



ALAMEDA COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

Date: June 15, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00PM

Location: County Veterans Service Office 22225 Foothill Blvd, Hayward, CA 94541

Freedom Hall Conference Room

Virtual Attendance: Zoom/ Remote Participation Available

1. Call to Order

Chairperson, Commissioner Shewet Yohannes called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 AM.

Commissioners, staff, and members of the public were welcomed to the meeting. Staff noted that due to temporary equipment limitations, the meeting agenda would not be projected during the session; however, meeting materials remained available to attendees and remote participants.

2. Roll/ Call / Quorum Established

Chair Yohannes conducted the roll call of Commissioners. The attendance of Commissioners, including virtual participation, is reflected below. A quorum was established.

Commissioner	Status
Shewet Yohannes (Chair)	Present
James F. Phair (Vice Chair)	Present
Robert R. Cole	Present
Steven M. Dolgin	Present
Omar Farmer	Present
Ronald Forbes	Absent
Michael Gilmore	Present
Alfred P. Gordillo	Absent
Nathaniel Harrison	Present
Frederick Jaffin	Present

Commissioner	Status
Joseph C. LoParo	Absent
Jack McILvain	Present
Greg Owens	Present
Keisuke Warner	Present
Diane Williamson	Present
Madeleine Reed	Present
Don Reed	Present
Daniel K. Bitner	Present (Virtual)
Robert E. Hart	Present

3. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

Commissioners reviewed the May 18, 2026 Veterans Affairs Commission meeting minutes.

During discussion, Commissioner Madeleine Reed noted the May minutes did not clearly identify which Commissioners attended virtually. Faith Battles advised that beginning with the June meeting, the minutes would identify Commissioners attending remotely and reminded Commissioners attending virtually to announce their attendance for the record. Commissioners were also reminded to sign the attendance sheet at each meeting when attending in person.

Action Taken

Motion: Approve the May 18, 2026, Veterans Affairs Commission meeting minutes as presented.

Motion By: Commissioner Owens

Second By: Commissioner Hart

Outcome: Motion Passed. **Chair Yohannes abstained from the vote due to not being present at the May 18, 2026 meeting.**

4. Pledge of Allegiance

The Commission stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed in honor of:

- Prisoners of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) service members
- Veterans lost by suicide

6. Public Comment

The Chair opened the floor for public comment regarding items not listed on the agenda.

Staff confirmed there were no members of the public requesting comment either in-person or remotely.

Outcome: No public comments were received.

7. Staff Updates – County Veterans Service Office (CVSO)

Administrative Updates

Faith Battles, Assistant Agency Director for Adult & Aging Services, addressed the Commission and thanked Commissioners for their feedback regarding the format of the meeting minutes.

Ms. Battles announced that beginning with the June meeting:

- Commissioners attending virtually would be identified in the meeting minutes.
- Commissioners attending in person must sign the attendance sheet.
- Virtual attendees should identify themselves for the record to ensure accurate documentation.

Brown Act Training

Ms. Battles confirmed that Deputy County Counsel Shanna Connor would conduct Brown Act training during the July 20, 2026, Veterans Affairs Commission meeting and encouraged all Commissioners to attend.

Digital Accessibility

Ms. Battles reminded Commissioners that all agenda attachments must be submitted to staff in advance so they can be reviewed for digital accessibility compliance before publication.

She explained that materials that cannot be remediated in time may still be distributed during meetings; however, Commissioners must verbally summarize the contents for the benefit of members of the public attending remotely.

Budget Reporting

Ms. Battles encouraged the Commission to include a regular budget update during future meetings to improve transparency regarding available funding, expenditures, and remaining balances. She also acknowledged Commissioner McElvain's interest in serving in a Treasurer capacity and suggested future discussion regarding financial oversight responsibilities.

County Veterans Service Office Update

Anthony Simpson presented the County Veterans Service Office Quarterly Report covering January 1 through March 31, 2026.

Highlights included:

- 2,040 total client contacts
- 406 claims filed
- Approximately 159 compensation claims
- 450 total financial awards processed
- Approximately \$195,032 in retroactive benefits awarded
- Approximately \$241,119 in new benefits awarded
- An average award amount of approximately \$3,710 per claim

Additional updates included:

- Continued appointments at the Fremont Outreach Office on Tuesdays.
- Continued appointments at the Eastmont location on Thursdays while transition planning continues.
- Installation of exterior County Veterans Service Office signage at the Hayward location is pending final completion.
- Google Maps updates remain in progress through the appropriate external agencies.

