

Minutes

Transition Military and Veterans Affairs Committee

Date: July 12, 2023

Location: City Hall, Lynwood Roberts Room

117 West Duval Street

Jacksonville, FL 32202

Chair: VADM Rick Snyder, USN (ret)

Attendees: Ramirez Poole, Dee Quaranta, VADM Rick Snyder, USN (ret), Harrison Conyers, Shane Edwards, Char Miller, Michelle McManamon, Dani Hernandez, Bob Adelhelm, Pat Mulvihill, Rich Possert Jr., Wendy Layton, Jeremy Brown, Travis Akers, Mildred Smith, George Carroll, Ron Hasty, Lynn Geiser, Derek Collins, Mike O'Brien, Wendy Layton, Keshan Chambliss Hargrove, Tony D'Aleo, Jodie Bielman, Dan Schnock, Paul McLemore, Robert Hernandez, Stanley Slowey, Benjamin Mathews, Deborah Fonzelle, Lisa Penn, Andrea Martinez, Shakera Rodgers, Rick Stanford, Terri Stanford, Jacalyn Crecelius, J. Maceo George, Leonard Harris, Tiffany Morales, Efe Kingsley, Joe Snowberger, Jessic Osiadacz, Eric Hernandez, Nick Howland, Amber Lehman.

1. Meeting Called to Order 4:02 PM VADM Rick Snyder
2. Minutes from prior meeting- Minutes moved by Rich Possert and seconded by Tony D'Aleo. Unanimously approved.
3. VADM Snyder provided a brief overview of the previous meeting and future topics.
4. Old business-None
5. New Business:
 - a. Mike O'Brien, Five Star Veterans Center provided an overview of services. Five Star Veterans Center provides transitional housing for Veterans, predominantly post-9/11. It has 40 rooms for all male clientele. Mental Health services are provided on-site. Since its founding, 450 Veterans have been served with 89% being reintegrated back into society. Mr. O'Brien mentioned the great collaborative support they receive from COJ MAVD and other Veteran Serving Organizations.
 - i. Gaps: affordable housing and long-term mental health services.
 - ii. Five Star Veterans Center is looking at acquiring long-term housing (capacity of 50) in the Regency area.
 - iii. VADM Snyder asked about current capacity. The center currently is housing 30 Veterans but averages 34 plus.
 - b. Derek Collins represented Firewatch. Firewatch is focused on Veterans suicide prevention. Training is provided for "Watch Standers" who act as mentors/support for Veterans considering suicide. Firewatch also partners with

agencies to provide Veteran safe spaces that have trained staff. 4500 Watch Standers have been trained (including all MAVD VSO's). 75 Veterans safe spaces have been created. Firewatch is now the official Veterans suicide prevention program for the State of Florida

- i. VADM Snyder asked about funding sources. Mr. Collins stated that all five NE Florida counties provide funding and grant funding is also utilized. The State of Florida provides funding to expand the program state-wide.
- c. Lynn Geiser, Help4Veterans. Help4Veterans provides support for women Veterans including financial support, household goods and items necessary to establish a home. Stephen A. Cohen Center provides space for Help4Veterans programs and events. Help4 Veterans currently serves 4 NE counties.
 - i. VADM Snyder asked how clients connect to them. Referrals from the Veterans Council of Duval County, Mission United and other agencies.
 - ii. Travis Akers-asked if there was a tool utilized by agencies to inform others as to services available. Derek Collins discussed the Resource Guide that was created by the Jacksonville Military Veterans Coalition and Firewatch. This on-line resource guide is available to all agencies.
 - iii. Dee Quaranta discussed the Community Veterans Engagement Board as a resource for collaboration and also the Veterans Council of Duval County.
 - iv. Tony D'Aleo stated that a Veterans Community Center would lead to better collaboration.
 - v. Lynn Geiser asked if there was an opportunity for agencies to convene to discuss services and case management. Rich Possert stated that was one of the intended roles of the Veterans Council of Duval County.
- d. Dan Schnock, Wounded Warrior Project discussed the collaborative relationship that WWP has with COJ MAVD. The focus areas of WWP are economic empowerment for warriors (making them transition ready), mental health services (including the Warrior Care Network), physical health and wellness, Connections Program (social connections for warriors) and the Advocacy Team (federal/congressional advocacy).
 - i. WWP, which is headquartered in Jacksonville, served 2400 warriors in Duval County last year.
 - ii. Ask: enhanced transition services for active duty servicemembers and additional services for women warriors/Veterans including homelessness prevention.
- e. Ron Hasty, UF Brain Wellness Program, Haley Brain Wellness Program is an interdisciplinary treatment program for military veterans and first responders experiencing persistent health issues associated with mild to moderate traumatic brain injuries, along with associated behavioral health issues, such as post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and substance use disorder.

