

2019 NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT



NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ACHIEVEMENTS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

*“With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, **to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan**, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”*
– **Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, March, 4, 1865**

Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255, press 1)

The Crisis Line, mandated by the Joshua Omvig Veteran Suicide Prevention Act of 2007, provides immediate support to veterans, service members and their families.

December 31, 2019

Mayor Bill de Blasio and Council Speaker Corey Johnson:

We are at the dawn of a new era for New York City veterans. A “change of command” has occurred at the Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS), bringing in a new Commissioner, and a new phase in the development of DVS. While the last three years were defined by the “startup phase” of the first new city agency in New York City in nearly a quarter century, the next several years will be defined by the agency’s focus on operations, efficiency and effectiveness.

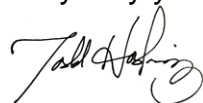
Since its inception, our vision for DVS has been to establish and maintain the most effective veteran’s program of any large city in the nation. This is even more true today with the conclusion of the start-up phase of DVS. To accomplish this, DVS must prioritize policies and initiatives that support veterans’ continued service as citizens. This guiding principle ensures that all New York City residents benefit from programs that support veterans.

Moving forward, it will be important for DVS to evaluate all of the programs that have been established and invest more heavily in those that are the most effective; while possibly eliminating some programs in order to focus its limited resources on those that are most successful. Establishing more effective communications and outreach capabilities so that our veterans are aware of and can take advantage of these great programs is absolutely critical to mission success.

We are grateful to our partners on the City Council who have vastly expanded the resources invested in the City’s veterans. We believe we have been judicious in focusing our recommendations on areas that provide the greatest value for all New Yorkers and we ask that due consideration be given to our recommendations to expand the VAB to include spouses, care givers and Gold Star parents and to fully fund the Veterans on Campus initiative.

We appreciate the leadership that the administration and the members of the City Council have shown in support of our veterans and we look forward to New York City leading the nation in its local veteran programs.

Very truly yours,



Todd Haskins
Chairman

NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Each of our members' terms expired during the year and new appointments / re-appointments were meaningfully delayed by both the administration and the City Council. As of December 31, 2019 8 of 11 members had current appointments; one member's term has expired but we expect him to be reappointed and the fifth appointment by the City Council remains unfilled; as does one appointment by the Mayor to replace Commissioner Hendon.

Board Member	Borough	Email (@gmail.com)	Term Expires	Appointment
Joe Bello Secretary	Bronx	JBelloVABNYC	June 30, 2021	Council
Tiffany Daugherty Vice Chairman	Manhattan	TDaughertyVABNYC	February 17, 2021	Mayor
Todd Haskins Chairman	Manhattan	THaskinsVABNYC	February 17, 2021	Mayor
Charles Hernandez	Bronx	CHernandezVABNYC	March 31, 2021	Council
Peter Kauffmann	Queens	PKauffmannVABNYC	August 23, 2020	Mayor
Wendy McClinton	Brooklyn	WMcClintonVABNYC	June 4, 2021	Council
John Rowan	Queens	JRowanVABNYC	November 19, 2021	Council
Annette Tucker Osborne	Brooklyn	AOsbourneVABNYC	August 23, 2020	Mayor
VACANT	TBD	TBD	TBD	Mayor
VACANT	TBD	TBD	TBD	Mayor
VACANT	TBD	TBD	TBD	Council

Recommendation to Expand the Board

In recognition of the importance of spouses, care givers, Gold Star parents and families, the VAB voted unanimously to ask for legislation from the City Council to expand the size of the board from its current 11 to 13, of which two members must be from this important constituency to the Board, one to be appointed by the Mayor and the Speaker of the City Council. These two representatives would have to be either a spouse of a veteran or deceased veteran, Gold Star parent or child or bona fide caregiver of a veteran as defined by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

We believe that these voices to the VAB would allow us to better advise the Mayor, Speaker and Commissioner of DVS on the fulfillment of DVS's mission to foster purpose driven lives for NYC service members, veterans, and their families.

FORMAL RECOGNITION OF COMMISSIONER LOREE SUTTON

At our final VAB meeting for 2019, on **Wednesday, November 20, 2019** the VAB voted unanimously to recognize the first Commissioner of the Department of Veteran Services, Loree Sutton. The recognition is set forth below:

“For superior service as the first Commissioner of the Department of Veteran Services, we hereby recognize Brigadier General Loree Sutton for her leadership during her tenure as Commissioner of the Department of Veteran Services. Commissioner Sutton established a vision for DVS and laid the foundation for its future success. Her team established a number of innovative programs during her tenure including Mission Home, the fight to end Veteran Homelessness, Veterans on Campus, Service to Service New York City, the Core4 Whole Health Model, and many others.”

A subset of the DVS’s accomplishments includes:

- In 2015 New York City was certified by HUD as ending chronic veteran homelessness (those veterans that were homeless the longest), and by 2019 had reduced the number of veterans living on the street by 98%
- Expanded Veteran Treatment Courts to All Five Boroughs
- Veterans and Uniformed Service Members added as a protected class under the City’s human rights law
- Established as an official Coast Guard City
- Created an emergency eviction prevention program for students receiving the GI Bill who were impacted by Federal IT errors
- VetsCARE: New York City’s first social impact bond
- Staffing expanded tenfold from 4 to over 40

Future generations of Veterans will look back on the DVS’s first Commissioner with pride and gratitude.

On behalf of the New York City Veteran’s Advisory Board,



Todd Haskins
Chairman

RATIONALE FOR LOCAL VETERAN POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Why Should the City Support its Veterans?

We believe that New York City, as well as the non-profit and private sectors, have both the moral and economic imperatives to support our veterans. New York City benefits from these investments:

- **Freedom and Security – the Moral Imperative:** All citizens of New York benefit from the freedom and security provided by our armed forces. The Federal Hall National Memorial reminds us of the observation of our first President, George Washington who noted that *“the willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by our nation.”* In our order to ensure our continued success it is critical that we support those who have served.
- **Federal Spending and Tourism – the Short-term Economic Imperative:** New York City also benefits disproportionately from federal spending and tourism. Activities and venues such as Fleet Week, New York’s July Fourth Celebration, New York City Veterans’ Day Parade (*“America’s Parade”*), the Intrepid Sea Air and Space Museum, and the Canyon of Heroes all are connected to our nation’s military veterans and produce significant commerce. Additionally, many of New York City’s programs qualify for federal funding which makes them more effective and economically efficient for the City. Lastly, as the economic capital of the world, many Veteran Service Organizations (VSO’s) and veteran-focused non-profits have either chosen to call New York City their home or host significant operations and events here, which also adds to the commerce and culture of the city. All of this provides a compelling rationale to support strong local veteran policies.
- **Veterans Make Great Citizens – the Long-Term Economic Imperative:** Veterans and their families are truly this country’s greatest renewable resources and attracting them to New York City supports our continued success. Veterans tend to have higher earnings and lower unemployment than non-veterans once their transition is complete. Veterans also tend to be more civically active and have lower incarceration rates than non-veterans. Increasing our veteran population will continue to add to the vibrant fabric of culture in the city.

These moral and economic imperatives provide a sound rationale for investment in local veteran policies and programs particularly since many of these provide a direct and measurable positive economic return for New York City.

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE: SUPPORT VETERANS' CONTINUED SERVICE AS CITIZENS

In order to provide discipline in prioritizing resources, the VAB has worked with DVS to establish a guiding principle through which all potential investments should be considered and prioritized. All programs should be viewed through the lens of how they **support veterans' continued service as citizens**. This aligns with the long-term economic imperative that veterans make good citizens and that the City benefits by attracting them in greater numbers.

Some veterans face unique challenges related directly or indirectly to their service. However, veterans are not victims. They actively chose to serve and providing support to allow them to continue their service as citizens is an important investment. Prioritizing based upon this principle has the added benefit of reinforcing the fact that all New Yorkers benefit from these programs, regardless of veteran status.

Wherever possible we should seek programming that reinforces and supports this principle. For example, we should partner with non-profits and VSOs for which this is a central tenet of their mission. Further, we should invest in programs and resources which help veterans improve such as education, employment support and programs which support personal self-improvement.

