



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

MINUTES

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

Meeting Held Electronically

PRESENT: Chairperson Pete Palmer; Vice- Chair Denise Pulk; Commissioners Debbie Dominick, Marie Monroe, Mike Ragole, Joel Stempel and Steve Ziomek

STAFF: Kelly Corsette, Communications/Public Affairs Director; Brent Stockwell, Assistant City Manager; Bill Hylan, Senior Assistant City Attorney

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

Chair Palmer called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Members present as listed above.

2. Discussion and possible action to approve March 3, 2021 Commission meeting minutes

COMMISSIONER RAGOLE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 3, 2021 VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER ZIOMEK SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR PALMER, VICE-CHAIR PULK, COMMISSIONERS DOMINICK, MONROE, RAGOLE, STEMPI, AND ZIOMEK VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

3. Presentation and discussion – Veterans Heritage Project

Michelle DiMuro from Veterans Heritage Project gave an overview of the program. The Veterans Heritage Project is a local non-profit that dates back to 1988, when a teacher began inviting veterans to come to the classroom and tell their stories. The program expanded in 2004 when students began interviewing veterans and assembling their stories into book form. In 2009, Veterans Heritage Project became a 501(c)(3) non-profit in hopes of expanding the program to additional schools. Currently 30 schools participate including two in Scottsdale,

Chaparral High School and Notre Dame High School. Ultimately, it is hoped that there will be chapters in schools nationwide. Ms. DiMuro explained that each fall, students interview veterans and write their service story. They then spend the winter months collaborating and publishing the stories in the book, entitled "Since You Asked." A reception is held in spring where students present veterans with a completed book. Each student and each veteran receives a book and an audio recording of their interview and recordings are archived with the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. The program sponsors five scholarships each year and partners with Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Society, which also offers scholarships. The program is expanding and alumni have begun advocating for chapters at their colleges.

Due to COVID-19, the 2020 spring reception was cancelled. In place of the 2021 reception, an event called "Honor Roll" is scheduled, which will combine the gala and book reception into a parade beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 17, 2021. Information on the event can be found at VeteransHeritage.org.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Ms. DiMuro said that funding is primarily through donations. Because it is an educational program, schools are able to apply tax credits to support some participation costs. Veterans who are interested in participating in the program are encouraged to visit VeteransHeritage.org veterans page for more information.

4. Update and discussion about Veterans AZ – video/podcast discussion program

Mr. Corsette announced that the VeteransAZ program was launched on March 29, 2021, in recognition of National Vietnam War Veterans Day. The program was launched as a video program on Scottsdale's YouTube channel and is also available as a podcast on most podcast apps. Full length interviews of the two guests, Mike Burns and Colonel Tom Kirk are available on YouTube. Seven Arizona cities have committed to airing VeteransAZ on their channels.

Episode 2 is in production and will focus on Memorial Day. It is expected to launch in April. The program will be used to help promote Memorial Day commemorations scheduled to occur around the Valley.

5. Discussion and possible recommendation(s) to the City Council regarding including veteran status and U.S. military service as a protected class in the proposed Anti-Discrimination Ordinance

Chair Palmer introduced Janice Shimokubo, Chair of the Human Relations Commission, and invited her to talk about the proposed Anti-Discrimination Ordinance.

Ms. Shimokubo talked about the history of the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance, which the Human Relations Commission most recently recommended to City Council in August of 2020. She explained that the ordinance is intended to close gaps between federal and state laws related to discrimination. The Human Relations Commission was not aware of the addition of veterans to the ordinance until they received the updated ordinance with six veterans' categories added. The HRC recommended eliminating the categories and replacing it with "U.S. Military Veterans Status."

Discussion ensued regarding whether or not to recommend inclusion of military status in the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance. It was noted that there has been no identified problem with

discrimination against veterans in the City of Scottsdale and that including it could create a perception of a problem. Commissioners shared that some veterans have expressed concern that being included in the ordinance would label veterans as victims. Mr. Stockwell clarified that the ordinance is a categorization of characteristics people cannot discriminate against and is intended to act as a policy statement about what is not acceptable with regards to discrimination. He noted that veterans and active duty service members are already protected classes under federal law. It was noted that seven cities in Arizona have an anti-discrimination ordinance and of those, four have included veterans' status.

Concern was expressed that if veterans are not included in the anti-discrimination ordinance, it could be difficult to add the category if the need arises in the future. Mr. Corsette noted that amending existing ordinances when a need arises is a common practice for Council. Commissioners inquired whether or not inclusion would put Scottsdale in a better position as a "most livable city for veterans." Mr. Stockwell said that the Commission could take a stance that adding veterans protections are not needed at this time, but that the Commission would continue to evaluate those characteristics that would comprise a veteran-friendly community and make additional recommendations in the future, which could include coverage in the anti-discrimination ordinance. It was noted that as of November 11, 2020, Scottsdale was listed on one website as the eighth most livable city for veterans.

Mr. Stockwell noted that on April 20, 2021, City Council will be presented with at least two options: Option A, which has all the protected classes without U.S. military service and Option B, which includes all protected classes, plus U.S. military service. He suggested that if the VAC wishes to recommend not including veterans as a protected class, that they rescind their previous recommendation.

COMMISSIONER RAGOLE MOVED TO RESCIND THE MARCH 3, 2021 VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL REGARDING VETERANS STATUS IN THE PROPOSED ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ORDINANCE. COMMISSIONER ZIOMEK SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ONE (1) BY ROLL CALL VOTE. CHAIR PALMER, COMMISSIONERS DOMINICK, MONROE, RAGOLE, STEMPLIL, AND ZIOMEK VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. VICE-CHAIR PULK DISSENTED.

6. Update, discussion and possible direction regarding the VAC Work Plan

Chair Palmer encouraged Commissioners to help identify individuals and organizations to be profiled on the VeteransAZ program. He asked Commissioners if there were any recommendations for the Veterans Advisory Commission work plan.

Commissioner Stempil suggested that the Commission attend a City Council meeting for the purpose of introducing themselves. Mr. Corsette said that typically, the Chair and/or Vice-Chair take the initiative to schedule individual meetings with the Mayor and Council members. Chair Palmer asked that Commissioners forward him any specific topics they feel are important to highlight for Council members.

7. Commission members' reports, updates, and suggestions for future agenda items

Commissioner Ziomek announced that Thunderbird Field II Veterans Memorial will be hosting a Veterans Day Celebration on Saturday, November 6, 2021.

Chair Palmer requested that Veterans Day and Memorial Day events be posted on the website.

8. Adjournment

COMMISSIONER RAGOLE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER STEMPIL SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SEVEN (7) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR PALMER, VICE-CHAIR PULK, COMMISSIONERS DOMINICK, MONROE, RAGOLE, STEMPIL, AND ZIOMEK VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Recorded and Transcribed by eScribers, LLC.