

Minutes Tempe Veterans Commission October 09, 2024

Minutes of the TEMPE VETERANS COMMISSION held on Wednesday, October 09, 2024, at 6:00 PM. – 7:30 PM., via Microsoft Teams and Tempe Public

(MEMBERS) Present:

Juan Garcia
Romaldo Gonzales
Beno Thomas, Chair
William “Dennis” Gorman
Jim Lange, Vice-chair
Gwendolyn “Gwen” DeNeal
Phil Kraft
Ryan Swearingen

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Melanie James, Secretary
Aaron McBride
Jose Moreno

City Staff Present:

Octavia Harris, Deputy CHHS Director
Jorge Benavente, Administrative Assistant II

Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Guest Appearances

Kelly Taylor, Marketing Coordinator, Tempe Center for the Arts

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order(1 min)

MOTION: Commissioner Gorman moved to START the meeting

SECOND: The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moreno, and the motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 2 – Attendance (1 min)

Commissioners Kraft and Swearingen were unable to attend the meeting.

Agenda Item 3 – Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Agenda Item 4 – Chair’s Remarks (5 min)

Chairperson Thomas briefly discussed the upcoming agenda and thanked the commissioners who were able to attend the council meeting in September.

Agenda Item 5 – Rescheduling Toxic Exposure Town Hall. (15 min)

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Toxic Exposure Town Hall was canceled. Recognizing its significance and the value it would offer to veterans throughout the Valley, the commission decided to reschedule it. After a thorough discussion, during which several spring dates were considered for their potential symbolism and favorable weather, the commission concluded that March 29th would be ideal. As both Vietnam Veterans Day and the City’s Care Fair fall on that date, the combined events could boost attendance. Should the commission face further obstacles, they are open to postponing the event until the fall.

Agenda Item 6 – New Directions Veterans Choir– (10 min) Kelly Taylor, Marketing Coordinator, Tempe Center for the Arts

On November 9th, the New Direction Veterans Choir, comprised of formerly unhoused veterans, will perform at TCA. Drawing from their personal experiences, the choir aims to inspire others and connect the most vulnerable members of the veteran

community with local services. TCA Coordinator Kelly Taylor and the commissioners discussed several potential collaboration opportunities, including hosting a table at the event and maintaining a presence both before and after the performance.

Agenda Item 7 – Finalizing/Distributing a Commission Contact list (5 min)

Commissioners, after speaking with Deputy Director Harris, opted to table this conversation for a later date. The commissioner asked her to please provide City guidance on the issues at hand.

Agenda Item 8 – Veterans Day obligations with City (5 min)

Details about the City's parade have not yet been shared, but Deputy Director Harris will provide that information soon. Additionally, due to the day's significance within the veterans community, some commissioners will be unable to attend due to prior commitments, while others will be present but in different capacities.

Agenda Item 9 – Book Packages donation conversation (10 min)

ReadOn Tempe, a grant-funded program, distributed books to families and organizations across the city. Before the program concluded, its coordinator generously donated dozens of books to the veterans commission for them to use as they see fit. The commissioners discussed several ideas, with Commissioner Kraft suggesting they deliver the books to local Little Libraries around Tempe. A few other commissioners expressed interest in creating book packages for specific events and mentioned coordinating with city staff in the future.

Agenda Item 10 – Possible 2024 Holiday Season charity/community service involvement ideas (5 min)

To enhance the commission's understanding, Chairperson Thomas requested that members discuss potential opportunities for involvement during the holiday season and share any pre-planned activities.

Commissioner Gonzalez contributed by highlighting his organization's upcoming initiatives. Before Thanksgiving, they will distribute turkeys to families of veterans. On Thanksgiving Day, they plan to prepare meals for anyone in need, collaborating with Valor, the Elks Lodge, and several other organizations to ensure the event's success.

Additionally, Commissioner Gonzalez mentioned that his organization will assist five families in need with their holiday shopping. This number could increase if additional companies or groups in the valley choose to collaborate

Agenda Item 11 – Future Agenda Items (5 min)

Chairperson Thomas will reach out to the commissioners for potential items

Agenda Item 12 – Adjournment

MOTION: Commissioner Garcia to MOTION Adjourn the meeting

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commission Gorman

AYES: Motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting will be on November 13, 2024.

Minutes Prepared by: Jorge Benavente

Reviewed by: Octavia Harris

Beno Thomas, Chair
Tempe Veteran Commission