

# Texas Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes

Second Quarterly Meeting (FY 2012)  
January 30, 2012

## I. Call to Order

Chairman O'Mahoney called to order the Second Quarterly Meeting of the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) at 1:33 p.m. on January 30, 2012, in Room 170 of the Stephen F. Austin Building at 1700 N. Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701.

The following Commissioners, constituting a quorum, were present:

T.P. O'Mahoney, Chairman  
James H. Scott, Secretary  
Richard A. McLeon, Member

Excused: Eliseo "Al" Cantu, Vice Chairman, and Daniel P. Moran, Member

Also present was Thomas P. Palladino, Executive Director.

Also present: See the attached list.

Chairman O'Mahoney noted the absences of Vice Chairman Cantu and Commissioner Moran, and called for the following motion:

MOTION: Excuse Vice Chairman Cantu and Commissioner Moran from today's meeting.

MADE BY: Chairman O'Mahoney

SECONDED BY: Secretary Scott

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

Secretary Scott led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. Commissioner McLeon gave the opening prayer.

Chairman O'Mahoney welcomed visitors to the meeting.

## II. Public Comment

Morgan Little, Texas Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) representative, provided a summary of Ombudsman cases for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011. Mr. Little announced the new Executive Director, John Steele, effective

September 6, 2011. ESGR is investigating how Guard & Reserve severance impacts Social Security benefits as well as the impact for veterans, and the Active component.

**III. Approval of Minutes from November 16, 2011 Commission Meeting**

The minutes were previously distributed to the Commissioners.

MOTION: Approve the minutes of the First Quarterly Meeting held on November 16, 2011, as presented.

MADE BY: Commissioner McLeon

SECONDED BY: Secretary Scott

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

**IV. Report, Presentation and/or Action by Representatives of the Advisory Committees**

Veterans Communications Advisory Committee - John Miterko, Chair

John Miterko reported on the status of efforts to promote TVC as the main point of contact for new veterans to obtain benefits. He noted changes to the committee membership to be taken up in agenda item five, and acknowledged the contributions of Nathan Self who recently resigned from the committee. Mr. Miterko reported on the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Summit, and will provide a report to the Commission at a later date with feedback from attendees on suggestions for future Summit planning. He concluded the report with an update on continued efforts to publicize the Fund for Veterans' Assistance lottery scratch-off tickets.

Veterans Employment and Training Advisory Committee – Marianne Rogers, Chair

Marianne Rogers noted the transition of the chair position to Richard Hatfield. The next committee meeting is scheduled for February 15, 2012, and no meeting has been held since the last regular Commission meeting. Ms. Rogers then deferred to Mr. Hatfield to continue the report. Mr. Hatfield thanked Ms. Rogers and acknowledged her contributions as the past chair of the committee. He then reported on the status of committee's efforts to pursue college credits for skills earned in the military.

Fund for Veterans' Assistance Advisory Committee

No report provided.

**V. Report, Presentation and/or Action regarding Advisory Committee Member Appointments**

The Commission considered proposed advisory committee appointments: Jennifer Cernoch was recommended to be transferred from the Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA) Advisory Committee to serve on the Veterans Communication Advisory Committee to replace Nathan Self who has resigned; and Colonel Bill Meehan was

recommended to serve on the FVA Advisory Committee to replace Jennifer Cernoch. The proposed term for these members is for one year, effective January 1, 2012.

MOTION: Approve the advisory committee member appointments, as presented.

MADE BY: Secretary Scott

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McLeon

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

**VI. Report, Presentation and/or Action regarding Executive Director Report**

Thomas Palladino, Executive Director, provided an overview of the responsibilities of the Texas Lottery Commission to promote and make available lottery tickets in cooperation with TVC regarding the Fund for Veterans' Assistance lottery scratch-off tickets. Secretary Scott expressed concerns about the availability of the TVC lottery scratch-off tickets in various locations in the San Antonio and Dallas areas. Mr. Palladino offered to mention this at the next meeting with the Texas Lottery Commission.

