

# New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for March 12, 2019 meeting held at:

**NYU Tandon**  
**Veterans Future Lab**  
87 35<sup>th</sup> Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11232

## Members

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### **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

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- 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup>.

**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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup>. 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