



ALAMEDA COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

Date: May 18, 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 Shewee 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

Commissioners participated in a verbal roll call, including in-person and remote attendees. Staff confirmed a quorum was established.

3. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

Commissioners reviewed the April 20, 2026, Veterans Affairs Commission meeting minutes.

During discussion, Commissioner Madeleine Reed noted that her remote participation during the April meeting had not been reflected in the minutes.

Action Taken

Motion: Approve the April 20, 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 April 20, 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)

Department Leadership Introduction

Faith Battles, Assistant Agency Director for Adult & Aging Services, formally addressed the Commission and welcomed attendees.

Ms. Battles acknowledged that this was her first formal Veterans Affairs Commission meeting since the Commission transitioned under her department's oversight. She expressed appreciation for the Commission's work and recognized the significance of the County Veterans Service Office's Hayward location, noting her prior professional history managing services within the same facility.

Ms. Battles shared remarks regarding the importance of maintaining strong collaboration between County staff and the Commission to support Alameda County veterans.

Brown Act Training Scheduling

Ms. Battles revisited the previously postponed Brown Act training presentation by Deputy County Counsel, Shanna Connor.

The Commission was informed that Brown Act training had previously been scheduled but was not completed during the prior meeting. Ms. Battles advised that Deputy County Counsel Shanna Connor remained available to provide training during the July 2026 Veterans Affairs Commission meeting.

Commissioners discussed timing considerations and agreed that adequate meeting time should be reserved for questions and discussion.

Outcome: The Commission expressed agreement to proceed with Brown Act training during the July 20, 2026, meeting.

Alameda County Point-In-Time Count

Ms. Battles informed the Commission that Alameda County's federally required Point-in-Time Count report measuring sheltered and unsheltered homelessness throughout the County would be publicly released on May 19, 2026.

Discussion included the significance of identifying unhoused veterans within County data and opportunities to better understand veterans' housing needs.

Ms. Battles advised Commissioners to monitor County publications and noted that staff would attempt to share veteran-specific data once available.

Digital Accessibility Requirements

Ms. Battles provided a detailed overview of federal and County digital accessibility requirements for publicly posted materials.

Discussion included:

- Federal accessibility requirements for online public documents
- The County's obligation to remediate documents for accessibility compliance
- Differences between public-facing online materials and meeting handouts
- Formatting standards required for agendas, reports, and presentations
- Timelines associated with remediation and public posting deadlines

Ms. Battles introduced Tamar Mitchell, Secretary II, acknowledging her role in supporting Veterans Affairs Commission materials and ensuring public-facing documents are digitally accessible prior to publication.

Ms. Mitchell's role in accessibility remediation was discussed, including the need for sufficient lead time to remediate documents prior to publication deadlines.

Commissioners were reminded that while meeting agendas are publicly posted at least 72 hours in advance, supporting materials requiring digital remediation should ideally be submitted approximately two weeks prior to meetings to allow sufficient time for accessibility review and online posting.

Commissioners were advised that:

- Meeting handouts distributed in person do not require accessibility remediation
- Documents intended for online posting must be digitally accessible
- Commissioners should verbally summarize handouts during meetings when materials cannot be posted online

- Agenda items and supplemental documents should be submitted as early as possible, preferably two weeks in advance

Commissioners also discussed challenges associated with charts, spreadsheets, flyers, and PDF formatting.

Ms. Battles shared that Alameda County departments had undertaken significant efforts to remove inaccessible materials from public websites and emphasized the County's commitment to compliance.

Annual Board of Supervisors Presentation

Ms. Battles reminded the Commission of its annual presentation to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors.

Commissioners were informed that the Veterans Affairs Commission annual presentation to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors was scheduled for:

Date: July 27, 2026

Time: 2:30 PM

Location: 1221 Oak Street, Suite 536, Oakland, CA

Discussion included expectations for presentation content, use of a County-approved accessible slide template, and deadlines for document submission to ensure accessibility compliance.

Commissioners were encouraged to participate in-person when possible.

