

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