



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING**

MINUTES

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Community Design Studio
7506 E. Indian School Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

PRESENT: Chairperson Steven Jackson (arrived at 5:14 p.m.), Vice-Chair Land Anderson (MS Teams); Commissioners Mark Ashley, Justin Layman, Patrick Mazzarella, Pete Palmer, and Joel Stempil

STAFF: Kelly Corsette, Communications & Public Affairs Director
Dale Wiebusch, Government Relations Director

1. Call to Order/ Roll Call

Vice-Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Members present as listed above.

2. Public Comment

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

3. Discussion and possible action to approve November 1, 2023 commission meeting minutes

COMMISSIONER STEMPIL MOVED TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 1, 2023 VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER MAZZARELLA SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0). VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON, COMMISSIONERS ASHLEY, LAYMAN, MAZZARELLA, PALMER, AND STEMPIL VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. CHAIR JACKSON WAS NOT YET PRESENT. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

4. Presentation, discussion, and possible recommendations: Veterans legislation at the state and federal levels

Dale Wiebusch, Government Relations Director, gave a presentation outlining details Arizona State legislature operations and activities that the government relations department is involved with at that level. He noted that he is the designated public lobbyist for the City of Scottsdale; the City contracts a separate lobbyist at both the state and federal levels. He gave an overview of the county and federal legislative activities. The legislative session starts the first Monday after the first Tuesday of the year, which this year is January 8, 2024, and will go no fewer than 100 days.

Mr. Wiebusch gave a detailed explanation of how to weigh in on bills through the state legislative website at AZLeg.gov. He reiterated that he is the designated public lobbyist for the city, however, commissioners have the ability to register a position as private citizens. Mr. Corsette explained that the City's commissions are appointed to advise City Council and have the ability to advise Council to take a particular position on a piece of legislation, but it is not within the Commission's purview to directly express a position as a body.

Mr. Wiebusch said that he is not aware of any currently proposed legislation pertaining to Veterans. He noted that the Government Relations department crafts legislation each year and this year's legislation was submitted prior to his invitation to speak at this meeting. He said that legislators do sometimes try to give preferential treatment to veterans in relation to things such as property tax classifications or spousal benefits. Mr. Wiebusch will track and report to Mr. Corsette on any veterans' legislation that comes forward during the upcoming session. He gave a brief overview of activities at the federal legislative level.

Commissioners asked clarifying questions throughout the presentation.

5. Discussion and possible recommendations – follow-up on Scottsdale Salutes and Scottsdale Veterans Day 2023 programs

Discussion ensued regarding the 2023 Scottsdale Veterans Day program and in particular the speech given by the VFW representative, which was focused on religious and political opinion. Consensus of the Commissioners was that the topic was inappropriate for a program that should have focused on honoring veterans. It was noted that other attendees at the event were also angered by the speech. Mayor Ortega's office and city staff have been made aware of the general upset over the incident. The Commission debated about their recommendation regarding the planning of future Veterans Day programs, which have historically been hosted by the City. It was noted that this year the City moved their event to City Hall and opted to participate in a joint event with the American Legion and VFW, because those groups typically use the space at City Hall for Veterans Day events. Consideration was given to making a recommendation that the VFW not be invited to participate in future events with the City, and the American Legion continue to be invited; that a letter be written to the organization, expressing the Commission's disdain for the VFW representative's speech; that the city be advised to not invite VSOs to participate in the future; and to allow staff to organize the event without input, as they have historically.

VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON MOVED TO RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY PARTNER WITH THE AMERICAN LEGION FOR THE 2024 VETERANS DAY EVENT AND NOT INVITE THE VFW TO BE A PARTICIPANT. COMMISSIONER PALMER SECONDED THE MOTION.

Discussion ensued regarding the motion.

COMMISSIONER ASHLEY PROPOSED THAT THE MOTION BE AMENDED TO RECOMMEND THE CITY HOST THE VETERANS DAY EVENT AT A TIME AND LOCATION OF THE CITY'S CHOICE WITH PARTICIPANTS OF THE CITY'S CHOICE. THE AMENDMENT WAS ACCEPTED AND THE MOTION CARRIED FIVE (5) TO TWO (2) VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON, COMMISSIONERS ASHLEY, LAYMAN, MAZZARELLA, AND PALMER VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. CHAIR JACKSON AND COMMISSIONER STEMPIL DISSENTED)

Further discussion ensued regarding not including the VFW in future Veterans Day events.

CHAIR JACKSON MOVED THAT THE COMMISSION RECOMMEND TO CITY COUNCIL THAT STAFF NOT INVITE THE VFW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VETERANS DAY EVENT HOSTED BY THE CITY, AT LEAST IN 2024. VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR JACKSON, VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON, COMMISSIONERS ASHLEY, LAYMAN, MAZZARELLA, PALMER, AND STEMPIL VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

(Note: Commissioner Palmer initially dissented to the motion and later in the meeting requested that his vote be changed to support the motion)

6. Discussion and possible action to adopt the calendar year 2024 meeting schedule

Mr. Corsette presented the proposed 2024 meeting schedule for review.

CHAIR JACKSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE CALENDAR YEAR 2024 MEETING SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED. COMMISSIONER PALMER SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR JACKSON, VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON, COMMISSIONERS ASHLEY, LAYMAN, MAZZARELLA, PALMER, AND STEMPIL VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

7. Discussion and possible action to nominate commission chair and vice chair to be elected at the January 3, 2024 meeting

Mr. Corsette reviewed the nomination process, noting that the election will be held during the January 3, 2024 meeting. He explained that nominations can be made during tonight's meeting, or Commissioners can email him to nominate themselves or another Commissioner before the next meeting. All nominations received will be on the slate at the January 3, 2024 meeting.

COMMISSIONER PALMER NOMINATED VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON FOR CHAIR OF THE VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION. COMMISSIONER ASHLEY SECONDED THE NOMINATION.

CHAIR JACKSON NOMINATED JUSTIN LAYMAN FOR THE POSITION OF VICE CHAIR OF THE VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION. COMMISSIONER PALMER SECONDED THE NOMINATION.

8. Discussion of the draft 2023 Annual Report to be considered for adoption at the January 3, 2024 meeting

Mr. Corsette presented the draft 2023 Annual Report for review, noting that highlighted areas will be updated prior to adoption.

9. Discussion, updates, and possible recommendations regarding the Veterans Advisory Commission Work Plan

Commissioner Palmer said that the 2022 Census has been updated with new data regarding veterans' status in Scottsdale and suggested that discussion be agendaized for the next meeting. Commissioner Ashley suggested that as part of the Commission work plan, consideration be given to expanding the Scottsdale Salutes program to include a veterans art show.

Mr. Corsette suggested that the Commission schedule time to review the work plan and make additions and eliminations as appropriate. One thing to consider is the suggestion that large employers that include veterans be included as part of the Scottsdale Salutes program.

10. Commissioner reports, staff updates, and suggestions for future agenda items

Commissioner Ashley gave an update on the activities of the Arizona Veterans Choir. He said that the choir has set a meeting schedule and is hoping to attract new members and expand the group.

Commissioner Mazzarella thanked staff and the Commission for inviting the Neighbors Helping Neighbors group to the Veterans Day event. He noted that Neighbors Helping Neighbors is always willing and available to help with veterans' needs.

Future meeting agenda items could include:

- Update on veterans Census results
- Work plan update

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 3, 2023.

11. Adjournment

CHAIR JACKSON MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER PALMER SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR JACKSON, VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON, COMMISSIONERS ASHLEY, LAYMAN, MAZZARELLA, PALMER, AND STEMPIL VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

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