

2014 Annual Report of the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission

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This document, approved and Ratified at the General Meeting of January 13, 2015, and respectfully submitted,
By and For the Veterans Affairs Commission, City and County of San Francisco.

Original signed by _____
Stephen Noetzel, 2014 President

Sec. 1: Executive Summary

The Significant Events/Accomplishments of the VAC 2014 Administration Year are summarized in items 'a' through 'c', below.

(a) A Year of Transition

By the end of 2014, Commission strength stood at 13 members, with four vacancies (i.e. three Mayoral appointed seats, and one Board of Supervisors appointed seat). In February 2014, one commissioner, Jordan Towers, chose not to accept re-appointment to his Board of Supervisors appointed seat. Also in February, the Commission gained one mayoral appointed member, Commissioner Bruce Smith. In March, the Commission gained a second mayoral appointed member, Jeff Marshall. In April, the Commission gained two new Board of Supervisors appointed Commissioners – Angela Jenkins and Dwane Kennedy. By the end of 2014, the Commission strength stood at 16 members, with one vacancy, a mayoral appointed seat.

(b) Commission Diversity

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

(c) Major Goals for the 2014 Administrative Year

The primary goals of the Commission (for 2014) were articulated in the April General Meeting. They included:

- The creation of "passive meeting bodies" comprised of two commissioners to act as an informal research team, which, when fully developed, would then be proposed to the entire Commission for action. The Commission created the following three passive meeting bodies:
 1. The standing committee on veterans mental health services, chaired by Commissioner Ramirez
 2. The standing committee on the research and creation of the development of a city department of military and veterans affairs, co-chaired by Commissioners Michael Maffei and Jeff Marshall
 3. The standing committee on the protection of veterans transportation services, chaired by Commissioner Kennedy
- The study and development of a new city department or agency titled "The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs."
- Lobby for veterans use of the SF Veterans Building. (See item 'a', Section 5, below).

Sec. 2: Commission Leadership and Personnel Changes of 2014

As per Commission by-laws, we started with our annual election of officers process, which eventually included an election resulting in the installation of Commissioner Stephen Noetzel as President; Commissioner Michael Maffei as Vice President, and Commissioner Lee Burnette as Secretary. The role of Commission Secretary changed hands officially in September 2014, due to unexcused absences on the part of Commissioner Burnette. At the September meeting, following an official vote by the full Commission, Commissioner Kennedy officially took over the duties of Commission Secretary for the remainder of the year.

At the start of 2014, authorized Commission strength stood at seventeen (17) mandated members; specifically: Five (5) Mayoral appointments, and Twelve (12) Board of Supervisor appointed members. At start of the year there were four vacant seats; three (3) Mayoral appointments and one Board of Supervisors appointment. In January, Commissioner Jordan Towers chose to let his appointment to the Commission expire. In February, the Commission received two new Commissioners (Mayoral appointments) – Bruce Smith and Jeff Marshall. In April, the Commission received two more Commissioners (Board of Supervisors appointments)

– Dwane Kennedy and Angela Jenkins. At the end of 2014, there remains one (1) vacant seat on the Commission, a mayoral appointment.

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 2014

(a) 2013 Annual Report

In March 2014, the Commission submitted its Annual Report for 2013 as required by its Charter, and by City Code. The 6-page report, signed by President Stephen Noetzel, included an Executive Summary, and 5 additional elements to describe the work of the Commission during the 2013 Administrative year.

(b) Report Regarding the City of San Francisco Veterans Court

A stated goal of the SFVAC for 2013 was to assist the City with the establishment of a Veterans Court. The SFVAC worked with local government agencies, including the San Francisco District Attorney's Office and the San Francisco Superior Court, a state government agency, the California Department of Veterans Affairs, and a federal agency, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the San Francisco Veterans Justice Court began operating, effective April 2013. At the Commission's September 10th meeting, Judge Braden Woods of the San Francisco Superior Court presented a report on the current status of the San Francisco Veterans Court. Judge Woods, who currently presides over the San Francisco Veterans Court, reported on the successful program. Specifically, he discussed the services that the Court provides, and highlighted the fact that inclusion in the San Francisco Veterans Court occurs regardless of the veteran's discharge status. Judge Woods also provided information on outreach efforts and described how the Court's case management system works to provide "wraparound" services.