Older Americans Month Recognition

Ms. Battles acknowledged Older Americans Month and Military Appreciation Month, noting the intersection between older adults and veterans served throughout Alameda County.

The Commission briefly discussed County awareness efforts, including public outreach and promotional campaigns recognizing older adults and veterans.

8. Subcommittee Reports – Stand Down Event

Commissioner Omar Farmer provided updates regarding planning efforts for the upcoming **2026 Alameda County Stand Down Event**.

Discussion included outreach coordination, volunteer recruitment, service provider participation, and advertising efforts intended to increase veteran participation.

Commissioner Farmer reported that planning efforts continue to progress and that approximately twenty-six service providers for Friday and twenty-two for Saturday, with additional invitations pending. Planning updates discussed included:

- **Dates:** June 26–27, 2026
- **Location:** St. Vincent de Paul, Oakland
- Volunteer recruitment and coordination efforts
- Outreach efforts to increase veteran attendance
- Service provider participation and coordination

- PTSD Awareness considerations in conjunction with June observances
- Planned veterans' benefits and claims presentations

Commissioners discussed expanded outreach and advertising efforts, including Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) **station advertisements** focused primarily in Oakland and Downtown Berkeley to increase veteran awareness and event participation.

Additional outreach efforts discussed included flyer distribution at the Oakland Veterans Affairs Clinic, outreach to skilled nursing facilities, and coordination with veteran-serving organizations and community partners.

Commissioner Farmer also discussed participation from additional service providers, including criminal court-related services anticipated during the second day of the event.

Anthony Simpson shared plans to conduct **veterans' benefits and claims information seminars** during both event days to increase awareness of available services and veteran benefits.

9. Legislative Update

AB 2219 – County Veterans Service Office Coordination

Vice Chair Skip Phair provided an update regarding Assembly Bill 2219, legislation intended to strengthen statewide coordination and oversight of County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs).

Discussion included:

- Increased coordination between County Veterans Service Offices
- Expanded CalVet oversight and quality-control responsibilities
- Standardized training opportunities for County Veterans Service Officers
- Improved statewide interoperability and continuity of veteran services
- Ability for County Veterans Service Offices to assist veterans across county lines to reduce service delays

Commissioners discussed opportunities for veterans to receive assistance across county lines without unnecessary duplication of services.

Action Taken

Motion: Submit a request to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to formally support AB 2219.

Motion By: Vice Chair Skip Phair

Second By: Commissioner Jones

Outcome: Motion Passed.

Alameda Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Project

The Commission revisited concerns regarding the cancelled Veterans Affairs facility project planned for Alameda.

Discussion included concerns regarding prior federal funding commitments, environmental remediation efforts already completed, accessibility barriers for Alameda County veterans, and questions surrounding the cancellation of the project.

Commissioners also discussed congressional outreach efforts and the possibility of future Commission advocacy regarding reinstatement of the project.

Outcome: The Commission agreed to continue gathering information and revisit the matter at a future meeting.

10. Ceremonial Awards and Veteran Recognition Projects

Commemorative Coin Proposal

Commissioner Omar Farmer provided updates regarding the Veterans Affairs Commission commemorative coin project.

Discussion included vendor pricing, inflation-related cost increases, budget limitations, and efforts to maximize the number of commemorative coins produced within available funding. Commissioners also discussed development of the commemorative coin master/die during the current fiscal year.

Outcome: The commemorative coin project remains in development, and vendor comparison efforts are ongoing.

Outcome: Project development remains in progress.

Veteran Memorial Bench Proposals

Dublin / Don Biddle Park Bench Proposal

Commissioner Farmer provided updates regarding the proposed commemorative bench honoring Colonel Marisol Chiles near Camp Parks in Dublin.

Commissioners discussed the City of Dublin's Adopt-a-Bench program and an alternative existing bench option after determining limited space was available for new bench installation. Discussion included the proposed location near veteran memorial features and Camp Parks, inscription language, and long-term recognition considerations.

