



Minutes Tempe Veterans Commission July 9, 2025

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

(MEMBERS) Present:

Jim Lange, Vice Chair
Melanie James, Secretary
William "Dennis" Gorman
Romaldo Gonzales
Phil Kraft
José Moreno
Juan Garcia

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Gwendolyn "Gwen" DeNeal
Ryan Swearingen
Aaron McBride

City Staff Present:

Rachael Brickner, Community Health and Human Services Administrative Manager
Michael Garrison, Veterans Services Coordinator
Karla Dominguez, Administrative Assistant II+

Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Guest Appearances

Noah Fraher, Office of Congressman Greg Stanton

Agenda Item 1 - Call to Order

MOTION: Commission Chair Jim Lange moved to CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER at 6:02 p.m.

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Secretary Melanie James; Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 2 - Attendance

Commissioners Gwendolyn "Gwen" DeNeal, Ryan Swearingen, and Aaron 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 June 11, 2025, Tempe Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Commissioner P. Kraft moved to APPROVE the June 11, 2025, Minutes.

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner W. D. Gorman; Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 5 - Vice-Chair's Remarks

Chair J. Lange emphasized the importance of attendance and participation, especially during summer months.

Agenda Item 6 - Community Health and Human Services Updates

Mr. Garrison provided an update on veteran services and reported that 10 new veterans have received assistance since the last meeting. He mentioned that five were Veterans Treatment court and five were from the community. He noted that veterans residing in shelter were primarily supported through Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) referrals to agencies such as NCHP, CBI, and UMOM. Mr. Garrison highlighted several recent cases of financial assistance. One veteran received funding for a defensive driving course through Veterans 5-9, and another one received help with internet bills and job-search supplies through the city of Tempe. He also mentioned the success of the recent flagpole dedication and shared details of an upcoming surge event focusing on veteran homelessness.

Agenda Item 7 - Community Outreach and Advocacy Opportunities

Mr. Fraher introduced himself as a congressional aide fellow to Congressman Stanton, focusing on veterans and Gold Star families. Mr. Fraher shared that his main role involves engaging with the community to identify veterans' issues and communicating these to the legislative team in D.C. Mr. Fraher highlighted a few recent successes: He helped a reservist with a \$32,000 debt due to a misunderstanding of the veteran's active-duty orders. Assisted veterans with GI Bill issues and funeral benefits, he also identified problems with some of CHAMPVA's practices and is working on solutions. Discussed ongoing efforts to hold the VA accountable, including sending letters regarding a veteran's tragic death at the Phoenix VA parking lot. Addressing proposed staffing cuts and ensuring the Phoenix VA continues to hire staff. Mr. Fraher stated the Congressman's office can assist with veterans having disability claim issues, but primarily during the higher-level review process. Mr. Fraher emphasized the office's commitment to supporting veterans.

Agenda Item 8 - Agent Orange Awareness Month

Commissioner W. D. Gorman mentioned the historical context of agent orange and emphasized the need for awareness and education for future generations regarding the toxic exposure. Mr. Gorman mentioned that the VA is accepting claims related to Agent Orange, although many children of Vietnam veterans are currently being denied. Discussion occurred for the lighting recognitions in October to increase visibility and awareness.

Agenda Item 9 - Meeting Locations

Chair J. Lange coordinated a meeting off-site at Bricks and Barley mentioned a potential date for the September meeting.

Agenda Item 10 - Commissioner Updates

- Commissioner J. Garcia emphasized enhancing collaboration between the MAC (Military Affairs Committee) and the Veterans Commission.
- Plans to improve veteran capabilities across both the commission and committee will be a focal point.
- The upcoming meeting will further develop these strategies for the calendar year 2025-2026. _

Agenda Item 11 - Future Agenda Items

- Tempe Veterans Commission meeting at Bricks and Barley
- Mr. Garrison requested the commission's input on the Veterans Resource Village.
- Agent Orange Awareness Month proclamation in October - City of Tempe Mayor and City Council
- Navy's Neptune Society - invitation from Commissioner J. Garcia

Agenda Item 12 - Adjournment

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

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner W. D. Gorman; Motion passed unanimously.

Chair J. Lange declared the meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, August 11, 2025.

Minutes Prepared by: Karla Dominguez

Reviewed by: Rachael Brickner

Jim Lange, Chair
Tempe Veterans Commission