(c) Progress toward Establishment of the War Memorial Veterans Building as a One-Stop-Shop

This continuing effort was spearheaded, throughout the year, by VAC President Ramirez in his monthly organization of the Veterans Town Hall / Collaborative meetings. The meetings include a morning session as well as an evening session. Commissioner Ramirez has featured dozens of Federal, State, Local, and Community partners (in small-group settings) with Veterans who need help to improve their lives. Until the Retrofit closure of the Veterans Building in May of 2013, the popular "Last Wednesday of the Month" meetings were led by Founder Eduardo Ramirez, (for some 22 consecutive months), in the War Memorial Veterans Building. After Building closure, Commissioner Ramirez arranged for re-location of the monthly Town Hall / Collaborative to the Philip Burton Federal Building, at 450 Golden Gate Ave. Founder Eduardo Ramirez points to the meetings as a pre-cursor of the concept of a "one-stop-shop" for San Francisco Veterans to access a complete panoply of veterans services in one building, during a single visit. The Commission remains committed to the eventual utilization of adequate space in the remodeled War Memorial Veterans Building, for "one-stop-shop" service convenience, for San Francisco veterans and their families.

(d) Resolutions, Endorsements and Advice Letters to Mayor and Board of Supervisors (2014)

> Resolution to Endorse City Efforts to keep CCSF Opened and Accredited

After several months of development, at its January 14, 2014, meeting, the Commission passed a Resolution to urge City Government to expend all effort to insure continuing operation of S.F. City College, thereby supporting the education opportunities for the 1300 Veteran students attending. The Commission remains hopeful that negotiations for un-interrupted operation of this important City Education resource will enable students to take full advantage of the Education Benefits of the "Post 9/11" GI Bill.

> Resolution Regarding Relocation of S.F. Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The October 14, 2014 Commission meeting included an Agenda item to consider a proposed resolution regarding the relocation of the S.F. Vietnam Veterans Memorial. At the October 14 meeting, the Commission drafted and approved a resolution similar to a resolution proposed by the American Legion War Memorial Commission. The resolution describes the poor condition of the current Vietnam Memorial Monument, located in an inconspicuous position at the foot of Market Street. The resolution goes on to note the 163 San Francisco service members who died in the Vietnam War, and offers support for renovation for the monument and relocation to a place of conspicuous honor in the foyer of the War Memorial Veterans Building. The resolution passed unanimously, and by the end of the year, cordial negotiations for the eventual relocation of the Memorial Plaque to a new place of honor are well underway.

> Official Endorsement of "The Mission Continues"

The May meeting included both Endorsement of the program and Commission support and advocacy for the Mayor to find service positions for up to five 'Fellows' to work in City Hall under the 6-month Mission Continues program.

> Official Endorsement of the "VETERANS TRAIL' at Ft. Miley".

The May meeting also included official Commission commitment to "Endorse and partner with the GG Nat'l Parks Conservancy in advocacy for development of the subject VETERANS TRAIL" as proposed for development in the Lands End area of the city.

Sec. 4: Ancillary Events undertaken by the VAC in 2014

City Sponsored Events for Memorial Day, and Veterans' Day.

By long-standing tradition, (if not by specific mandate), members of the Commission 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 26th of May, 2014 (Memorial Day), led by former Commissioner Wallace Levin, members of the Commission organized, planned and participated in the annual Memorial Day ceremonies at the S.F. Presidio. Once again, former Commissioner 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.

On Tuesday, the 11th of November, 2014 (Veterans' Day), members of the Commission organized, planned and participated in the annual Veterans' Day parade. Again, Parade Director and former Commissioner Wallace Levin presided over a well-attended event.

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 City Hall, Room 416) on the SECOND TUESDAY 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.

