

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

Date: April 20, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00PM

Location: County Veterans Service Office – Freedom Hall Conference Room
22225 Foothill Blvd.
Hayward, CA 94541

Virtual Attendance: Zoom/Remote Participation Available

1. Call to Order

Vice Chairperson, Skip Phair called the meeting to order at **10:00 AM**.

The Chair welcomed Commissioners, staff, and guests to the first Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) meeting held at the newly established County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) location in Hayward. Remarks were shared recognizing the significance of holding the Commission meeting at the new standalone facility and the advocacy efforts that contributed to securing the location.

2. Roll Call / Quorum Established

Commissioners present signed in upon arrival.

The Chair noted that Commissioners had signed in and confirmed that a quorum was established without conducting a verbal roll call.

The Commission was informed that approval of the prior meeting minutes would be deferred to the next Commission meeting due to a transition in secretarial support. Although March meeting minutes existed, Commissioners had not yet received them with adequate time for review prior to formal approval.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The Commission stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed in honor of:

- Prisoners of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) service members
 - In remembrance of Veterans lost by suicide
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5. Public Comment

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

Staff confirmed there were no participants attending remotely via Zoom. No members of the public request comment.

Outcome: No public comments were received.

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

Veterans Service Office Update

Anthony Simpson provided updates regarding County Veterans Service Office operations and acknowledged the efforts of former and current Commissioners who advocated for the standalone Hayward location.

Mr. Simpson emphasized that the facility represented a longstanding goal of the Commission and would significantly improve service delivery for veterans throughout Alameda County.

Benefits of the facility highlighted during discussion included:

- Improved ADA accessibility
- Enhanced parking availability without fees
- Improved restroom accommodation
- Dedicated interview rooms for confidential conversations
- Increased meeting and office space
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Improved veteran-centered environment Mr. Simpson stated that the facility is intended to function as a centralized, veteran-focused location for service delivery.

Staffing and Outreach Updates

Mr. Simpson reported that the office was currently operating with a staff of eight, allowing for expanded outreach and service delivery.

Recent outreach efforts included participation in a veterans-focused event held approximately two weeks prior at the Veterans Memorial Building. Mr. Simpson described the event as

successful and reaffirmed the office’s commitment to expanding outreach opportunities and increasing awareness of available veteran benefits and services.

Client Service Improvements

Mr. Simpson discussed the addition of two publicly accessible computer stations in the facility lobby. The computers are intended to assist veterans who require immediate access to veteran-related forms, benefits documentation, and service resources.

Mr. Simpson shared an example involving veterans who recently utilized the computers to access and print veterans’ verification letters required to obtain services.

Additional safeguards have been implemented to restrict access to inappropriate websites while allowing veterans to conduct benefits-related research and complete service-related tasks.

The Commission discussed the long-term vision of establishing the facility as a “one-stop shop” for veterans.

Eastmont and Fremont Transition

Commissioners inquired about the status of Eastmont operations.

Mr. Simpson explained that Eastmont had not yet fully closed and remains operational on a limited basis during the transition period. Veterans continue reporting to Eastmont, and staff are actively redirecting veterans to the Hayward facility.

Current operations include:

- Eastmont appointments are available on Thursdays
- Fremont services continuing through partnerships
- QR-code scheduling access for Hayward, Fremont, and Eastmont appointments

Mr. Simpson emphasized the long-term goal of transitioning veterans toward Hayward as the primary service location.

7. Website, Signage, and Public Access Concerns

Commissioners raised concerns regarding outdated online location information for the County Veterans Service Office.

Discussion included:

- Google search results displaying outdated office locations
- Public confusion regarding Hayward office information
- Need for improved signage and online visibility
- Delays associated with leased building requirements

Mr. Simpson explained that the Hayward office is located in a leased building rather than a County-owned facility, requiring coordination with the property owner and General Services Agency (GSA) before signage can be installed.

