

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for January 23, 2018 meeting held at:

Brooklyn Workforce 1 Career Center
9 Bond Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Members

Present:

Todd Haskins (Manhattan)	Samuel Innocent (Brooklyn)
Charles Hernandez (Bronx)	Joe Bello (Bronx)
John Rowan (Queens)	Mariel Juarez (Brooklyn)

Absent/Unavailable:

*Pat Devine (Bronx)	*Anthony "Tony" Odierno (Manhattan)
Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)	Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)

*--Term Expired/Does not wish to be reappointed.

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:15 PM.
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience.

Old Business: Elections were not held. It was agreed upon by the members in Executive Committee that with the majority of VAB members three-year terms finished, the board would look at holding elections at the April meeting. The Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary would stay in place until then and the board would ask the Mayor and City Council Speaker to re-appoint or appoint new individuals as soon as possible.

New Business: The chair reviewed the board's **Annual Report** to the Mayor and Speaker of the City Council and discussed what the report does in terms of informing and giving recommendations. As part of the report, the chair discussed:

Three reasons as part of public policy to support veterans: (1) Moral (2) Federal dollars brought in and spend from veterans and family members and (3) that veterans are a great investment.

The board's meeting dates and how moving forward there will be pre-scheduling of the meeting dates (barring any unforeseen circumstances).

The board's recommendations to the Mayor and Speaker regarding veterans issues and DVS, which include:

- (1) Contracting ability by DVS.
- (2) Properly fund the Veterans on Campus Initiative. Tie in to fund a campaign to assist returning veterans (which would be return on investment).
- (3) Better support for Veteran Entrepreneurs (through DVS and SBS).
- (4) Encouraging the Mayor and Council to support budgeting consistency for DVS.

Regarding DVS, the board made the following recommendations to the Commissioner:

- (1) DVS develop better communications (add more investment).
- (2) Provide more resources to assist veterans in post-secondary education.
- (3) Vets on Campus: Continue to build the coalition of Colleges and Universities supporting the Vets on Campus initiative, including support for veterans to ensure that they complete the degrees they are pursuing.
- (4) Continue with Mission Home (reducing Veteran Homelessness).
- (5) Build out VetConnectNYC.
- (6) Provide resources to support veterans in political engagement.
- (7) Provide deeper support for veteran entrepreneurs in programs like Bunker Labs, NYU Tandon, etc.

Lastly, the Chair highlighted the fact that many of the board members three-year terms have expired and that it's difficult to conduct business with the lack of clarity of who is involved. He called for the Mayor and Speaker to appoint or re-appoint members to the VAB as quickly as possible.

Presentations:

DVS: Commissioner Sutton welcomed everyone in attendance. She introduced her staff in attendance (Team DVS) and welcomed the new City Council Veterans Committee Chair Chaim Deutsch to the meeting. Commissioner Sutton gave a brief update on VetConnectNYC (currently NY Serves) and stated that it will be launching sometime in the spring and that the name change will reflect ownership (by the City) and branding.

CM Deutsch: Councilman Deutsch introduced himself and shared that he has been a member of the City Council for four years and has worked in City government for 17 years. The Councilman also shared that his parents are holocaust survivors who were liberated by the U.S. Army. He stated that he good at listening to people regarding what's needed. The Councilman then discussed homelessness and stated that he is looking to hold his first hearing at a homeless shelter so that he and his colleagues are able to visualize the issue/problem and come up with solutions. He also stated that his questions will have meaning to it. The Councilman then briefly discussed the MTA and half-fair metrocards for veterans. He stated that he is sending out a letter (tomorrow) to the MTA in support of this measure. The Councilman also discussed "Cold War" status in regard to home owner's tax-exemption, DRIE (Disabled Rent Increase Exemption) and SCRIE (Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption). He stated he would like to create a VRIE

(Veterans Rent Increase Exemption). He finished by stating that “we will accomplish a lot over the next four years.”

AC Othman: DVS Assistant Commissioner Othman introduced new members of DVS. He briefly discussed the “Vets on Campus” program, which is taking off this year. He also stated that DVS will be work with VOWS (Veterans on Wall Street) this year and finished by talking about Fleet Week, which will be from May 23 to May 29.

Public Comments: Board member Mariel Juarez (Brooklyn) hosted this part of the meeting. The following individual(s) gave public comments to the board:

Ronda Sherwin: Veterans Financial Coach with AFS Corp. Ms. Sherwin stated that her organization offers free financial coaching for veterans on all income levels. She brought fliers that were on the table for anyone interested.

Melissa Bryant: IAVA. Ms. Bryant stated that she runs the DC shop for IAVA and that she does all the legislative work. Ms. Bryant stated that IAVA is the only veteran’s organization that works here and discussed their RRRP program and what it does.

Corey Ortega: NYC Veterans Alliance. Mr. Ortega gave greetings to the board and discussed his organizations first civic leadership workshop held in February. He shared that by mid February they would be putting out a policy agenda. He also briefly discussed the NY Serves network and stated that they make referrals to the network. Lastly, he invited the board to visit Civil Hall when it holds its Manhattan meeting.

Rob Piechota: Director, Small Business Development Center at City Tech (CUNY-Brooklyn). Mr. Piechota talked about contracts for veterans. He also discussed how only 400 veterans are registered with SBS, which is feeble numbers. He also discussed the PricewaterhouseCoopers report on supporting veterans owned businesses from late 2014. He stated that we are horrible as a voting block and that we need to state the case for veterans’ small businesses. Lastly, he talked about SBDC (what they are) and stated that contracts are out there.

There were no more public speakers.

Board member Sam Innocent briefly talked about **WorkForce1** and that he is the Veterans Specialist here. He stated that if any veteran is looking for employment to reach out to him. He also stated that if anyone knew of any employers looking for veterans to reach out to him. Lastly, he said that he can help individuals with updating their resumes.

Monique Rada from DVS shared upcoming Theater of War dates/locations and briefly discussed local and national caregivers.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: April 2018

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary