

**STATE OF HAWAII OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES'  
ADVISORY BOARD ON VETERANS SERVICES MINUTES**

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Office of Veterans' Services (Tripler Army Medical Center)  
459 Patterson Rd. E Wing, Rm 1-A103 Honolulu, HI 96819

**Friday, October 6, 2023**

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

**ATTENDANCE**

**Board Members:**

Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair  
Mr. Blair Suzuki, Vice Chair  
Mr. Michael Lilly  
Ms. Mary Kay Hertog  
Mr. Reyn Kaupiko  
Ms. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn

**OVS Staff:**

BG Bruce Oliveira, Interim Director  
Ms. Yolanda Ehere, Secretary

**Guests:**

Ms. Stacey Bonnett, Director, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Benefits  
Ms. Amy Rohlfs, 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. Katherine Korenaga, Community and Project Development Director,  
Department of Human Services  
Mr. Gene Matias, Public Affairs Specialist, National Cemetery of the Pacific  
Ms. Nicole Gray - Congresswoman Jill Tokuda Office Representative  
Mr. Carlos Santana – Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative  
Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS  
Mr. David Liao, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

**Absent:**

Ms. Yam Yi Lee, Administrative Services Assistant  
Ms. Carol Kanayama, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations  
Col. Pamela Ellison, Human Resources Officer, Hawaii Army National Guard

**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. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Yolanda Ehere welcomed a baby girl to her family on September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

III. **MINUTES**

The Board reviewed the September 1, 2023 minutes. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn motioned to accept the September 1, 2023 minutes and Blair Suzuki seconded.

IV. **COMMUNICATIONS**

None

V. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

**Ms. Stacey Bonnett, Director, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Benefits**

Briefed on: Outreach events on October 20th from 8:30 to 2:00 PM at the Honolulu Vet Center and October 19th at the West Oahu Vet Center from 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM.

Question from Mary Kay Hertog: I had several veterans tell me they signed up at the PACT Act Registration event back in March 2023, but have yet to be contacted by anyone for further evaluation. Is there a priority on how veterans are contacted and scheduled to see the various contractors (QTC)?

Answer: The registration part is for the VA Medical Center, if you're registering as having been exposed to toxins and you're filling out that questionnaire to file a claim for benefits for the PACT Act and for those exposures you still have to come to the regional office and submit a claim and file a claim paperwork.

There are two separate and distinct things. Doing one does not correlate to the other,

**Ms. Amy Rohlf, Public Affairs Officer, VA Pacific Islands Health Care System - Medical**

Briefed on: Flu vaccine and COVID vaccine are available, so please go through your primary care to arrange to get them. VA Clinics will be closed on Saturday and Monday for Columbus Day.

Upcoming Events

October 18th at US vets

October 21st on the Island of Maui.

October 28th on the island of Lanai

Three-day event for Veterans Day week - COA challenge.

This is a sporting event where our veterans can participate in.

Follow up to Mary Kay Hertog Question

Answer: We are continuing to register PACT Act even after the deadline. It's still ongoing and will last forever.

Question from Chair Bridget Komine – Does Dr. Robinson have an Assistant Director?

Answer: Yes, we currently have Mr Freeman, Andrew Freeman, who is our Acting Assistant Director. We also have an Associate Director, Mr. Devin Woods.

**BG Bruce Oliveira, Interim Director, OVS**

Briefed on: OVS vacancies, Virtual Veteran's Day Concert

Question from Micheal Lily: Do we have a contract for the Maui with Maui Community College for the Multi Service complex?

Answer: No, we do not have a contract.

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

Briefed on: No changes on submitted report.

Question from Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn: Any movement on Molokai veteran cemetery improvements and the Molokai Veteran Center initiatives?

Answer: I don't see movement because it's going to be difficult to get the Fed match unless we ignore the Fed match and just go in and say, you know, we just want to move forward with this project without any Fed match and then maybe we can move forward with it that way.

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

Briefed on: We're in our survey window for CMS. We're expecting it in the next few weeks or so. Trying to recruit licensed nurses. Nursing assistant training that's sponsored by Hill Medical Center is in progress. I'm Retiring at the end of December. No replacement hired yet.

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

Briefed on: No changes on submitted report.

**Mr. David Liao, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations** - Present. No submitted report.

**Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS** - Present, No submitted report.

**Mr. Gene Matias, Public Affairs Specialist, National Cemetery of the Pacific**

Briefed on: We're planning for the Veteran's Day ceremony on November 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 o'clock.

**Ms. Nicole Gray - Congresswoman Jill Tokuda Office Representative** - Present. No submitted report.

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

**Department of Health** – Not present. No submitted report.

**VI. BOARD MEMBER'S REPORTS**

1. Kauai - Ms. Mary Kay Hertog - Report submitted.
2. Maui - Mr. Michael Lilly - Not present. No submitted report.
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 – Report submitted. No additions.
6. Oahu - Ms. Roxanne Bruhn - Report submitted. No additions.

**VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Discussion on what needs to be on the agenda. Mary Kay Hertog motioned to review the various committees to make recommendations whether to stand them down and use them ad hoc or keep them as is. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn seconded. All are in favor.

- A. Legislative Committee –No Report or Update
- B. By Laws and Procedures -- No Report or Update
- C. Recognition and Awards –Will review at the next meeting.
- D. Women's Committee -- No Report or Update
- E. Projects and Events Committee-
  - Maui Veterans Cemetery Blessing/Dedication Event Update- Michael Lilly
    - 1. No Report or Update

**VIII. ADJOURN – 10:05 am**

Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn motioned, and Mary Kay Hertog seconded.

Yolanda Ehere – Recorder