GUIDANCE FOR THE NEW COMMISSIONER

The New York City Department of Veteran Services has completed three years as an agency and turned over leadership from its founding Commissioner. This year we wanted to provide more focused guidance for the new Commissioner in addition to the broader list of recommendations and opportunities which we have provided. This not only highlights the opportunities which can have the greatest impact, but also serves to narrow the agency's strategic focus as it shifts from startup phase to one of more consistent operations.

The "start-up" phase of DVS over the past three years was marked by needs identification and program development. The next phase of DVS should focus on capacity refinement and operational excellence. Recognizing the limitations of resources, some programs may be de-emphasized or even eliminated in order to maximize the benefits to all New Yorkers of the City's investments in its veterans. Such actions should not be viewed as a sign of failure but rather of an agency coming into its own and optimizing limited resources. This discipline should enable the administration and City Council to expand the agency's budget over time.

The VAB recommends six specific priorities that would deliver the greatest "return on investment" to New York City:

- Enhance Outreach: The best programs in the world are worthless if nobody knows about them. As such, DVS must strive to enhance its communications and outreach capabilities in order to reach all veterans. This includes social media and new forms of communication. Additionally, given that approximately half of the veteran population in New York City are over the age of sixty, it also requires old fashioned community engagement to be effective.
- Support Veteran Housing: Among the most effective DVS programs has been Mission: Home, its effort to end veteran homelessness. Not only has this enriched the lives of those who had fallen on hard times but it has benefitted all New Yorkers by generating valuable Federal resources to fund these efforts – allowing the city to use its resources for other homeless populations. While this has been very successful by any measure, it is critical to finish the job and achieve "functional zero." Further, the State and Federal resources that this effort attracted to the city must be quantified so New York City taxpayers better understand how valuable this program has been to the city. Recently, the VA changed the limits of the VA mortgage program, making the program more relevant for New York City veterans. Providing access, and more importantly education will enhance overall veteran home ownership.
- Enable Veterans on Campus with Real Resources: At last count there were more than 12,000 veterans utilizing the GI Bill to attend college in New York City – providing over \$600 million dollars in Federal funding to the New York City economy. This is a staggering amount of federal resources and it does not count the additional spending on living expenses which exceeds \$200 million. Developing programs that support these students and helps attract additional GI Bill students to study in New York benefits all New Yorkers, not just veterans. DVS should identify

the unique needs of student veterans and seek specific funding from the administration and City Council to provide services to this population – including rental support, discounted MTA access, tutoring, and access to medical and mental health care.

- Provide Direct Support for Veterans Filing Claims: Navigating the Federal VA bureaucracy to access benefits for which a veteran qualifies is incredibly difficult. This has become more challenging as many of the traditional providers of these services have lost funding and support staff trained to complete these activities. Based on data from the American Community Survey sponsored by the US Census Bureau, DVS estimates that a properly trained claims support specialist processing VA claims could realize approximately \$9.4 million in benefit recovery annually. Not only does this change the lives of those receiving the benefits they are due, but it also benefits all New Yorkers by bringing more federal resources into the city. To learn more: <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-our-veterans-are-getting-shortchanged-20191111-baahjdhiwbcvIm6qxu5qrsftgi-story.html>
- Add Veteran Owned Businesses to the MWBE Program in New York City: Federal and State government provides support to veteran-owned businesses, but New York City offers no such program, other than allowing them to register on the City's Small Business Payee Information Portal (PIP). Adding veteran-owned businesses to existing MWBE programs would have little to no cost and allow the city to lead from the front in supporting veteran entrepreneurs.
- Celebrate and Honor Veterans throughout New York City: A critical function of DVS is to celebrate veterans throughout New York City. With great annual events like Fleet Week and the NYC Veteran's Day Parade, New Yorkers turn out in great numbers to honor veterans – but there are some areas where the City can do better. Many of the monuments recognizing the "greatest generation" are in disrepair, and there is no monument in New York City recognizing the thousands of New Yorkers who answered our nation's call in the wake of 9-11 or for Gold Star families. As many veterans reach the end of their lives, some do not have families with the means to pay for proper burials or "final honors." DVS should continue to find ways to engage with the community and celebrate veterans and their service.

SUMMARY OF VAB ACTIONS OF IN 2019 AND PLANS FOR 2020

Below is a summary of the key activities for 2019:

- ✓ **Advised the Commissioner on the Development and Staffing of DVS:** The VAB was actively involved in discussions around key legislative, organizational, and policy initiatives. We also advised on hiring strategy and policy priorities.
- ✓ **Conducted 5 Meetings:** We successfully conducted five meetings in 2019, one in each Borough as mandated. At year-end 2019 only 8 of 11 members had current appointments. Three seats are currently vacant, two from the Mayor and one from the Speaker, and one seat had expired but we have been operating assuming Mr. Joseph Bello's term would be extended as guided by the Speaker's office.
- ✓ **2020 Meeting Schedule:** We have tentatively scheduled the 2020 VAB Meetings on the following dates:

Date	Borough
Thu March 19	Brooklyn
Thu April 30	Bronx
Wed June 17	Staten Island
Thu September 17	Queens
Thu November 19	Manhattan

- **Convened Government and other Leaders to Connect Veterans with Services:** At each of the VAB meetings members of the DVS, VA and representatives of other government and non-government organizations were present which created an opportunity to connect veterans directly with the services they offer.
- **Engaged with DVS, City Council and the Veteran Community on Strategic Priorities and Policies Relating to Veterans in New York City:** The VAB actively engaged with all three of its key stakeholders to help prioritize resources and raise issues. This has included meetings with several elected officials as well as members of the veteran community.

HIGHLIGHTS OF EVENTS AND MILESTONES IMPACTING VETERANS IN NEW YORK CITY IN 2019

2019 continued to be an important growth year for veterans in New York City. The Department of Veteran Services has provided a summary of their activities and accomplishments for the year which is included in the following pages. We wanted to highlight two particular achievements that we believe are noteworthy.

NYC's FIRST SOCIAL IMPACT BOND:

Launched Veterans Coordinated Approach to Recovery & Employment (Vets CARE), a Pay for Success initiative that supports unemployed veterans with PTSD attain competitive, suitable employment; winner of NYU's Grunin Prize for Law & Social Entrepreneurship

RAPIDLY HOUSING HOMELESS VETERANS:

DVS launched the Veteran Peer Coordinator program, catapulting New York to a record decrease in veteran homelessness and helping the City to reduce shelter stay to a median of 79 days.

In addition, the Mayor's Office of Operations has provided the 2018 Veteran Services Report pursuant to Local Law 23 of 2015 which follows the DVS summary.



James W. Hendon
COMMISSIONER

Jeffrey D. Roth
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

December 31, 2019

To the Chair of the Veterans Advisory Board,

The New York City Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) extends its heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for the tremendous work you and your colleagues on the Veterans Advisory Board do throughout the year advocating for and supporting this City's veterans and their families. We especially appreciate the insightful and informational year-end report that we understand you are in the process of drafting. To that end, DVS would like to provide you with some information that may be of use to you in assessing the achievements from this past year both at the Department of Veterans' Services and within the New York City veterans' community.

Overview of DVS Accomplishments: 2019

Agency Operations

In less than four years, DVS has evolved from a small shop within the Mayor's Office, to a standalone agency with roughly forty employees. As we continue to expand in staff, we also begin to expand operationally, continuing our service and outreach to our over 210,000 veterans and their families.

In 2019, DVS continued its outreach goals with the launch of VetConnectNYC. In less than one year, DVS and VetConnectNYC was able to assist more than 3,000 veterans in accessing services and information across New York City. Furthering this commitment to service, DVS hosted and/or attend a variety of veteran events, expanding our reach to the community we serve. In addition, through notable ventures and collaborations, DVS began to house an increasing number of veterans, in efforts to continue to reduce veteran homelessness. In reducing these numbers, DVS not only tackled the housing issue facing many veterans, but pushed forward in expanding the services to effectively employ more and more veterans.

As we moved towards the latter half of 2019, we said farewell to Commissioner Loree Sutton and a warm welcome to Commissioner James Hendon. As we pushed initiatives forward like the legal discharge upgrade, under Commissioner Hendon's vision, we began to revamp, reevaluate and restructure the agency into the next chapter.

