

2012 ANNUAL REPORT of the Veterans Affairs Commission, 9 City and County of San Francisco

Report INDEX

Sec. 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Sec. 2: Commission LEADERSHIP and PERSONNEL CHANGES of 2012

Sec. 3: Significant ACTIONS taken by the VAC in 2012

Sec. 4: ANCILIARY EVENTS undertaken by the VAC in 2012

Sec. 5: General Meetings – Attendance & Guests (With attached Document: MEETING ATTENDANCE RECORD)

Sec. 6: Heading into 2013 – the New Leadership Year

This document, approved and Ratified at the VEC General Meeting of 1/8/13, Respectfully Submitted, By and For the Veterans Affairs Commission, City and County of San Francisco
this 11th Day of January, 2013....

Original document signed as indicated

Eduardo Ramirez, 2012/13 President

Sec. 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Significant Events/Accomplishments of the VAC 2012 Administration Year are summarized in items 'a' through 'e', below.

(a) A year of TRANSITION

2012 was once again a year of significant transition for the VAC. It included significant changes in both Commission Personnel as well as mid-term Leadership changes, (See Sec., 2, below). By the end of 2012, Commission strength stood at 15 members, with TWO vacancies (i.e. a Mayoral appointed seat, and BOS Seat #2).

(b) Commission DIVERSITY

In its current configuration, the SFVAC meets or exceeds all diversity requirements as per City Code and our By-Laws. We have Female veteran appointees by both the BOS and by the Mayor. We have disabled vets as required. Aside from specific requirements our commission includes a strong mix of ages, eras of service, racial/ethnic diversity, and LGBT Community representation.

(c) Major GOALS for the 2012 Administrative Year

The primary GOALS of the Commission (for 2012), were articulated in the January General Meeting. They included:

- Review/Update VAC By-laws. (Accomplished in November, 2012 – see item 'e' of Sec. 1, below).
- Lobby for Veterans use of the SF Veterans Building. (See item 'a', Section 5, below).
- Increase effectiveness & visibility of the VAC (See Section 6, below)

(d) First VAC Committee Meetings

Early in 2012, a BYLAWS REVISION COMMITTEE was established, with Comm. S. Noetzel as Chair. The Committee accomplished its work during five (5) Public Meetings during the year, each scheduled and run in accordance with all Public Notice requirements – thereby representing the first formally structured Public-access Committee Meetings in the history of the SFVAC. (See item 'e', Sec. 1, below, Re: **By-Laws Revision as submitted by Committee**).

In December of 2012, the COMMITTEE on WOMEN'S ISSUES Within the Veterans and Military Community (Chaired by Comm. D. GUY) also met in a formal Public Meeting. During their initial meeting they established that their initial priority issues would be **Women's' Health care and Sexual Trauma in the military**. Additional issues would include Homeless Female veterans, and the high rate of unemployment for female veterans. Comm. Guy announced that the Committee plans to re-form during the 2013 Administrative year, for continuing work on these issues.

(e) Major By-Laws Revision

In the November 2012 General Meeting, after considerable study and discussion of the extensive RECCOMENDATIONS of the BYLAWS REVISION COMMITTEE, the Commission voted to ADOPT the REVISED COMMISSION BYLAWS, as per Committee recommendation. The new By-Laws include re-distribution of duties and responsibilities of the various Officers to 'spread the work-load', and encourage greater participation among the membership. A copy of the COMMISSION BYLAWS (as adopted) are now available in the SFVAC WEBSITE.

Sec. 2: Commission LEADERSHIP and PERSONNEL CHANGES of 2012

As per VAC By laws, we started with our annual **Election of Officers** process, which eventually included an election **resulting in the installation of Commissioner JOHN CALDERA as President; Comm. Anthony ALFIDI, Vice President, and Comm. Stephen NOETZEL as Secretary.**

In April **Commissioner Amber ROSE resigned from the Commission** stating that her personal responsibilities required her full attention and she could not devote the required time and commitment to the VAC.

