



Minutes Tempe Veterans Commission April 9, 2025

Minutes of the TEMPE VETERANS COMMISSION held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 9, 2025, in a hybrid format via Microsoft Teams and in-person at Tempe Public Library.

(MEMBERS) Present:

Beno Thomas, Chair
Melanie James, Secretary
Gwendolyn "Gwen" DeNeal
Romaldo Gonzales
Phil Kraft
José Moreno

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Jim Lange, Vice-Chair
Ryan Swearingen
Aaron McBride
Juan Garcia
William "Dennis" Gorman

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

Michael Spykes, City of Tempe Park Ranger Supervisor, attended the meeting as a guest.
Brian Cole, City of Tempe Park Ranger, attended the meeting as a guest.
Jessica Mills, owner of Veter-Clean, attended the meeting as a guest.
Ibrahin Robles Jr, owner of Veter-Clean, attended the meeting as a guest.
Tom Sheets, Representing Southwest Veterans Chamber of Commerce, attended the meeting as a guest.
Andy Trotti, Representing Southwest Veterans Chamber of Commerce, attended the meeting as a guest.
Kenneth Enfinger, Representing Southwest Veterans Chamber of Commerce, attended the meeting as a guest.

Agenda Item 1 - Call to Order

MOTION: Commissioner P. Kraft moved to CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER at 6:02 p.m.

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner J. Moreno; Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 2 - Attendance

Commissioners R. Swearingen, A. McBride, J. Garcia, and D. Gorman 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 March 12, 2025, Tempe Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Commissioner P. Kraft moved to APPROVE the March 12, 2025, Minutes.

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner G. DeNeal; Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 5 - Chair's Remarks

Chair B. Thomas thanked everyone for hosting a successful Veterans Town Hall event. Chair Thomas mentioned ways for the

Veterans Commission to be engaged with the community. Chair Thomas advised the Veterans Commission that this would be his last meeting.

Agenda Item 6 - Community Health and Human Services Update

Dr. Webster advised of the upcoming Tempe Salutes event on May 6. Rachael Brickner mentioned the need for volunteers for the Tempe Salutes event. Dr. Webster advised that the position of Veteran Services Coordinator for the City of Tempe would be posted soon. Dr. Webster noted that a nonprofit called Carry the Load will be hosting an event at Kiwanis Park on May 14. Dr. Webster further mentioned that the National WWII Museum in New Orleans is seeking WWII veterans to participate in an upcoming event. Ms. Brickner thanked Chair B. Thomas for volunteering his time to staff a table at the Community Health and Human Services Care Fair event on March 29.

Agenda Item 7 - City of Tempe Presentation: Park Rangers

Mr. Michael Spykes and Mr. Brian Cole introduced themselves and spoke about the city of Tempe Park Ranger program. Mr. Spykes noted that the Park Ranger program was implemented to increase the feeling of safety in Tempe parks. Mr. Spykes mentioned that the Park Rangers increase safety through education, communication, and community engagement.

Agenda Item 8 - Community Outreach and Advocacy: Veter-Clean

Ms. Jessica Mills introduced herself and spoke about her veteran-owned business. Ms. Mills mentioned that Veter-Clean is always looking to hire veterans and seeks ways to serve veterans in the community. Dr. Webster mentioned connecting Veter-Clean with the Tempe Works program.

Agenda Item 9 - Community Outreach and Advocacy: Southwest Veterans Foundation

Mr. Tom Sheets introduced himself and spoke about Southwest Veterans Community Foundation, a trade name for the organization's 501c6 and 501c3 nonprofit branches. Mr. Sheets noted that the Southwest Veterans Chamber of Commerce, a 501c6, supports veteran-owned businesses. Mr. Sheets mentioned that Southwest Veterans Foundation, a 501c3, awards grants and scholarships to veterans and organizations who support veterans. Mr. Sheets further announced that the annual Patriot's Ball will be held on Saturday, October 25, 2025.

Agenda Item 10 - Update: Recognition for Robin Arredondo-Savage

Ms. Rachael Brickner notified the commission members that Ms. Arredondo-Savage previously received a banner of recognition for Veterans Day as part of the Downtown Tempe Authority's Military Tribute Banner Program. The commission members resolved to find another way to recognize Ms. Arredondo-Savage. Chair Thomas encouraged the commission members to contact Dr. Webster with additional recognition ideas.

Agenda Item 11 - Future Agenda Items

- Richard White Pickett, owner of Polymath Photography - invitation from Commissioner G. DeNeal
- Under the Shield - invitation from Commissioner P. Kraft
- Noah Fraher, Congressional Aide for Congressman Greg Stanton - invitation from Commissioner P. Kraft

Agenda Item 12 - Adjournment

MOTION: Commissioner P. Kraft motioned to ADJOURN the Meeting.

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

Chair B. Thomas declared the meeting adjourned at 7:26 PM.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, May 14, 2025. **Meeting date updated to May 6, 2025, to allow for Commission member advocacy at the Tempe Community Salutes event.

Minutes Prepared by: Karla Dominguez

Reviewed by: Dr. Jacqueline Webster

Beno Thomas, Chair
Tempe Veterans Commission