

County of Santa Clara
National Guard & Veterans Affairs Commission

Thursday, January 17, 2008
Minutes

Regular Meeting

1. Call to order/Roll call

The regular meeting of the National Guard and Veterans Affairs Commission is called to order by Chairperson Rollis at 3:00 p.m. in the Isaac Newton Senter Auditorium, County Government Center, 70 West Hedding Street, San Jose, California. A quorum is present.

Members Present

Paul Gedling

Bryan Holmberg

Tony Rollis

Ronald Sambrano

Members Absent

Francis Keffer, III

Marcel Pajuelo-Schwartz

1 vacancy

2. Public Presentations

There are no public presentations.

3. Approve minutes of November 15, 2007

Chairperson Rollis requests that Item 5.b be amended to reflect that "...the Rescuegram was not prepared..."

On motion of Commissioner Gedling, seconded by Commissioner Holmberg, it is ordered that the minutes of November 15, 2007 be approved, as amended.

4. Approve a request to be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors in the amount of \$150 (\$75 each) for the purchase of the Air Guardsman of the Year Award and the Army Guardsman of the Year Awards

Chairperson Rollis notes that the National Guard and Veterans Affairs (NGVA) Commission has awarded the Air Guardsman of the Year Award and the Army Guardsman of the Year Award annually for over 30 years to individuals who exemplify National Guard values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

On motion of Commissioner Holmberg, seconded by Commissioner Gedling, it is unanimously order that a request be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors to authorize payment for the purchase of two plaques of commendation to be presented by a member of the NGVA in June 2008 to the 2008 Air Guardsman of the Year and the 2008 Army Guardsman of the Year.

5. **Accept verbal reports**

a. Director, Office of Veterans' Affairs

Peter Garrison, Director, Office of Veterans' Affairs, announces that Ron Bean, Veterans Service Representative, who had extensive knowledge of benefits, passed away in December 2007. He reports that there has been activity in many outreach programs for veterans, such as Homeless Connect, Naval Operations Family Days, and the Older Adults Care Commission. He notes that the latter provides strategies for income management to senior citizen veterans and information to their caregivers.

Mr. Garrison states that the Office has received a number of inquiries about solicitation from organizations offering to provide for a fee information about long-term care facilities. He emphasizes that the Office provides such information at no charge. He continues by noting that the San Jose Veterans' Clinic is open Tuesday and Thursday mornings, and the Gilroy Clinic is open one day per month.

Continuing, Mr. Garrison indicates that approximately 15 people visit the Office of Veterans' Affairs each day, with an increase in the number of veterans of the War in Iraq who request information relating to education benefits and disability claims. He notes that the Office provided service to 1,285 veterans in 2007, compared to 1,259 in 2006.

Mr. Garrison reports that he and Veronica Mendoza, Veterans Services Representative, completed emergency response training, and he is encouraging all Office of Veterans' Affairs staff members to take the training. In response to an

inquiry by Commissioner Sambrano, Mr. Garrison indicates that the training is preparation for such emergencies as earthquakes and pandemic flu.

Mr. Garrison reports that Richard Herrera, Veterans Representative II, visits Little Orchard, a reception center across from Oakhill Cemetery, to assist veterans with filing requests for records. The facility also provides employment assistance, a dormitory where the homeless can stay for 60 days, and help with drug and alcohol problems. Chairperson Rollis notes that Bill O'Reilly, FOX News, has drawn attention to the plight of homeless veterans. He also mentions that some organizations, such as Paralyzed Veterans of American, have received low scores for the percentage of contributions which actually go to charitable causes.