In May, **Commissioner and Vice President Anthony ALFIDI resigned**, (from BOS Seat #3) indicating that he was unhappy with the recent direction of the Commission. **During the June VAC meeting**, replacement nominations were made, an election was held and **Commissioner Eduardo Ramirez was elected as interim Vice-President for the balance of the 2012 term.** On 5/16/12 **Ms. Ann WEEBY** was appointed to the Commission (by Mayor Lee) to fill the **seat vacated by Comm. ROSE.**

In June, **Commissioner Michael THOMPSON** resigned (from BOS Seat #2) of the Commission due to personal reasons. At end of 2012, Seat #2 remains opened.

During the September VAC meeting, **Commissioner John CALDERA resigned as President.** **During the October VAC meeting**, after nominations were made, an election was held and **Commissioner Eduardo Ramirez was elected as interim PRESIDENT for the balance of the 2012 term.**

On 12/4/12 the BOS appointed **three new Commissioners, as follows.**

Commissioner **Michael MAFFEI** was appointed to BOS Seat #9, replacing **Comm. Dara WONG**, whose Commission had expired.

Commissioner **John GALLAGHER** was appointed to BOS Seat #6, replacing **Comm. George GIBBS** whose Commission had expired, and

Commissioner **Lee BURNETTE** was appointed to BOS Seat #3, replacing **Comm. Anthony ALFIDI** who had retired in May.

Commissioner Chris GRUWELL resigned from the Commission, effective 12/31/12. At end of 2012, this Mayor-appointed seat remains opened.

In summary, the 'transition of 2012' included appointment of four (4) new Commissioners.

By the end of 2012, Commission strength stood at 15 members, with a Mayoral appointed seat, and BOS Seat #2 vacant.

The attached ATTENDANCE RECORD provides a full view of Commissioners participation during the calendar year.

NOTE: A current Commission ROSTER is available at two locations:

- Within the City '311' Information Website 'Community' link (then under Centralized Commission, Task Force, Committee DATABASE) at URL: <http://www.sf311.org/index.aspx?page=92>
- Within the WEBSITE for the SAN FRANCISCO VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION, 'About Us' page, at URL: <http://sfgov3.org/index.aspx?page=1689>

Sec. 3: Significant ACTIONS taken by the VAC in 2012

(a) 2011 ANNUAL REPORT

On 16 January, 2012, the SFVAC submitted its **ANNUALREPORT (for 2011)** as required by its Charter, and by City Code. The 6-page report, signed by (retiring) President Raymond WONG, included an Executive Summary, and 5 additional elements to describe the work of the Commission during the 2011 Administrative year.

(b) RESOLUTIONS, ENDORSEMENTS and ADVICE LETTERS to Mayor and Board of Supervisors (2012)

- **RESOLUTION** advocating for the **addition of a VETERANS FITNESS AND WELLNESS CENTER in the Retrofit Plans for the War Memorial Veterans Building. In the February 2012 General Meeting, after considerable investigation and discussion, the **VAC approved the aforementioned RESOLUTION.** Subsequently, a **Letter of Advice** (dtd. 30 April, 2012), signed by VAC President John Caldera, was forwarded to the Mayor Edwin Lee and Board of Supervisors, **urging their support for this important plan, and more specifically, to facilitate a Joint Meeting to bring together all parties with a stake in the future of the building.** Copies of the letter, with its attached RESOLUTION in Support of Construction of a Fitness and Wellness Center in the War Memorial Veterans Building, were forwarded to the War Memorial Board of Trustees, the leadership of the American Legion War Memorial Commission, and the director of the VA medical Center at Ft. Miley. ***There has been no formal response on this matter, from either the Office of the Mayor, or the Board of Supervisors.*****
- **Endorsement of initiative to name US Naval ship THE USS HARVEY MILK.** In the May, 2012 General Meeting, after considerable investigation and discussion, the **VAC approved a RESOLUTION** in support of a Board of Supervisors Resolution (as authored by Supervisor Weiner) which urged **the Secretary of the Navy to christen a ship as the "USS Harvey Milk"**

- **Censure of Commission President.** In the June, 2012 General Meeting, after considerable investigation and discussion, the VAC approved a **RESOLUTION CENSURE its President (Comm. Caldera)** for *overstepping his authority* in the matter of seeking Office Space for the SFVAC in City Hall. The Resolution directed the President to ***“cease and desist from any action that exceeds specific authority provided by the Commission, on this and all other matters.”*** By a raised-hand vote, the **MOTION to CENSURE President Caldera** overwhelmingly passed, with all Commissioners voting in favor, and one abstention.

