



Minutes Tempe Veterans Commission August 13, 2025

Minutes of the TEMPE VETERANS COMMISSION held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, August 13, 2025, in a hybrid format via Microsoft Teams and in-person at Tempe Public Library.

(MEMBERS) Present:

Jim Lange, Chair
Melanie James, Secretary
Gwendolyn DeNeal
William “Dennis” Gorman
Romaldo Gonzales
José Moreno
Juan Garcia

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Phil Kraft, Vice Chair
Aaron McBride

City Staff Present:

Michael Garrison, Veterans Services Coordinator
Karla Dominguez, Administrative Assistant II+

Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Guest Appearances

Dana West, Clinical Outreach Manager, Home Base Arizona.
Marcus Denetdale, Regional Assoc. Dir, Home Base Arizona.
Michelle Soto, Deputy CEO, The Arizona Pet Project.

Agenda Item 1 - Call to Order

MOTION: Commission Chair Jim Lange moved to CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER at 6:04 p.m.
SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner W.D. Gorman; Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 2 - Attendance

Commissioner Aron McBride and Vice Chair, Phil Kraft, 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 July 9, 2025, Tempe Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Motion initiated by Commissioner W.D. Gorman to correct and approve minutes.
SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner Garcia; Motion passed unanimously.

On Agenda Item 8 – Agent Orange October Awareness Month, Mr. Gorman mentioned the correction of “the VA is accepting claims related to Agent Orange, although many are currently being denied.” to “the VA is accepting claims related to Agent Orange, although many children of Vietnam veterans are currently being denied.”

Agenda Item 5 - Vice-Chair's Remarks

Chairman J. Lange reiterated the importance of attendance and participation, especially during summer months, with excused absences being permissible so that we can keep a healthy Commission.

Agenda Item 6 - Community Health and Human Services Updates

Mr. Garrison provided an update that several important events are scheduled for the months of September, October, November, and December. The regular meetings required by code have taken place, but there is concern regarding the update of The Tempe Veteran's Village in November, especially if no meeting occurs in October. With the 2026 elections on the horizon, it's important to note that Vice Chair Craft's term is ending this year, as it has been confirmed that they have completed two full terms. Mr. Garrison also mentioned Ryan Swearingen is no longer a member of the Commission, while Dillon McDade has been approved by the City Council and will start assisting in either September or early October.

Agenda Item 7 – Presentation: Dana West from Home Base

Dana West (Clinical Outreach Manager) and Marcus Denetdale (Regional Assoc. Dir.) gave a brief introduction about themselves. Also, a review about Home Base and their international objective which is dedication to healing the invisible wounds for Veterans of all eras, service members, military families and families of the fallen through world-class clinical care, wellness, education and research.

Agenda Item 8 – AZ Pet Project

Michelle Soto with the AZ Pet Project describes the organization as a hybrid between social work and animal welfare with their goal being to support pet families to stay together focusing on adoptions or intake. Looking at pet families going through vulnerable situations like housing, domestic violence, or any emotional/physical distress that can affect a pet. With assistance from the organizations case/social workers they can aid families and their pets in need.

Agenda Item 9 – Tempe Veterans Commission Business Card

Mr. Garrison stated that the business cards have been ordered and that they will be available the following day.

Agenda Item 10 - CY25 Closeout Annual Review, Elections and New Commissioners

- Mr. Garrison mentioned The Tempe Veterans Commission will be attending events in September, October, and November.
- Mr. Garrison mentioned The Commission has conducted 6+ regular meetings as required by the City Code. Mr. Garrison mentioned a notice of possible quorum will be posted before these events.
- The next regularly scheduled meeting will be in December to hold elections for Chair/Vice-Chair/Secretary and approve the 2025 Annual Review.