Mr. Simpson also confirmed that quarterly statistical reports would continue to be provided to the Commission.

8. Subcommittee Reports

Outreach Subcommittee – Stand Down 2026

Commissioner Omar Farmer provided an update on planning efforts for the 2026 Alameda County Stand Down event.

Mr. Farmer reported that planning continued to progress and that community partnerships remained strong. Service provider participation continued to increase as planning progressed.

Planning updates included:

- Dates: June 26–27, 2026
- Location: St. Vincent de Paul, Oakland
- Continued recruitment of volunteers and service providers
- Coordination with community partners
- Outreach efforts to increase veteran participation
- Public awareness efforts including advertising on AC Transit buses in place of BART to increase visibility and maximize outreach.

Commissioners discussed expanding outreach through community organizations, skilled nursing facilities, and the Oakland Veterans Affairs Clinic. Additional discussion focused on advertising opportunities through Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stations to increase awareness of the event.

Commissioner Farmer also reported that private security would be required for Saturday, June 27, as the Department of Veterans Affairs would no longer provide security coverage. The estimated cost of approximately \$360 would be brought forward as a budget request. Commissioners discussed continued volunteer recruitment and distribution of outreach flyers through VA clinics, food pantries, shelters, senior housing locations, and other community organizations.

Anthony Simpson reported that the County Veterans Service Office would conduct veterans' benefits and claims presentations during both days of the event and provide on-site assistance to veterans seeking information regarding available benefits and services.

PAL Legislation Subcommittee

Vice Chair Skip Phair provided an update on legislation affecting California veterans.

Discussion included recent activity related to state legislation impacting County Veterans Service Offices and continued efforts to improve coordination of veteran services throughout California.

Commissioners discussed monitoring pending legislation and maintaining communication with state and local officials regarding measures affecting veterans and their families.

Ceremonial Awards Subcommittee

Commissioner Farmer provided an update regarding the Veterans Affairs Commission commemorative coin project.

Discussion included vendor pricing, production timelines, and design development. Commissioners reviewed progress toward producing the commemorative coin and discussed completing the master die while maximizing the number of coins that could be produced within the approved budget.

Outcome: The commemorative coin project remains in development.

Veterans Memorial Bench Projects

Commissioner Farmer reported on several memorial bench projects currently under development.

Dublin Veterans Memorial Bench

Discussion continued regarding the commemorative bench honoring **Colonel Marisol Chiles** through the City of Dublin's Adopt-a-Bench Program. Commissioners reviewed proposed placement, inscription language, and project status.

Hayward Veterans Memorial Building Bench

Commissioners discussed plans for a memorial bench honoring **Major Sidney** at the Hayward Veterans Memorial Building.

Discussion included possible installation locations, preservation of the memorial, security considerations, and opportunities for collaboration with local veterans organizations.

Commemorative Veterans Program

Commissioner Farmer presented a proposal for a Veterans commemorative display recognizing distinguished Alameda County veterans.

Discussion included potential display concepts, installation locations, and future opportunities to expand public recognition of local veterans through permanent exhibits.

Commissioners expressed support for continued development of the proposal and requested additional information for future consideration.

Women's Veterans Recognition Day

Commissioners received a report on the June 12, 2026, Women Veterans Recognition Day celebration held at the Alameda Naval Air Museum. The event included a keynote speaker, presentation of Quilts of Valor, and community recognition of women veterans. Commissioners expressed appreciation to Lazy

Dog Restaurant for donating the event meal and thanked the museum staff and volunteers for their support.

Commissioner Bruner presented a commendation issued by Supervisor Lena Tam recognizing Women Veterans Day and the service and contributions of women veterans. The commendation was read into the record.

Commissioners discussed attendance at the event, outreach efforts, future promotional opportunities, and ongoing concerns regarding the long-term sustainability of the Alameda Naval Air Museum.