(c) VETERANS RELATED LEGISLATION

During 2012, the SFVAC voted its **SUPPORT** (in the form of Resolutions, Endorsements, and Advice Letters to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors), for several specific pieces of legislation, as summarized below:

- **US House Resolution 3435:** Proposed Federal Legislation titled: **Sexual Assault Training Oversight and Prevention Act. (i.e. the S.T.O.P. Act)** as introduced by Congresswoman Jackie Speier. Passage would institute new rules within the military to protect service members against rape, sexual harassment, hazing and all remaining abusive practices experienced by service-members.
- **CA Senate Bill SB661:** Proposed State Legislation that **Restricts Protests and Demonstrations at Military Funerals.** This bill is a Re-write of an earlier Bill that was VETOED by Governor Brown under Freedom of Speech consideration. The NEW Bill (SB661) includes greater protection for grieving families to honor and bury their fallen loved ones in private and respectful ceremonies.
- **US House Bill 210:** Proposed Federal Legislation titled: **The Fairness to Filipino Veterans Bill** (which now has over 90 co-sponsors in the House). In its General Meeting of 3/5/12, the VAC passed a **Resolution to Advise the City Government** of San Francisco to support a US SENATE version of the House Bill, so that this matter can move forward to passage. In this regard, a **Letter of Advice** (dtd. 25 April, 2012), signed by VAC President John Caldera, was forwarded to the Mayor Edwin Lee and Board of Supervisors, **urging them to author a Resolution in support of Senate Companion Bill to match House Version of Filipino Veterans Fairness Act.** ***There has been no formal response on this matter, from either the Office of the Mayor, or the Board of Supervisors.*** Copies of the letter were also sent to **Senators Feinstein and Boxer**, in the hope that they might take action and draft the requested Senate Bill.

(d) ETHICS TRAINING

On 2/28/12 the City of San Francisco offered an evening of training for City Employees and members of its various Commissions, Agencies and Boards. A total of **seven (7) VAC Commissioners** (Alfidi, Caldera, Crichlow, Noetzel, Ramirez, D. Wong and R. Wong) attended the training session, thereby earning a **Certificate of Ethics Training with respect to the California Brown Act and the San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.** The training is offered every two years and it represents a **base line of critical knowledge in the little-known laws and regulations that govern interaction between Commissioners.**

(e) SPRING RESOURCE FAIR in VETERANS BUILDING

On 3/2/12 the entire War Memorial Veterans Building was transformed into a major Resource and Job Fair. The event was fully endorsed by the SFVAC as several Commissioners worked closely with the Community Covenant organizations that planned and sponsored the event. **Some 55 vendors (i.e. Service Providers)** attended and participated, including **some 25 Employers.** Additional Resource vendors included **tables for all Bay Area Colleges and Universities** (public and Private). Some 400 participants attended at least a portion of the proceedings as **numerous Résumé's were circulated; Initial employment interviews conducted (including 2 veterans “hired on the spot”), and at least 6 veterans were signed up for VA services.** In short, an extremely successful Event, by any standard of measurement.

Sec. 4: ANCILIARY EVENTS undertaken by the VAC in 2013

(a) City Sponsored Events for MEMORIAL DAY, and VETERANS DAY.

By long-standing tradition, (if not by specific mandate), members of the SFVAC have organized and produced, (individually and working in concert), the TWO major Annual San Francisco EVENTS that honor the military service and sacrifice of its Veterans and Military Community.

- **On Monday, the 28th of May, 2012 (Memorial Day), led by Comm. Wallace LEVIN,** members of the Commission organized planned and participated in **the annual MEMORIAL DAY ceremonies at the S.F. Presidio.** Once again, Comm. Levin presided over a stirring event in commemoration of the many Armed Services men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our nation. Many of the Commissioners participated in various roles to assure that the parade and ceremonies proceeded exactly as planned. The Mayor and several S.F. Supervisors commended Comm. Levin for another outstanding memorial event at the Presidio.
- **On Sunday, the 11th of November, 2012 (Veterans Day), led by Comm. Wallace LEVIN,** members of the Commission (and a variety of volunteers) organized planned and participated in another highly successful annual **VETERANS DAY PARADE in downtown San Francisco.**

(b) TOWN HALL Meetings.