Agency Initiatives

Ending Veteran Homelessness

DVS continues its leadership role in the City's effort to end veteran homelessness and build out a rapid rehousing system that makes homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. In the first four months of FY20, DVS housed 54% more homeless veterans than the same period last year, and in doing so will hit a remarkable milestone over the coming year -- housing their 1,000 veteran. Additionally, the number of veterans receiving a VASH Continuum voucher through DVS and NYCHA increased by 51%, from 49 in its inaugural year, to 74 in 2019. This pilot program between DVS and NYCHA and supported by HELP USA and the Robin Hood Foundation, helps veterans that are ineligible for VA services, access the rental subsidies and case management needed to successfully exit shelter and stay out.

Veterans Success Network

DVS is committed to ensuring that veterans and their family members not only have a place to live, but the means to live with fulfilling and productive careers. To that end, in 2019, DVS launched the Veteran Success Network, a three-pillared program designed to ensure veterans and their families get the education, personal connections, and career training necessary to create the best professional path that meets their needs. The Veterans Success Network consist of:

Veterans on Campus (VOC): a coalition of over 80 colleges and universities in the New York City area with the highest concentration of GI Bill users. Through the Veterans on Campus network, DVS can connect with student veterans as they pursue their education, explore internships and summer jobs, and work with school administrators to ensure they have the knowledge to foster the most veteran-supportive campuses possible

Service 2 Service (S2S): Service to Service is a joint DVS-NYC Service mentorship program that connects veterans and AmeriCorps alumni with mentors in City government to help them find careers as civil servants.

Veteran Career Council: DVS' newest initiative currently under development, the Veteran Career Council will create career pathways to public and private employment opportunities.

Outreach & Engagement

Our Engagement and Community Services (ECS) team of veterans and family members understand from experience how hard it can be to navigate services and benefits. As our services to veterans continue to expand, so did our capacity. In 2019, DVS increased in ranks adding more members to the ECS team to further provide constituent services. As we continue our mission to help every New York City service

member, veteran or family member, regardless of era of service, branch of service, or discharge status, each new ECS member brings us closer to that goal. Further, DVS expanded its outreach to the community by the following:

Digital outreach: As you are aware, DVS shares information about programs and initiatives through various online channels, including a newsletter, Twitter, and Facebook. In 2019, DVS launched a new podcast, entitled “SITREP,” sharing stories of NYC veterans & their families, furthering our ties to the community.

Events: Team DVS goes to where veterans live, gather, and celebrate service. Throughout 2019, Team DVS attended hundreds of events, reaching thousands of veterans, family members, elected officials, non-profits and many more; expanding DVS’ reach and collaboration with the community. As always, our ECS team stands ready to provide personalized assistance, share information, or connect veterans and their families with external resources.

VetsThriveNYC

VetsThriveNYC is built on the premise that social determinants of health—including housing, education, employment, financial and legal stability—are vital for achieving and sustaining health and wellbeing. To this end, VetsThriveNYC relies on a collective impact framework rooted in the strength and resilience of community support, employing a coordinated care network, VetConnectNYC, to ensure veterans and their families have access to whole-of-life services for fulfilling their life goals, including continued service on behalf of others.

VetsThriveNYC also draws on the Core4 Whole Health Model. This 4-tiered pyramid upends the traditional clinically-focused approach, through:

Culture: Educational and cultural initiatives, led by our Public Artist in Residence, Bryan Doerries and his Theater of War Productions

Connection: Peer intervention & social support, led by the mentoring program ProVetus, based at Columbia University’s Teacher’s College

Community: Holistic services based in veterans’ home communities, including modalities such as meditation, yoga, acupuncture, service animals, and expressive arts therapies – to be launched in 2020

Clinical care: Clinically-based care and treatments, led by the Headstrong Project, who’s no- paperwork, no-hassle approach makes it easy to seek clinical treatment

In sum, VetsThriveNYC aims to increase individuals’ help-seeking behavior and social engagement, moving the front lines of healing from the clinic to the community.

Serving Underserved Veteran Populations

This past year, the City of New York continued to bolster its efforts to serve New York City's most underserved veteran populations. This includes:

Homeless veterans: In addition to the VASH Continuum resource for homeless veterans disconnected to the VA, DVS also worked with its public and private partners to develop a new outreach strategy to connect with homeless veterans that for various reasons had not had access to all the services available for homeless veterans. This effort led to 43 additional veterans being enrolled and provided assistance with finding permanent, affordable housing.

Disconnected veterans: Hundreds and potentially thousands of veterans are living in NYC with dishonorable discharges due to factors such as race, mental illness, and sexual orientation. Because of such, these veterans are unable to access the countless federal benefits they've earned. To remedy this issue, DVS, in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Operations has received \$1,500,000 in grant money to award to non-profit legal organizations to assist veterans with their discharge upgrades.

Underemployed and Unemployed Veterans: Finding a job can be one of the most daunting tasks upon leaving the service. To better assist veterans in finding gainful employment, DVS has launched a number of notable programs such as Service2Service and Pay for Success. Through these programs, DVS and the City of New York continue to provide innovative solutions for problems affecting veterans. Through the Service2Service program, veterans across the city can be paired with a mentor in city government to better learn the intricacies of local government. Through Pay for Success, service-disabled veterans, including those suffering from PTSD are connected to well-paying job opportunities, whereby payment is rendered upon notable success to include income, length of employment, and veteran happiness.

Select Highlights & Milestones Impacting Veterans in NYC in 2019

January

- SITREP Podcast Launch: DVS in continuing its social outreach launched their inaugural podcast episode. In the launch of this Podcast DVS is seeking to address table top issues regarding the veteran community, in addition to interviewing a unique group of veterans.
- Veterans on Campus 2019 Kick-Off: Hosted the top 20 institutions with the largest student veteran enrollment, plus additional schools and organizations, DVS sought to create this collaborative partnership to best address student needs.

February

- Employer Roundtable: DVS hosted a roundtable on February 27th to complement the job placement services being offered through the VetsCARE pay for success employment partnership for which eighteen different corporate and public

employers attended. Notable participants included NYC DCAS, Mayor's Office of Human Resources, Port Authority of NY & NJ, IBM, A+E Networks, Citi, Turner Construction, Nordstrom, and NBC Comcast.

- Affordable Housing in Surf Vets Place: DVS in partnership with the Members of Neighborhood Housing Services Brooklyn assisted formerly homeless vets in attendance.

April

- Transgender Ban Protest: On Saturday April 13, 2019 Deputy Commissioner Jeff Roth spoke on behalf of the agency at a rally organized by the New York City Veterans Alliance to protest the transgender troop ban going into effect.

May

- Veteran Owned Business Round Table: DVS, along with representatives from Syracuse IVMF, Next Street, and the SBS facilitated a conversation with veterans and small business owners to assess community needs and identify opportunities for empowerment and support affecting veteran business leaders.
- JP Morgan Chase "Carry the Load" Relay and Rally: To commemorate fallen service members, DVS, along with a host of other organizations, participated in the event to reflect, respect, and support fallen heroes.

June

- SAGE Vets/ Generations Project Pride Month: Deputy Commissioner Jeff Roth delivered remarks for the kick-off event which featured the stories of LGBTQIA+ veterans from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, & Afghanistan.
- Manhattan VA Letter of Support: DVS issued a letter of support to the New York City Veterans Alliance who are spearheading the effort to rename the Manhattan VA to "Margaret Corbin Medical Center."

August

- Housing Event with U.S. Interagency Council on Housing and HUD: DVS co-hosted an event with its federal partners and HPD to educate HUD multifamily property managers and owners about the federal homeless preference and make the appeal that they adopt the preference specifically for homeless veterans.

September

- Outreach Expansions: Expanding outreach efforts through social media, DVS shared photos from a number of their events this month. Photos from the event received over 20,000 impressions on Twitter, and reached an average of 600 Facebook followers.
- Former Homeless Veteran to UN Chef: One of the first veterans housed by DVS, James Brown, took his talents and skills to ultimately develop a catering company and later prepared and served food to the U.N. General Assembly. It is stories like these and so many others that signify DVS's ongoing commitment to veterans in our city.

