

**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, January 3, 2025**

**ATTENDANCE**

**Board Members:**

Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair  
Mr. Blair Suzuki, Vice Chair  
Ms. Mary Kay Hertog  
Mr. James Hussey  
Mr. Aris Banaag

**OVS Staff:**

Mr. John Alamodin, Director  
Ms. Yolanda Ehere, Secretary  
Ms. Yam Yi Lee, Administrative Services Assistant

**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  
Ms. Katherine Korenaga, Community Project Dev Dir, Department of Human  
Services  
Mr. Gene Matias, Public Affairs Specialist, National Cemetery of the Pacific

**Absent:**

Ms. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn  
Mr. Wade Ishii, Asst. Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii DOD Engineering  
Ms. Kai Chartrand, Long Term Care Administrator, Yukio Okutsu State Veterans  
Home  
Mr. Kenneth Fink, Director, Department of Health  
Ms. Carol Kanayama, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations  
Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS  
Ms. Nicole Gray - Congresswoman Jill Tokuda Office Representative  
Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative

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

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

**II. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None

**III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 6, 2024**

The Board reviewed December 6, 2024 minutes. Blair Suzuki motion to approve the minutes. Mary Kay Hertog seconded.

**IV. COMMUNICATIONS**

None

**V. DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

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

Briefed on: Veterans Education Benefits - Veterans that were eligible for both the Montgomery GI bill benefit as well as the Post 911 GI bill benefit had to elect one or the other and they could not use both. The Supreme Court decided that veterans are entitled to utilize both benefits.

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

Briefed on: On Thursday, January 9<sup>th</sup> all VA Pacific Islands clinics will be closed in honor and in remembrance of former President Jimmy Carter. Also on Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, we will be closed in honor and remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

**Mr. John Alamodin, Director, OVS**

Briefed on: Welcome Aris Banaag to the board! The City Council legislation for exemption registration for veterans 65 years of age or older passed the First Reading. The next reading is not scheduled yet. The proposed Maui State Veterans Home for the state match of \$35,000,000 has been included in the governor's fiscal budget, it is joined with a federal match of \$58 million in an effort to build a home in Maui. As part of the DoD legislative package, there will be proposals to have a state veteran cemeteries board. The Danel K. Akaka dedication ceremony has been scheduled for Wednesday, March 26<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 11am. The invitations are forthcoming.

**Mr. Wade Ishii, Asst. Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii DOD Engineering - Not present but submitted a report.**

**Ms. Kaui Chartrand, Long Term Care Administrator, Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home - Not present but submitted a report.**

**Mr. Kenneth Fink, Director, Department of Health - Not present. No submitted report.**

**Ms. Katherine Korenaga, Community Project Dev Dir, Department of Human Services**

Briefed on: No additions or changes to submitted report.

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

**Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS - Not present. No submitted report.**

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

Briefed on: Columbarium courts 1 through 5 are still under construction, so we're not able to allow anyone there to visit any of the niches to place flowers or visit a loved one. We're anticipating that it will be opened as soon as March.

**Ms. Nicole Gray - Congresswoman Jill Tokuda Office Representative** - Not present. No submitted report.

**Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative** - Not present. No submitted report.

**VI. BOARD MEMBER'S REPORTS**

1. Kauai - Ms. Mary Kay Hertog - No report submitted. No additions.
2. West Hawaii – Mr. James Hussey - Report submitted.
  - Thank Director Alamodin for his visit to Kona last month. He met a few people on the cemetery staff and we are working on some ideas that were presented to him.
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. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn - No report submitted. No additions.
6. Maui – Mr. Aris Banaag – New Board Member
  - Introduction: I'm currently serving in the Hawaii Air National Guard. I have about 30 years of military service. I am the current Vice President of Maui Veteran's Council.

**VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- A. Legislative Committee – No Report or Update
- B. By Laws and Procedures - No Report or Update
- C. Recognition and Awards – No Report or Update
- D. Women's Committee - No Report or Update
- E. Projects and Events Committee - No Report or Update

**VIII. ADJOURN – 9:34 am**

Mary Kay Hertog motioned, and Blair Suzuki seconded.  
Yolanda Ehere – Recorder