Mr. Simpson reported:

- Exterior signage is anticipated within six to eight weeks
- Office hours signage remains pending
- Property ownership has been cooperative regarding improvements to veteran visibility and facility recognition

Mr. Simpson further shared efforts to install an American flag and POW/MIA flag at the site.

Commissioners discussed the need to coordinate with Google and County website administrators to ensure search results direct veterans to the correct location.

8. Secretary Introduction and Administrative Improvements

The Chair introduced Tamar Mitchell, Secretary II, acknowledging her role in preparing Commission agendas, announcements, meeting materials, and administrative support documents during a recent transition in secretarial support.

Ms. Mitchell shared that Commission agendas had recently been redesigned to improve digital accessibility and better align with formatting used by other Alameda County commissions and boards.

Discussion included:

- accessibility remediation requirements for public documents,
- timelines associated with website posting,
- improving communication with Commissioners and the public,
- updating Commissioner contact information, and
- formatting preferences for future agendas.

Ms. Mitchell requested that Commissioners provide updated contact information, including district representation and preferred email addresses, to support improved communication and public notice.

Commissioners were also asked to provide feedback regarding whether Commissioner names and district information should continue to appear on future agendas.

The Commission acknowledged the ongoing transition process and efforts to improve communication, accessibility, and document consistency.

9. Brown Act Training and Motion to Amend Agenda

Deputy County Counsel Shannon O'Connor attended the meeting for a scheduled Brown Act training presentation for the Commission.

Ms. O'Connor provided an overview of the purpose and historical background of the Brown Act, explaining that the legislation was enacted in 1953 to increase government transparency and public participation.

Topics introduced included:

- Purpose and history of the Brown Act
- Public transparency requirements
- Agenda posting requirements
- Public participation rights
- Remote attendance considerations
- Technology-related updates affecting public meetings

During the introduction, discussion occurred regarding whether the Brown Act training could proceed because it had not been included on the published agenda.

Commissioners discussed Brown Act compliance requirements, timing considerations, and remaining agenda items. Concerns were raised regarding meeting time and the need to prioritize time-sensitive agenda items.

Action Taken

Motion: Amend the agenda to include Brown Act training following subcommittee reports.

Outcome: Motion Passed.

The Commission agreed to continue with time-sensitive subcommittee items first and return to the Brown Act training presentation afterward if time permitted.

The Brown Act training presentation did not ultimately occur during the meeting due to time constraints and prioritization of remaining agenda items.

10. Subcommittee Reports – Stand Down Event

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

Discussion included event logistics, service provider coordination, volunteer recruitment, and outreach efforts to increase participation.

Mr. Farmer reported that planning efforts are underway and that service providers are being coordinated for participation in the event. Volunteer support will be needed both prior to and during the event, including assistance with setup, outreach, and day-of-event support.

The Commission discussed continuing advertising efforts similar to prior Stand Down events, including expanded outreach strategies and direct community engagement. Postcard distribution and outreach efforts were discussed as methods to increase veteran awareness and attendance.

Event details discussed included:

- **Dates:** June 26–27, 2026
- **Location:** St. Vincent de Paul, Oakland
- **Volunteer recruitment and coordination needs**
- **Community outreach and advertising efforts**
- **PTSD Awareness considerations**, noting that June 26 coincides with PTSD Awareness observances
- **Veteran benefits seminars and presentations**

Anthony Simpson shared that he plans to conduct veterans' benefits and claims information seminars on both days of the event.

Commissioners discussed continuing partnerships with community organizations and increasing public awareness to maximize attendance and veterans participation.

11. Legislative Update

AB 2219

The Commission discussed Assembly Bill 2219, legislation intended to strengthen statewide coordination and oversight of County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs).

Discussion included proposed improvements to statewide veteran service delivery, including:

- **Increased statewide coordination between County Veterans Service Offices**
- **CalVet oversight and quality-control responsibilities**
- **Additional training opportunities and support for County Veterans Service Officers (VSOs)**
- **Ability to transfer workload between counties to reduce service delays**
- **Improved continuity of veteran services statewide**
- **Limitations on extended County Veterans Service Officer vacancies**

Commissioners discussed the proposed ability for veterans to receive assistance across county jurisdictions without unnecessary duplication of services.

