2013 ANNUAL REPORT of the Veterans Affairs Commission, City and County of San Francisco

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This document, approved and Ratified at the VEC General Meeting of March 11, 2014, and respectfully submitted, By and For the Veterans Affairs Commission, City and County of San Francisco this 18th day of March, 2014

original signed by_

Eduardo Ramirez, 2013 President

Sec. 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Significant Events/Accomplishments of the VAC 2013 Administration Year are summarized in items 'a' through 'e', below.

(a) A year of Stability - and a NEW HOME.

Unlike recent years, 2013 was a year of relative stability for the VAC, in terms of the Commission's elected leadership. Commissioners elected to leadership positions successfully served out their entire terms. By the end of 2013, Commission strength stood at 13 members, with FOUR vacancies (i.e. three Mayoral appointed seats, and BOS Seat #2). Also, due to the impending 2-year closure of the War Memorial Veterans Building, beginning with the January 2013 Meeting, the Commission began meeting (on the Second Tuesday of every month), at its NEW MEETING LOCATION; Room 416 of City Hall. The Commission has been more than pleased with this accommodation, and is grateful for the efforts of the Office of the Mayor, in facilitating this "New Home" accommodation.

(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 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 2013 Administrative Year

The primary GOALS of the Commission (for 2013), were articulated in the January General Meeting. They included:

- Start a SF VETERANS COURT (Accomplished in April 2013 see item 'b' of Sec. 3, below).
- > Lobby for Veterans use of the SF Veterans Building. (See item 'a', Section 5, below).
- > Progress toward Establishment of the War Memorial Veterans Building as a One-Stop-Shop (See Section 6, below)

Sec. 2: Commission LEADERSHIP and PERSONNEL CHANGES of 2013

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 EDUARDO "Eddie" RAMIREZ as President; Comm. Jordan TOWERS, Vice President, and Comm. Stephen NOETZEL as Secretary.

At start of 2013, AUTHORIZED Commission strength remained at seventeen (17) mandated members; Specifically: Five (5) Mayoral appointments, and Twelve (12) BOS appointed members. At start of year there were TWO vacant seats; ONE Mayoral Appointed and ONE BOS Appointed.

By the END of 2013, there were FOUR vacant seats, (THREE Mayoral, and One BOS appointed).

See 2013 Meeting Attendance Record (Page 5 of this report) for names and details.

2013 ANNUAL REPORT of the Veterans Affairs Commission, City and County of San Francisco – Page 2 of 5 Sec. 2: Commission LEADERSHIP and PERSONNEL CHANGES of 2013.....Continued On 2/6/13, the SF BOS appointed new Commissioner Mary TRAMIL to (vacant) BOS Seat #2. (See Resignation entry, below).

In August, **Commissioner Alexandra CRICHLOW resigned her Mayoral appointment to the Commission**, (via her resignation letter of 8/913), citing ongoing medical issues.

Also in August long-term **Commissioner Wallace LEVIN resigned his Mayoral appointment to the Commission**, (via his resignation letter of 8/12/13), citing family home-care medical care issues and commitments that precluded his attendance at evening meetings.

In September, **Commissioner Mary TRAMIL resigned her BOS Appointed seat (#2,** via her 9/30/13 resignation letter of 9/30/13), citing heavy work and family commitments.

By the end of 2013, Commission strength stood at 13 active and participating members. VACANCIES include BOS Seat #2, plus THREE (un-numbered) vacant Mayoral Appointed seats.

VACANCIES include DOS Seat #2, plus TIREE (un-numbered) vacant mayoral Appointed seats.

The attached <u>ATTENDANCE RECORD</u> provides a full view of Commissioners participation during the calendar year. NOTE: A current <u>Commission ROSTER</u> is available at two locations:

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

Sec. 3: Significant ACTIONS taken by the VAC in 2013

(a) 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

On 8 January, 2013, the SFVAC submitted its **ANNUAL REPORT (for 2012)** as required by its Charter, and by City Code. The 6page report, signed by President Eduardo RAMIREZ, included an Executive Summary, and 5 additional elements to describe the work of the Commission during the 2012 Administrative year.

(b) Major Revision of Commission BYLAWS.