Mr. Garrison notes that the Veterans Administration Health Care System in Palo Alto has an outreach program for veterans in the Bay Area. He reports that he accompanied Dr. Ian Tong, Medical Director, Veteran Outreach Medical Service, and registered nurse practitioner Miki Kwan to the Homeless Connect outreach sponsored by the City of San Jose on December 5, 2008, and has gone to Sunnyvale Employment Development Department to talk to veterans about benefits. different locations like the Boccardo Reception Center, and the EDD Office in Sunnyvale to make contact with veterans' needing health care from VA. which provides blood pressure checks, and he discusses benefits and filing of informal disability claims to protect veterans whose eligibility may expire while waiting to receive the medical records needed to file a formal claim.

b. Representative of the 129th Rescue Wing, California Air National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel (Lt. Col.) Pete Sobrino reports that 35 members of the 129th Rescue Wing have been deployed to war zones, an additional four were sent to the Mexican border, and others went to New Zealand and elsewhere. He distributes copies of the December 2007 and January 2008 Rescuegram. He further notes that the Outstanding Airmen and First Sergeant of the Year Banquet was held on Saturday January 12, 2008 at the Doubletree Hotel in San Jose.

Lt. Col. Sobrino indicates that the 129th Rescue Wing needs more aircraft maintenance personnel. In response to an inquiry by Chairperson Rollis, Lt. Col. Sobrino explains that the engineering squadron was consolidated with the squadron in Fresno, leaving only the commander and a few staff members, and no runway repair personnel at the 129th. Commissioner Gedling commends the presentations made at the banquet, and Lt. Col. Sobrino credits Chief Master Sergeant Liliana Ramos for her efforts organizing plans for the banquet.

c. Commander/Representative of the Army National Guard

There is no report.

d. Chairperson

Chairperson Rollis announces that the California National Guard Senior Leadership Conference will be held in San Jose this year on a date to be determined, and that the host will be Major General Dennis Lucas. He indicates that he and Commissioners Holmberg and Pajuelo-Schwartz attended the Santa Clara County Commissioner Appreciation Reception on December 4, 2008. He notes that a Conflict of Interest workshop will be held at 10:00 a.m. on January 23, 2008 in Board Chambers, 70 West Hedding Street. He also announces that the annual Four Chaplains Interfaith Ceremony will be held on February 2, 2008 at St. Francis Cabrini Church, 15333 Woodard Avenue, San Jose to honor the four chaplains who gave their life vests and lives to save servicemen on the USS Dorchester, which sank after being hit by torpedoes on February 3, 1943.

Chairperson Rollis reports that he met with staff members from Supervisorial District 3 to discuss the Commission's inquiry about flying flags at half-staff in honor of military personnel killed in action. He notes that possible options include submitting a request to the Governor to authorize lowering of flags, and he notes that flags are lowered for deputies and fire fighters killed in the line of duty. Commissioner Sambrano states that he contacted Ernest Glave, President, United Veterans Council of Santa Clara County, to discuss who would notify the City and County when local residents are killed in action.

e. Commissioners

Commissioner Holmberg requests a notice on letterhead waiving parking fees at County parks for active or reserve military personnel in pay grades E-4 or lower and their families. Lt. Col. Sobrino indicates that he will send electronically a document with instructions for obtaining a one-year pass from the Parks Department Administration Office in Los Gatos. He notes that applicants must provide proof of residency in Santa Clara County.

In response to an inquiry by Commissioner Gedling, Chairperson Rollis explains that NGVA Commissioners are required to file a Conflict of Interest Form 700 annually and will receive instructions at a workshop to be held at the County Government Center on January 23, 2008 at 10:00 a.m.

6. Discuss Commission work plan for Fiscal Year July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009, to be submitted to the Clerk of the Board by April 1, 2008

On order of Chairperson Rollis, there being no objection, it is ordered that a workshop be held immediately following this meeting to discuss the work plan and that a draft work plan will be presented for consideration and approval at the next meeting on March 20, 2008.

7. Announcements

Chairperson Rollis directs attention to the announcements that Boards and Commissions agendas and minutes are now available on the County of Santa Clara website at <http://www.sccgov.org/portal/site/bnc> and that there is currently one (1) vacancy on the Commission.

8. Adjourn

On motion of Commissioner Sambrano, seconded by Commissioner Holmberg, it is unanimously ordered that the meeting be adjourned at 3:47 p.m. to a workshop and subsequently to the next regular meeting scheduled at 3:00 p.m. on March 20, 2008 in Room 157, County Government Center, 70 West Hedding Street, San Jose.

Respectfully submitted,

Marti Jurick
Deputy Clerk