

UNITED VETERANS COUNCIL
“2007 VETERANS ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR”
An Ad-Hoc Alliance of Veterans Service Organizations in San Diego County
“The Voice of the Veterans Community in San Diego”
WWW.SDUVC.ORG

Veterans Museum and Memorial Center
2115 Park Boulevard
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Summary of Meeting

Saturday, May 26th, 2007

The Chairman: The Chairman, Tom Richards, called the meeting to order at 9:32 A.M., and Stuart Hedley led the Pledge of Allegiance, with Chaplain Darcy Pavich offering the Invocation. All Council Officers were present, along with forty-one members of the Council and Guests.

Appropriate introductions were conducted, and The Chairman recognized and lauded the Past Chairmen of the Council and past, as well as present Veterans of the Year who were present.

The Chairman then introduced Congresswoman Susan Davis, who lauded the members of the Council for their hard work and diligent communication with their Members of Congress to lobby on behalf of Veterans issues. She commented on the meaning of Memorial Day, and honoring those who have served and fallen, and those who are still serving. She spoke about a variety of other subjects, to include the CALVET Home Loan Bill (HR 551), and the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act (HR 1538). She also commented on the status of the Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery Annex at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, abolishing the offset between the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) and Dependant Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) for all military retirees.

The Minutes: The Chairman called for a review of the Minutes of the April 28th, 2007 Council meeting. He called for corrections or additions, and hearing none, John Voorhies made a Motion to approve the Minutes as published, which Ed Daugherty seconded, and the Motion passed on a voice vote. Jesse Ugalde and Pete Houben lauded the Secretary for the quality of the Minutes. Jesse also lauded the Chairman for his recent election as National Commander-In-Chief for the Legion of Valor.

Treasurer’s report: The Chairman called for the Treasurer’s report. The Treasurer, Joe Brunner, described the ledger, to include receipts and expenditures and reported an ending balance of \$2395.70 in the checking account and \$100.23 in the savings account, for a total of \$2495.93.

Chairman’s comments: The Chairman, Tom Richards, commented on the upcoming Veterans Seminar, Job & Resource Fair to be held at the Saturday, June 2nd, 2007 at the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center from 8:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. Congresswoman Davis and several members provided additional comment on the issue of Veterans unemployment.

The Chairman also commented on the Councils’ Vision, Mission, and Goals Statement and opened the Floor for discussion on how to best implement each of the goals. Clint Steed, Stuart Hedley, Terry Jensen, Joe Brunner, Darcy Pavich, Sonja Dugan, Bob Phillips, Joan De Munbrum and Pete Houben all provided input or feedback during the discussion.

1st Vice Chairman's comments: Allen Miliefsky, the 1st Vice Chairman, commented on the upcoming Memorial Day Ceremony to be held on Memorial Day, Monday, May 28th, 2007 at 10:00 A.M. at the Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery, and at the Mt. Soledad Memorial at 2:00 P.M.

2nd Vice Chairperson's comments: The 2nd Vice Chairperson, Betty Nimits, commented on how fortunate today's active duty personnel are to have so many individuals and organizations concerned about their transition from military to civilian life.

Good of the Order: The Chairman called for issues pertinent to the Good of the Order. He commented that he would be speaking this evening on "The American Veteran Radio Show" at 8:00 P.M. on KCBQ AM 1170

Scott Langhoff advised those individuals announcing upcoming events under the Good of the Order to bring that event information to him after the meeting. In the future, email it to him prior to the meeting at slanghoff@cox.net or fax it to him at (619) 434-2149, along with any applicable flyers so the event can be posted on the UVC website at www.sduvc.org and distributed to the Councils' email network.

Dave Wiley commented on the upcoming Arlington West display to be set up by Veterans for Peace at Oceanside north of the Pier on Memorial Day, a non-political Memorial to honor the Iraq War dead with thousands of crosses on the sand and a directory of those fallen with pictures and details about their deaths.

Mary Lou Scott of the Wounded Warrior's Association commented on the upcoming "Heroes on the Harbor" event to be held on the USS MIDWAY on June 15th, with all proceeds going to the Semper Fi Fund.

Bob Bornt spoke about Operation Farm Hand, a project to provide a therapeutic vegetable and meditation Gardens for Veterans, active duty personnel and their families to provide job skill training at Mission San Luis Rey.

Reverend Richard West reported that the National Naval Officers Conference would be held at the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado from July 16th to the 20th. Sponsors and exhibitors are requested. You can contact him at (619) 263-7888 or (619) 708-6016 or by email to pccwest1@juno.com for more details.

Bea Wagget commented on the American Legion Poppy Program, and recited the poem "Flanders Fields".

Richard Nathanson commented on the Troops to Teachers Program agreement with the San Diego and Los Angeles Unified School Districts who will commit to hire qualified Veterans for up to two years in advance to teach in their Districts, which will allow service members to have a seamless transition from active duty to the classroom.

Legislative reports: The Chairman called for the Legislative reports.