Throughout the year, in addition to his many other duties, **Comm. Eddie Ramirez** has continued to run his **TOWN HALL MEETINGS on the 4th Wednesday of each month, in the War Memorial Veterans Building**. Hosting a morning session (mostly for Homeless and/or Job Seeking Veterans), as well as an Evening Session, **Comm. Ramirez has featured dozens of Speakers, Educators, and Service Providers for small-group settings with Veterans who need help to improve their lives**

(c) Mid-Term Presidential ELECTION.

At the outset of the **September, 2012 General Meeting**, Commission **President John Caldera resigned** as President of the Commission. **Vice-President Eduardo RAMIREZ** was elevated to the position of **Acting President**. In a subsequent ELECTION (during the October General Meeting), Comm. Ramirez was ELECTED as Interim President, to serve in that capacity for the remaining portion of the 2012 Administration Year.

(d) Re-Establishment of City Policy on Fee Exemption for Veterans.

During the **September, 2012 General Meeting**, Guest (and Veteran) **David Glass** explained a problem he has recently experienced with the **City Health Department**. As a **long-term food vendor** (at numerous public Concerts/Events) he has, for many years, enjoyed the **State of California VETERANS EXEMPTION (of fees)** in connection with his business, **as provided in the California Code (Sec. 16102)**. Mr. Glass claimed that **in contradiction to the law, City Health Department has arbitrarily leveled substantial "inspection fees" to his Veteran Owned business**. After making his case before the Commission, **President Eduardo Ramirez** appointed **Comm. Jordan TOWERS** to be the **LEAD person to fully research this item**, and report his findings to the Commission in the next meeting. In the **December General Meeting**, **Comm. Towers** reported a **very positive outcome in this case**. Specifically, he reported that he had first asked the **City Attorney to look at the matter** and issue a **Legal Opinion** on whether the City Health Department was in compliance with the State mandated Veterans Fee Exemptions in this matter. **Comm. Towers** further reported that the **City Attorney issued a Legal Opinion that completely SUPPORTED the fee exemption, and that the City Health Department was NOT IN COMPLIANCE with State Law in attempting to level inspection fees on Mr. Glass or other Vendors who have proven their status as Veterans of US Military Service**. Finally, **Comm. Towers** reported that an **Administrator from the City Health Department** has informed Mr. Glass of their error, and will discontinue its recent improper practices in this regard. The Commission expressed its collective thanks to **Comm. Towers** for his excellent work in gaining this victory on behalf of the Veterans Community in San Francisco.

Sec. 5: General Meetings – Attendance and Guests

(a) MEETING GUESTS and PUBLIC COMMENTARY.

The monthly General Meetings of the VAC, traditionally held at 6pm, in room 104 of the War Memorial Veterans Building, on the first Monday of every month, **were once again attended by a wide variety of guests at every meeting**. They came to **initiate and strengthen connection** between a variety of public and private organizations (and the Commission) **to provide enhanced services to the Veterans Community of San Francisco**. Some of the most frequent meeting guests were bay area Veterans who were already active in Veterans issues. **As in the past, some guests were later appointed to seats on the VAC**. Officers of the **American Legion War Memorial Commission** attended frequently to act as **liaison between the ALWMC and the VAC** on important issues pertaining to **Retrofit Plans and Post-Retrofit Building Use Plans**. Other guests represented **liaison between organizations such as Swords to Plowshares, Veterans hiring and career advancement programs, including representatives of the VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER (later re-named as the VETERANS SUCCESS CENTER), Veterans Campus Clubs, Veterans Housing Programs, and the S.F. Arts Commission**. We look forward to follow-up and further development of these 'mutual interest liaison contacts in the new Administration Year.

(b) Commissioners ATTENDANCE at General Meetings.

ATTACHED as part of this REPORT, is the official ATTENDANCE RECORD for the VAC Monthly Meetings of 2012.