Agenda Item 11 – Update on Agent Orange Awareness Day/Month & Proclamation

- Commissioner Gorman stated that the Tempe Veterans Commission will be attending the Agent Orange Awareness Day event on October 16, 2025.
- Commissioner Gorman specified, there should also be an adjustment and revision of the proclamation's first paragraph.
- Agent Orange Awareness Month proclamation in October - City of Tempe Mayor and City Council

Agenda Item 12 - Change in Chapter 2, Article V, Division 20, Section 2-365 (Established, composition)

Mr. Garrison initiated a discussion on potentially amending the Commission's composition by replacing the Pat Tillman Veteran's Center at ASU (or its designee) with another representative. The goal is to expand recruitment efforts and fill the current vacancy with a participant more aligned with the commissions mission. Commissioner Garcia stated he would like to engage with Pat Tillman Veteran's Center prior to the Commission voting on an adjustment to the composition of the Tempe Veterans Commission

Agenda Item 13 – Change in Chapter 2, Article V, Division 20, Section 2-367 (Powers and duties)

MOTION: Commissioner Gwendolyn moved to keep the language and add the Department of labor's medallion

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner William "Dennis" Gorman; Motion passed unanimously.

The Tempe Veterans Commission voted to approve a request to amend **Tempe City Code Chapter 2, Article V, Division 20, Section 2-367-Powers and Duties**. Specifically, the Commission recommends updating subsection (4) to include the United States Department of Labor HIRE Vets Medallion Program, in addition to benchmarks outlined by the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, as criteria for assisting the City of Tempe and its business community in earning recognition as “Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers.” This update is intended to align with the City’s existing veteran-specific performance measure.

Background Information: On August 13, 2025, Tempe Veterans Commission meeting, the Commission requested that the City Council review their recommendation to amend Chapter 2, Article V, Division 20, Section 2-367 of the Tempe City Code. The Commission would like to update item (4) of the Commission’s Powers and Duties to include the United States Department of Labor HIRE Vets Medallion Program as part of the benchmarks used to assist the City of Tempe and its business community in earning recognition as “Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers.” The Veterans Commission voted to approve this request with 7 Commissioners voting aye, and two not voting.

New Verbiage would be something to the effect of: (4) To develop and promote benchmarks, as outlined by the Arizona Coalition for Military Families and the United States Department of Labor HIRE Vets Medallion Program, for assisting the City of Tempe and its business community to earn recognition as “Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers.”

Agenda Item 14 – Remembrance Walk

MOTION: Commissioner Moreno motioned for the substitution of the 9/11 Remembrance Walk instead of the regular meeting.

SECOND: Motion seconded by Commissioner Garcia; Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 15 – Agent Orange Proclamation at City Council

MOTION: Commissioner James motioned for the substitution of The Agent Orange Proclamation Event instead of the regular meeting.

SECOND: Motion seconded by Commissioner Garcia; Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Gorman stated that the Tempe Veterans Commission will be attending the Agent Orange Awareness Day event on October 16, 2025. Also, there should also be an adjustment and revision of the proclamation’s first paragraph.

Agenda Item 16 – Veterans Resource Village at Tempe Veterans Parade

MOTION: Commissioner Garcia motioned for the substitution of the Veterans Resource Village at Tempe Veterans Parade instead of the regular meeting.

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner William “Dennis” Gorman; Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 17 – Commissioner Updates

- Commissioner Moreno provided an update and noted that next week is “Welcome Back” week at ASU. He sees this as a great opportunity to engage student veterans, welcome them into the community and connect them with available resources.
- Commissioner Garcia announced he is officially serving as the Chair of the Tempe Military Affairs (MAC) with Mr. Garrison as Vice Chair. He shared that this follows two strategic planning sessions held in July, which helped establish a renewed direction for the MAC. A revised mission statement was approved at the committee’s 2025-2026 kickoff meeting.
- Commissioner Gorman reported that he attended the Vietnam Veterans of America convention, where delegates voted to continue the organization beyond 2028 and passed a resolution urging Congress to recognize toxic exposure on U.S. bases for veteran benefits. He also spoke to the U.S. Air Force Retirement Group in Tempe about upcoming 2025 retirement related legislation and represented the Tempe Veterans Commission.

Agenda Item 18 – Future Agenda Items

- Approve August 2025 Minutes
- Revisit meetings
- Tempe Veterans Commission 2025 Annual Review
- Elections for Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary
- Discuss potentially changing the Pat Tillman Veteran Center (PTVC) seat.
- 2026 Strategic Planning

Agenda Item 19 – Adjournment

MOTION: Commissioner W.D. Gorman motioned to ADJOURN the Meeting.

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

Chair J. Lange declared the meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, December 10, 2025.

Minutes Prepared by: Karla Dominguez

Reviewed by: Michael Garrison

Jim Lange, Chair
Tempe Veterans Commission