Commissioners also discussed reimbursement of expenses incurred for the 2025 and 2026 Women Veterans Recognition Day events. Staff requested that all receipts and supporting documentation be forwarded for review so reimbursement requests could be processed through the County's financial procedures. Discussion included the possibility that reimbursement of prior fiscal year expenses could impact the current fiscal year budget.

Veterans Memorial Building Subcommittee

Commissioners received an update regarding ongoing efforts to improve veterans' access and use of county veterans memorial buildings, particularly the Oakland Veterans Memorial Building. Discussion included existing agreements governing veterans' access, state law related to veterans memorial buildings, and continued efforts to ensure facilities are used consistently with their intended purpose. The subcommittee will continue developing recommendations and report back to the Commission.

9. Legislative Update

AB 2219 – County Veterans Service Office Coordination

Vice Chair **Skip Phair** provided an update regarding state legislation affecting veterans and County Veterans Service Offices.

Discussion included recent legislative activity in Sacramento, including the State budget process and several veteran-related bills that had advanced during the current legislative session. Vice Chair Phair provided updates regarding legislation related to:

- County Veterans Service Office coordination and resources.
- Disabled veterans' property tax exemptions.
- Military retirement pay taxation.
- Expansion of CalFresh (SNAP) eligibility for recently discharged veterans through a proposed federal waiver.

Vice Chair Phair advised that legislative activity would pause during the summer recess and resume in August, at which time additional opportunities for advocacy would be considered.

Commissioners also briefly discussed the development of a future resolution regarding the cancelled Alameda Point Veterans Affairs medical facility project and agreed to continue gathering information before bringing forward a proposal.

Action Taken

Outcome: No action was taken.

10. New Business / Announcements

Acceptance of Commissioner Joshua Jones' Resignation

Chair Yohannes announced the resignation of **Commissioner Joshua Jones** from the Veterans Affairs Commission.

The Commission acknowledged Commissioner Jones' service and contributions to Alameda County veterans during his tenure on the Commission. Commissioners expressed their appreciation for his dedication and wished him well in his future endeavors.

Outcome: The Commission formally accepted Commissioner Jones' resignation.

Special Events

Commissioners discussed the appointment and reappointment process for Veterans Affairs Commission members and County Veterans Memorial Building Commissions. Staff clarified the process for Commissioner reappointments and noted that commissioners seeking reappointment should notify staff so the appropriate Board of Supervisors office can be contacted. Commissioners also discussed vacancies, potential recruitment of new members, and the distinction between County Veterans Memorial Building Commissions and local advisory councils.

Budget Discussion

Commissioners discussed the importance of maintaining regular budget reports and tracking expenditures approved by the Commission. Discussion included outstanding reimbursement requests from the prior fiscal year, budget transparency, and the need to monitor approved expenditures against available funding throughout the fiscal year.

Commissioners also discussed establishing financial oversight responsibilities, including continued discussion regarding a Treasurer role to assist with budget tracking and reporting.

11. Agenda Building

Chair Yohannes invited Commissioners to identify items for inclusion on future meeting agendas.

Topics suggested for future meetings included:

- Brown Act Training presented by Deputy County Counsel Shanna Connor.
- Continued updates regarding the 2026 Stand Down event.
- Veterans Affairs Commission budget and financial reporting.

- Progress reports on commemorative projects, including memorial benches, commemorative coins, and the Veterans Banner Project.
- Women Veterans Recognition Day follow-up and recognition initiatives.
- Updates regarding state and federal veterans legislation.
- County Veterans Service Office quarterly performance updates.
- Finance Department presentation regarding Commission budget procedures, reimbursement processes, and financial reporting.
- Continued discussion regarding Commission financial oversight and Treasurer responsibilities.
- Brown Act Training (estimated one-hour presentation by Deputy County Counsel).

Commissioners also requested continued updates regarding the Hayward County Veterans Service Office, veteran outreach activities, and future opportunities to improve services for Alameda County veterans.

Chair Yohannes reminded all subcommittee chairs to submit agenda requests and written updates approximately two weeks before each Commission meeting to allow sufficient time for agenda preparation, accessibility review, and public posting requirements.

15. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Commission, Chair Yohannes adjourned the meeting at approximately **11:35 AM**.

Prepared By:
Tamar N. Mitchell
Secretary II
Alameda County Department of Adult & Aging Services