Mr. Palladino continued with a review of activities and events he has attended since the last meeting, and gave an overview of future meetings and events. Mr. Palladino reported on the Second Quarterly meeting of the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services and workgroups, and the status of the legislatively-mandated report to be given to the Texas Legislature on October 1, 2012. Mr. Palladino noted the Veterans Summit taking place on January 31 through February 1, 2012 in Austin, Texas, which has over 600 registered attendees and 80 exhibitors. He gave an overview of accolades and general information items of the agency, and the Current Texas and U.S. Casualty Report that was previously provided to Commissioners. He then called on Jeff Williford, TVC Legislative Liaison, to make a presentation to the Commission.

Mr. Williford presented the ESGR Patriotic Employer Award to the Texas Veterans Commission, and an American Flag that was flown over the United States Capitol in Washington D.C. on March 2, 2011, by the office of Senator John Cornyn, and then flown over the Base Defense Operations Center at Camp Leatherneck in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, during combat operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom on September 11, 2011, in honor of the Texas Veterans Commission. Mr. Williford thanked the Commission for all their support while he served in Afghanistan. Chairman O'Mahoney, on behalf of the Commission, thanked Mr. Williford for his service.

**VII. Report, Presentation and/or Action regarding Agency Programs and Divisions, including Action Plans**

The Commissioners reviewed the Quarterly Program Reports that were previously provided. Program Directors were provided the opportunity to brief the Commission on any new items or highlight significant items.

Shawn Deabay, Director of Veterans Employment Services, introduced the Regional Veteran Employment Representatives who were in attendance. He reported on the status of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Effective January 2013, TAP classes will be contracted out, and the funding provided to the agency for 5 Full Time Employees (FTE) will no longer be available. Discussion was held and the following motion was made:

MOTION: Submit a letter to the Texas Congressional delegation highlighting the agency's concerns regarding the loss of 5 FTE positions.

MADE BY: Secretary Scott

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McLeon

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

Connie Jacksits, Director of Veterans Education, updated two items on the Quarterly Program Report that was previously provided. First, the contract with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been signed and is now effective. Second, there are 2 Veterans Education employees who now have been granted full-security clearance to access the VA computer systems necessary to conduct the required compliance surveys. One more employee is scheduled to be granted access in the near future.

Angela Shinn, Women Veterans Coordinator, reported on the status of various projects and activities since starting with the agency on November 1, 2011. She has established the program goals: To coordinate support for women veterans in Texas with government and non-government entities; advocate services for women veterans in Texas; raise awareness of benefits and services for women veterans; and increase the support for women veterans throughout Texas and the United States. Ms. Shinn also stated she will be hosting the Women's Veterans session, and the Veterans Business session at the TVC 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit, and she is scheduled to attend the National Association of Women Veteran Coordinators conference in May 2012.

Bill Wilson, Director of Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA), highlighted the new annual report of the FVA that provides a summary of accomplishments for the year. Mr. Wilson announced the new lottery ticket, and the current grant solicitation period open until February 7, 2012. He reported on the status of monitoring visits and the reorganization of FVA staff to create Grant Officers that will allow grantees to be assigned one point of contact. Mr. Wilson gave an overview of amendments approved since the last Commission meeting, and reported on grantees; Hill Country Community MHMR, Luke's Wings, and City of Cuero are terminating their grants and returning all

unused funds. The returned funds will be made available to be awarded in the next grant cycle.

Chairman O'Mahoney moved to agenda item twelve, report, presentation and/or action regarding approval of funding for Fund for Veterans' Assistance grantee, American Red Cross of Central Texas. Mr. Wilson presented the recommendation to adjust the amount of funding awarded to American Red Cross of Central Texas from the previously approved amount of \$96,350 to \$87,350 due to changes in the scope of the grant.

MOTION: Approve the revised grant award of \$87,350 for American Red Cross of Central Texas, as presented.

MADE BY: Commissioner McLeon

SECONDED BY: Secretary Scott

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

Jim Richman, Director of Claims Representation and Counseling, introduced Regional Directors, Pat Patterson, and Robert Manchester who were in attendance. He announced the resignation of Victor Polanco, TVC Office Supervisor at the Austin VA Outpatient Clinic, and introduced his replacement, Pam Maercklein. Mr. Richman reported the status of performance measures for the first quarter, and provided an overview of the new VA claims development process that will be contracted out to a division of Xerox. The process will be done similarly to the Claims Processing Assistance Team (CPAT) that was discontinued in July 2011. Mr. Richman reported he is researching the implementation of an automated call system to assist with the increased amount of calls his program is receiving. Chairman O'Mahoney recommended looking at all other options before converting to an automated phone system due to the highly personal nature of claims counseling. Mr. Richman concluded his report with the number of pending claims in Houston and Waco (52,725 and 64,548, respectively).

