The following Agenda will be considered at a regular meeting of the Veterans Advisory Board to be held January 23, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. at City Hall, Council Chambers, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

1. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Acceptance of Agenda
4. Approval of Meeting Minutes
   Documents:
   
   11-28-23 VAB MINUTES.PDF
5. Recognitions
   • 5.1 Veterans Corner-Chair
6. Board Member Reports
   • 6.1 Board Reports
   • 6.2 City Staff comments
   • VAB ordinance requirements
7. Public Participation
   • 7.1 Public comment (3 minutes)
   • Guest Speaker-- Amin Henriquez, Chief for the VA Center for development and Civic Engagement
8. Old Business
   • 8.1 Guest Speaker- David Villareal, Architectural Management-Veterans Park parking lot expansion.
9. New Business
   • 9.1 Upcoming VAB Board Elections

If you need an accommodation for a disability to enable you to fully participate in this event, please contact us 72 hours before this event at 528-3473/V or 528-4211/TTY.

The City of Las Cruces does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.
10. Reminders
   - Presidents Day - February 19, 2024
   - Next Meeting - February 27, 2024

11. Adjournment

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1. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM
Chair Woods called the meeting to order. A quorum was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
ALL STAND FOR PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

3. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA - Done after the Minutes.

4. VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES - October 24, 2023
Motion to accept the minutes with corrections made by John Poland; seconded by Sam Bothern. Motion passed.

5. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

Motion to accept the agenda made by John Poland; seconded by Sam Bothern. Motion passed.

5. RECOGNITION

5.1 Veterans Corner-Chair

Nothing.

6. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

6.1 BOARD REPORTS

Hector Sanchez - NMSU Student at Large - They will be having the court ceremony this Friday, December 1st, 6:00, at Corbet Student Union Building for the graduating veterans. This year over 40 graduating veterans graduate from New Mexico State University, and 11 from Doña Ana Community College. Reception for veterans and their families.

John Poland - American Legion Post 10 - In November of each year they honor and recognize first responders. On November 17th they sponsored first responder recognition Thanksgiving dinner. The remaining food from that was taken to the fire stations and dispatch centers to share with first responders who were on duty. The members donated $1,000 to the Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 8, for the Cops and Kids Christmas Event.

Victor Eres - Marine Corps League (USMC) - They had 12 funerals this past month. Participated in two color guards. They had their Marine Corps Ball on November 10th at the Elks Lodge. They hope to have a better venue in the future. The 11th Annual USMC Reserve Bicycle Ride for Toys for Tots which is this Sunday, 11:00 and they will meet at the community park, west of San Albino church. This will be a 4.5 mile ride from the park to Valley Pizza. Ask for new, unwrapped gifts.

Lawrence "Sam" Bothern - Disabled American Veterans (DAV) #10 - Nothing to report

Fred Madrid - Vietnam Veterans of America - Nothing to report.
James Turner - Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) 10124 - Resumed
serving food Monday - Thursday 11:00 - 2:00. They have a diverse menu.
The Garrison Flag, December 7th Pearl Harbor Day and Christmas Day.
Next meeting he will have next year’s schedule available.

Karen Woods - UMW of Southwest - Having the annual bingo on
December 9th at the American Legion, doors open at noon, play begins at
2:00. Contact her for further questions or information.

6.2 CITY STAFF COMMENTS

Larry Nichols stated the Public Works department has received four bids for
the parking lot expansion and are still in negotiation with the lowest bidder.
The project should begin upon completion of the negotiations.

The Veterans Day Parade was a success.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Montevis Price and the Rachel, Coordinator for the Veterans Treatment Court
Program. They have nine participants and all are doing good. Their program
passed gold certification for the district court. Also have a new program manager
for the adult drug programs, Carmen Lucero. They are hoping to have her come
to speak at the VAB in the near future.

Melanie Goodman from Senator Ben Ray Lujan’s office. They just hired a new
staff person based in Santa Fe who is a retired Navy veteran who has senior
veteran service officer experience, Nick McKenzie. He will be working on
constituent services and case work, and assisting with cases all over the state.

