



**THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
BOROUGH OF THE BRONX  
COMMUNITY BOARD 7**



RUBEN DIAZ, JR., BOROUGH PRESIDENT    EMMANUEL MARTINEZ, CHAIRPERSON    ISCHIA BRAVO, DISTRICT MANAGER

## VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Chad Royer</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021</b>
<b>Meeting Time:</b>	<b>6:30 PM</b>
<b>Members: (Check Those In Attendance)</b>	<b>✓ Chad Royer    ✓ Emmanuel Asamoah    ✓ Hugo Gonzalez ✓ Jean Hill    ✓ Jeffery Hunter    ✓ Helene Redd ✓ Adaline Walker-Santiago</b>
<b>Minutes done by:</b>	<b>Chad Royer</b>

**Minutes:**

- I) Introductions**
- II) Review of previous minutes (If applicable)**
- III) Follow-up from previous month (If applicable)**
- IV) New Business**
  - a) Invited Panelists For The Veterans Roundtable Tenant Support and Housing, and Know Your Rights As Family Members Of Veterans: Amjad Mujaahid of NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Shawn Kingston of the US Department of Veterans Affairs, Michelle Veliz of the Department of Consumer Affairs and Worker Protection, Orlando Torres of NYC Commission of Human Rights, and Emile St. Cyr of NYC Commission of Human Rights**
  - b) Veterans Roundtable Discussion**
    - 1) People who have housing vouchers like the G.I. Bill continue to have problems finding housing citywide. Vouchers need to be accepted when presented and landlords are not allowed to discriminate. Starting February 15, there will no longer be a unit limit for landlords to accept vouchers for rental availability or purchase availability.**



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**Discrimination for employment is not allowed based on one's service history.**

- 2) The community and its leaders should consider collaborate with landlords to figure out what are some of their needs and challenges and educate landlords on the protocol. Landlords have an obligation to understand the neighborhood as well. We should also understand what role the city plays in encouraging or not producing the support for landlords and veterans. Our voices need to be heard at the Congressional and borough president's office. We need to listen to those who are affected so we can encourage the drafting of policies that are needed.**
- 3) It is very insulting for those who served to have to go through issues and discrimination in employment and housing. Any form of discrimination should be reported to the office of the Commission of Human Rights.**
- 4) Landlords are refusing vouchers because they can receive more money in rent from other renters not using vouchers. The Veterans Affairs office (VA) has 15 HUDVASH social workers who help veterans in getting housing and on occasion would visit landlords in an effort to identify and correct issues. The VA budget is over \$200 billion per year nationwide.**
- 5) According to the Paid Sick Leave Law, if veterans were denied paid leave, they can call 311 and send email to the office of labor policy and standards to file a complaint. For example, if someone had COVID-19 and employer threatens action like firing, a complaint can be made, and the office can step in and have wages honored. The Department of Consumer Affairs offers Ready To Rent Program, a partnership with HPD, access to financial**



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counselors who could help with things like budgets, student loans, and how to receive stimulus payments. A housing ambassador can help veterans apply for any specific housing like the housing lottery. The office received many complaints from those who have been working while sick and had to self-quarantine for being exposed to COVID-19.

6) How to file a complaint against landlord:

- <https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-01074>

7) New tenant protection laws:

- <https://www1.nyc.gov/content/tenantprotection/pages/>

8) Other information: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/housing-connect-rentals.page>

c) Questions

- 1) What new housing developments will be coming to our area that will serve the needs of our veterans? This question comes a lot, but there are no known sites at this time. The VA does not develop housing but place veterans in housing. All new developments in the city needs to allocate a minimum of 10% of housing space to veterans.
- 2) What is the appropriate protocol for veterans to follow if he/she feels or has evidence that landlords or management companies are not properly addressing or handling maintenance related issues in the residence that they live in? The first step to take is to record a complaint through the 311 system, just in case the judge needs to establish a timeline as to when the problem started, but if they feel discriminated due to veteran status, they should call the CCHR hotline at 212-416-0197. The next step is talking to neighbors to see if they are facing similar issues, just in case they are not facing



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the issue and a veteran is singled out. If veterans are not receiving repairs, they can call social workers from the VA in the HUDVASH department, as these social workers make weekly and monthly visits to veterans who are recipients of HUDVASH program. If buildings are not up to code, then landlords can lose vouchers and veterans can move elsewhere.

- 3) What was a recent idea for legislation to be passed that would benefit veterans directly? It is suggested to reach out to the assembly and senate to find out what bills were and are on the table within the last year or two. Many of the general items have been tabled until the pandemic gets under control.
- 4) How can we reach all veterans in our Bronx community more effectively to inform them of all their rights, as in employment, housing and other resources? Locating veterans in the Bronx is somewhat difficult, but working with community boards, colleges, health care entities and elected officials is encouraged. We should also see if there are other veterans committees on other community boards in the Bronx who want to expand their reach. The office of the Commission of Human Rights is open to partnering up with other groups to do workshops. The VA wants to encourage veterans to take advantage of the services and benefits, whether or not they have benefits elsewhere. Veterans are entitled to the benefits, yet some feel that taking advantages of benefits takes away resources from other veterans when in fact more resources are allocated to the VA from Congress when more people take advantage of the services. Reaching out to spouses and family members of veterans has been a successful tactic to encourage more engagement. Veterans are encouraged



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to sign up, even if they may not need to services now. Even though the VA is a government agency, the VA is not-for-profit. Veterans and advocates are encouraged to identify resources that are right in our neighborhood or district and continue promoting it on a continuous basis. A veterans support service network is also suggested where resources and benefits can be shared with veterans and their families directly.

5) Can the city council set up regularly scheduled media programming like BronxNet so they can discuss and broadcast topics and issues pertaining to veterans on a bi-weekly or monthly schedule? It would be recommended to reach out to these networks in order to get free airtime.

6) How can families of veterans get information on PTSD discreetly, delivered or presented with consideration of COVID standards? There is a 24 hour Crisis Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and a online chat system with a crisis counselor.

Individuals can tex message to 838255. The VA has a dedicated team that focuses on mental health because they get a lot of calls addressing PTSDs. Anyone who is not a veteran can also call. The VA is currently working on a system that mirrors 911 where anyone can call to address veteran needs. The Bronx Vets Center on Morris Avenue and East Fordham Road is also another resource.

It is also suggested to have a buddy check system where weekly virtual contacts can be made to check on people since no one really knows what others are going through.

The VA accepts intakes, but people can go to the nearest hospital. Once someone in the hospital is stabilized, the patient can be





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**transferred to the closest VA, and the VA will pay for the ambulance bill once the VA receives the bill within 72 hours.**

- V) Next meeting date: Wednesday, February 17, 2021**
- VI) Discussion on next agenda**
- VII) Adjournment**