

Minutes

Transition Military and Veterans Affairs Committee

Date: August 9, 2023

Location: City Hall, Exam Room 3 Mezzanine

117 West Duval Street

Jacksonville, FL 32202

Chair: VADM Rick Snyder

Attendees: Dee Quaranta, Joe Tavares, Harrison Conyers, Austin Belet, Joe Inderhees, Peter Harding, Dr. Keshan Hargrove, Wendy Layton, Noah Moran, Demetris Harrison, VADM Rick Snyder, Bob Adelhelm, Anthony Fonzelle, Deborah Fonzelle, Errol White, Mark McManus, George Carroll, Harley Reaves, Karen Ivey, Charles Parker, Hallie Williams-Bey, Rich Possert, Brian Snow, Eric Hernandez, Travis Akers, Harry Wilson, Mildred Smith, John Longfield-Smith.

1. Meeting Called to Order 4:05 PM VADM Rick Snyder
2. Minutes from prior meeting 7/26/23 as amended by Rich Possert seconded by Travis Akers, and 8/2/23 moved by Travis Akers and seconded by Joe Tavares. Approved
3. VADM Snyder provided a brief overview and introduced John Longfield-Smith, as a new committee member.
 - a. Joe Inderhees, Deputy Chief of Staff thanked the committee for their service during this transition.
4. Old business-
5. New Business:
 - a. Review of Transition Committee Recommendations:
 - i. Bob Adelhelm requested that committee members be listed along with the Veterans Service Organizations that they represent.
 1. Reece Wilson, OGC, stated that this request was statutorily acceptable.
 - b. Bob Adelhelm asked how the City of Jacksonville could impact goal #1. (Affordable healthcare (mental, dental, suicide prevention)).
 - i. VADM Snyder confirmed that healthcare is being addressed by another transition committee and that our responsibility is awareness of the issue.
 - ii. Bob Adelhelm stated that awareness of services available through the Jacksonville National Cemetery and Veterans benefits that are related to burial should be included.
 1. Travis Akers felt that this addition should be included in #4 (benefits awareness).

- iii. VADM Snyder recommended adding to one of the focus items of the report to “preserve and highlight” the Wall and create an advisory committee to assist MAVD. Rich Possert moved and Errol White seconded. Approved
- e. Pete Dowling (submitted electronically) My suggestion to the Committee for today’s meeting is simple as follows: When it comes to designing a new Vet Center or Homeless Veterans’ Community in Jacksonville, Don’t Try to ‘Re-invent the Wheel’.

While it has been a good and useful exercise for this Committee to discuss the core objectives, ideas, and parameters around the development of a Vet Center or Homeless Veterans Community in Jacksonville, many successful projects of each type already exist throughout the USA. They not only exist, but they also display in their websites how they got there and how they were funded.

Some are completely Government (Fed or State VA) driven and some involve a partnership with private developers.

Veteran’s Center

I noticed in the most recent Committee recommendations that more than ONE Vet Center is being considered. This makes sense considering the geographical size of Jacksonville as well as the large Veteran population. If the Vet Center Project does evolve into multiple centers, I highly recommend the vacated Mayport USO property on Mayport Rd not far from the Main Gate at NS Mayport for a Veterans Center EAST while another location could be found for a Veterans Center WEST.

Having worked on this building many years ago, I am familiar with the facility. Aside from some clean-up and updating (i.e., painting, flooring, landscaping, etc.), the Vet Center Project would save a great deal of money to re-purpose this facility vs building a new one.

In addition, and a key factor in selecting a site for any new project, there is good access into the property, plenty of parking and ample room to expand if needed now or in the future.

Homeless Veterans Community

From the massive Master-Planned Vet Community such as the WEST LA VA NORTH CAMPUS COMMUNITY PLAN to the smaller March Veterans Village (200 Living Units) in San Bernardino County CA along with others throughout the country, there is much to learn from.

The most successful design theme seems to be a Town Center Concept whereby disabled vets can access stores and other support & medical services within a short distance via walking or wheelchair.

With Great Respect and Appreciation to the members of this Committee for your past, current and future work for Veterans.

Dear VADM Snyder and COJ MVA Transition Cmte:

PLEASE READ MY BLUE CARD COMMENTS INTO THE RECORD AND SHARE A COPY WITH EXISTING COMMITTEE MEMBERSAs a constituent, military retiree, and member of many veteran organizations, I somewhat resent being censured and marginalized at times and with time limits imposed by the committee. That is not what I believe Mayor Deegan intended when she said she wanted public involvement! How can I view where public comment has been documented adequately by the committee at each meeting and the comments showing as a public comment addendum to the committee full report as opposed to what I anticipate as a digestible abbreviated summary?

VA HOSPITALS

On the one hand, National Defense and protection against encroachment on existing military installations is mission imperative. On the other, we encourage first termers to shop the exchange and commissary if VA disabled and invite the community on base to supplement cost recovery for much needed MWR. My ramble leads to a strong advocacy to replace the current single story warehouses on NAS JAX with a VA HOSPITAL (VAMC). Many VAMC's use military land to co-locate, justify additional medical staff and share hospital resources. Federally owned land, a nearby "MedEvac" runway and a Naval Hospital expansion or shared VAMC seems logical at NAS JAX (Lawson/Rubio). The veteran brain trust as it exists has had this issue for seven years that I know. There is much more to the story. Will Navy retiree's chose JAX because of a VA Hospital factored into their equation? What additional ancillary benefits would the hospital bring. The Con: Big Box Jacksonville Hospitals might see a very slight decline in billable lab tests and community care referrals.

COJ DEDICATED VETERAN AND MILITARY FUNDS

Years ago I offered that there should be **ONE MASTER ACCOUNT** if and where possible where we the public can see charitable slush funds and expenditures from military and veterans alleged accounts.

Today, I believe there are at LEAST three (the Wall, the Jaguars, The Concessions) or four “accounts” that hold the term military or veteran as a justification for its existence and expenditures. One Master and Sub accounts would consolidate and make readily accessible, public confidence on intake and disbursement. Although primarily an accountant/audit responsibility, a quarterly MAVD report enthuse special accounts would be in order.

As an aside, Vystar is obligated to deposit on the anniversary date, \$50K ONE of the accounts and veterans are told that dedicated funding is part of the Mayors budget and has to be asked for and not made available from March thru October. The “ASK” is do the veterans get the same interest that the city would collect from a delinquent payor? I’m told it’s in an interest bearing account but not told the rate on that or other accounts.

Unspend funds each year loose to inflation. Our good veteran stewards and fiduciaries are underreporting any advocacy to correct these potential veteran exploitations.

Respectfully,

George Carroll

- f. Travis Akers expressed his appreciation to MAVD and Harrison Conyers on the Purple Heart Ceremony that he attended on Monday. He called it one of the most moving ceremonies that he had ever attended.
8. Move to adjourn at 5:15PM by Bob Adelhelm and seconded by Dr. Keshan Hargrove.