U.S. House Legislation: Scott Langhoff commented on behalf of John Smith, who was absent and excused, and indicated that the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies had recently marked up the '08 Appropriations Bill that included a \$6.7 billion increase for the VA. It also authorizes the hiring of over 1000 new claims processors to help deal with the growing claims backlog and delays. The full House also passed several additional Veterans Bills including HR 67 to improve VA outreach, HR 612 that would extend from two years to five years the time that every Veteran from OIF/OEF qualifies for free VA health care, HR 1470 which would provide chiropractic care at all VA Medical Centers, HR 2199 which authorizes improvements in the treatment of

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and HR 2239 which expands eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation. These Bills still require the support of the Senate to become law.

U. S. Senate Legislation: The Senate Legislative Chair remains unfilled. Scott Langhoff reported that the Senate Armed Services Committee approved its' version of the FY 2008 Defense Authorization Bill, which would among other things reject the Administration-proposed TRICARE fee and pharmacy co-pay increases, and eliminate the disability offset to retired pay for retirees forced to retire due to injuries, otherwise known as Chapter 61 retirees, before they had twenty years of service.

State Legislation: Steve Arends gave brief comments on recent legislative accomplishments in the U.S. House for Veterans, and AB 357, introduced by Assembly member Shirley Horton, which allows taxpayers to contribute to the State Veterans Homes "Quality of Life Fund", and reported that through March, Californians had donated over \$58,000.00 to the fund. He indicated that copies of the State Legislative report were at the back of the room near the door.

Scott Langhoff indicated that if anyone wants to communicate with their elected representatives, there is a link to a directory of all elected officials from the President down to the Mayor and City Council members of San Diego Counties' Cities on the Resource page of the Council website at www.sduvc.org

Veteran's Museum and Memorial Center: Will Hays reported on behalf of RADM Rod Melendez, Director of the Center, and indicated that the Museum is in need of volunteers to be Docents and perform other functions at the Museum. He gave brief comment on the recent Veterans Gala, and mentioned the Vietnam War Peace Memorial, which would be ongoing over the Memorial Day Weekend, and the Memorial Service following the Council meeting at 11:30 A.M. They also have a new photo exhibit of Veterans Memorials from across the Country.

VA San Diego Healthcare System/"One VA" Committee: Pete Houben reported on behalf of Gary Rossio, Director of the VA Healthcare System in San Diego, and as Co-Chairman of the "One VA" Committee, and gave various comments on the recent report of the Presidents' Task Force for Veterans Benefits. He also commented that the Middleton Award, the highest VA award available for excellence in bio-medical research, and that the San Diego VA Medical Center just recently received its' fifth award! He also reported that Cheryl Deegan, Assistant Director of the VA Regional Office, would have her Retirement Ceremony on Thursday, May 31st at 9:00 A.M. at the Regional Office. He indicated that the next "One VA" Committee meeting would be at the VA Medical Center on Wednesday, June 20th at 9:30 A.M. and it is open to the Public.

VA San Diego Regional Office: Matt Braiotta reported on behalf of Lily Fetzer, Director of the VA San Diego Regional Office, and indicated that they are seeing a high number of issues per disability claim. About three years ago, they were seeing an average of six or seven issues per disability claim, and now the average is seventeen issues per disability claim. They are maintaining an average of less than 110 days to process a disability claim.

They just hired five new Veterans Service Representatives, three new Rating Veterans Service Representatives, and two Claims Assistants, and will be hiring another group of Veterans Service Representatives in the near future. If anyone is interested in applying for any of these positions, they can visit www.usajobs.gov

He also indicated that the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors visited San Diego in the past week, with the Director giving testimony to the panel, consisting of Senator Bob Dole and the former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, amongst others.

They also had the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee visit in the past month, reviewing the VA's "Seamless Transition" program here.

They are also trying to improve their outreach efforts to the returning members of the California National Guard and various Reserve units who have been activated for duty in OIF/OEF, as well as working with the DOD to receive advance information on upcoming separations of personnel so they can be contacted before they separate to apply for their benefits.

Scott Langhoff, Joe Brunner and Nancy Baughman posed questions or gave additional comment on a number of the topics Matt had mentioned.

VA National Cemetery at Ft. Rosecrans: Gary Ackerman reported on behalf of Bill Livingston, Director of the National Cemetery at Ft. Rosecrans. He commented on their Memorial Day program schedule. He also indicated that they have a few vacant positions at the Riverside National Cemetery that they would like to hire Veterans to fill, and those jobs are listed on www.usajobs.gov

Naval Medical Center, San Diego: Jennifer Town, Program Manager for the Comprehensive Combat Casualty Care Center (C5) at NMC San Diego, provided an electronic report to the Secretary on behalf of Captain Lisa Arnold, (NC) USN, Special Assistant to the Commander, Naval Medical Center San Diego. She indicated that they had recent visits by the Secretary of the Navy, Dr. David Winter and Mrs. Winter, that Maria Shriver had visited family members at the Fisher House and several injured service members.