This document serves to meet our annual Attendance & Participation requirement. A Summary Statistics from that Report follows

- Comm. **CALDERA** achieved a **Perfect Attendance Record** for 2012 VAC meetings.
- Comm. **WEEBY** achieved *Perfect Attendance for all meetings after appointment*.
- As he is unable to attend Commission meetings, Comm. **GRUWELL** resigned from the Commission at end of '12
- Commissioners **not mentioned above**, compiled an **aggregate 87% attendance record**.

Sec. 6: Heading into 2013 – the New Leadership Year

The Commission will begin the New Administration Year (2013) with completion of the traditional **Nominations and Public Elections process** as per its by-laws mandate. **Once the new Leadership Team is elected, we will work productively to address new issues and continue to make progress on all issues of concern to the Veterans Community of San Francisco.**

Of the many issues, the over-arching, and continuing **PRIMARY ISSUE** regarding **Future use of the War Memorial Veterans Building, remains**. More specifically the **Question: How Much of the War Memorial Veterans Building Can Be/Should Be Preserved for Use By and For Veterans?**

We enter the New Administration Year confident that the City of San Francisco Administration (both Mayor's Office and Board of Supervisors) will join with us in a productive and inclusive process to insure a fair and equitable solution to this all-important 2013 issue.

REPORT authored by VAC Secretary Stephen S. Noetzel. Submitted for approval at VAC General Meeting of 1/8/13, and RATIFIED by unanimous Commission vote on 1/8/13.

[illegible]

ATTENDANCE RECORD – VAC Monthly Meetings, 2012
(Official ATTACHMENT to the 2012 ANNUAL REPORT of the VAC)

NAME	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alfidi	P	P	P	P	P	Resigned from Commission effective 5/14/12.....						
Baldonado	A2	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	A2

Caldera	P		P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	P
100%													
Crichlow	P		P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	A1	A2	P
Dacumos	P	P	A1	P	P	P	X	A2	A4	P	A1	P	
Gibbs	P	P	P	A1	P	A1	X	P	P	A4	P	P	
Gruwell	A1	A1	P	A1	A4	A4	X	A4	A4	A4	A4	A4	
Guy	A2	P	P	P	P	A1	X	P	P	P	P	P	
Levin	P		P	P	A1	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	P
Noetzel	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	A1	A1	P	P	
Ramirez	P	A1	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	P	
Rose	P	P	A1	A1	Resigned from Commission effective 3/3/12.....								
Thompson	P	P	P	P	P	P	Resigned from Commission effective 6/15/12						
Towers	P	P	P	A4	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	P	
Weebyappointed by Mayor effective 5/16/12					P	X	P	P	P	P	P	100%
Wilkerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	A4	P	A2	
D. Wong	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	A1	P	P	P	
REPLACED on Commission by Comm. Michael Maffei, effective 12/4/12.....													
R. Wong	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	A1	P	P	P	

Notes:

X = No Meeting

A1 = Absent – Excused by President

A2 = Absent – due to illness

A3 = Absent – Family illness

A4 = Absent – NO NOTIFICATION (unexcused)

100% (A) – Perfect attendance for ALL 2012 VAC meetings

100% (B) – Perfect meetings attendance after appointment

NOTES on Commissioners RETIRED in 2012, (with REPLACEMENT and new appointment notations)

Comm. A. ALFIDI, Resigned BOS Seat #3, effective 5/14/12. REPLACED By Comm. L. BURNETTE 12/4/12

Comm. G. GIBBS (BOS Seat #6) Commission EXPIRED 1/31/12. REPLACED By Comm. J. GALLAGER 12/4/12

Comm. C. GRUWELL Resigned Mayoral appointment effective 12/31/12. **Seat CURRENTLY VACANT**

Comm. A. ROSE, Resigned Mayoral appointment effective 4/3/12. REPLACED by Comm. A. WEEBY 5/16/12

Comm. M. THOMPSON Resigned BOS Seat #2 effective 6/15/12. **Seat CURRENTLY VACANT**

Comm. D. WONG (BOS Seat #9) Commission EXPIRED 1/31/12. REPLACED By Comm. M. MAFFEI 12/4/12