Hayward Veterans Memorial Building Bench Proposal

Commissioners discussed a proposed memorial bench recognizing Major Sidney at the Hayward Veterans Memorial Building.

Discussion included potential placement options, including installation near the Army Room, as well as concerns regarding long-term preservation, theft, vandalism, and indoor versus outdoor placement considerations.

Commissioner Farmer also discussed interest from veteran-serving organizations, including the American Legion, regarding potential support for additional memorial bench projects.

Commissioners reflected on Major Sidney's military service and longstanding contributions to the veteran community.

11. Veteran Recognition Program Updates

Union City Veterans Memorial Brick

Commissioner Farmer reported that payment for the previously approved commemorative brick honoring Darlyn Escalante had been submitted to the City of Union City.

Outcome: Project remains in progress.

Alameda County Veterans Banner Project Proposal

Commissioner Farmer presented a proposal for an Alameda County Veterans Banner Project intended to recognize veterans through commemorative banners near the Oakland Veterans Memorial Building.

Discussion included potential banner locations, coordination with the Oakland Department of Transportation, support received from Councilmember Carroll Fife's office, project costs, and opportunities to recognize veterans in connection with the Black Veterans Historical Corridor initiative.

Action Taken

Motion: Approve moving forward with the Alameda County Veterans Banner Project as presented.

Motion By: Commissioner Farmer

Second By: Commissioner Hart

Outcome: Motion Passed.

12. Women Veterans Recognition Day

Commissioners discussed planning efforts for Women Veterans Recognition Day 2026.

Discussion included event logistics, venue considerations, scheduling, accessibility, and opportunities to increase visibility for women veterans and the newly established County Veterans Service Office location.

Commissioners discussed several venue considerations, including the Hayward County Veterans Service Office, the Hayward Veterans Memorial Building, and the potential reopening of the Alameda Naval Air Museum. Discussion also included daytime versus evening scheduling considerations, parking accessibility, and security limitations associated with after-hours use of County facilities.

Tentative event considerations included:

Date: June 12, 2026

Time: Under review

Location: To be finalized

Outcome: The matter was referred to the Women Veterans Recognition Day subcommittee for final recommendations.

Women Veteran Recognition Wall Proposal

Commissioner Farmer presented a proposal for a Women Veteran Recognition Wall intended to permanently recognize annual Women Veterans Recognition Day honorees.

Discussion included plaque design options, proposed installation locations, project costs, timing considerations, and long-term expansion opportunities. Commissioners also discussed fiscal year funding timelines and concerns regarding additional review of proposal materials prior to implementation.

Action Taken

Motion: Approve moving forward with the Women Veteran Recognition Wall project.

Motion By: Commissioner Farmer

Second By: Commissioner Owens

Outcome: Motion Passed.

13. Budget and Treasurer Discussion

The Commission discussed budget tracking practices and the need for improved transparency regarding Veterans Affairs Commission expenditures and remaining available funding.

Discussion included prior budget committee practices, whether a formal Treasurer role exists within Commission bylaws, and options for maintaining ongoing financial oversight of Commission-supported projects and initiatives.

Faith Battles clarified that County staff do not maintain Veterans Affairs Commission budget balances and that financial tracking remains the responsibility of the Commission.

Commissioners discussed incorporating financial updates into future meetings and the possibility of utilizing existing Commission leadership structures to support budget oversight.

Outcome: Commissioners agreed to continue discussing budget tracking procedures and incorporate financial updates into future meetings.

14. Announcements and Memorial Day Events

Commissioners shared announcements regarding upcoming Memorial Day observances throughout Alameda County.

Events discussed included Memorial Day ceremonies and veteran recognition activities taking place in Alameda, Castro Valley, Hayward, Fremont, and San Leandro.

Commissioners encouraged participation in local veteran recognition events and opportunities to honor veterans throughout the County.

Anthony Simpson also shared updates regarding plans for future veterans claims clinics at the Hayward County Veterans Service Office in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, including efforts to expand veterans' access to benefits information, healthcare enrollment, and PACT Act-related services.

15. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 PM.

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