



Minutes Tempe Veterans Commission December 10, 2025

Minutes of the TEMPE VETERANS COMMISSION held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, in a hybrid format via Microsoft Teams and in-person at Tempe Public Library.

(MEMBERS) Present:

Jim Lange, Chair
Phil Kraft, Vice Chair
Gwendolyn DeNeal
William "Dennis" Gorman
Romaldo Gonzales
José Moreno
Dillion McDade
Aaron McBride

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Melanie James, Secretary
Juan Garcia

City Staff Present:

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

Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Guest Appearances

There were no guest appearances

Agenda Item 1 - Call to Order

MOTION: Commission Gorman moved to CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER at 6:01 p.m.

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

Agenda Item 2 – Attendance

Commissioner Garcia and Secretary James informed Chairman Lange in advance that they could not attend the meeting.

Agenda Item 3 - Call to the Audience for Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Agenda Item 4 - Welcome of new Commissioner for At-Large Member

The Tempe Veteran Commission members introduced themselves to Commissioner McDade. Commissioner McDade introduced himself as a veteran of the Navy, sharing his pride in having served his country. He recounted his time in the military, including his enlistment shortly after 9/11 and how that experience shaped his commitment to service. After leaving the Navy in 2006, he transitioned into public service, where he has continued to contribute to his community. He expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve both in the military and his current role, emphasizing the values of duty, honor, and community engagement that guided his work. His background as a veteran resonates with many and he encouraged open dialogue about the needs of the community.

Agenda Item 5 - Review and Approval of August 13, 2025, Tempe Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Motion initiated by Commissioner W.D. Gorman to APPROVE August 13, 2025, Minutes.

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

Agenda Item 6 - Review and Approval of 2025 Annual Report

The Commission Members reviewed and approved the 2025 Annual Report draft.

MOTION: Vice Chair Kraft motioned to APPROVE the 2025 Tempe Veterans Commission Annual Report.

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

Agenda Item 7 - 2026-2027 Slate of Officers Nomination Elections

Commissioner W.D. Gorman nominated Chairman J. Lange to continue serving as the Chair of the Veterans Commission. Chairman Lange accepted the nomination.

Chairman J. Lange nominated Commissioner G. DeNeal to serve as the new Vice Chair of the Veterans Commission. Commissioner G. DeNeal accepted.

Commissioner W.D. Gorman nominated Secretary M. James to continue serving as the Secretary of the Veterans Commission. Secretary M. James had previously informed the staff liaison, M. Garrison, of her willingness to continue serving as Secretary if nominated.

MOTION: Commissioner W.D. Gorman motioned to APPROVE the 2026-2027 Tempe Veterans Commission Slate of Officers.

SECOND: Motion seconded by Vice Chair Kraft; Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 8 – Chair’s Remarks

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

Agenda Item 9 – Community Health and Human Services Updates

Mr. Garrison provided updates on recent community events focused on veterans. Mr. Garrison highlighted the successful 9-11 Memorial Walk organized by Commissioner R. Gonzales who noted its growth and the impactful stories shared by retired NYPD officers. He discussed the observance of Agent Orange Awareness Month, emphasizing the need for continued awareness of its effects on veterans and their families, with support from the Vietnam Veterans of America. Mr. Garrison mentioned the Community Salutes event recognizing high school students who enlisted in the military and expressed a desire for ongoing discussions to enhance it. He thanked Commissioner Gonzales for his support at the Tempe Veteran Employee Breakfast, which had 55 veteran attendees and was sponsored by El Jefe. He also recapped the Veterans Village at the end of the Veterans Day Parade, which aimed to engage families and veterans, and acknowledged the contributions of various commissioners. Mr. Garrison announced that a new representative from the Pat Tillman Veterans Center would be joining the commission and informed members about an upcoming presentation from the city clerk regarding commission operations. He encouraged collaboration and input from the commission to improve future events.

Agenda Item 10 – Meetings and Event Tempo

- Commissioner Moreno discussed the inclusion of Memorial Day in future planning.
- Discuss the proposal to explore the balance between increasing the number of events and decreasing the number of meetings.
- Vice Chair Phil Kraft and Commissioner Opel suggested scheduling the Agent Orange Awareness proclamation as a permanent item on the city council calendar for October.
- Commissioner Gorman suggested maintaining monthly meetings for consistency and engagement.

Agenda Item 11 - Recruitment of Vacant Seats

- Chairman Lange noted there is a vacant position for Veterans housing advocacy. He mentioned that there has not been a significant number of applicants for this role and encouraged the commission to actively reach out to potential candidates who may be interested in joining.

Agenda Item 12 – Discussion and Possible Action for Changing Commission Composition

- Mr. Garrison, the staff liaison, reported that a candidate had been identified to fill the previously vacant seat. Based on this update, the Commission determined that consideration of the proposed change was no longer necessary, and no discussion or action was taken.

Agenda Item 13 – Farewell to Vice-Chair Phillip Kraft

- The commission members shared their heartfelt farewells and expressed gratitude for Vice Chair Kraft's contributions.
- Personal stories and memories shared by commission members highlighting Vice Chair Kraft's positive impact and leadership.
- Mr. Garrison acknowledges Phil's role since joining the commission in June 2019.

Agenda Item 14 – Commissioner updates

- Commissioner Moreno reported that a welcome home event was held over the past weekend for a National Guard unit that recently returned from deployment. He expressed his commitment to keeping the community informed about future welcome home events and encouraged everyone to share this information.
- Commissioner Gonzales shared information about volunteer opportunities to set up QR codes at the Chase Field and State Farm Stadium to enhance the experience for attendees. For the upcoming game, he anticipates the attendance of 450 veterans and their family members, including reservists. Additionally, he mentioned a toy drive scheduled for December 20th and is seeking volunteers to help distribute shoes and Christmas cards at Victory Place. He emphasized that this initiative is a wonderful way to spread holiday cheer and encouraged the community to participate.

Agenda Item 15 – Future Agenda Items

- 2026 Strategic Planning
- Presentation from the City Clerk

Agenda Item 16 – Adjournment

MOTION: Commissioner McDade motioned to ADJOURN the Meeting. SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner Moreno; Motion passed unanimously.

Chair J. Lange declared the meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, January 14, 2025.

Minutes Prepared by: Karla Flores

Reviewed by: Michael Garrison

Jim Lange, Chair
Tempe Veterans Commission