Anthony Simpson expressed support for the legislation and discussed ongoing challenges associated with disconnected county systems. Mr. Simpson explained that statewide interoperability between county systems would improve continuity of care and reduce confusion for veterans seeking assistance in multiple jurisdictions.

Mr. Simpson discussed the BenPro case-management system, explaining that improved communication between counties would allow County Veterans Service Offices to better assist veterans without restarting claims processes or creating unnecessary barriers to services.

Commissioners noted support from veterans organizations, including discussion of support from the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) organization.

Discussion also occurred regarding the possibility of developing a future Commission recommendation or resolution encouraging support for the legislation through the Alameda County Board of Supervisors.

Outcome: The Commission agreed to revisit the matter at a future meeting and discuss possible resolution language supporting the legislation.

SB1407

Discussion also occurred regarding Senate Bill 1407, relating to military retirement pay exemptions

Commissioners acknowledged that some veterans-related legislation may require multiple legislative cycles before advancing.

Action Taken

Outcome: The Commission agreed to revisit formal legislative support language at a future meeting.

12. Commemorative Coin Proposal

Omar Farmer presented commemorative coin design options for Commission consideration.

Discussion included:

- Coin design preferences
- Cost considerations
- Budget limitations
- Potential vendor comparisons
- Use of coins for recognition and ceremonial purposes

Commissioners reviewed multiple commemorative coin design concepts and expressed the strongest preference for Design B.

Action Taken

Commissioners reviewed several proposed commemorative coin design options and discussed vendor pricing, inflation-related cost increases, and budget limitations.

Commissioners expressed the strongest preference for Design B as the proposed commemorative coin design.

Discussion included creating the commemorative coin master/die during the current fiscal year and maximizing the number of coins purchased within available funding.

Motion: Enter into a contract for a commemorative coin utilizing the selected logo design, create the master/die, and obtain as many coins as feasible within the approved \$500 budget.

Outcome: Motion Passed.

13. Veteran Recognition and Memorial Proposals

Livermore Veterans Memorial – Battlefield Cross Proposal

Discussion occurred regarding a proposed **Battlefield Cross memorial project** at the Livermore Veterans Memorial Building.

Commissioners discussed providing partial funding to support startup costs associated with the memorial installation. Approximately **\$4,300** in initial funding requirements was discussed to initiate production.

Additional grant funding and community partnerships were discussed as potential funding sources.

Union City Veterans Memorial Brick

Discussion occurred regarding purchasing a commemorative brick recognizing Darlyn Escalante for contributions to veterans' services and advocacy efforts.

Action Taken

Motion: Approve commemorative brick purchase.

Outcome: Motion Passed.

Hayward Golf Course Memorial Proposal

Commissioners discussed memorial options at the Hayward Golf Course, including:

- Memorial garden option
- Commemorative bench option

Further review was requested prior to final decision.

Dublin / Don Biddle Park Bench Proposal

The Commission discussed establishing a veterans memorial bench program recognizing veteran contributions.

Outcome: Commissioners expressed general support for continued exploration of the proposal and requested additional information prior to final decision-making.

14. Women Veterans Recognition Day

Commissioners discussed planning efforts for Women Veterans Recognition Day.

Topics included:

- Event logistics
- Program structure
- Honoree considerations, including discussion regarding Delphine Metcalf-Foster
- Event logo discussion
- Potential speakers and recorded remarks or video participation

The Commission reviewed a proposed logo and generally supported continuing its use.

Tentative event details discussed:

Date: June 12, 2026

Time: 7:00 PM

15. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at **12:00 PM**.

Prepared By:

Tamar N. Mitchell

Secretary II

Alameda County Department of Adult & Aging Services

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