After almost nine months of background work and development by the **Bylaws Committee** (in the previous year) a **major revision** of the Commission BYLAWS was put before the Commission for consideration and a **Ratification Vote at the January meeting** of the Commission. Among other changes, the revised BYLAWS included Job Descriptions and a listing of the duties of the Commission Officers. After full consideration, the BYLAWS were adopted and RATIFIED by the Commission at its meeting of 1/8/13. Subsequently, in September of 2013, the Bylaws were again modified to accommodate a minor revision. Commission Bylaws are available for public view on the Commission Website at: http://sfgov3.org/index.aspx?page=1688

(c) Establishment of 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 **after several months of intensive collaboration, the San Francisco Veterans Justice Court began operating, effective April 2013.** This new criminal court serves the Tenderloin, SOMA, Civic Center, and Union Square communities here in San Francisco. The types of criminal cases heard at the Veterans Justice Court are misdemeanor and non-violent felony cases. The Veterans Justice Court creates, for the first time in San Francisco, a court that has "centralized" treatment services for offenders, who happen to also be Veterans. The Veterans Justice Court is permanently staffed by several representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs, who assist the judge, assistant district attorney, and public defender in creating a collaborative solution specific for each offender. Rather than seeking a "traditional" resolution like incarceration to a criminal case, the goal of the Veterans Justice Court is rehabilitation. To that end, the Veterans Justice Court seeks to address the underlying needs of each offender, and often a resolution to a case will include intensive in-patient treatment for alcohol and/or substance abuse, or a similar out-patient program. Although the Veterans Justice Court is still in the very early stages of operation, the program is shaping up to create an effective solution to address the specific problems that Veterans face in the criminal justice system.

(d) Action to secure Funeral Arrangements and Military Honors Burial for iconic Bay Area Veteran.

In September of 2013, the Commission acted on a request to assist in acquisition of funeral services for a WWII Veteran known widely in the Bay Area as Commander ULYSSES MOORE. During Public Comment at the 9/10/13 General Meeting, the Commission learned that Mr. Moor had recently died at age 91, had no family in the area, and there were sparse resources for a proper funeral, and no funds available to transport his remains to his home in West Point, Mississippi. Within 3 days of the request.

Commissioners Ramirez, and Noetzel, working independently on the problem, were able to acquire **free transport of the remains (courtesy of Southwest Airlines) and a full military funeral and burial services in Mississippi**. At the following VAC Meeting, friends of the deceased returned to thank the Commission for its key role in facilitating a dignified funeral and memorial on behalf of a fellow veteran.

(e) 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 VETERAN'S TOWN HALL/COLLABORATIVE meetings. The meetings include a morning session as well as an Evening Session, Comm. 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, Comm. 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-curser 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.

(f) RESOLUTIONS, ENDORSEMENTS and ADVICE LETTERS to Mayor and Board of Supervisors (2013

<u>> The Jan Karski Holocaust Remembrance Exhibit Presentation.</u> The March 12, 2013 Commission Meeting included a presentation by proponents of the JAN KARSKI Historical Exhibition. Guest advocates of the traveling Exhibit, (last shown in the lobby of the U.N. Building in NYC), asked the Commission to endorse their request for Installation of the Exhibit in Public Areas of City Hall during Holocaust Remembrance Month. The Commission voted to endorse the request and wrote an Advice Letter to Mayor Lee, in support of a Public Display of the Exhibit. A response from the Mayor's office indicated that there were other art installations already scheduled for Public Areas of City Hall for that period, and that the Karski Exhibit could not be accommodated.

> Endorsement of the VETERAN'S ALLEY ART PROJECT in San Francisco.

The October 8, 2013 Commission Meeting included a presentation by Mr. Amos Gregory (A Veteran/artist and founder of the Veteran's Ally Project). Mr. Gregory described the history of the mural project and the therapeutic effect that creative Mural Paining had on the Veteran artists who contributed their artwork to the project. Mr. Amos informed the Commission that he was making application (to appropriate City Authorities), to have the site of the murals (i.e. Shannon Alley), to have the name formally RE-NAMED as VETERAN'S ALLEY. After presentation and discussion, the Commission voted unanimously to ENDORSE the project, and thanked Mr. Gregory for his efforts.

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

After several months of development, at it's December 10, 2013 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.

> ADVICE LETTER requesting Reduction of Authorized Commission Strength to (traditional) 15 Members.

The October 8, 2013 Commission meeting included an Agenda item to consider a formal request to reduce authorized Commission strength back to its ORIGINAL 15-member strength, thereby reversing the 2009 City Code change which increased the number of VAC Commission seats from the traditional 15 members, to 17 (i.e. City Ordinance 245-09). After due consideration a motion to write an ADVICE LETTER to City Government, requesting such a change, was passed, unanimously. The Advice Letter, signed by President Ramirez, (on 10/9/13) was sent to Mayor Lee and the President of the BOS. Formal answer still pending.

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

(a) <u>City Sponsored Events for MEMORIAL DAY, and VETERANS DAY.</u>

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 27th of May, 2013 (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.

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This year the program paid special honors in commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Korean War and its many veteran participants, both surviving and deceased. The Mayor and several S.F. Supervisors commended Comm. Levin for another outstanding memorial event at the Presidio.

On Sunday, the 10th of November, 2013, 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. This year, the parade was led by a roaring contingent of well over 200 patriotic motorcyclists, followed by well over 50 participating Veterans and patriotic participating groups.

