

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for September 21, 2016 meeting held at:

Lincoln Hospital
234 East 149th Street
Bronx, New York, 10451

Members

Present:

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

Absent:

Charles Greinsky (Staten Island) Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)
Anthony “Tony” Odierno (Manhattan)

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:15 PM.
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience and the chair recognized Police and First Responders.

Welcomes:

- Tracy McDermott gave greetings on behalf of Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.
- James Carr, Director of MIS & Network Security Officer (Marine Corps) gave greetings on behalf of Lincoln Hospital. Stated that Lincoln Hospital is always welcoming to veterans.
- Joe Mondello, Chair of the Bronx Borough President Veterans Advisory Council gave greetings, welcomed us back to the Bronx, talked about some of the items the council has worked on and thanked the board for its work. Mr. Mondello gave the chair a Bronx Veterans Resource Guide.

Old Business: The board approved June 2016 minutes (SI)

New Business: **Elections** were held and the following individuals were re-elected to one (1) year terms:

- Todd Haskins - Chair

- Samuel Innocent – Vice Chair
- Joe Bello – Secretary

- Todd Haskins resumed chair duties.

Presentations:

DVS. Commissioner Sutton greeted the board members and congratulated the newly re-elected officers. She briefly overviewed what has been happening at DVS and stated that DVS will have 25 personnel by the end of October and 34 by the end of FY17. She introduced and gave background on several new personnel who were in attendance, including the new Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner. The Commissioner talked about a recent incident regarding a veteran who passed away and stated that DVS will be looking into regulations and working with other agencies to make the process smoother. The Commissioner also announced that there will be another flag ceremony at City Hall for Veteran week. The Commissioner also talked about veteran homelessness and that it has been reduced by 90% and that many units have been lined up for veterans.

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

Michael Williams: Mr. Williams is the Bronx VA Medical Center Minority Veterans Coordinator. He stated that he has been to every VAB meeting this year and travels all over the community helping veterans. He announced that if anyone wanted to speak with him, he would be available.

Wayne Malone: Mr. Malone brought up the issues going on at St. Albans. Mr. Malone stated that two veterans died from Heart attacks in March of 2016 and how they could have been saved but St. Albans took away the crash cart and replaced them with only heart defibrillators. He wondered how the VA can spend 9 million dollars for a columbarium but cannot put the money in for a crash cart. He also talked about how the response time at St. Albans is slow with in once case there was no Doctor on duty.

Paola Munoz: Ms. Munoz stated she was representing NYS Senator Gustavo Rivera (33 District, Bronx). She talked about Senator Rivera's bill in the State Senate (S775-A) which would enable veterans (when they identify themselves) to receive benefit information when they apply for or renew their driver's license. She stated that the Assembly bill (A122-A) sponsored by Assemblyman Dinowitz has not been brought to a vote in the NYS Assembly's Transportation Committee and that veterans should reach out to their elected officials in both the Senate and the Assembly to support these bills. She handed out legislation information.

Dan McSweeney: Talked about the Parade season coming, with Veterans Week and Veterans Day. He also talked about the need to coordinate. Mr. McSweeney talked about the MyVA Metropolitan Veterans Community Engagement Board and the need to coordinate with the VAB.

Sonia Villamil: From the NYC Department of Finance. Ms. Villamil talked about the Department's forgiveness program (Amnesty) and the ability to collect a debt while giving a break on the violations. Ms. Villamil also talked about Rent and the homeowner's exemption. She warned of scams going on in Queens and for everyone to be vigilant.

Jacqueline Rodriguez: Ms. Rodriguez represented NYC's Human Resource Administration (HRA) and talked about the need for public engagement to help find stable housing/units for veterans and others. She also talked about homeless prevention and the "homebase" program.

Loretta Humphrey/Andrea Scarsboro: (Both we're not on the sign-up sheet). Ms. Humphrey and Ms. Scarsboro followed up on Mr. Malone's conversation regarding St. Albans. They stated that Ms. Martina Pruda, the Director of the NYC VA Harbor Healthcare system responded to the situation at St. Albans. They read Ms. Pruda's statement. They stated that in 2011/2012 there were crash carts but there are none now. They asked the VAB to assist getting crash carts back to St. Alban's. Mr. McSweeney stated that the next MyVA CEB meeting is on October 20th and they should bring these complaints to that meeting.

There were no more speakers.

Board member John Rowan (Queens) talked about Bill S2921/HR4683, the Vets First Bill in the US Senate and House. He explained that if you got out on a DADT discharge, you can file to the Military Board of Corrections. However, if you got out with a bad paper discharge, you cannot get an upgrade. The Fairness to Vets would change that. Mr. Rowan asked for a motion to ask CM Eric Ulrich, chair of the NYC Council's Veterans Committee to hold a hearing on bad paper discharges. The motion passes unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: November 30, 2016

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary