

2015 Annual Report of the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission

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This document, approved and ratified at the General Meeting of February 9, 2016, and respectfully submitted, by and for the Veterans Affairs Commission of the City and County of San Francisco.

original signed by 
Stephen S. Noetzel, 2015 President

Sec. 1: Executive Summary

The Significant Events/Accomplishments of the VAC 2015 Administration Year are summarized in items 'a' through 'c', below.

(a) A Year of Transition

By the end of 2014, Commission strength stood at 16 members, with one (Mayoral appointed) vacant seat. In February 2015, two commissioners, Edward Ramirez and Edward Wilkerson, chose not to accept re-appointment to their Board of Supervisors appointed seats. In March, the Board of Supervisors Rules Committee chose not to reappoint Commissioner Caldera. In April, the Commission gained three Board of Supervisors-appointed members, Latonia Dixon, Kevin Miller, and Brendan Rogers. In May, the Commission added one new Board of Supervisors appointed Commissioner – Sam Pandey. In October, Commissioner Bruce Smith resigned his Mayoral appointed commission seat. In November, Commissioner Reginaldo Baldonado resigned his Board of Supervisors appointed commission seat. By the end of 2015, the Commission strength stood at 14 members, with three vacancies (i.e., two Mayoral appointed and one BOS appointed).

(b) Commission ROSTER

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>

(c) 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, and racial/ethnic diversity.

(d) Major Goals for the 2015 Administrative Year

The primary goals of the Commission (for 2015) were articulated in the February General Meeting. They included:

- Continue VAC advocacy for fair and equitable space allocation in the War Memorial Veterans Building (post Renovation), to include Veterans Service Organizations of all types, as well as other qualified Patriotic Organizations.
- Research Team on protocols for equitable assignment to veterans housing and other mental health issues.
- Committee on veterans mental health issues to study areas where VAC might provide advice on areas including (but not limited to) issues of: moral injury, depression and suicide, and more.
- Further potential for establishment of committee on collaboration and agenda development.

Sec. 2: Commission Leadership and Personnel Changes of 2015

As per Commission by-laws, we started with our annual election of officers process, which included an election resulting in the installation of Commissioner Stephen Noetzel as President; Commissioner Michael Maffei as Vice President, and Commissioner Dwane Kennedy as Secretary.

In February 2015, two commissioners, Edward Ramirez and Edward Wilkerson, chose not to accept re-appointment to their Board of Supervisors appointed seats. In March, the Board of Supervisors Rules Committee chose not to reappoint Commissioner Caldera. In April, the Commission gained three Board of Supervisors-appointed members, Latonia Dixon, Kevin Miller, and Brendan Rogers. In May, the Commission gained one new Board of Supervisors appointed Commissioner – Sam Pandey. In October, Commissioner Bruce Smith resigned his Mayoral appointed commission seat. In November, Commissioner Reginaldo Baldonado resigned his Board of Supervisors appointed commission seat. By the end of 2015, the Commission strength stood at 15 members, with two vacancies. (one a mayoral appointed seat, and the other a Board of Supervisors appointed seat.)

The attached attendance record provides a full view of Commissioners participation during the calendar year.

Sec. 3: Significant Actions taken by the VAC in 2015

(a) 2014 Annual Report

In January 2015, the Commission submitted its Annual Report for 2014 as required by its Charter, and by City Code. The 4-page report, signed by President Stephen Noetzel, included an Executive Summary, and 5 additional elements to describe the work of the Commission during the 2014 Administrative year.

(b) Commission Policy on “Endorsement” and/or “Support”

The Veterans Affairs Commission streamlined the process for Commission endorsement of outside groups. Going forward, a group seeking endorsement of the Commission shall complete the Endorsement Form found on the Commission website, and submit the form in advance of the Commission meeting. At the meeting, Commissioners shall vote to endorse the group’s activity after brief discussion and comment

(c) Shall Future VAC Meetings Be Held at City Hall or Veterans Building?

At the December VAC meeting, President Noetzel had for discussion and as an action item, the question of whether future VAC meetings shall be held at City Hall or in the Veterans Building. After speaking at length, and listening to lengthy public comment, the VAC voted, by a tally of 8-2, to continue to hold monthly VAC meetings in City Hall. The vote breakdown, as requested by President Noetzel, was as follows: Voting to

keep VAC meetings in City Hall: Dixon, Guy, Jenkins, Kennedy, Maffei, Miller, Rogers, and Weeby. Voting to move VAC meetings to Veterans Building: Noetzel and Wong.

(d) Resolutions, Endorsements and Advice Letters to Mayor and Board of Supervisors (2015)

> Resolution on Justice for Port Chicago Fifty

SFVAC Commissioner Angela Jenkins first introduced this complex issue to the Commission in September of 2014. The issue of finding a meaningful way to address the injustice suffered by fifty African American Sailors, wrongly convicted of Mutiny in the aftermath of a horrific explosion at a bomb-loading pier called "Port Chicago" in the northern reaches of San Francisco Bay in 1944, was developed at each subsequent meeting. At the February 10, 2015 VAC meeting, the final draft of a Resolution urging the S.F. Board of Supervisors and Mayor to bring Restorative Justice to the US Navy Sailors of Port Chicago was unanimously adopted. The Resolution was distributed to numerous bay area agencies, organizations and political leaders with a request for adoption of supportive Resolutions and advocacy for Federal Action as called for in the Resolution.

The SFVAC is honored to report that through the unrelenting efforts of Commissioner Jenkins and other members of the "Port Chicago Study Team", this advocacy met with great success.

