



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

Wednesday, November 1, 2023

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

PRESENT: Vice-Chair Land Anderson; Commissioners Mark Ashley, Justin Layman, Patrick Mazzarella, Pete Palmer, and Joel Stempil

ABSENT: Chairperson Steven Jackson

STAFF: Kelly Corsette, Communications and Public Affairs Director

GUESTS: Anna Mineer, Arizona Veterans Mission Group; Derek Debus, Arizona Veterans Mission Group

1. Call to Order/ Roll Call

Vice-Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 5:00 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 October 4, 2023 commission meeting minutes

VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 4, 2023 VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. COMMISSIONER STEMPIL SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0). VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON, COMMISSIONERS ASHLEY, LAYMAN, MAZZARELLA, PALMER, AND STEMPIL VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

4. Presentation, discussion, and possible recommendations: Arizona Veterans Mission Group

Anna Mineer and Derek Debus, representing the Arizona Veterans Mission Group, gave a presentation outlining the organization's mission. The organization partners with volunteer attorneys to provide legal services to veterans and active military, with a focus on topics such as discharge upgrades, access to benefits, and benefit increases. In addition to providing legal services, they cover fees for medical exams that diagnose service-related injuries and advocate for veterans and active military at the federal and state levels. Mr. Debus talked in detail about ongoing problems with unaccredited entities that charge for VA claims services and rubber-stamp VA physician documents, which in many cases has resulted in the veteran being accused of fraud. There is currently proposed legislation including the Guard Act that is pending in Congress, which would reinstate penalties for the fraudulent organizations. Efforts are also being made to work with the State of Arizona to offer disabled veterans benefits similar to those offered by other states.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Debus explained that many veterans are being prosecuted for fraud because they gave their personal VA information to these fraudulent organizations and information was submitted on their behalf without their complete understanding of what was being submitted. He further explained that in many cases veterans are being advised to file a new case when filing an appeal would be more beneficial to them. Discussion ensued regarding the status of HR 8736, the Guard Benefits Act. It was suggested that when talking to those legislators that are opposed to the Guard Benefits Act, examples be given about the Employee Retention Credit (ERC). Mr. Debus said that his firm currently represents approximately 600 military clients.

5. Discussion and possible recommendations regarding the Veterans Advisory Commission Work Plan

Commissioner Palmer said that Senator Sinema's staff is currently working on updating the Arizona quality of life handbook. He asked Commissioners to review the document and offer suggestions for updating the information.

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

Kelly Corsette, Communications and Public Affairs Director, announced that Scottsdale Salutes banners will be installed starting on Friday, November 3, 2023. An additional 17 poles have been acquired this year, totaling 47 poles dedicated to veteran recognition. Commissioner Stempel is among the 40 new veterans being honored this year. The Scottsdale Salutes reception will be held Thursday, November 9, 2023 at 4:30 p.m. in the Community Design Studio courtyard and will be followed by a performance by Jazz Ambassadors at 6:00 p.m. at Civic Center, near 75th Street, near the library. Banners will remain in place from November 3 through November 17, 2023.

Veterans Day celebration will be held on Saturday, November 11, 2023 at the Memorial for the Fallen, beginning at 10:30 a.m. The celebration will begin with a performance by Scottsdale Fire Department Pipes and Drums. The event will be hosted by Mayor David Ortega and will include keynote speaker U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Michael McLaughlin.

Commissioner Layman noted that Scottsdale Community College will be hosting a Veterans

Day event on Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at 10:30 a.m.

Future meeting agenda items could include:

- Legislative update, focusing on the Guards Act

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 6, 2023.

7. Adjournment

VICE-CHAIR ANDERSON MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER PALMER SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0). 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 5:40 p.m.

Recorded and Transcribed by eScribers, LLC.