They had a surprise visit from Governor Schwarzenegger on the 17th, visited inpatient service members and those on Medical Hold. He was a hit, and really very humbled with his visit. One of the bilateral above the knee amputee service members who also had a severe brain injury, but possesses a remarkable spirit and sense of humor asked the Governor to "flex for him". Sure enough, he did and a priceless picture was generated... the Governors' bicep framed by a big Marine smile!

The also had a visit from members of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. They had a big focus on support services and transitioning of service members, and the report of their visit is expected in one to two weeks.

They hope to finish construction in late July, with a ribbon-cutting Ceremony in late August if all goes well. They are receiving more of the severely- injured service members from the East Coast and direct from Landstuhl now, averaging seven to nine severely-injured inpatients on a daily basis, and that number is expected to increase.

California State Veteran's Home – Chula Vista: Kate Hawk reported on behalf of Gil Acevedo, Administrator of the of the State Veteran's Home in Chula Vista, and indicated that the Administrator was attending the Dedication of the Bill Ayers Memorial Rose Garden at the Home being conducted by Assembly member Mary Salas at 11:30 A.M. today. They also had their Founder's Day Celebration on the 12th of May with approximately 1,000 attendees, and a Disabled American Veterans Barbeque on May 19th, with approximately 800 attendees. They also participated in the Dedication of Wolf Canyon Park in the Palos Verdes McMillan housing development. She also reported that sixty members of the USS TARAWA crew recently volunteered to paint curbing at the Home. The Home's Memorial Day Ceremony will be on June 4th.

San Diego County Veterans Service Office: Tom Splitgerber, Director of the San Diego County Veterans Service Office, reported that he attended a Veterans Roundtable, hosted by Congressman Bob Filner, in Washington, D.C. this past week, concerning the VA claims backlog, with about twenty other attendees from the VA, other Government agencies, various Veterans Service Organizations and several other

organizations. He will be attending the annual meeting of the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers in early June in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Veterans Village of San Diego: Darcy Pavich reported on behalf of Al Pavich, Director of Veterans Village. She indicated that VVSD now owns all of the property at 4141 Pacific Coast Highway. Demolition of half of the old facility will begin on June 11th, and they are in the process of moving into the new building. Construction on the second 112-bed facility should begin shortly thereafter.

They are also preparing for “Stand Down 2007” from the 13th through the 15th of July, they are still seeking volunteers for the event. They will have their Clothing Drive for “Stand Down” on June 26th. She reminded everyone of their Golf Tournament to be held on June 8th, which supports the children and family members in their program. She provided flyers for all events at the meeting, and they can be found at the Council’s website at www.sduvc.org

San Diego County Veterans Advisory Council: Steve Arends reported on behalf of Nancy Owen, Chairperson of the Council, and indicated that he had nothing significant to report.

San Diego County United Veterans Association: Joe Brunner, Co-Chairman of the Veterans Day Parade, reported on behalf of John Weaver, Chairman of the Association and also Co-Chairman of the Parade, and indicated that the Association and Parade Committee meet the second Thursday of each month at 6:00 P.M. in the lower hall of the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center, with the next meeting being June 14th. They are still in need of volunteers for a variety of tasks, and all are welcome to attend.

Mt. Soledad Memorial Association: Bob Phillips reported on behalf of Bill Kellogg, President of the Association, donated \$100.00 to the United Veterans Council in appreciation of everything the Council has done for the Association. He also commented on their upcoming Memorial Day Ceremony on Monday, May 28th at 2:00 P.M. at the Memorial. Members of the Gerald Ford Family will attend to receive the plaque being dedicated to President Ford. Admiral Len Hering, Commander, Naval Region Southwest, will be their Keynote Speaker. They are having additional meetings with the Navy to develop a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the operation of the Memorial. He gave brief comment on pending litigation. Charlotte Perry, a Trustee of the Association and Coordinator of their Speaker’s Bureau Program, provided flyers for their program at the meeting and indicated they have a presentation they will make to any group who requests one about the Memorial program and its history. She can be reached at (858) 454-7798 or by email to CPerry7798@aol.com

Special Forces Association: Ed Daugherty, Past President of the Association, reported that in the past month, they had donated \$1400.00 to various wounded service members at the Naval Medical Center from a Chapter of only ninety members.

Old business: The Chairman called for Old Business or Correspondence, and hearing none, he called for any New Business.

New business: The Chairman called for any other Motions or New Business that needed to be brought before the Council.

The Chairman asked for those present to stand and observe a “Moment of Silence” in honor of those who have fallen in defense of their Nation.

The Chairman admonished all present to take the information disseminated today back to the members of their organizations, and bring a Veteran to the next meeting! The Meeting was adjourned at 11:15 A. M.

The next Meeting of the United Veterans Council of San Diego County will be at 9:30 A.M. on Saturday, June 23rd, 2007 in the Lower Hall of the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center in Balboa Park.

Recorded by:

Approved by:

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