October

- VetSource 2019: DVS and IVMF hosted the VetSource Summit at the Grow With Google Learning Center on October 30th. Roughly 30 veteran business owners attended, in addition to strategic partners including CUNY, MWBE, MOCS, SBS, AT&T, Turner Construction, Signature Bank, Barclays, and the Excelsior Growth Fund. Remarks were delivered by Deputy Mayor Thompson, and newly announced Commissioner Hendon and Commissioner Bishop. In addition, the DVS Communications team live-streamed the 2019 Summit on Facebook live. This was the first DVS event to be live-streamed for our online community.

November

- Welcoming DVS' New Commissioner: In October DVS said farewell to Commissioner Loree Sutton and welcomed Commissioner James Hendon.
- VSO Legacy Project: DVS and its partner, LISC-NYC, kicked off a new initiative to provide local posts with support to re-envision and redevelop their buildings to secure their place and legacy in the neighborhood and create affordable housing for veterans and others in need.

Legal Services: The City announced that it will help provide grants to legal services organizations that will help veterans challenge their discharge status, including LGBTQIA+ veterans given less than honorable discharges due to their orientation or gender identity. With an honorable discharge status, more veterans will be able to receive VA services previously denied to them, including mental health care.

- Holistic Services: Through public-private partnerships, the City announced that it will expand support for veteran-specific holistic health services. Through coordinated partnerships with veterans' services organizations, DVS will encourage veterans and their families to seek out additional therapies to

complement their mental health care treatment.

- Stars and Smiles Campaign: Launched on Veterans' Day, Stars and Smiles is a joint effort between DVS and the Mayor's Fund to raise funds for free dental services for Veterans in need.
- Surf Vets Opening: DVS was proud to work with Concern for Independent Living and Georgica Green Ventures to identify 82 homeless veterans for their beautiful new apartment building on the boardwalk in Coney Island.

December

- Service2Service: DVS and NYC Service recruited 90 mentee applicants (52 veterans and 38 AmeriCorps Alumni) for the S2S program. Agency representation within the city employee mentor pool is diverse, with applicants from: SBS, DVS, HPD, FDNY, DOHMH, DOT, DEP, EM, DSS, NYCHA, Public Advocate, and MOCJ. Mentor/mentee matching will commence during the second week of January, with programming to commence later in the month.



Jeff Thamkittikasem
Director

TO: Corey Johnson, Speaker of the City Council
Loree Sutton, Commissioner of the Department of Veterans' Services
Todd Haskins, Chair of the Veterans Advisory Board

FROM: Jeff Thamkittikasem

DATE: May 3, 2019

SUBJECT: Local Law 23 Veterans Services Report for 2018

Attached please find the 2018 Veterans Services Report pursuant to Local Law 23 of 2015. As you may be aware, Local Law 23 requires the Mayor's Office of Operations to collect and report specified data from a certain set of agencies that provide services to veterans, by category of benefit available to veterans and by veterans' borough of residence. If you have any questions about this report, please feel free to contact Guenevere Knowles at GKnowles@cityhall.nyc.gov or 212-788-1460. Thank you.

Attachment

**Veterans Services Calendar
2018**

Agency	Indicator Name	CY2015	CY2016	CY2017	CY2018
DCA	Applications for general vending licenses submitted by veterans	499	427	372	373
DCA	General vending licenses issued to veterans	348	297	227	227
DCAS	Civil service examination applications received from applicants claiming veterans' credit	1,887	2,843	5,539	2,175
DOHMH	Fee-exempt mobile food vending licenses issued to veterans	398	357	354	324
DOHMH	Food vending permits issued to veterans	190	181	200	204
HPD	Mitchell-Lama housing applications received from veterans, or their surviving spouses, who have identified themselves as heads of household on their applications	76	95	133	143
HPD	Approved Mitchell-Lama applications for veterans, or their surviving spouses, who have identified themselves as heads of household	73	88	120	143
HPD	Veterans residing in rental units who use US Department of Housing and Urban Development/US Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers administered by HPD (snapshot)	96	122	135	163
NYCHA	Veterans residing in housing operated by NYCHA who use HUDVASH vouchers administered by NYCHA	353	469	572	651
NYCHA	Veterans residing in rental units who use HUD-VASH vouchers administered by NYCHA	2,236	2,228	2,150	2,169

Veterans Services CY2018
By Applicant's Borough of Residence

DCA

General vending license applications from veterans

Borough of Residence	Approved	Rejected	Total
Bronx	52	25	77
Brooklyn	60	46	106
Manhattan	28	23	51
Queens	58	28	86
Staten Island	9	10	19
Outside of NYC	20	14	34
Total	227	146	373

DCAS

Civil service exam applicants claiming veterans' credit

Borough of Residence	Applicants
Bronx	359
Brooklyn	466
Manhattan	195
Queens	474
Staten Island	145
Outside of NYC	536
Total	2,175

DOHMH

Licenses and permits issued to veterans

Borough of Residence	Mobile food vending licenses	Food vending permits
Bronx	70	49
Brooklyn	89	41
Manhattan	56	32
Queens	71	59
Staten Island	14	7
Outside of NYC	24	16
Total	324	204

Veterans Services CY2018
By Applicant's Borough of Residence

HPD

Mitchell-Lama applications from veterans/surviving spouses heads of household

Borough of Residence	Approved	Rejected	Total
Bronx	30	0	30
Brooklyn	51	0	51
Manhattan	40	0	40
Queens	21	0	21
Staten Island	1	0	1
Total	143	0	143

HPD

Use of HUD-VASH vouchers administered by HPD

Borough of Residence	Used in rental units
Bronx	96
Brooklyn	28
Manhattan	28
Queens	6
Staten Island	5
Outside of NYC	0
Total	163

NYCHA

Use of HUD-VASH vouchers administered by NYCHA

Borough of Residence	Used in NYCHA housing	Used in rental units
Bronx	184	1,122
Brooklyn	319	519
Manhattan	131	221
Queens	5	219
Staten Island	12	58
Outside of NYC	0	30
Total	651	2,169

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are organized in two parts: (1) Policy and Legislative Recommendations for the Mayor and City Council and (2) Strategy and Program Recommendations for DVS.

Recommendations for the Mayor and/or City Council

Fund a Campaign to Encourage Transitioning Veterans to Study at New York City's World-Class Colleges and Universities: Great progress has been made since the May 2017 launch of Veterans on Campus, and the administration's swift action to support veterans receiving the GI Bill in the wake of VA's basic allowance for housing error highlights the importance of such a program. DVS's swift action to provide emergency rent relief for veterans whose GI Bill benefits were impacted highlights the importance of this program. We believe New York City can benefit further from this program and give back to the veteran community by expanding the program to actively recruit veterans to study in New York City after they leave the service. This would brand New York City as a "veteran-friendly city" and also allow the city to benefit even more from the GI Bill.

Expand the Board and Include Two Spouses, Caregivers or Gold Star Parents or Children: In recognition of the importance of spouses, care givers, Gold Star parents and families, the VAB had voted unanimously to expand the size of the board to 13 and include two members from this important constituency to the Board, one to be appointed by each of the Mayor and the Speaker of the City Council. These two representatives would have to be either a spouse of a veteran or deceased veteran, Gold Star parent or bona fide caregiver of a veteran or deceased veteran as defined by the US Veterans Administration.

This change would require action by the City Council to modify the construct of the board. We believe that this perspective would allow the VAB to better advise the Mayor, Speaker and Commissioner of DVS on the fulfillment of DVS's mission to foster purpose driven lives for NYC service members, veterans, and their families.

Establish a Preference for New York City to Contract with Veteran Owned Businesses: The Federal Government, State Government and most major US corporations maintain preference programs to contract with veteran owned businesses and yet New York City does not. This sends the wrong message to our veterans the City Council and/or administration should change this. The cost to administer such a program would be minimal as it could be administered through the existing Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise ("MWBE") program. Veterans come from all backgrounds and as such many veteran owned businesses already qualify for the MWBE program. For New York City to be a leader in local veteran policies it absolutely must find a way to support veteran entrepreneurship and veteran owned businesses through a contracting preference.

