



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

MINUTES

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

Hybrid meeting (some present at the Community Design Studio, others electronically)

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

STAFF: Kelly Corsette, Communications/Public Affairs Director

GUESTS: Rocky Coronado, Be Connected AZ

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

Chair Palmer called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Members present as listed above.

2. Discussion and possible action to approve April 7, 2021 Commission meeting minutes

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

3. Presentation and discussion – Be Connected AZ

Rocky Coronado, Be Connected AZ, introduced himself as an Airforce Veteran and navigator for Yavapai County with the Be Connected Program with the Arizona Coalition for Military Families. The best way to make a referral to the program is to call the 1-866 phone number provided. The program began in 2009 with the assistance of Senator John McCain's office, to connect veterans and their families to services, resources and supports. Senator McCain and

his team were instrumental in having Arizona designated as a pilot program under the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, which helped established the foundation by which the program was built. Be Connected is a statewide effort to strengthen access to support resources for over 600,000 service members, veterans and families who reside in Arizona. The program has expanded in recent years with over 20 employees covering the state. The program is implemented on behalf of veteran communities in partnership with public and private sector stakeholders. Leadership partners represent different sectors of the military, government, community and work closely together to build upon existing community strengths to create the most effective program possible for veterans and families. Be Connected is part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, including Phoenix VA, Prescott VA and the Southern Arizona VA in Tucson. Smaller offices are also located throughout the state.

The three program components are: Call, Match and Learn. The goal is to reduce deaths by suicide, build upon existing capacity and strengths, adding new layers of coordination and support and demonstrative effectiveness and developing a sustainability plan to build upon program components into systems and funding. Anyone is free to call the 866 number, including veterans, family members and providers. The veteran is matched with needed supports through a navigator to ensure they are connected with needed resources. There are in-person and online trainings to assist individuals in obtaining the knowledge, skills and abilities to assist veterans. To become a Be Connected partner or organization, a pre-application is available online. Someone from the Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF) will contact the applicant to facilitate the process.

Vice Chair Pulk stated that she works for a nonprofit organization in Scottsdale and referred to the sentence, "If you're interested in becoming a Be Connected partner organization." She asked for clarification on whether this for the public sector, private sector or an individual. Mr. Coronado said it is for anyone who is willing and able to help veterans.

Commissioner Ziomek asked for a definition of what it means to become a partner and whether this always entails a monetary contribution. Mr. Coronado stated that there are no dues or membership fees. It means that ACMF has vetted the organization to determine the services offered and the capacity to deliver those services. The vetted organizations are then included on the ACMF website.

Vice Chair Pulk asked about the number of representatives in the Scottsdale area. Mr. Coronado acknowledged that he has not specifically pulled up the stats for Scottsdale, however there is a large number in the metro Phoenix area.

4. 2019 Census data for Scottsdale

Chair Palmer stated that the census reflected a reduction of approximately 1,000 veterans in Scottsdale from the previous census for a current total of approximately 16,000 total veterans. Of these, 66 percent are over the age of 65, which is also decreased from the previous figures.

Vice Chair Pulk asked whether the term "loss" refers to a confirmed passing or if the veteran was not accounted for. Chair Palmer said that the census does not provide those details, merely that there were approximately 1,000 more veterans at the time of the 2010 census. The total number of veterans remains at approximately 6 percent for the Scottsdale area. The

disability rate remains higher than average when compared with the Scottsdale population. The poverty rate is well below the norm for the City of Scottsdale.

Commissioner Ziomek requested that copies of the slides be provided to Commissioners. Mr. Corsette noted that the slides are linked via the agenda.

Vice Chair Pulk referenced the category of Scottsdale veterans by education and asked whether the college education levels are higher than the national norm. Chair Palmer said that the census link should provide the national norm for education.

Commissioner Ziomek stated that T-Bird is more interested in helping veterans with disabilities or PTSD via a dogs for vets organization or something similar. He asked whether there is data on the number of disabled vets in Scottsdale. Mr. Palmer said the data is not broken down to that level, but merely lists percentages. Given that the majority of veterans is over 66 years of age, there are likely many who fall into the disabled category. Commissioner Ziomek added that it would be challenging to acquire the specific data, due to HIPAA restrictions. He suggested that interested Commissioners do a Google search on Scottsdale veteran data, which provides greater detail on the statistics. Mr. Corsette added that Scottsdale has not yet received the city by city numbers from the 2020 decennial census and these are expected to be received in September. At that point, the Commission may have access to more detailed information. The census conducts a random sample survey on a yearly basis and the data collected is used to provide data between the decade interval census reports. It is not a complete count, however the information is very useful for cities.

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

Chair Palmer stated that he and Vice Chair Pulk met with the Mayor last week to provide an update on the Work Plan. The Mayor expressed interest in attending a future meeting.

Vice Chair Pulk added that the Mayor directly asked her to assist with the wording of a proclamation for recognizing the month of June as PTSD Awareness Month. Today she was contacted by the Mayor's Chief of Staff and administrative staff with the draft document. She returned it, along with questions for the staff and the Mayor. The Mayor has indicated a desire for the language to be more wordy. It is expected that there be more than one draft before the final.

Mr. Corsette provided an updated on the Veterans AZ video program. Episode two was just released and focuses on Memorial Day. Episode three will focus on National PTSD Awareness Day in June. Vice Chair Pulk commented on the excellent quality of the second episode.

Commissioner Ragole complimented both Chair Palmer and Vice Chair Pulk, based on a recent conversation with Mayor Ortega, wherein the Mayor referenced a great recent discussion with the Chair and Vice Chair. At that time, Commissioner Ragole asked the Mayor whether he was aware that the American Legion National Convention is coming to Phoenix in August. One of the biggest events is the Legacy Run. The after ride gathering will be at Post 44 the day before the convention starts. The Mayor offered to provide support by way of proclamations for the American Legion and the planned activities. In addition, for the Memorial Day event, Post 44 will be hosting this year and he invited Commissioners to attend. The Mayor will be speaking at the event.

Commissioner Dominick asked whether it would be helpful to have a couple of their PTSD specialists be involved in PTSD month. Mr. Corsette said this would be great and he would speak to Commissioner Dominick about arrangements.

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

Commissioner Ziomek said there are hundreds of veterans organizations around the Valley and it would be nice to hear from the Dogs for Vets Foundation.

7. Adjournment

COMMISSIONER RAGOLE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. CHAIRPERSON PALMER 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 5:44 p.m.

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