

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for June 11, 2019 meeting held at:

Samuel H. Young American Legion Post 620
1530 Hutchinson River Pkwy
Bronx, New York 10461

Members

Present:

Todd Haskins (Manhattan)	John Rowan (Queens)
Charles Hernandez (Bronx)	Tiffany Daugherty (Manhattan)
Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)	Annette Osborne (Brooklyn)
Peter Kauffman (Queens)	James Hendon (Bronx)
Joe Bello (Bronx)	

Absent:

Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)

Note: Awaiting final board member to be appointed by Speaker's Office.

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:35 PM.
- All VAB members introduce themselves to the audience. Todd briefly talks about what the VAB does.

Greetings:

Joe Mondello, the Chair of the Bronx Borough President's Veterans Advisory Council and member of the Sam Young American Legion Post gives greetings and welcomes the board to the Post. Mr. Mondello briefly talks about the post, its history and thanks everyone for coming out.

Presentation:

Commissioner Sutton thanks the board and welcomes everyone in attendance. The Commissioner discusses the Executive budget for DVS and makes it clear that whatever anyone may have recently heard, DVS is being properly funded. The Commissioner states the Mayor and City care about its veterans. Commissioner Sutton recommends reading the VAB report and then discusses Fleet Week and the Senior Leadership Seminar that took place during Fleet Week,

as well as Memorial Day events. The Commissioner also talks about how the agency has more work to do and is on the brink of its 4th year anniversary and full operational capacity. The Commissioner talks about the need to bring veterans together and how they should be treated. She states we can all agree to disagree. Finally, the Commissioner asks everyone from DVS to stand up and be recognized.

New Business: The chair (Todd) talks about some of the items that the VAB discussed, including Vets on Campus, where veterans come in transitioning for college. Todd also talks about the veteran homeless numbers, the drop in federal dollars and how the City has stepped in to fill the gaps. Todd discusses the challenges VSOs are facing to pick up their numbers and the proposal that DVS is looking at to try and reinvigorate them.

Commissioner Sutton also talks about Pride Month and how DVS is supporting, including a bracelet they are giving out. Additionally, the Commissioner talks about DVS participating in this year's Pride Parade.

The Chair makes a motion to accept the April VAB minutes. The board approved the minutes.

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

Emile St.Cyr: Mr. St.Cyr works for the NYC Human Rights Commission. The NYC Human Rights Commission is charged with enforcement of the Human Rights Law and educating the public and encouraging positive community relations. He discussed the City passing laws that protects veterans and service members from discrimination, bias and harassment. He stated that they will be holding workshops at the Harlem Vet Center over the course of the three Fridays starting next week and to look for an e-mail coming. John Rowan asked Mr. St.Cyr what workshops will be discussed. Mr. St.Cyr says the three workshops will be on discrimination, public accommodations and housing.

Peter Del Debbio: Mr. Del Debbio is the American Legion Bronx County Commander. He gives greetings and welcomes the board to the Bronx. He also acknowledges DVS Assistant Commissioner Adam Connolly who recently attended the Legion's Bronx County convention.

Ashton Stewart: Mr. Ashton Stewart is the SAGE Vets Program Coordinator, which works with older LGBTQ veterans. Mr. Stewart talked about a bill passed in the NYS Legislature that would restore state benefits to LGBTQ veterans discharged due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. He also discussed how housing has been a challenge and how many veterans cannot get help with housing.

Richard Cartagena: Mr. Cartagena represents the Harlem Vet Center. Mr. Cartagena talked about the Harlem Vet Center, what a Vet Center is, what it does and how it provides services to veterans and family members without charging. Mr. Cartagena also talked about readjustment services that Vet Centers provide and can speak to anyone afterwards who wants more information.

Kaitlyn Filzer/Joe Crowley: Ms. Filzer and Mr. Crowley represent the Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans Project at Fordham Law's Feerick Center. They discussed how they started two years ago and are trying to develop program where gaps in legal services for veterans are. Currently

they are working on consumer debt, credit cards, doing clinics for child support/downward modifications, etc. They give out their contact information.

Ricardo Garcia: Mr. Garcia is a member of the Bronx American Legion and sits on the Executive Committee. He also welcomes the VAB and talks about the need for 9/11 federal funding and how the monies have been reduced and is almost depleted. He asked everyone to help lobby for support and how the VFW and Legion support this. He also asks for people to send letters to their congressional representative on this issue.

Amjad Mujaahid: Mr. Mujaahid works for the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Bronx Neighborhood Health Action Center. Mr. Mujaahid talks about the work that he does and that the South Bronx is the target area. He also discusses the work that he does helping veterans and their family members. Mr. Mujaahid talked about his referral service and how he works with both Mr. Stewart and Mr. St.Cyr. He acknowledges what Mr. Stewart said earlier about housing and states that a lot of veterans who have HUD and Section 8 vouchers are being turned away and need help.

Mike Munoz: Mr. Munoz is representing the NYC Veterans Alliance. Mr. Munoz again asks about updating the VAB site on DVS's webpage (he asked last meeting). He states that the membership has been asking about this issue. A representative from DVS tells him it was updated yesterday. Mr. Munoz then talks about what they are and what they are do. He then briefly talks about their event for June 25 on primary election.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: September 2019

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary