

SUMMARY MINUTES

**Veterans Advisory Board Meeting
December 21, 2023 – 5:30 P.M.
City Hall – Everglades Room**

A. CALL TO ORDER BY: Thaddeus Hamilton, Chair, at 5:30 P.M.

B. ROLL CALL

Thaddeus Hamilton, Chair
Brenda Covin Senior – **Absent Excused**
Stanley Bostic
Mark Shultz
Kenton Isackson
Robert Latimer
Eshia McLymont
Norman Rothfeld
Lance Dickman
Loretta Young

Emilie Smith – Deputy City Manager
Stephanie Joseph – Administrative Assistant I
Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

D. OPEN PUBLIC DISCUSSION

E. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 16, 2023 MINUTES

Vice-Chair Leibowitz asked for a motion to approve the November 16, 2023 minutes, a motion was made by Member Latimer and was seconded by Member Dickman, and the Board approved unanimously.

F. OLD BUSINESS

a. Review Police Department Thank You Letter

The Board reviewed and approved the Police Department Thank You letter. The final copy will be brought back to the January meeting for Board member signatures.

G. NEW BUSINESS

a. Guest Speaker – Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick

Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick introduced herself to the Board and explained that one of her favorite committees is Veteran Affairs. Congresswoman McCormick is one of the ranking members for Technology Modernization, which has oversight and investigative jurisdiction over the Department of Veterans Affairs' major IT projects and technology modernization programs. Congresswoman McCormick expressed the importance of making sure that Veterans live the best life with dignity.

Member Shultz asked if the Veterans Affairs (VA) can offer their parking lot to homeless Veterans temporarily. Congresswoman McCormick explained that she could reach out to the Veterans Affairs VA regarding the parking lot for homeless Veterans and offer something more extensive and flexible. But the main goal is to house and place Veterans in a safe environment.

Member Isackson suggested creating a shelter for Homeless Veterans. Congresswoman McCormick explained that Veteran's housing was funded in Palm Beach County but there is a gap between temporary housing to permanent housing for Veterans. Congresswoman McCormick suggested providing more funds to the Salvation Army to accommodate temporary housing for Veterans until a program is created. Member Isackson expressed his concern with using a 3rd party company such as the Salvation Army, the process to house the Veterans may take a lot longer versus the program being funded directly by Veterans Affairs.

Member Rothfeld asked if a pilot program could be created to provide homeless Veterans with a monthly payment. Congresswoman McCormick explained that she could look into something similar for the Veterans. Member Rothfeld asked if it's likely for that kind of program to get enacted. Congresswoman McCormick explained that it would be very difficult to pass a program due to the current state of the Congress. Member Rothfeld asked if there were funds available that do not require a bill to be enacted, that could be allocated to fund the program. Congresswoman McCormick will have to look into discretionary funds that are not being used to fund the pilot program.

Chair Hamilton asked what the Board can do to push Congress to work together. Congresswoman McCormick suggested reaching out to consider negotiations.

Congresswoman McCormick explained that the Cerner operating system that the Veterans Affairs uses, has not been working very well lately. This system is very crucial for Veterans to receive information related to medical records, benefits, and much more. Congresswoman McCormick is currently working toward making the system smoother to work for everyone's needs.

Member Isackson explained that there should be salary increases for nurses and doctors at the Veterans Affairs. Member McLymont explained that nurses and doctors have received incentive bonuses because of the amount of medical staff who resigned during COVID-19. Retention bonuses are also being given to keep staff. Congresswoman McCormick shared that the Pact Act was created and passed to help expand VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. Full implementation of the Pact Act has been stalled due to funds being reduced from the Pact Act.

Congresswoman McCormick encouraged the Board to attend a hearing in Washington D.C. Members of Congress will also be coming to South Florida for Field Hearing in March 2024, to allow the public the opportunity to speak.

H. BOARD MEMBER'S DISCUSSION

The Board discussed the Veterans Day Ceremony which went very well.

Chair Hamilton encouraged the Board to view the Broward County Vietnam Wall.

I. NEXT BOARD MEETING: THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2024

Location: Everglades Meeting Room (City Hall)

Address: 10770 West Oakland Park Boulevard

J. ADJOURNMENT AT 6:25 P.M.

Member Isackson made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Member Dickman seconded the motion. The Board approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.

Transcribed by: Stephanie Joseph, Board Secretary/ *Stephanie Joseph*

If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the board, agency, or commission concerning any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, he/she will need a record of the proceedings, and, for such purpose, he may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. F.S.S. 286.0105.