



Minutes Tempe Veterans Commission February 12, 2025

Minutes of the TEMPE VETERANS COMMISSION held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, in a hybrid format via Microsoft Teams and in-person at Tempe Public Library.

(MEMBERS) Present:

Beno Thomas, Chair
Jim Lange, Vice Chair
Melanie James, Secretary
Juan Garcia
Gwendolyn "Gwen" DeNeal
Phil Kraft
William "Dennis" Gorman
Jose Moreno
Romaldo Gonzales

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Ryan Swearingen
Aaron McBride

City Staff Present:

Dr. Jacqueline Webster, Deputy Community Health and Human Services Director – Social Services Division
Rachael Brickner, Community Health and Human Services Administrative Services Manager

Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Guest Appearances

Orlando Jimenez, Founder and President of Dos Bros Coffee, was in attendance as a guest speaker.
Abe McCann, State Director of Veterans Services, U.S. Department of Labor, was in attendance as a guest speaker.

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order

MOTION: Commissioner J. Garcia moved to CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER at 6:14 p.m.
SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner P. Kraft; Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 2 – Attendance

Commissioners R. Swearingen and A. McBride were absent from the meeting.

Agenda Item 3 – Call to the Audience for Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Agenda Item 4 – Review and Approval of January 8, 2025, Tempe Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Commissioner P. Kraft moved to APPROVE the January 8, 2025, Minutes.
SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner W. Gorman; Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 5 – Chair's Remarks

Chair B. Thomas thanked everyone for attending the meeting and greeted the meeting's guest speakers.

Agenda Item 6 – Presentation: Orlando Jimenez, Founder & President of Dos Bros Coffee

Mr. Jimenez mentioned that the Dos Bros Coffee shop was having a grand opening celebration on February 14, 2025. The Commission Members discussed ways to develop a community connection and support small veteran-owned businesses like Dos Bros.

Agenda Item 7 – Presentation: Abe McCann, State Director, Veterans Services, U.S. Department of Labor

Mr. McCann advised of his work with Home Base Arizona, which provides mental health services to veterans and their families at no cost and holds events to develop social connections.

Mr. McCann informed the Commission that he also serves as the State Director of Veterans Services for the U.S. Department of Labor to help veterans find employment opportunities and training services.

Mr. McCann advised that he worked to develop a program to encourage businesses to employ veterans – a program originally developed at the local level with the City of Tempe.

Mr. McCann notified the Commission of a program through the Department of Labor that protects the employment rights of Veterans who get deployed, trains businesses on employment rights, and ensures veteran jobs are protected upon returning from deployment.

Mr. McCann informed the Commission that the Department of Labor oversees grants for state agencies who develop programs to connect veterans to jobs.

Mr. McCann advised the Commission of the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program grant, which provides funding for organizations who assist veterans in securing employment.

Agenda Item 8 – Finalize Details for Town Hall

Ms. Brickner advised that she will invite the city's Public Information Officer to a meeting to ensure the event is marketed by the city.

Commissioner W. Gorman mentioned that the flyer is prepared for the event and mentions the Tempe Veterans Commission, the Vietnam Veterans Chapter 1011, and the American Legion Post #2.

Commissioner Gorman stated that the event will include information on the Elizabeth Dole Act, which provides benefits to caregivers of aging veterans, as well as the ongoing issues at Fort McClellan.

Commissioner R. Gonzales confirmed that he is still able to provide refreshments for the event.

Commissioner Gorman mentioned that his only remaining concern is obtaining a decent audio system for the event.

Ms. Brickner advised that the City of Tempe will provide audio equipment for the event.

Commissioner Gorman advised that there is ample parking at American Legion Post #2.

Ms. Brickner advised that the City of Tempe will provide name tags for the Veterans Commission Members.

The Commission Members discussed various organizations to engage with to market the event.

Ms. Brickner advised that the Veterans Commission seek guidance from the Public Information Officer to determine what information will be included in the flyer.

Commissioner J. Moreno mentioned that there was a flyer created for a previously cancelled event that can be used as a template for the Town Hall flyer.

Ms. Brickner reassured the Commission that the event's information will be included in the city's newsletter.

Agenda Item 9 – Recognition of Robin Arredondo-Savage

Commissioner Kraft suggested that the Commission invite Ms. Arredondo-Savage to a future meeting to have refreshments and congratulate her on her new position as CEO of the Tempe Chamber of Commerce.

The Commission Members discussed options of ways to honor Ms. Arredondo-Savage for her professional achievements.

The Commission Members determined the potential cost of the initiative to honor Ms. Arredondo-Savage.

The Commission Members resolved to invite Ms. Arredondo-Savage to a future meeting after the March Veterans Commission meeting and Town Hall.

Agenda Item 10 – Veterans Commission Presence in the Community

Commissioner J. Lange suggested that the Veterans Commission look for ways to reach out to the community and increase the Veterans Commission's presence.

The Commission Members discussed ways to be of more assistance to the veteran community.

Commissioner J. Garcia suggested recognizing pro-veteran and veteran-owned businesses with a plaque or other type of recognition from the Veterans Commission.

Commissioner J. Moreno suggested that the Commission Members attend local VFW meetings.

Agenda Item 11 – Future Agenda Items

Chair B. Thomas noted that the next Veterans Commission Meeting will further finalize the Town Hall event details. Commissioner J. Garcia mentioned inviting a representative from the Education Foundation to a future meeting to discuss scholarship opportunities.

Commissioner G. DeNeal mentioned supporting a local veteran-owned cleaning company looking for business and employees.

Commissioner W. Gorman suggested having a representative from the Southwest Veterans Foundation speak to the Commission about the Patriots Ball, scholarships, and other services and programs at a future meeting.

Chair Thomas suggested inviting the City of Tempe Park Rangers to discuss their programs and services.

Commissioner J. Moreno suggested inviting Kelly Mills from TriWest speak at the April Commission meeting.

Agenda Item 12 – Adjournment

MOTION: Commissioner G. DeNeal motioned to ADJOURN the Meeting.

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner M. James; Motion passed unanimously

Chair B. Thomas declared the meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 12, 2025.

Minutes Prepared by: Nicole Galvan

Reviewed by: Dr. Jacqueline Webster

Beno Thomas, Chair
Tempe Veterans Commission

APPROVED