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 progress 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 Success Center (VSC), the Veterans Community Media Center (VCMC), 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.

Guests at the October meeting included representatives of the Friends of Port Chicago who made a presentation regarding ongoing efforts to gain a posthumous "Correction of Service Record" for the 50 Port Chicago Sailors convicted of Mutiny for refusing to work under unsafe conditions. The issue continues to be revisited on a monthly basis. It is expected that a research Committee will provide recommendations for Commission Action in 2015.

(b) Commissioners' Attendance at General Meetings

Attached as part of this Report is the official Attendance Record for the VAC Monthly Meetings of 2014. This document serves to meet our annual Attendance & Participation requirement. Both the February and June meetings were cancelled.

Sec. 6: Heading into 2015 – the New Leadership Year

The Commission will begin the New Administration Year (2015) with completion of a public election 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. During a recent mid-construction site visit by members of the VAC, it was obvious to all that when construction is done, and the building re-opens in the late summer of 2015, it will without doubt, stand as the finest municipal Veterans facility in the nation.

We enter the new administration year confident that the City of San Francisco administration (both the Mayor's Office and Board of Supervisors) will join with us in a productive and inclusive process to negotiate a fair and equitable space allocation plan that insures that San Francisco Veterans returning from service now and well into the future, can avail themselves of services they require, in the newly remodeled Veterans Building.

Report authored by Commissioner Maffei, and submitted for approval at VAC General Meeting of January 13, 2015 and ratified by unanimous Commission vote on January 13, 2015.

ATTENDANCE RECORD – VAC Monthly Meetings, 2014 **(Official Attachment to the 2014 Annual Report of the VAC)**

NAME	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Baldonado	P	X	P	EA	EA	X	X	P	P	EA	EA	P
2. Burnette	P	X	EA	UA	P	X	X	UA	UA	UA	UA	UA
3. Caldera	P	X	P	P	P	X	X	P	P	P	P	P
4. Dacumos	EA	X	P	P	EA	X	X	P	P	P	EA	P
5. Gallagher	P	X	UA	UA	P	X	X	P	P	P	P	EA
6. Guy	P	X	P	P	P	X	X	P	P	P	EA	P
7. Jenkins	<u>Appointed 4/114</u>			P	P	X	X	P	P	P	P	P
8. Kennedy	<u>Appointed 4/114</u>			P	P	X	X	P	P	EA	P	P
9. Maffei	P	X	P	P	P	X	X	P	P	EA	P	P
10. Marshall	<u>Appointed 2/6/14</u>		P	P	P	X	X	P	P	P	P	P
11. Noetzel	P	X	P	P	P	X	X	P	P	P	P	P
12. Ramirez	P	X	P	P	P	X	X	P	P	EA	P	EA
13. Smith	<u>Appointed 2/6/14</u>		P	P	EA	X	X	P	P	UA	EA	EA
14. Weeby	P	X	P	P	P	X	X	P	EA	P	EA	EA
15. Wilkerson	P	X	P	P	P	X	X	P	P	P	UA	P
16. Wong	P	X	P	P	P	X	X	P	P	P	P	P

Notes:

Mayoral Appointments indicated as underlined.
All others are Board of Supervisor appointments.

INDEX TO SYMBOLS:

X No Meeting
P Present
EA Excused Absence
UA Unauthorized Absence

At end of 2014, Commission strength stands at 16 active members, with one Board of Supervisors appointed vacancy.

Notes on Commissioners who left the Commission in 2014, and Commissioners who joined the Commission in 2014

Commissioner Jordan Towers chose not to seek re-appointment to the Commission, and his term expired on January 31, 2014.
Commissioner Bruce Smith took his Mayoral appointed seat on the Commission at the March 2014 meeting.
Commissioner Jeff Marshall took his Mayoral appointed seat on the Commission at the March 2014 meeting.
Commissioner Angela Jenkins took her Board of Supervisors appointed seat (Seat # 2) at the April 2014 meeting.
Commissioner Dwane Kennedy took his Board of Supervisors appointed seat (Seat # 10) at the April 2014 meeting.