Add Resources for Contracting Capability for DVS: This has been a top priority of the VAB for each of the last three years and we believe it continues to be valid today. One of the most fundamental aspects of a City Agency is having direct control over contracting resources and lacking this ability has hampered DVS's effectiveness. As excited as we are about the launch of VetConnectNYC, it was delivered nearly a year behind schedule in part due to the lack of contracting authority. DVS is not currently funded or staffed to allow for this capability and contracts to local Veteran Service Organizations or non-for-profits that provide direct service to veterans are currently executed through the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). In addition to prioritization, there are unique contracting attributes that VSOs often carry, such as not being a 501(c)(3), which confuse and slow down the completion of contracts and disbursement of funds when centralized through DCAS. This should be rectified in the budget process this year.

Providing Resource Support: Once again we ask that some form of part-time operational resource support from either DVS, another City organization or some form of paid internship would aid in record keeping and continuity.

Invest in Resources to Evaluate and Document the Impact of Our Programs: Our vision statement includes reference to the *most effective* local veteran policies. These words were chosen carefully, and we are committed to recommending policies and programs focused on veterans that benefit all New Yorkers. In order to accomplish this, DVS must be provided with the appropriate resources.

We call upon the administration and the City Council to provide additional funding specifically dedicated to evaluating and documenting our programs including:

- Document benefits and efficiency: We believe that New York City has created extremely effective veteran programs and that these are a model for the country. Documentation will allow us to prove that we have been good stewards of resources and attract additional State and Federal resources. Further, the documentation hereof will highlight the value that these programs provide to all New Yorkers.
- Document lessons learned: The veteran population in New York City is a relatively small one compared to many other constituencies. Documenting the lessons learned from our programs could allow us to scale them to larger populations, thereby benefiting all New Yorkers. This model is already being applied to our veteran homeless and treatment court programs and we are encouraged by the opportunity to share our successes with other populations in the City.
- Conduct a Veteran Census: In order to create thoughtful policy, we must understand our veteran population. Towards that end, we recommend that NYC Census 2020 include a Veterans Census or other form of population study in its overall plan. This is in addition to resources focused on evaluating our programs.

Advocate for the Consistent Application of Policies for Veteran Treatment Courts:

Work with the five District Attorney's Offices and the Office of Courts Administration to create consistency throughout the boroughs for the use of Veterans Treatment Courts. This would provide equal treatment to veterans in all five boroughs, reduce costs to the criminal justice system, and reduce crime given the favorable recidivism statistics experienced through these programs.

Support the Restoration of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument on the

Hudson: Since 1902 the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument has towered over the Hudson on the Upper West Side of Manhattan as one of the most significant memorials to the Union Soldiers who served from New York in the Civil War. It serves as a constant reminder of the sacrifice made by New Yorkers during the civil war. The monument has fallen into disrepair and requires approximately \$25 million in improvements to make it viable. We recommend that our elected officials continue to work with State and Federal officials to find funding to save and preserve the monument. We commend the efforts of Manhattan Borough President, Gail Brewer and others who have been leading these efforts and encourage continued support.

DVS Strategy and Program Recommendations

Develop a Comprehensive Veterans Outreach Plan: We continue to believe that the DVS' communications and outreach capabilities must be enhanced and expanded. DVS is building great programs and their effectiveness is impacted by the awareness of those eligible for the programs – communications and outreach infrastructure is critical. This has been highlighted on many occasions in the past and oversight hearings have been hosted by the Committee on Veterans on this topic, but we do not believe that enough progress has been made.

Expand Veterans on Campus-NYC: New York City is the nation's largest importer of college students, with 110 colleges and nearly 600,000 students. This supports both the positive migration of educated citizens to the city and has the added benefit of attracting Federal to the City as most transitioning veterans have access to the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Each veteran who obtains a four-year degree in the city provides more than a quarter of a million dollars of economic activity with the majority of this in the form of direct federal spending on the Basic Allowance for Housing.

Recommit to Mission Home, New York City's Fight against Veteran

Homelessness: New York City has been an innovative leader in its fight against veteran homelessness. That said, we have observed an increase in veteran homelessness from 535 as of December 2017 to 684 during the Point in Time (PIT) count in January 2019 (the 2020 count will take place on January 27). It is important that we consolidate our gains and continue to make progress towards functional zero. It should be noted that New York City has continued to make progress in fighting street homelessness among veterans after having been declared free of street homelessness by the US Housing and Urban Development with the formal PIT count in 2019 identifying only 6 street homeless veterans each of whom declined support.

Specific recommendations include:

- ✓ Continue to work towards Functional Zero: We commend the DVS, HRA and all New York City agencies and partners involved in the fight against veteran homelessness and call upon them to continue the bold objective of reaching functional zero.
- ✓ Build a Comprehensive Prevention Plan: Activities to prevent veterans from becoming homeless are already underway, but these should be expanded and the lessons-learned captured and tracked in order to share best-practices. Prevention is almost always less expensive than the cost of someone becoming homeless.
- ✓ Document our Success: DVS should spearhead an inter-agency effort to document the success of Mission Home. The report would include existing and innovative strategies that were used, details on how city and private resources were used to leverage federal dollars, and what strategies are being used to maintain this success in the long term. DVS should also work with the Mayor's Office of Budget and Management, New York City Independent Budget Office, or other relevant independent econometrists to conduct an economic impact study of the programs

and include this in the report. It will also be critical to highlight the aggregate state and federal dollars we have attracted to our city so that the public better understands the benefits that our veteran programs bring to New York City. It will also be important to demonstrate to state and federal authorities that we have used these resources wisely

- ✓ Share our Success Across the City: As a relatively small population in the City with access to federal and state resources, we have been able to find new pathways to success in our fight to eliminate veteran homelessness. For example, in 2016 on average an individual in the New York City shelter system was homeless for 355 days. Among the veteran population, that was a median of 79 days and we can use these lessons learned to help the broader system.
- ✓ Continue to share our Success with other Cities throughout the Nation: Continue to meet with federal and state officials to highlight the successes New York City has had and ask for more resources to advance this worthy cause. Highlight that we have been good stewards of their resources where possible. Since New York City began its fight against veteran homelessness in 2011, we have realized an approximately 90% drop in homelessness, which compares very favorably to the 47% drop nationwide since 2010, according to HUD.

Invest in Resources to Encourage and Support Veteran Engagement in the Political Process: While engagement has been very successful at the national level, New York City has not fared as well with only one sitting City Council Member having served in the military. Consistent with our guiding principle of supporting veterans' continued service as citizens, the DVS should invest in programs that support veteran engagement in the political process. They should do so by partnering with existing organizations supporting this mission such as New Politics and Veterans Campaign.

Build-Out VetsThriveNYC: As part of the pioneering ThriveNYC mental health initiative, 2016's landmark legislation created funding to provide support for specific mental health initiatives for veterans in need. DVS' ThriveNYC team successfully implemented the VetsThriveNYC Whole Health and Community Resilience Program which includes citywide targeted outreach to engage veterans, military families and caregivers through education, connection to services, and resources tailored to the specific needs of the individual. Also, as part of this program, DVS' Core4 Whole Health Model™ shifts the conversation to concentrate on what matters most to veterans and their families regarding the many areas of life that can affect their health and well-being. It is designed to foster hope, healing and wholeness through informed access to clinical treatment, community holistic services, peer/family/community social support and cultural initiatives and the arts. With the administrations current revamping of the ThriveNYC program, we expect these programs to be re-evaluated to become more effective as they are fully resourced with the implementation of VetConnectNYC.

Develop a Plan to Celebrate Veterans throughout History: A critical part of the mission of the DVS is celebrating veterans and what they have brought to our nation and to New York City. We are in the midst of a series of landmark anniversaries

including last year's centennial of both the end of World War I and the first Veterans Day Parade (dubbed "*America's Parade*") and the fifty-year anniversary of various milestones of the Vietnam War. Last year the first sitting President attended the Veterans Day parade, and this highlights the opportunity to use events like America's Parade and Fleet Week to convene other leaders and showcase New York City. Specific funding should be provided to support this convening.

Employment and Entrepreneurship: Stable employment is a critical element of supporting veterans continued service as citizens. Whether something as simple as paying taxes or more significant such as volunteering actively or engaging in the political process, stable employment is required.

