

1 **VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD**
2 **CITY OF LAS CRUCES**
3 **August 24, 2021, at 9:00 a.m.**
4

5 **MEMBERS PRESENT:** Karen Woods, UMW of Southwest, Chair
6 Christine Sautter, MOAA
7 Daniel Ansbach, Special Forces Association
8 Hector Sanchez, Member at Large 2 - Student
9 Hubert L. Gay, Vietnam Veterans
10 James (JR) Turner, Member at Large 1
11 John Poland, American Legion Post 10
12 Patrick Ramirez, VFW Post 10124
13 Victor Eres, Marine Corps League
14

15 **STAFF PRESENT:** Eric Enriquez, Assistant City Manager
16 Audrianna Sambrano, Administrative Assistant
17

18 **OTHERS PRESENT:** Bill Hawkins, Veterans Parade Committee
19 Dale Lawrence, Las Cruces Vet Center
20 Desiree Johnson, VA LC C-Boc
21 Dolores Archuleta, Veterans Wall Chair
22 Isabel Gonzales, VA HBPC
23 Larry Orvis, Retired VAB Chair
24 Marja Amador, VA HBPC
25 Montevis Price, Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist
26 Patricia Torres, American Legion Auxilliary
27 Travis Rogers, VA LC C-Boc
28 Victor Sanchez, Veterans Treatment Court Coordinator
29
30

31 **I. CALL TO ORDER (9:00 a.m.):** Chair Woods called the meeting to order.
32

33 Chair Woods introduced Daniel Ansbach, Special Forces Association, as a
34 new member of the board.
35

36 **II. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA:** Motion to approve agenda by Board
37 Member Rod Gajewski, seconded by Board Member Victor Eres.
38

39 **III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:**
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41 a. The minutes from July 27, 2021, were approved. Motioned by Board
42 Member Rod Gajewski and seconded by Board Member Christine
43 Sautter.
44

1 **IV. OLD BUSINESS: NONE**

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3 **V. NEW BUSINESS:**

- 4
5 **a. Rod Gajewski**, requested updated contact information for the board
6 members on the public website for citizens who need to get in touch
7 with a board member.
8

9 **VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATON:**

- 10
11 **a. Desiree Johnson, Administrative Officer, Las Cruces VA Clinic**,
12 stated that they have extended the expiration date for the Johnson &
13 Johnson vaccination until September 21, 2021. It is available at their
14 clinic and spouses and caregivers are eligible. They just need to go to
15 va.gov and register to get the vaccine, then schedule an appointment.
16 Ms. Johnson also stated that the Moderna vaccine is available at the El
17 Paso VA by appointment.
18

- 19 **b. Hubert Gay, Vietnam Veteran**, stated that the turf area at Veterans
20 Park between the picnic tables and Roadrunner is covered in Red
21 Spurge and Crabgrass. Mr. Gay stated that if it doesn't get sprayed
22 and taken care of, it will take over the turf. Mr. Enriquez stated that
23 the spraying of the weeds has come to the City Manager's attention,
24 and it has been approved, it will be taken care. City Manager's Office
25 is also looking at other options on how to treat it if possible. The areas
26 that are going to be treated will be closed off.
27

- 28 **c. Bill Hawkins, Veterans Parade Committee**, stated that the
29 Veterans Day parade will be on November 6, 2021. Set up will be at
30 9:00 a.m., and the parade will start at 11:00 a.m. There is currently
31 an issue with the route, and the parade may not be able to go up Main
32 Steet. It's an ongoing issue that is being worked on with the Mayor.
33 The Veterans Parade Committee has agreed that Main Street is the
34 perfect route. There are already 24 participating groups that will be
35 participating in the parade. The theme this year is going to be honoring
36 Korean War Veterans. They would like to solicit Grand Marshall
37 nominations to anyone. Primarily the Veterans Advisory Board, if there
38 are any names that can be provided will be viewed. Mr. Hawkins stated
39 that the Veterans Parade Committee will follow the current state
40 mandates at the time of the parade.
41

42 Mr. Enriquez stated that the Mayor is involved and will reach out to the
43 Farmer's Market. Chair Woods requested to write a letter of
44 encouragement to the Mayor to have the parade going up Main Street.