(b) Second Annual Veterans Film Festival

From noon to 6pm on on Saturday the 5th of October, 2013 the 2nd Veterans Film Festival was held at the MISSION CULTURAL CENTER. The event is planned and developed by founder, Commissioner Eddie Ramirez.

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. 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 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.

(b) Commissioners ATTENDANCE at General Meetings.

ATTACHED as part of this REPORT, is the official ATTENDANCE RECORD for the VAC Monthly Meetings of 2013.

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

- Commissioners CALDERA, NOETZEL, and RAMIREZ all achieved a Perfect Attendance Record for 2013 VAC meetings.
- > Commissioners not mentioned above, compiled an aggregate 76% attendance record.

In Appreciation:

After some 32 years of service on the Veterans Affairs Commission, the members and leadership should like to express a special Note of Appreciation, on the occasion of the September 2013 retirement of Commissioner WALLACE LEVIN. His service and leadership, from the foundation of the Commission is unparalleled. The Veteran's Community of San Francisco has lost a great advocate with the retirement of Commissioner Levin. Moving forward, we wish all the best for Mr. Levin and his family.

Sec. 6: Heading into 2014 – the New Leadership Year

The Commission will begin the New Administration Year (2014) 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. 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 2014 issue.*

REPORT authored by VAC Commissioners S. Noetzel, and M. Maffei, and submitted for approval at VAC General Meeting of March 11, 2014 and RATIFIED by unanimous Commission vote on 3/11/14.

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ATTENDANCE RECORD – VAC Monthly Meetings, 2013

(Official ATTACHMENT to the 2013 ANNUAL REPORT of the VAC)

Meeting of:												
NAME	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Baldonado	Р	Р	A1	Р	Р	A1	Х	A1	Р	Р	A 4	Р

2. Burnette	Ρ	Р	Р	Р	<mark>A4</mark>	Р	Х	<mark>A4</mark>	Ρ	Ρ	Р	Р	
3. Caldera	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	Х	Р	Ρ	Ρ	Р	P 100% (A)	
4. Crichlow	Р	<u>A1</u>	Ai	A1	A1	<mark>A4</mark>	X	<u>Res</u>	Resigned effective 8/12/13				
5. Dacumos	Р	Ρ	A1	Ρ	A1	A1	Х	Р	Р	Ρ	Р	Ρ	
6. Gallagher	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	A4	Х	Ρ	Р	<mark>A4</mark>	Р	<mark>A4</mark>	
7. Guy	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	Х	Р	Р	Р	A1	Ρ	
<u>8. Levin</u>	Ρ	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	X	Х	ŀ	Resign	ed effec	<u>tive 8/12/13</u>	
9. Maffei	Р	Р	Р	A1	Р	Р	х	A4	Р	Р	Р	Р	
10. Noetzel	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	Х	Ρ	Р	Р	Р	P 100% (A)	
11. Ramirez	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	Х	Ρ	Р	Р	Р	P 100% (A)	
12. Towers	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	х	Р	Р	<mark>A4</mark>	Ρ	Р	
13. Tramil A	ppointed	2/16/13	Ρ	Р	Р	<mark>A4</mark>	х	<mark>A4</mark>	<mark>A4</mark>	Resig	ned effe	ective 9/30/13	
14. Weeby	Р	<u>A1</u>	P	Р	Р	Р	x	Р	<u>A1</u>	A1	P	P	
15. Wilkerson	Ρ	Р	Ρ	Р	Р	<mark>A4</mark>	х	Р	Р	<mark>A4</mark>	Ρ	Р	
<u> 16. Wong</u>	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	Р	X	Ρ	<u>A1</u>	P	Р	P	

<u>Notes:</u> <u>Mayoral Appointments indicated as Underlined and Italic.</u> All others are Board of Supervisor Appointments

INDEX TO SYMBOLS:

X = No Meeting

P = Present for entire 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

Note: At end of 2013, Commission strength stands at 13 active members, with a total of FOUR vacancies, (i.e. THREE Mayoral appointed and ONE BOS Appointed).

NOTES on Commissioners RETIRED in 2013, (with REPLACEMENT and new appointment notations)

Comm. M. TRAMIL Appointed to (BOS Seat #2) replacing Comm. Thompson after his 6/15/12 resignation Comm. A. CRICHLOW Resigned Mayoral appointment effective 8/9/13 Seat CURRENTLY VACANT Comm. W. LEVIN Resigned Mayoral appointment effective 8/12/13 Seat CURRENTLY VACANT Comm. M. TRAMIL Resigned (BOS Seat #2) effective 9/30/13 Seat CURRENTLY VACANT NOTE: Mayoral seat vacated via the resignation of Comm. C. GRUWELL (of 12/31/12) Seat CURRENTLY VACANT