In the ensuing months the issue gained Supportive "Mirror Resolutions" from:

- Veterans for Peace, Chapter 69, San Francisco
- American Legion, Post 315 of San Francisco
- The S.F. Lions Veterans Club of San Francisco
- The Human Rights Commission of San Francisco

The culmination of this surge of interest and advocacy resulted in the adoption of a Resolution by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, on July 14, 2015 to "Commemorate the 71st Anniversary of the Port Chicago disaster and urging the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to exonerate the 50 US Navy Sailors convicted of mutiny in the incident with the designation of Honorable Discharge."

In a City Hall ceremony at the Board of Supervisors General meeting of 7/14/15, the SFVAC was presented with a Certificate of Commendation (Authored by Supv. Cohen, and signed by the attending members of the BOS), "In recognition of its efforts to promote the history of the Port Chicago Memorial, and in appreciation of our advocacy for justice for the survivors of the Port Chicago Disaster."

It should also be noted that distribution of the SFVAC Resolution to area Congressional Representatives, resulted in a series of meetings with Legislation Development Representatives in the offices of US Senators Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein, and US Representatives Barbara Boxer and Mark DeSaulnier.

> SFVAC Advocacy for establishment of a Veterans Affairs Commission for City of San Jose, CA.

At the 3/10/15 VAC meeting Mr. Sam Pandey, (a Veteran and CORO Fellow, working in the office of Mayor Lee as a Special Assistant on Veterans Affairs), made a presentation, to advocate in support of an ADVICE LETTER to City Government of San Francisco, to urge establishment of a Veterans Affairs Commission for the City of San Jose, California. SFVAC authorized the letter and it was sent to Mayor Lee and the S.F. Board of Supervisors.

> RESOLUTION to Endorse Relocation of 2015 Veterans Day Parade, and in Support of the First Annual Fisherman's Wharf Celebration in Support of Veterans.

The resolution was unanimously passed at VAC Meeting of 8/11/15 and forwarded, with Transmittal letter, to Mayor Lee and the S.F. Board of Supervisors.

Sec. 4: Ancillary Events undertaken by the VAC in 2015

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

By long-standing tradition, 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 25th of May, 2015 (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 Sunday, the 8th of November 2015, 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. Of note, the 2015 Veterans' Day Parade marked the first time the Parade was held in the Fisherman's Wharf route. The Parade was a success and it was well attended. The VAC sent "thank you" notes to the Mayor, the Board of Supervisors, the Chiefs of Police and the Fire Departments, to show our gratitude for the high level of participation and support from the City's elected officials.

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.

At the May 2015 VAC meeting, Mr. Bevan Dufty, Director of San Francisco's Project HOPE (Housing Opportunity, Partnerships, and Engagement) provided a comprehensive presentation on how the City continues to find innovative ways to end chronic homelessness and provide relief to needy individuals, groups and families. He reported that Mayor Lee remains committed to finding appropriate housing and rehabilitative social services for the approximately 700 homeless Veterans within this population, by the end of this year. Mr. Dufty also applauded the efforts of San Francisco landlords for their commitment to dedicating numerous rental units to the HUD CASH program.

(b) Commissioners' Attendance at General Meetings

Attached as part of this Report is the official Attendance Record for the VAC Monthly Meetings of 2015. This document serves to meet our annual Attendance & Participation requirement. The October meeting was cancelled.

Sec. 6: Heading into 2016 – the New Leadership Year

The Commission will begin the New Administration Year (2016) 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.

Report authored by Commissioner Maffei, and submitted for approval at VAC General Meeting of February 9, 2016 and ratified by unanimous Commission vote on February 9, 2016.

ATTENDANCE RECORD – 2015 (Official Attachment to the 2015 Annual Report of the VAC)

<u>NAME</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
Baldonado	P	P	EA	P	P	EA	X	EA	EA	UA (Resigned 11/10/15)		
Burnette	UA	UA	UA	(Resigned BOS#3 on 3/18/15 – Replaced by Commissioner Pandey 5/5/15)								
Caldera	P	P	P	(Appointment to BOS#4 expired 1/31/15 – Replaced by Comm. Rogers 3/24/15)								
Dacumos	EA	P	EA	P	P	P	X	EA	EA	X	EA	EA
Dixon	(Appointed to BOS#1 4/14/15)			P	P	P	X	P	P	X	P	P
Gallagher	P	P	UA	EA	P	EA	X	EA	EA	X	P	EA
Guy	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	X	EA	P
Jenkins	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	X	P	P
Kennedy	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	X	P	P
Maffei	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	X	P	P
Marshall	P	P	EA	P	P	P	X	EA	EA	X	P	EA
Miller	(Appointed to BOS#7 3/24/15)			P	P	P	X	P	P	X	EA	P
Noetzel	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	X	EA	P
Pandey	(Appointed to BOS#3 5/5/15)				P	EA	X	P	EA	X	P	UA
Ramirez	P	(Appointment to BOS#1 expired 1/31/15 – Did not seek new term, Replaced by Comm. Dixon)										
Rogers	(Appointed to BOS#4 3/24/14)			P	P	X	P	P	X	P	P	P
Smith	P	P	P	EA	EA	EA	X	P	EA	(Resigned 10/28/15)		
Weeby	P	EA	P	P	P	EA	X	EA	P	X	P	P
Wilkerson	P	(Appointment to BOS#7 expired 1/31/15 – Did not seek new term, Replaced by Comm. Miller)										
Wong	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	EA	X	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 2015, Commission strength stands at 14 members, with three vacancies (i.e., two Mayoral appointed and one BOS appointed).