1
2 **d. Marja Amador, VA HBPC,** stated that they are going into homes
3 100% now and are accepting applications at this time as long as the
4 individual is enrolled in the VA. The three ways to get a referral is by
5 their provider, self-referral, or a community referral.
6

7 **e. Isabel Gonzales, Medical Foster Home Coordinator,** stated that
8 they receive federal funding, and the scope of their program is to place
9 Veterans in foster homes as an alternative to them going into a nursing
10 home. They are currently reaching out to the community to see who
11 would be willing to open up their homes to foster a Veteran. There is
12 a process such as inspections, etc., that needs to be approved by the
13 Safety Inspector from the VA in El Paso. A caregiver will then provide
14 24/7 care for the veteran and have a whole medical team available
15 while the Veterans are in the foster homes. Ms. Gonzales also stated
16 that if anyone knows if a veteran lives alone and cannot care for
17 themselves, the VA does have aid and attendance to help them pay
18 for the cost of the foster home. It's \$1,800.00 if they are single and
19 \$2,200.00 if they are married if they qualify for the assistance.
20

21 **f. Victor Sanchez, Veterans Treatment Court,** stated that the
22 Veterans Treatment Court received \$30,000.00 from the City of Las
23 Cruces that they requested to keep the program running for the
24 Veterans that are on probation. With those funds, they were able to
25 buy iPads, iPhones, bicycles, and provided housing for first and last
26 month's rent for the Veterans. Mr. Sanchez stated that there are
27 currently 10 Veterans enrolled in the program and 14 are pending their
28 sentencing for a judge to order them to join the program. Mr. Sanchez
29 also stated that they conduct random home visits, drug testing, and
30 they also have surveillance officers checking on clients.
31

32 **g. Montevis Price, Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist,** stated
33 that they recently held a Veterans benefits drive that included eight
34 veterans who went out to help other veterans who don't have any
35 claims or any service connection to get the process started.
36

37 **h. Patricia Torres, President of the American Legion Auxiliary Unit**
38 **#10,** stated that they did not take a break during the pandemic. They
39 hand sewed over 700 masks and distributed them in our community,
40 throughout the state, and places in the nation that needed them. They
41 also hand sewed tote bags and included toiletry, scarves, hats, and
42 food items that were distributed to the homeless that were in the
43 street. They also worked with Oak Street to clean out their community
44 room, pantry, stocked their pantry, and catered meals. Ms. Torres

1 stated that they are working hard for the Veterans. They will be having
2 a rummage sale on Friday from 1-5 pm and Saturday from 8-11 am.

3
4 **i. Larry Lawrence, retired VAB Chairman,** stated that they have been
5 doing a lot of food drives at Walmart locations and at Save Mart from
6 7-11 am on the first Sunday of each month.

7
8 **j. Lynn Hampton, National Representative for the National VFW**
9 **Kansas City,** stated that they have teamed up with the United Military
10 Veterans of the Southwest to provide a Patriots Day breakfast on
11 Sunday, September 12th at VFW #10124 from 7-11 am. Also, VFW
12 now has a foundation for the Department of New Mexico. The
13 foundation that was created to become a 501C3 because they were
14 not able to get funds from larger grants being a C19. Now that there
15 is a 501C3 created they can now work with agencies here for a mini
16 stand down for homeless Veterans in Las Cruces on November 11,
17 2021, at VFW #10124. They are asking for donations for winter kits.
18 They are working with the VA to secure the TA-50.

19
20 **k. Eric Enriquez, Assistant City Manager,** stated that there was a
21 ribbon cutting on August 5th for the Desert Hope complex for Veterans
22 on 1310 Pecos Street. They are efficiency homes that include a
23 community room, and an exercise and laundry room.

24 25 **VII. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS:**

26
27 **a. Hubert Gay, Vietnam Veterans,** requested for a staff member of
28 Parks & Rec be present for the meetings. The new Iraq/Afghanistan
29 monument that will be placed at Veterans Park will include two pictures
30 in front of it. One male that was killed in Afghanistan and one female
31 that was killed in training at Ft. Bliss to go to Afghanistan. The Marine
32 Corps monument is redone and put back at the park. There will be a
33 September 11th car show that will go to the Honor Flight and the Travis
34 Mills foundation at Borman Ford. There will also be a Garrison Flag
35 raising on September 11th. The next food drive will be on September
36 6th., at the Walmart on Rinconada.

