

ADVISORY BOARD ON VETERANS SERVICES MINUTES

Teams Audio
+1 808-829-4853, 181671097# (Dial-in Number)
Friday, September 2, 2022
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Board Members: Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair
Mr. Reyn Kaupiko
Ms. Donna Shimizu
Mr. Jim Traxler
Mr. Michael Lilly

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

Guests: Mr. John Lombardo, Acting Director, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
– Benefits
Ms. Amy Rohlf, Public Affairs Officer, VA Pacific Islands Health
Care System – Medical
Mr. Wade Ishii, Asst. Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii
DOD Engineering
Mr. Juan Babiak, Veterans Liaison, Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home
Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS
Mr. Lance Pridemore, Assistant Cemetery Director, National Cemetery of
the Pacific
Col. Pamela Ellison, Human Resources Officer, Hawaii Army
National Guard
Ms. Nicole Gray - Congressman Kaiali'i Kahele Office Representative
Mr. Carlos Santana – Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative

Absent: Mr. Blair Suzuki, Vice Chair
Ms. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn
Ms. Mary Kay Hertog
Ms. Katherine Korenaga, Community and Project Development Director,
Department of Human Services
Ms. Carol Kanayama, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

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

Chair Bridget Komine 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 August 5, 2022, minutes. Jim Traxler motioned to accept the August 5, 2022, minutes and Donna Shimizu seconded.

III. **COMMUNICATIONS**

None.

IV. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

Mr. John Lombardo, Acting Director, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Benefits

Briefed on: New VBA Director nomination is being pushed through; announcement in a couple of weeks. National backlog of a153,000 claims, but there has been an increase of claims in the last month. Will start processing the Pact Act claims at the beginning of the year.

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

Briefed on: Closed on Saturday and Monday due to Labor Day holiday, but the drive through pharmacy will be open. New booster shot will be arriving on September 15th to make an appointment call 1.800.214.1306.

Mr. Ron Han, OVS, Director

Briefed on: Successful NASDVA Conference had 38 states and territories in attendance. OVS has several vacancies. More information to come from partnering States on how they are supporting the new Burial Equity Act.

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

Briefed on:

- HSVC Expansion and Improvements, Oahu - Construction in progress. August 31, 2022: Construction ~10% complete
- Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home, Oahu - August 15, 2022 – Contractor notification of potential delay in completion of construction due to delay of electrical switch gear. Pending recovery schedule from Contractor., August 15, 2022 – Site visit with Senator Hirono's staff., August 18, 2022 – Art Advisory Committee meeting at site. Artist Kai'ili Kaulukukui attended virtually., August 26, 2022 – House Finance staff visit., Construction 66% complete through August 2022.

- Kauai Veterans Cemetery, Phase 2B - August 29, 2022: Final payment request from contractor (TCG), approved by VA.
- Maui Veterans Cemetery Expansion and Improvements - August 22, 2022: All work including the walkway extension and punch-list items complete. Landscaping may appear incomplete (or not properly maintained) due to water restrictions for the area (irrigating is not allowed). Construction complete.
- Molokai Veterans Cemetery will be reviewed for updated scope for improvements to be worked in the upcoming year's VA/NCA pre-application award grant program.

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

Briefed on: Working diligently on recruiting additional staff, so that we can expand number of beds.

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

Briefed on: 2.4% unemployment rate for veterans nationally.

Mr. Lance Pridemore, Assistant Cemetery Director, National Cemetery of the Pacific

Briefed on: We're continuing to work on the homeless issues. Construction projects in the cemetery continue to make progress.

Ms. Nicole Gray - Congressman Kaiali'i Kahele Office Representative – Present.
No submitted report.

Mr. Carlos Santana, Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative – Present. No submitted report.

Ms. Katherine Korenaga, Community and Project Development Director, Department of Human Services – Not present, but submitted a report.

Ms. Carol Kanayama, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations – Not present.
No submitted report.

Department of Health – Not present. No submitted report.

BOARD MEMBER'S REPORTS

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Legislative Committee
 - No Report.
- B. By Laws and Procedures
 - No Report.
- C. Recognition and Awards
 - No Report.
- D. Women's Committee – Briefed by Col. Ellison
 - Possible planning for next year's 2023 summit.
- E. Project and Events Committee
 - Maui Veterans Cemetery Blessing/Dedication Event
 - Planning will commence on selecting a date/time for this special event with OVS, the County and the Maui Veterans Council

NEW BUSINESS - None

V. OLD BUSINESS – None

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

VIII. ADJOURN – 9:54am

Reyn Kaupiko motioned; Donna Shimizu seconded.

Yolanda Ehere – Recorder