**LAURA KOERNER**

US Navy Veteran Chairwoman

**KEVIN BARBER**

US Army Veteran Vice Chair

**KIMBERLEE SHANEYFELT**

Colonel, US Air Force (Retired) Secretary

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

**MIKE P. HERNANDEZ**

Corporal, US Marine Corps (Retired) Member

**MARY LOPEZ DALE**

US Army Veteran Member

**THOMAS P. PALLADINO**

Colonel, US Army (Retired) Executive Director

**Veteran Services Advisory Committee**

**Minutes**

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

2:05 p.m.

Stephen F. Austin Building – HQ Conference Room

1700 North Congress Ave, Suite 800, Austin, Texas 78701

1. **Call to order.**
	* Earl Newsome, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00AM.
2. **Roll call of Committee members.**
	* + Sara Henly - GoToWebinar
		+ Jim Cunningham – GoToWebinar
		+ Jim Brennan – GoToWebinar
		+ Kitty Meyers – GoToWebinar
		+ Shelly Mencacci – GoToWebinar
		+ Earl Newsome – In Person
		+ Greg Gomel – Not in attendance
		+ Lee Rivas - Not in attendance
		+ Larry Wallace – Not in attendance during roll call, but joined the meeting at 2:07pm.
3. **Public comment.**
	* There were no comments from the public.
4. **Approve the minutes of the VSAC meeting held February 9, 2022.**
	* + **Motion:** Jim Cunningham moved to approve the minutes and Shelly Mencacci seconded the motion.
5. **Review TVC’s response to the Justice Involved Veterans recommendations.**
	* Blake Harris, Director of the Veterans Mental Health Department (VMHD), reviewed the Texas Veterans Commission’s response to the Committee’s recommendations for Justice Involved Veterans (JIV).
	* **Recommendation #3 Comments:**

-Kitty Meyers & Jim Brennan both agreed that other organizations should help with drafting or pushing legislation for veteran intake processes.

-James Crabtree, Government Relations Director, mentioned TVC cannot express interest for or against any legislation. The TCCVS is a group of state agencies to come up with recommendations for legislators to work on themselves and is not representative of TVC.

-Jim Brennan explained the difference between recommendations and proposed legislation.

* + Recommendation #4 Comments: Blake Harris answered Earl Newsome’s question that there will be similar performance data tracked for the Committee’s Suicide Prevention and Homelessness recommendations.
1. **Discuss and provide recommendations to enhance Communications and Outreach of TVC services to veterans, their families, and surviving spouses. Claims, Education, and Employment Services.**
	* Earl Newsome showed the Committee 1) the Texas Veterans Portal website displaying resources for Dependents and Caregivers 2) VA’s Survivors and Burial Benefit Handout. “How can we get information out to families to utilize their veterans benefits?”
	* Elaine Zavala, Communications Director, mentioned that survivor’s benefits such as DIC, death, pension, and burial information is directly related to our Claims Department. TVC communications creates a state and burial benefit booklets for the department to use for outreach purposes, as well as a paid social media campaign that runs for 3 weeks. The Communications department is mandated to include information about VCSO assistance and claims in the electronic monthly newsletter. Lastly, Julia Conner creates radio programming on survivor’s benefits.
	* Elaine answered Earl’s question about targeting survivors. The Veterans Land Board’s invites claims staff to outreach at nursing homes and the VLB outreaches directly to funeral home directors.
	* Sara Henly asked if Claims has specific conversations like the Women Veterans Program does during their “virtual hours”.
	* Elaine stated the agency is beginning to conduct 1-hour Q&A session for the public to come in and ask questions. There is a dedicated claims person participating. Military Spouse Appreciation Day is one of the main campaigns to target to spouses and dependents.
	* Larry asked what other methods TVC is doing to get the word out for those that are not connected to our social media or know about our website.
	* Elaine then stated TVC is only reaching people outside our communities through free news coverage. For example, Buddy Check Day was of interest to many news stations that are offering private companies to pay for Buddy Check messaging that TVC does not have to pay for. Currently, Jim Halbrook has tracked $1 million in free press. TikTok videos are another way those who may not be connected to TVC can hear about the agency through the hashtag #fyp.
	* Shelly Mencacci brainstormed to reach out to caregivers that are not the veteran or spouse by reaching out to hospice/hospitals, education offices, and mortuaries to receive survivor benefit information. Kitty added VSOs to Shelly’s list.
2. **Discussion on agenda items, date/time, and location for the next Veteran Services Advisory Committee or Appropriate Subcommittee meeting.**
	* 1) Claims Subcommittee includesEarl,Jim Brennan, Shelly, Lee to meet June 8th at 2:00pm. 2) Education Subcommittee**:** Earl,Sara, Larry, Shelly, Jim Cunningham. 3) Employment Services Subcommittee:Earl,Kitty, Larry, Shelly, Greg.
	* The next full advisory committee meeting is to be held Wednesday, June 22 at 10:00am.
3. **Adjournment.**
	* + **Motion:** Kitty Meyers moved to adjourn the meeting and Jim Cunningham seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 3:49pm.

 Earl S. Newsome III

 Aug 10, 2022

**Minutes Approved by and Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Earl S. Newsome III, Chairman