37
38 **b. Hector Sanchez, Member at Large 2-Student NMSU,** stated that
39 NMSU Administration has approved an additional position for their
40 office that will be dedicated to first year Veteran students. Its critical,
41 first year Veteran students drop out more and struggle to get a high
42 education at a high rate than the total population. Resources will be
43 available for these students such as housing, food, tutoring, providing

1 additional services in the classroom, etc. Veterans receive a GI Bill
2 Scholarship.

3
4 **c. Patrick Ramirez, VFW Post 10124**, stated that they are having the
5 pancake breakfast on September 12th from 7-11am. Every Friday
6 night they have a dinner that started at 4-7pm with a nominal fee and
7 karaoke afterwards. On September 11th, they will have a flag
8 retirement at 11am. On September 26th, they will have a senior
9 breakfast at 9am and haircuts will be donation encouraged.

10
11 **d. Rod Gajewski, Military Order of the Purple Heart**, stated that one
12 of the Korean War Veterans has recently passed away. The issue with
13 it was that the family was not provided any information regarding a
14 burial flag and certain benefits from the funeral home. Mr. Gajewski
15 would like to encourage the Veteran communities to provide
16 information to families of Veterans, such how to get the DRC benefits
17 and funeral services. Mr. Gajewski stated that the Marine Corps
18 provide training to the funeral homes on procedures that should be
19 followed.

20
21 **e. John Poland, American Legion #10 Commander**, stated that they
22 have several suits, dress slacks and shirts they are offering for free to
23 any Veteran that have a job interview, funerals, or other special
24 events. They are also starting a non-perishable food pantry to provide
25 for needy Veterans. American Legion will be participating in two car
26 shows. On September 11th will be the Travis Mills foundation car show
27 at Borman Auto Plex. On September 19th will be the Wounded Warrior
28 car show, and the American Legion Commander trophy will be given
29 out. On October 11th they will have the annual 1st Responder dinner
30 and they are reaching out to all City and County law enforcement,
31 Sherriff's, and Fire departments for nominations. Gift certificates of
32 recognition will be provided. Narratives provided from supervisors of
33 groups will be read.

34
35 **f. Victor Eres, Marine Corps League**, stated that the competition for
36 the Honor Guard on August 19th was cancelled. Mr. Eres also
37 mentioned that the funeral home honor guards was slow for the month
38 of August, which is a good thing. Baca's and Getz are usually good at
39 contacting the honor guards for services. The ball this year has been
40 cancelled. They will be present at the Travis Mills event providing the
41 honor guards. Mr. Eres stated that the Marine Corps monument was
42 removed again. There is three Eagle Globes and Anchors, one device
43 is supposed to be the officers, which is silver with gold continents on
44 it, which is okay. The gold device should be solid gold, and the last one

1 should be solid black. Unfortunately, someone added different colors
2 to a couple of the devices. It needs to be taken back and redone.
3 Hopefully there will be an update for next month's meeting.
4

5 **g. James Turner, Member at Large 1,** stated that in regard to burial
6 benefits, is it one of the most mis concepted benefits, but it is
7 important that the families know that the DD214 is the main document
8 is the main one to get everything going. Mr. Turner stated the
9 September is a busy month for the Garrison Flag, September 6th,
10 11th, and 17th.
11

12 **h. Karen Woods, Chair, United Military Women of the Southwest,**
13 stated that the Women's Veterans Monument is back, and they are all
14 up. The reason they were down was due to electrical issues. Chair
15 Woods would like to give kudos to Parks & Rec for being on top of
16 things. There will be a car show at Sonoma Ranch Clubhouse on
17 September 4th from 8am-12pm. The event in El Paso at Top Golf on
18 September 25th has been cancelled.
19

20 **VIII. REMINDERS:**

21
22 a. **Next meeting September 28, 2021:** will take place at the East Mesa
23 Public Facility Complex.
24

25 **IX. ADJOURNMENT (10:30 a.m.)**

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27 Motion to adjourn by Board Member Sam Borden, seconded by Board
28 Member Hector Ramirez. Motion passes.
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30
31  _____  _____
32 Chairperson Date
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