Towards the end of ensuring that our veterans remain employed in well-paid jobs, we recommend the following:

City Employment: The government is the largest employer in the city and it simply must lead by example. Additionally, there are many City and State agencies that face potentially acute labor shortages, such as the MTA, where a large proportion of its skilled labor is eligible for retirement over the next five years. Transitioning service members could be a cost-effective pipeline for talent. We must develop citywide veteran employment programs. These include classifying veterans as a protected class where appropriate so that they can be provided with a hiring preference, supporting agencies creation of veteran employee support networks, and recruiting initiatives for attracting transitioning veterans to various city employment opportunities. We should seek collaborative commercial and non-profit leaders to develop programs to such as those run by the Home Builders Institute which trains transitioning veterans for careers in the homebuilding industry.

Private Employment: Critical to supporting veterans continued service as citizens is supporting their stable employment. New York City does not control private employers; however, it can act as a facilitator to private companies who want to hire veterans. These programs can potentially be revenue-neutral through Federal government employment programs for veterans, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) program, which can provide businesses up to \$9,600 in tax credits per eligible veteran hired if those tax credits are then redeployed in the city.

- Create a Private Employment Support Program: Create a comprehensive private employment support program to educate and support private employers in New York City in establishing veteran hiring initiatives. This could include actions such as creating a veteran employment program handbook highlighting the benefits of a veteran hiring program, as well as actions required and resources available to execute such a program, hosting periodic training sessions on this topic and promoting the benefits of hiring veterans, and veterans connecting veterans to vetted and specialized non-profit and free resources available. Many of the country's leading experts on veteran employment programs and coalitions

of employers are active in New York City including the Veteran Jobs Mission, Veterans on Wall Street, the Arcadia Group and Miligistix. We recommend that DVS continue to seek opportunities to convene and collaborate with these groups.

- Track Outcomes: Establish policies to track outcomes for long-term unemployed veterans who have obtained employment, WOTC credits for employers, and other key performance indicators.

Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship is the lifeblood of the America. According to the Small Business Administration from 2012 Census Bureau Data, veterans own 9% of small businesses, while only comprising 6.7% of the population. Nationally, veteran owned firms generated \$1.14 trillion in receipts annually and employed 5.03 million people. State and Federal government provide a great deal of support to small businesses in the forms of training, contract support, financing and other benefits. As such, New York City should support its veterans who seek to become entrepreneurs through a comprehensive program. The program should include, among other attributes, the following three specific items:

- Create an Outreach Program to Educate Veteran Business Owners on Doing Business with New York City: Once the Administration or City Council act to include veteran-owned businesses in a directed program, execute an outreach plan to ensure that veteran entrepreneurs are aware of the change.
- Connect Veteran Entrepreneurs to Resources: In order to support and encourage entrepreneurship, programs should be created to connect veteran entrepreneurs to resources. Specialized resources are active in New York, including: The Coalition for Veteran Owned Business (CVOB) through the Institute for Veteran and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University, Veterans Future Lab at NYU, Bunker Labs and more.
- Support the Tradition of Veteran Venders: New York City has a tradition of supporting veterans interested in operating as street vendors going back to the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. To ensure that veterans who choose to vend excel, DVS should, in conjunction with other agencies and with input from current veteran vendors, develop a training program to ensure that veterans are educated on the regulations and can ply their craft with professionalism. DVS should also partner with private industry to create programs for veterans to finance and acquire equipment which will support their success. Further, the Department of Consumer Affairs should give due consideration to veteran status in awarding licenses.

Veteran Treatment Courts: We are proud that Veteran Treatment Courts (VTCs) have now been established in each of the five Boroughs and we believe that these are tremendous programs for both veterans and taxpayers. According to the Vera Institute of Justice the average cost to incarcerate a prisoner in the State of New York is \$60,076, the most expensive state in the country nearly twice the national average of

\$31,286. Further, as of the first three years of existence, the Buffalo Veteran Treatment court has a 0% recidivism rate. While we would not expect that to be sustained, it has clearly been more successful than other such courts.

Regarding VTCs, we recommend the following three actions:

- ✓ Consistent Application across the Boroughs: In order for the City to benefit most from the program, we ask that the policies be applied consistently throughout New York City. Veterans should have equal protection and application of the law throughout all of New York City's Criminal Courts. We urge the five NYC District Attorney's Offices work with the Office of Courts Administration to create guidelines for which offenses should be referred to treatment courts.
Measure Outcomes: In order to ensure that the City gets the maximum benefit from these programs, we recommend that outcomes be measured and that each of the VTCs have a standard set of reporting data, which should be provided at least to DVS in its coordinating function and the New York City Council Committee on Veterans in its oversight capacity. A working group should be convened to determine which data should be collected, but it should include at least number of cases referred, outcomes, recidivism rates, costs, and key lessons learned in the application of the program so we can ensure that it continually improves.
- ✓ Share Lessons Learned: Anecdotal evidence suggests that VTCs have had more favorable outcomes as measured by recidivism rates than the other treatment courts, potentially due to the peer support model employed. If true, lessons learned in the success of the VTCs should be shared with the other treatment courts so that all New Yorkers benefit from these investments in programs for veterans.

Create Innovative Funding Strategies: While the majority of the resources and funding for the services that DVS provides will be provided by various government sources, there are times that the most innovative public policy will require other sources. New York City as the financial capital of the world should be at the forefront of innovation in funding and establishing public / private partnerships.

DVS should actively investigate the following potential funding strategies:

- ✓ 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) Funding: New York City has been at the forefront of establishing opportunities for government collaboration with private citizens via 501(c)(3) non-profit funding mechanisms. DVS may also qualify for the establishment of a Veteran Service Organization under 501(c)(19) which could allow it to access different pockets of funding for veteran focused programs. All should be considered and evaluated.
- ✓ Social Impact Funding: We encourage the administration and DVS to secure private impact investment funding and VA support to extend and sustain the **VeteranCARE** employment program.
- ✓ Real Estate: The availability of long-term affordable housing is a clear choke-point in the fight to end veteran homelessness. New York City is home to many of the

most powerful real estate firms in the world, and we should seek opportunities to collaborate with the real estate community to create long-term housing solutions.

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for March 12, 2019 meeting held at:

NYU Tandon
Veterans Future Lab
87 35th Street, 2nd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11232

Members

Present:

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

Absent:

Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:35 PM. Introduces VAB member James Hendon, host for the evening's meeting.
- James Hendon welcomes the VAB and visitors to NYU Tandon's Veterans Future Lab. He briefly talks about what the Veterans Future Lab is and invites everyone to visit the space after the meeting.
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience. Chair Haskins goes over the agenda.

Presentation:

DVS Commissioner Sutton welcomed everyone in attendance and congratulates the new board. She asks the audience who is attending for the first time. She states this is the 3rd year of the agency. The Commissioner gives some statistics, including saying 2% of the City population are veterans, 4% including families. She recognizes Molly Levi of the PLG Fund. The Commissioner discusses the current budget season, including council hearings for the preliminary budget and eventually the city having a budget by July. She introduced her staff in attendance (Team DVS)

and asks everyone to sign up for their newsletter. Finally, the Commissioner talks about the Metro NY CVEB event taking place on April 4th.

New Business: The chair (Todd) 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. The chair goes over what the VAB is, with members (veterans) representing all five boroughs, which give a diverse perspective.

The chair acknowledges that the board is not an advocacy body, our job is to advise the Commissioner and the City. We are separate and independent from DVS and we create an annual report to the Mayor and Speaker of the City Council advising them how city resources should be deployed. Our guiding principle is to prioritize services and resources. 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 spent by veterans and family members; and (3) veterans are a great investment.

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

(1) Funding the Veterans on Campus Initiative. Tie-in to fund a campaign to assist returning veterans (which would be a return on investment). The chair stated he would like to see the City Council fund this program.

(2) VetConnectNYC. In development for the past couple of years it is now here, and it connects vets with services.

(3) Mission Home (Homelessness). In 2012, there were 4K homeless veterans in NYC but by 2018 there was 540. In contrast, Los Angeles still has 4K homeless vets. We reduced the number by tapping into federal dollars and following them. This allowed the city to test mechanisms and see what works. There is a need for the Federal government to continue to fund to continue to help the city drive the numbers down.

(4) Contracting ability by DVS. This is an on-going issue.

