

ADVISORY BOARD ON VETERANS SERVICES MINUTES

Teams Audio
+1 808-829-4853, 181671097# (Dial-in Number)
Friday, January 7, 2022
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Board Members: Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair
Mr. Blair Suzuki, Vice Chair
Mr. Michael Lilly
Mr. Jim Traxler
Ms. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn
Mr. Reyn Kaupiko
Ms. Mary Kay Hertog
Ms. Donna Shimizu

OVS Staff: Mr. Ron Han, OVS, Director
Ms. Yolanda Ehere, Secretary
Ms. Yam Yi Lee, Administrative Services Assistant

Guests: Mr. Sergio Chao, Director, VBA Benefits
Ms. Amy Rohlf, Public Affairs Officer, VA Pacific Islands Health
Care System
Mr. Wade Ishii, Asst. Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii DOD
Engineering
Mr. Juan Babiak, Veterans Liaison, Yukio Okutsu State Veterans
Ms. Katherine Korenaga, Community and Project Development Director,
Department of Human Services
Mr. Jim Horton, Director, National Cemetery of the Pacific
Ms. Carol Kanayama, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS
Col. Pamela Ellison, Human Resources Officer, Hawaii Army National
Guard
Mr. Carlos Santana – Senator Mazie Hirono’s Office Representative
Ms. Nicole Gray - Congressman Kaiali’I Kahele Office Representative

Absent: Department of Health

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & CALL TO ORDER – A Moment of Silence

Blair Suzuki led the Pledge of Allegiance. After a moment of silence, Chair Bridget Komine called the meeting to order at 0900 hours.

II. **MINUTES**

The Board reviewed the December 3, 2021, minutes. Roxanne Bruhn motioned to accept the December 3, 2021, minutes and Blair Suzuki seconded.

III. **COMMUNICATIONS**

None.

IV. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

Mr. Sergio Chao, Director, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Benefits

Briefed on: VBA opened by Appointments only. Postponed bringing workforce back due to the rise in COVID positive cases... will reassess on February 1, 2022. On January 18th from 9am to 3pm, a benefit counselor will be at the Kauai Veterans Center. On January 26, 2022 there will be a virtual benefits workshop.

Ms. Amy Rohlfs, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Pacific Island Health Care System-Medical

Briefed on: COVID vaccines and boosters are available to all veterans.

Mr. Ron Han, OVS, Director

Briefed on: State Legislature will be starting up soon. OVS Workforce will be hybrid moving forward with no face to face sessions with Veteran clients... staff doing a mixture of telework and in office work. We are hiring on all islands.

Questions for Ron:

1. Michael Lilly asked for an update on the flagpole situation at Makawao? Ron responded I checked with Julianne Pokini. She's with the County of Maui. So, the County folks and Contractor are still working with the flagpole vendor to resolve.

Mr. Wade Ishii, Asst. Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii DOD Engineering

Briefed on:

- HSVC Expansion and Improvements - December 20, 2021: DAGS's Attorney General decided to award construction project to T. Iida Contracting (2nd Low Bidder). December 28, 2021: DAGS notified us that TCG Construction (Low Bidder) has protested the award to T. Iida Contracting. Project can't move forward until protest is resolved.

- Hawaii State Veterans Home - December 31, 2021: Project construction ~34% complete. State Health Planning and Development Agency holding CON presentations on January 13, 20, and 27.
- Kauai Veterans Cemetery, Phase 2B - January 4, 2022: VA approved federal funding for various change orders.

Mr. Juan Babiak, Veterans Liaison, Yukio Okutsu State Veterans

Briefed on: entered protocol for outbreak mode – 1 clinical staff member and 3 nonclinical staff tested positive...but had not seen any patients. We tested all of our residents and all were negative. Another round of testing will happen on Monday.

Ms. Katherine Korenaga, Community and Project Development Director, Department of Human Services

Briefed on: Happy New Year to everyone!! Nothing to add.

Ms. Carol Kanayama, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

Briefed on: Virtual Job Fairs.

Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS

Briefed on: 2020 vs 2021 employment information – Veteran unemployment rate reduced by 4%.

Mr. Jim Horton, Director, National Cemetery of the Pacific

Briefed on: No changes to the interment services, Started construction in December for about one year

Mr. Carlos Santana, Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative – Present.

Ms. Nicole Gray - Congressman Kaiali'i Kahele Office Representative – Present.

Department of Health – Not present. No submitted report.

BOARD MEMBER'S REPORTS

1. Kauai - Ms. Mary Kay Hertog - Report submitted.
2. Maui - Mr. Michael Lilly - Report submitted. No additions.
3. Oahu - Mr. Blair Suzuki, Vice Chair - Report submitted. No additions.
4. Oahu - Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair - Report submitted. No additions.
5. Oahu - Ms. Reyn Kaupiko - Report submitted. No additions.
6. Oahu - Ms. Roxanne Bruhn - Report submitted. No additions.

7. Big Island - Mr. Jim Traxler - Report submitted. No additions.
8. Big Island - Ms. Donna Shimizu - Report submitted.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Legislative Committee
 - No Report.
- B. By Laws and Procedures
 - No Report.
- C. Recognition and Awards
 - No Report.
- D. Women's Committee
 - Chair Ellison briefed on last month's meeting –
 - Saturday, June 11th, 2022, Women's Veterans Summit.
 - Trying to get Senator Duckworth to be the keynote speaker.
- E. Project and Events Committee
 - Maui Veterans Cemetery Blessing/Dedication Event
 - Will discuss doing the working session.

V. NEW BUSINESS - None

VI. OLD BUSINESS – None

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

VIII. WORKING SESSION - OVS / Advisory Board Issues / Ideas

IX. ADJOURN – 10:36am

Mary Kay Hertog motioned, Donna Shimizu and Michael Lilly seconded.

Yolanda Ehere – Recorder