- i. VADM Snyder asked what the current program treatment length and capacity is. Mr. Hasty stated that the program has a three-week treatment program and that the program is growing and bringing on additional staff.
- f. Joe Snowberger, Mission United, highlighted that NE Florida has multiple resources for service to Veterans and military families and Mission United acts to connect them to clients. Mission United provides services in a nine-county area through the 211 Call Center and 988 Suicide Prevention Hotline. In the last four years they have received 24,000 calls
 - i. Ask: Focus on the mission to convene VSO to create a collaborative environment.
 - 1. Have COJ MAVD to act as a leader in convening Veteran Service Organizations to address gaps. Include state and federal resources.
 - 2. Items for discussion includes short-term housing, male Veterans with children, the gap time between homelessness and when HUD VASH and SSVF are able to assist with housing support.
 - 3. Additionally, Mr. Snowberger asked that resources for military spouse support, especially employment assistance needs to be focused on.
- g. Jodie Bielman, Cohen Military Family Clinic, the clinic provides mental health services for Veterans and military families. The focus is on therapy services (not long-term). The Cohen Clinic provides meeting spaces for community groups that serve Veterans and military families. Over 700 clients were served in the past year. Twenty-four percent of clients were active-duty or military families.
- h. Pat Mulvihill, Rotary of North Jacksonville. the Rotary Club and Charities of North Jacksonville has become the “tip-of-the-arrow” in leading the way in participating in a multitude of high-impact military and veterans’ community services initiatives which include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Design & Build of The Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Wall and Eternal Flame adjacent to the Entrance to TIAA Bank Field.
 - ii. Structural Engineering-Permitting-Erection of the AMVETS Carillon-40 Ft. Bell Tower at the JAX National Cemetery (“JNC”);
 - iii. Performance of Leadership Roles for the Logistics and Safety Services and Flyovers for High-Attendance Events (MEMORIAL DAY / WREATHS-ACROSS-AMERICA / VIETNAM WAR VETS MEMORIAL DAY) at the JNC.
 - iv. Interface with the North Florida Congressional Delegation to provide Federal Funding for the GOLD STAR FAMILY Parkway.
 - v. Advisory and Original Construction Management for the National POW-MIA Memorial & Museum at Cecil Air and Space Port.

- vi. Leadership for the Funding-Design-Build-Operations Teams for the Community Health Outreach Oral Health-Nutrition Programs.
 - vii. Opening-Staffing of The Military Lounge for Military Inbound & Outbound Travelers at Jacksonville International Airport.
 - viii. Performance of a Multitude of Critical Humanitarian-Aid Programs for Over 225 Ukraine Warzone Evacuee Families Who Have Fled to Jacksonville, Mainly Women and Children (75), and Who Have Left Their Warfighter Spouses in the Ukraine to Fight the Russian Army; and as
 - ix. Part of the Community Outreach Advisory Team at Naval Station Mayport TRIDENT Ministry Focusing on Nutrition and Housing.
- i. Michelle McManaman, Operation New Uniform. ONU helps those transitioning from active duty to civilian employment. ONU also serves military spouses for free. They are currently expanding to Tampa. They host several cohorts each year with 15 clients in each one. Graduates have a 97% success rate in landing careers.
 - i. Ask-encourage collaborative meetings between Veterans Service Organizations.
 - j. Stanley Slowey and Denise Mathis, DAV. DAV provides claims assistance at no cost to Veterans. DAV also provides transportation support for medical appointments in Lake City and Gainesville.
 - k. Andrea Martinez, TRIO, based at FSCJ, TRIO provides educational assistance and transition support to those recent Veterans entering post-secondary education.
 - l. Veterans Treatment Court assists Veterans having some charges to be dismissed if the mandated treatment plan is completed.
 - m. Aaron Hernandez, First Coast YMCA, serving Veterans and active-duty families with fitness programming. Works in schools to assist children of transferring military acclimated to their new community.
 - n. Jacalyn Crecelius, Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, provides legal services for non-criminal cases such as divorce, custody issues, evictions, and military records upgrades. JALA has a VA grant to provide additional assistance for women Veterans.
 - i. Ask: continue collaborative efforts with Veteran Serving Organizations
6. Commission member question: Travis Akers asked who provides substance abuse services. Five Star Veterans Center provides Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. The VET Center (VA) also provides group counseling.

Bob Adelhelm suggested review of the Environmental Impact Study regarding the F-35's impact on the community.

George Carroll-see attachment

7. Public Comment- Lisa Penn stated the transitioning military are underserved by the Military Transition Classes (TAPS). Better support is needed for service members transitioning into the community so that can connect with community services.
8. Closing comments: VADM Snyder stated the next meeting being held July 19, 2023, at 4PM will focus on a proposed Veterans Community/Wellness Center.
9. Move to adjourn at 5:55 PM moved by Bob Adelhelm, seconded by Travis Akers.

Public Comment (via email):

VA HOSPITAL IN JAX

Mayor Deegan previously announced proactive intent on securing Federal Grants. Who in the new administration will sincerely explore the multiple millions of dollars the VA has to build hospitals and what economic stimulation it would bring to Jacksonville notwithstanding the significant benefit to veterans having to travel to Lake City and Gainesville. (Lawson/Rubio). Where NAS JAX pursues solar panels, will veterans have a voice in advocating a separate and secure new VA Hospital off Roosevelt likened to many VA/Military co-located hospitals? Time is wasting. Many on the committee are already aware of this issue can we learn their insight as to what they have learned.

SALE OF VETERANS ARENA NAME

Several Committee Members are recipients of VyStar benefits and may or may not be appeased. Previous public constituent comment I made to the Mayor's veteran transition committee called for a forensic audit of the Naming CONTRACT and NAMING ordinance. By example, perception is concession donations SHOULD be in the Hundreds of Thousands and only \$36,000 has been reported. Requests of MVAD and some members before appointment to this committee, questioned facilitation and audit of "kiosk" beverage purchases within the arena. Answers so far have been non responsive.

REALTOR DISCLOSURE

Will the Mayor be proactive in mapping current noise levels where the F-35 might impact residents, schools, flight path critical structures by insuring realtors disclose perceived adverse impact for new customers and firmly state that she supports Active Missions and Training as a necessity and that Sound is one of Freedom.

USCG MAYPORT ENCROACHMENT

The Coast Guard like NS Mayport expressed concern to the committee regarding development encroachment potentially hampering the integrity of their mission. Will the Mayor explore if areas of concern can be purchased under eminent domain as I mentioned at the last meeting?

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF MEETING MINUTES

Are there any city directives governing timely publication of meeting minutes and recordings on platforms accommodating constituents. Will the committee insure access?

Respectfully,

George Carroll
JAX FL 32256