Mike Osburn of Adaptive Cyclers Plus, a nonprofit working with the VA and
disabled veterans. They provide adaptive cycles for veterans to use free of charge,
including helmets. They also work with the VA for veterans who qualify through
the VA. Their biggest problem is lack of participation. They get grants, but not
enough to cover, especially costs of travel to Las Cruces from El Paso, particularly
with the bicycles and equipment. Alex Arce is a rider and he speaks for this
nonprofit. He states the program has helped him from using a walker to being able
to stand and be more mobile.

Fernando Caro the disabled veteran outreach program specialist and Jason Bernal
of Work Force Connections. They advocate to find employers will to help veterans
get employed. A veteran specific job fair is still being worked on, hopefully April
5th.

8. OLD BUSINESS
8.1 VETERANS DAY PARADE RE-CAP

Bill Hawkins stated the Parade is a group effort with a good committee. He recognized various people: Dolores, JR, Brian Morrow, and Larry Nichols, and asked for a round of applause. The parade was probably the biggest they have had. Averaging 55-65 entries, this year 88. The momentum for the parade is gaining and more people are coming. What made it great was the wonderful attitude people came with.

8.2 HONOR FLIGHT

The representative of Honor Flight stated several groups within this Board have helped Honor Flight. John Poland’s American Legion does a monthly donation which helps. A video was shared with the Board. Their last flight a veteran did not expect much but when he got home he was impressed with what he got out of it. People came and greeted him upon returning. He is now proud to proclaim being a Vietnam Veteran. Honor flight helps with healing and closure, but also help families. It was stated that veterans are proud, but many Vietnam Veterans had a difficult time, but after Honor Flight are now able to be proud and express that. Many returned home stating they will never be the same. She stated maybe people will want to speak: John Poland who is on Honor Flight board, Fred Madrid as he was on the last flight, and JR Turner who is a guardian.

John Poland stated that it is a great program. He has been seven to eight times. First time he went as a guardian. Many veterans can finally “come home” with resolution of some of the internal issues.

Fred Madrid went on the last Honor Flight. He stated he was 16.5 years old when he went to Vietnam. When he returned he did not tell anyone for over 30 years. He stayed in the military for 26 years. He had a great experience, best time in the world. They got letters from children that was special.

JR Turner he was on Honor Flight 2 in 2009 as a guardian. That program was short. He then just did Honor Flight 16 which was just a few months ago. He was impressed with the orderliness.

The Honor Flight representative stated they need sustained funding. Her father-in-law is a Korean War Veteran who experienced a lot of changes after his Honor Flight that the family was unaware. They got involved slowly and financially. Her husband is on the board of directors and she is the flight team leader and videographer. Need help getting connected with community members, corporations can put this in their budget and give continued funding. They do have the spring flight funded, but not enough for the fall flight. Spring will be April 25-27. They are doing two flights a year. They have approximately 140 veterans on the waiting list, and the list
is growing. They need key guardians to go on the trips. Their money goes only to veterans, not guardians. Guardians and crew pay for themselves each trip. Also she would like to huge homecomings with flags, signs, tickertape. Memorial Medical Center has, and continues to be a great partner. Some of the guardians and veterans have permanent connections that continue for years. They are trying to get schools involved too and work on education. They received a roping saddle that is being auctioned.

After the last trip a veteran wrote a four-page letter just describing Honor Flight and what it meant. He called it “Tears in the Grass.”

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1 VETERANS PARK PARKING LOT EXPANSION

Larry Nichols stated this was addressed under item 6.2. Getting closer.

Chair Woods mentioned Wreaths Across America and why there is not one in Las Cruces. They are getting wreaths from Ft. Bliss on December 16th and placing them. Call the Chair for further information. They are picking up 192 wreaths.

9. REMINDERS

No meeting in December as it is Christmas.

DECEMBER 7 - PEARL HARBOR DAY
DECEMBER 25 - CHRISTMAS DAY
JANUARY 1 - NEW YEAR’S DAY
JANUARY 15 - MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY
JANUARY 26 - NEXT VAB MEETING

9. ADJOURNMENT (10:14)

Motion to adjourn made by John Poland; seconded by Sam Bothem. Motion passed.

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Chairperson