In all, the VAB report listed 35 recommendations. The chair asked if there were any questions. Molly Levi asked if Student Veterans of America (SVA) were involved. Todd says yes. Todd also mentions that there are 12K veterans in NYC colleges and mentions Columbia.

Elections: VAB member John Rowan announced the officers elected earlier. The new executive committee is Todd Haskins (Chair), Tiffany Daugherty (Vice Chair), Joe Bello (Secretary).

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

Molly Levi: Ms. Levi talked about Pat Gualtieri and who he was. How in 2015 she started the PLG Veterans Assistance Fund to provide Educational scholarships and working with disabled veterans. Ms. Levi stated she does a newsletter that reaches 683 people and that she gets news from many different sources. Ms. Levi also talked about March 23rd Vietnam Veterans Day event

with the United War Veterans Council. She works closely with them and anyone who wants to read names or participate in the Tribute march should talk to her afterwards.

Ashton Stewart: Mr. Stewart represented SAGE Vets. Mr. Stewart talked about what SAGE Vets does and how they are working with the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs on an event on March 29th in honor of Vietnam Veterans Day. He invited all to attend. Ms. Stewart talked about the unique needs for LGBT veterans, from discharge upgrades to social and economic issues.

Giovanni Taveras: Representing the NYS Veterans Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Taveras talked about WMBE's and the need to get people, particularly veterans to start small businesses.

Ronda Sherwood: Ms. Sherwood is a Veterans Financial Coach. She ran a program for three years that helps veterans, and particularly student veterans learn financial management. Her non-profit grew up with DVS but is unfortunately ending on March 29th. Ms. Sherwood stressed the need for the program and to keep it going.

Mike Munoz: Representing the NYC Veterans Alliance. Mr. Munoz talked about what they are and what they are doing. He talked about the Public Advocates race and IAVA's Storm the Hill. He also stated that the Alliance would be putting out their policy agenda toward the end of the month and handed out a briefing sheet on renaming the Manhattan VA.

Monique Porter: Ms. Porter is the Commander of DAV Chapter 108. She talked about how the DAV does claims and that they are here to help. If anyone wants more information, see her.

There were no more public speakers.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: April 2019

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for April 29, 2019 meeting held at:

Queens Borough Hall
120-55 Queens Blvd
Kew Gardens, NY 11424

Members

Present:

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

Absent:

Charles Greinsky (Staten Island) Charles Hernandez (Bronx)

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

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:30 PM. The chair gives greetings and talked about what the VAB does.
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience. Chair Haskins goes over the agenda.

Presentation:

DVS Commissioner Sutton welcomed everyone in attendance and discusses the Executive budget for DVS. Commissioner Sutton states that they are waiting to see where DVS shakes out come July and what OMB is looking at. She states three years ago they were an office of 4 people and today they have 40 people.

The Commissioner then discusses Fleet Week and the Parade of Ships (May 22). She refers to the link with this year's events (<http://militarynews.com/app/fleetweeknewyork/events.html>) and the hashtag #SelfiewithaSailor. She also discusses Memorial Day and states that we must remember our Gold Star Mothers and families. The Commissioner asks if there are any questions. She recognizes Molly Levi of the PLG Fund. Molly asks a question about VA benefits and that the co-

op provision as law has sunset. The Commissioner states that she will talk to her. Rahman Telfair, a Corrections Officer asks a question about Military/Reserve running out of days and that the city only gives 30 days of time. He states they need more days. The Commissioner states someone from DVS will speak with him to get further information.

New Business: The chair (Todd) talks about Fleet Week and how the event supports the city's economy and that it's a great experience for our military, veterans and the public in general. The chair also discusses the VetConnectNYC rollout from last fall and asks everyone to help get the word out.

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

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

Keith Rivera: Mr. Rivera works at the Queens Vet Center. He discussed what the VA does, what the Vet Center is, what it does and how it provides services to veterans and family members without charging. Mr. Rivera also talk about the readjustment services that Vet Centers provide.

Molly Levi: Ms. Levi talked about Pat Gualtieri and who he was. She shared how she started the PLG Veterans Assistance Fund in 2015 to provide Educational scholarships and working with disabled veterans. Ms. Levi stated she produces a newsletter for the community and that she gets news from many different sources.

Kenneth Barr: Mr. Barr is an Army veteran who served from 1979-1989. Mr. Barr discussed the privatization of the VA. He talked about how he was taken to the Manhattan VA for medical issue and how they did surgery and took his gall bladder and saved him. He stated that no hospital would have done that, particularly that fast. He stated that the hospital staff respected that he was veteran. He stated that he was accosted by someone at the VA over the Mission Act and that the Mission Act will drive away resources. Finally, he stated that universal health care is vital to National Security.

Mike Munoz: Represented the NYC Veterans Alliance. Mr. Munoz asked a question about the VAB site on DVS's webpage and that information needs to be updated. The Secretary stated they are working with DVS to update the site. Mr. Munoz talked about what they are and what they are do. He briefly talked about their policy agenda and the Town-Hall meeting with Rep. Ocasio-Cortez.

Queens Borough President representative Dan Brown spoke and thanked everyone for attending. He briefly talked about Tanya Thomas, DVS's Engagement & Community Services Coordinator and her work at the Borough President's Office. He stated the DVS office was down the hall and open to any veterans that need help. Mr. Brown once again thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: June 2019

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary

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

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for the September 25, 2019 meeting held at:

Staten Island Borough President's Office
10 Richmond Terrace, #120
Staten Island, NY 10301

Members

Present:

Todd Haskins (Manhattan)	John Rowan (Queens)
Charles Hernandez (Bronx)	Tiffany Daugherty (Manhattan)
Peter Kauffman (Queens)	James Hendon (Bronx)
Joe Bello (Bronx)	

Absent:

Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)	Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)
Annette Osborne (Brooklyn)	

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

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:50 PM.
- All VAB members introduce themselves to the audience. Todd briefly talks about what the VAB does and thanks the Staten Island Borough President's Office for hosting the meeting.

Presentation:

Assistant Commissioner and Senior Advisor Alexis Wichowski welcomes everyone and gives regards from Commissioner Sutton, who was not able to attend the meeting. AC Wichowski talks about the Fair Fares program for student veterans and states that 743 student vets have applied for the reduced-fair metro cards. She briefly discussed the VetConnectNYC hearing the City Council held and explains what VetConnectNYC is, along with the number of providers in the network, with more coming onboard. AC Wichowski then discusses the Mayor's MMR report and talks about some of the highlights of the report, including homeless veterans and the need to find more affordable housing. AC Wichowski states that DVS has a new CIO, who used to be with the FDNY, as well as new digital outreach person. Staff numbers for DVS are now at 46 people.

Finally, AC Wichowski states that DVS has been reaching out to veteran owned businesses as they are having a one-day Procurement Summit (Vet Source) at Grow with Google on October 30th.

New Business: Todd (Chair) talks about Fair Fares and how it is a unique opportunity to help student veterans. He then talks about DVS's Veterans on Campus initiative and how there are 12,000 student veterans in New York City. Todd then talks about VetConnectNYC and says it is an investment by the city and we all need to help get the word out to the community to increase veteran awareness. Finally, Todd states that there is much work to do on the Veteran Small Business front as the City offers no preference for veterans or is listed in the M/WBE.

The Chair makes a motion to accept the June VAB minutes. The board approved the minutes. There is no other official business

Public Comments: The following individual(s) gave public comments to the board:

Samuel Cottes: Mr. Cottes works for the Staten Island Vet Center. Mr. Cottes explains what the Vet Centers do and then states that there is little to no support for veterans in Staten Island. He states that homelessness is an issue in Staten Island and that many veterans don't want to leave Staten Island. Mr. Cottes says that the Borough Presidents Office is helping and were able to open a State Veterans Office on the 3rd floor where they work with veterans on a one on one basis. Finally, Mr. Cottes states that transportation is an issue for veterans in Staten Island with many elderly veterans needing help to get to the hospital for medical appointments.

Tony Tse: Mr. Tse works for the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Tse stated that he does disability claims for veterans but by appointment only. He endorses several things that Mr. Cottes spoke about, including little support for Staten Island. He stresses that the board and elected officials should not forget about Staten Island. He shouts out DVS's Monique Rada, who he says is the Staten Island representative.