#### **VIII. Discussion and/or Action to Adopt Amendments to 40 TAC §452.2, Advisory Committees**

Jim Richman presented the staff recommendation to approve the proposed amendments to 40 TAC §452.2, Advisory Committees, to be published in the *Texas Register*. The proposed amendments will create a new advisory committee for Veteran County Service Officers (VCSOs). This will allow the agency to formally interact and coordinate with the VCSOs across the state and build a stronger network between the agency and VCSOs to benefit Texas veterans.

MOTION: Approve the proposed amendments to 40 TAC §452.2 for publication in the *Texas Register*, as presented.

MADE BY: Secretary Scott

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McLeon

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

**IX. Report, Presentation and/or Action regarding TVC Spring Training Conference and Spring Training Conference Curriculum**

Mr. Richman presented the TVC Spring Training Conference Curriculum and examinations for approval, including, Initial Training Test, Certification Training Test, Accreditation Training Test, and Computer Training Test.

MOTION: Approve the Spring Training Conference examinations and curriculum, as presented.

MADE BY: Commissioner McLeon

SECONDED BY: Secretary Scott

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

**X. Report, Presentation and/or Action on Final Appropriation Year 2011 4th Quarter Operating Statement**

Irma Rodriguez, Chief Financial Officer, presented the final 4th Quarter Operating Statement for Appropriation Year 2011, previously provided to Commissioners.

**XI. Report, Presentation and/or Action on Appropriation Year 2012 1st Quarter Operating Statement**

Irma Rodriguez presented the 1st Quarter Operating Statement for Appropriation Year 2012, previously provided to Commissioners.

**XII. Report, Presentation and/or Action regarding Approval of Funding for Fund for Veterans' Assistance Grantee**

This item was taken up with agenda item seven.

**XIII. Discussion of Date, Time and Location of Next Commission Meeting**

The Third Quarterly Commission Meeting was tentatively scheduled for May 4, 2012; the Fourth Quarterly Commission Meeting was scheduled for August 8, 2012; and the First Quarterly (FY 2013) Commission Meeting was scheduled for November 7, 2012.

**XIV. Executive Session**

Chairman O'Mahoney adjourned into Executive Session at 2:50 p.m.

Chairman O'Mahoney reconvened in Open Meeting at 3:06 p.m.

**XV. Discuss and take Possible Action on the Items considered in Executive Session**

Chairman O'Mahoney reported there was no action taken in Executive Session.

**XVI. Commissioners' Closing Comments**

The Commissioners extended their gratitude to staff for all their support and hard work.

**XVII. Adjournment**

Chairman O'Mahoney adjourned the meeting at 3:07 p.m.

Minutes Approved by:

  
T.P. O'Mahoney, Chairman



## TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarterly Commission Meeting

FY 2012 -- January 30, 2012

1:30 p.m. SFA Bldg. -- Room 170

### Speakers & Visitors

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**Chelsea Buchholtz**  
Governor's Advisor  
Office of the Governor

**Carmen Cernosek**  
Office of the Lt. Governor

**Lena Conklin**  
Legislative Budget Board

**Richard Hatfield**  
Chair, Veterans Employment & Training Advisory Committee

**Lisa Idais**  
Office of the Governor

**Morgan Little**  
Chair, Texas Coalition of Veteran Organizations  
Representative, ESGR

**Colonel Bill Meehan**  
Texas Military Forces  
Camp Mabry, Texas

**John Miterko**  
Chair, Veterans Communication Advisory Committee  
Legislative Liaison, Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations

**Ida Musgrove**  
Office of Senator Van de Putte

**Amy Parker**  
Texas Workforce Investment Council  
Office of the Governor

**Marianne Rogers**  
Past Chair, Veterans Employment & Training Advisory Committee

**Ken Wallingford**  
Veterans Liaison  
Texas Veterans Land Board