Robert Poles: Mr. Poles is an Army veteran. Mr. Poles says he has three ideas to present to the VAB: Free or reduced transportation for Veterans, mental health and sending veterans from state operated facilities to VA hospitals and including Veterans preference for housing. He gives out handouts. John Rowan tells him that some of the laws he cited are old (including the Vet preference for housing) and that he would need a new law directing NYCHA to move on. He was also informed about a World War II veteran who is currently working and advocating on the free or reduced fair MetroCard's.

Molly Levi: Ms. Levi is the founder of the PLG Assistance Fund. She talks about Pat Gualtieri and who he was. She shared how she started the PLG Veterans Assistance Fund to provide Educational scholarships and working with disabled veterans. She also shares that she does a Valentine Outreach to veterans (cards, etc.) as well as a Clothing Drive. Finally, Ms. Levi stated she produces a newsletter for the community and that she gets news from many different sources and has a large distribution list.

Cheryl Dupris: Ms. Dupris is a 33-year Army veteran. She states that she has been in New York City since 1997. Ms. Dupris talked about suicides and that veterans are not finding employment. She also said veterans are having major issues with housing and that city workers have been unprofessional. Ms. Dupris also discussed several programs she is involved with, including looking for women to tell their stories (digital stories). She states that DVS needs to provide training for VSO's and should set up VSO appointments in a public space that is closer to veterans

that cannot come to Borough Hall. Finally, she states that DVS should help recruit more people to VSO's.

Westley Thomas: Mr. Thomas is a USMC veteran who did two (2) tours in Vietnam. He states that what he does to help his fellow veterans comes from his heart. He shares that mental health caught up with him in 1988 and that he got help in 2000 at a health fair. He now gets help at the Manhattan Vet Center in lower Manhattan. He states that a lot of veterans need help and are being shafted.

John Moss: Mr. Moss an Army veteran. He states that he wrote an article with Rep. Max Rose on how no veteran should wait more than 90 days to get a claim. He states that there should be doctors on any medical panel, not people who only read books. He says the C & P exam are a waste of time as most doctors have already diagnosed the veteran. Finally, he thanks former Rep. Charlie Rangel for all his help.

Michael Abramovich: Mr. Abramovich is representing the NYC Veterans Alliance. Mr. Abramovich states he lives in Staten Island and that he served six years in the Army. He also shares that the Alliance did a Brooklyn ruck march with 45 marchers and gives information on an upcoming town-hall meeting with the National Nurses Union.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: November 2019

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for the November 20, 2019 meeting held at:

David N. Dinkins Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, Mezzanine Floor
New York, NY 10007

Members

Present:

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

Absent:

Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)

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

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:30 PM.
- All VAB members introduce themselves to the audience.

Chair gives greetings to the audience and welcomes new DVS Commissioner James Hendon, who was a VAB member. Todd thanks former Commissioner Sutton for all her work and makes a motion to recognize her for all the work she has done over the past several years. Peter Kauffman seconds. Motion passes.

Todd talks about how the agency used to be only four employees when Commissioner Sutton started. Todd briefly talks about what the VAB does and states that there are seven vacancies right now.

Todd introduces Commissioner Hendon. Reads his Bio. Commissioner Hendon is asked to give remarks.

Presentation:

Commissioner Hendon welcomes all in attendance. He recognizes all DVS staff in attendance.

The Commissioner states that not much will change at DVS immediately. He wants to involve more agencies to assist veterans and their families. The Commissioner talks about VetConnectNYC and states it is the “digital square” to help veterans with services. He talks about DVS’s biggest change, which will be to focus on outreach. His main goal will be to go where the vets are. He also states that we need more veterans to attend VAB meetings and asks those in attendance to come to the next meeting with someone who isn’t here.

Commissioner Hendon takes questions from the audience.

Amjad Mujaahid from the New York Department of Health asks if DVS offices in the outer boroughs can stay open later in the evenings or weekends. Commissioner Hendon states that the outreach coordinators spend two days at the Borough Halls and three days doing outreach within the respective boroughs. States that he will look into it but would need more bodies.

Commissioner Hendon talks about a new initiative called Service2Service, which is a professional development program centered on mentorship between NYC veterans and AmeriCorps alumni as mentees and City government employees are mentors.

Giovanni Taveras from the NYS Veterans Chamber of Commerce states that VSOs are dying off and that most veterans are looking for services. He asks if DVS can work with a Job Fair to help veterans.

Commissioner Hendon states that DVS is not a non-profit and that young veteran activity is not centered around VFW or American Legion anymore. We have to go to them. Mr. Taveras states that we need more volunteers to tie in with VSO’s. Commissioner Hendon says he will consider a summit for next year to discuss this issue but doesn’t want to replace/replicate what groups like RWB or Mission Continue are doing. Board member John Rowan talks about the differences between VVA and new veterans. He also discusses disability claims and how this will effect new veterans as they get older.

Charlotte Martin from the Intrepid Museum asks what role does the Commissioner see the Intrepid playing with DVS? The Commissioner states that he would like to see more arts and cultural events. The Commissioner talks about the need for monuments, street re-naming and a place to archive our stories and inform the public and follow veterans. VAB Vice Chair Tiffany Daugherty shout outs the great work the Intrepid Museum does.

Troy Olson from SUS talks about canvassing veteran’s real estate experience, states that young people need to take advantage of programs that are available to help with integration. Commissioner Hendon gives DVS’s website and states that they liaison with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on homelessness.

Chair Haskins thanks Commissioner Hendon for sharing his thoughts and taking questions.

New Business: The Chair makes a motion to accept the September VAB minutes. The board approved the minutes. There is no other official business.

Public Comments: Todd (Chair) hosts this part of the meeting. The following individual(s) gave public comments to the board:

Lobsang Salaka: Mr. Sakaka works for the Census. He welcomed the Commissioner and stated that he is an Army veteran who served for 9 years and did 3 tours. He talks about the upcoming 2020 Census and the need to get all citizens and veterans counted. He wants to leverage DVS to help get the word out. He also talks about how the Census will be hiring. He is not affiliated with hiring.

Kaitlyn Filzer: Ms. Filzer is an AmeriCorps VISTA member who is working with the Volunteer Lawyers for Veterans Project at Fordham Law's Feerick Center. She discussed how they started two years ago and are trying to develop programs where gaps in legal services for veterans are. They are currently work on helping with consumer debt, credit cards, and doing clinics for child support/downward modifications, etc. They give out their contact information and Ms. Filzer introduced her successor Taylor (didn't get last name).

Ashton Stewart: Mr. Ashton Stewart is the SAGE Vets Program Coordinator, which works with older LGBTQ veterans. Mr. Stewart stated that SAGE is officially part of VetConnectNYC. 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 and how the Governor recently signed it into law. He also discussed the recent initiatives announced by Mayor de Blasio. Finally, he discussed a presentation he did to the Bronx American Legion Commanders and thanked CM Deutsch for his work on veteran issues.

Giovanni Taveras: Representing the NYS Veterans Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Taveras stated that he is a Navy veteran. He asked the audience to help him obtain used or new office supplies.

Molly Levi: Ms. Levi is the founder of the PLG Assistance Fund. She talks about Pat Gualtieri and who he was. She shared how she started the PLG Veterans Assistance Fund to provide Educational scholarships and working with disabled veterans. She also shares that she does a Valentine Outreach to veterans (cards, etc.) as well as a Clothing Drive. Finally, Ms. Levi stated she produces a newsletter for the community and that she gets news from many different sources and has a large distribution list. Finally, Ms. Levi shared the three pillars of the PLG Assistance Fund. They are: Scholarship for Student Vets, Suicide prevention and Special Needs.

Troy Olson: Mr. Olsen is representing both the NYC Veterans Alliance and SUS. Mr. Olson talks about what the Alliance is and what they are do. He also briefly talks about their calendar and the ruck march in August (Battle of Brooklyn). Mr. Olson then talks about SUS and specifically the SSVF program. He states there has been an 80% nationwide reduction in homeless veterans.

Board member John Rowan announces the Queens Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedication on December 20th at 10 AM in Elhurst Park. All are invited.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: TBD 2020

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary