



County of El Dorado Meeting Minutes Veteran Affairs Commission

Todd Smith, District I – Alternate John Poimiroo
Chris Cockrell, District II – Alternate Roger Reynolds
Kurt Raffetto, District III – Alternate open
Ken Welch, District IV – Alternate Tim Thompson
Daniel Browne, Jr., District V – Alternate Phillip Houseworth
Terry Thomas, VSO, Secretary Ex-Officio
Lauren Odell, Recording Clerk of Veteran Affairs Commission

Department of Veteran Services
130 Placerville Drive, Suite B
Placerville CA 95667
www.edcgov.us/veterans
Telephone: 530-621-5892
Fax: 530-621-2218

**Thursday, December 16, 2021 @ 1200 hours
El Dorado Hills Fire Station 85
Conference Room
1050 Wilson Boulevard
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762**

Veteran Affairs Commission Agendas and Minutes are available for viewing in the Veteran Memorial Building lobby at 130 Placerville Drive, Placerville CA 95667 and online
<https://www.edcgov.us/Government/Veterans/Pages/Commission-Agendas-and-Minutes.aspx>

I. CALL TO ORDER - PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Meeting called to order at 12:00pm.

II. ROLL CALL

District	Present	Absent
I	Todd Smith, John Poimiroo	
II	Chris Cockrell, Roger Reynolds	
III		Kurt Raffetto
IV	Ken Welch, Tim Thompson	
V	Phillip Houseworth	Dan Browne

III. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME OF GUESTS

Richard Todd, HHSVA Veteran Services Program Manager; Terry Thomas, HHSVA Veteran Services Officer; Tim Whalen, Citrus Heights Vet Center, EDVR, Military Family Support Group; David Zelinsky, EDVR; Patty Babbish, guest of Todd Smith; Marsha Stump, guest of Todd Smith

IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF CONSENT CALENDAR

Motion to adopt agenda made by Todd Smith; Second by Roger Reynolds; Motion passes 4-0.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Motion to approve minutes made by Ken Welch; Second by Chris Cockrell; Motion passes 4-0.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

No action items

END OF CONSENT CALENDAR

VII. GUEST SPEAKER - VETERAN SPOTLIGHT - None

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

None

IX. EX-OFFICIO REPORT – RECEIVE AND FILE (Todd/Thomas)

Introduction of Terry Thomas, new Veteran Service Officer for El Dorado County, made by Richard Todd. Terry Thomas presented his report. Richard Todd presented his report. Report received and attached to these minutes.

Commission requested an updated Veteran Services Org Chart to be provided at next meeting.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS – RECEIVE AND FILE

- **TOT (Transient Occupancy Tax)** (Raffetto/Houseworth)
TOT Committee met to review final comments on the mini-grant applications that are to be voted on later in this meeting. Also confirmed that reporting drafts will be used for latest perpetual grant recipients that need to provide accountability for the use of their grants.
- **RULES** (Poimiroo/Houseworth) No report
 - **SPECIAL COMMITTEE – HOUSING** (Welch)
Ken Welch will provide updated housing report at next meeting with changes to available programs.
- **LEGISLATIVE** (Smith/Raffetto) No report
- **TRANSPORTATION** (Browne/Thompson) No report
- **BUDGET** (Houseworth/Reynolds) No report
- **EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT** (Cockrell/Browne)
Chris Cockrell is finalizing the Veteran Owned Business project. Set agenda topic for January to approve the outgoing letter and plan for this project.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA** (Reynolds/Poimiroo)
54% increase in visits over last month.

XI. COMMUNICATIONS' REPORTS – RECEIVE AND FILE

- **VETERANS MEMORIAL BUILDING – VETERANS HOUSE COUNCIL** (Reynolds)
No report
- **AMERICAN LEGION SERVICE OFFICER** (Zelinsky)
David Zelinsky presented his report. Minutes attached.
- **EDC VETERANS ALLIANCE** (Poimiroo)
Approximately 1,000 people attended the Veterans Day event at the Monument. May 19-22 USS Kirk reunion in El Dorado County. Reception being planned with details to come.
- **EL DORADO VETERAN RESOURCES** (Zelinsky)
Tim Whalen gave report. \$10,000 raised for the Christmas Family Support Event. Also hosting a toy drive/giveaway.
- **REGIONAL VETERAN EVENTS** No report

XII. OLD BUSINESS

None

XIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review Mini-Grant recommendations (Raffetto/Houseworth)

Veteran's TOT Mini Grants: September 2021							
First Name	Last Name	Legal Name of Organization	City	Grant Title Description	Grant Amt Requested	Yes/No Assigned	Approved Amount
Keri	Bransom	Cassidys Animal Recovery Kamp of Grace	Shingle Springs	Outreach Vessel Retrofitting and implementation	\$5,000	Yes	\$5,000
Jenna	Sproull	Food Bank of El Dorado County	Cameron Park	No Vets Goes Hungry Program	\$5,000	No – moved to perpetual	0
Matthew	Corso	California Service Dog Academy	Visalia	Veteran Veterinary and After Care Support	\$5,000	Yes*	\$5,000
Ernie	Lory	El Dorado County Fire Safe Council	Diamond Springs	Develop and/or maintain fire safe defensible space around veterans' homes	\$5,000	Yes	\$5,000
Terence	Moran	Wooden Boats For Veterans Foundation	Vallejo	Introducing Veterans and Their Families to Therapeutic Sailing	\$5,000	No	0
Robert	Prestwich	Marine Corps League Ssgt Sky Mote Detachment 697	PLACERVILLE	Recapture Covid/fire income	\$5,000	No	0
Terri	Olson	Hearts Landing Ranch	Granite Bay	Veterans Equine Psychotherapy Program	\$5,000	Yes*	\$5,000
eric	hill	Sierra Harm Reduction Coalition	Cameron park	Harm Reduction For Veterans	\$5,000	Yes*	\$5,000
David	Sarmago	Cold Springs Church	Placerville	Healthy Meals for Vets	\$2,500	Yes	\$2,500
Terry	Lemonchek	Arts and Culture El Dorado	Placerville	Veterans' Voices Writing Workshop	\$5,000	Yes	\$5,000
Total Funds Requested					\$47,500	Total Funds Approved	\$32,500
Total Funds Available to Spend					\$115,420.69		

*Indicates restrictions to spending requirements or reimbursed upon use of allocated funds

Motion to approve the TOT mini grants as detailed in the above table made by Todd Smith; Second by Tim Thompson. Discussion of mini-grants that were recommended for funding by the TOT. Motion passes 4-0.

B. Review and approve 2022 meeting schedule (Poimiroo)

2022 schedule of locations for the Veterans Affairs Commission meetings presented by John Poimiroo. Motion to approve the scheduled made by Tim Thompson; Second by Todd Smith. Motion passes 4-0. Schedule attached to minutes.

XIV. GOOD OF THE ORDER (Additional Commission and HHS Staff Comments)

1. The County of El Dorado requires all its commissioners to take and complete an Implicit Bias course. Commissioners who have not yet done so may satisfy the requirement by completing an eLearning course. (Poimiroo)

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

P. Babbish

XV. NEXT MEETING LOCATION, DATE & TIME

Thursday, January 13, 2022 @ 1200 Hours in Placerville

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 1:13pm

Veterans Services – December 2021 Report

Richard Todd, Acting Veterans Service Officer

- The Veteran Services office is happy to present our new Veterans Service Officer (VSO), Mr. Terry Thomas.
- **Claims:**
Total Claims filed May 1, 2021 - November 30, 2021: **592** Details:
Claims for Service Connected Disability: **243**
Claims for Survivor or Burial Benefits: **32**
Registration with VA Healthcare: **25**
College Fee Waivers: **75**
DMV/Driver's License with Veteran Status: **120**
- **Clipper Article:** There is a monthly add for Veteran Services running through August of 2022.
- **Total number of Veteran Services Website hits for November:** 1,085
- **SLT Veteran Services Office Update:**
 - Larger and More Signs: The request for exterior signs, is with the sign maker. We should have the mock-up soon. An interior sign was installed on the window stating the time and days of operation.
- **Veterans Administration Rate Change:**
There will be a **5.9%** increase for VA compensation and pension payments in 2022 due to a cost of living adjustment. Under federal law, the cost-of-living adjustments to VA's compensation and pension rates are the same percentage as for Social Security benefits. Periodically, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) makes cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to VA compensation and pension benefits to ensure that the purchasing power of VA benefits is not eroded by inflation. Under federal law, the cost-of-living adjustments to VA's compensation and pension rates are the same percentage as for Social Security benefits.

COLAs are determined by an increase in inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). The Bureau of Labor Statistics determined there was a 5.9% increase in 2021. Therefore, the COLA for 2022 is 5.9%.
- **U.S. Department of Veterans affairs Flyer:** (attached)
- **Code Red:**

Are you ready? The El Dorado County Sheriff's Office- Office of Emergency Services Alert Notification System provides a number of ways in which the county may contact the community in the event of an emergency such as: evacuations due to wildfires or hazardous material spills, or urgent law enforcement operations.

The El Dorado County Office of Emergency Services partnered with CodeRED emergency notification service to alert residents and businesses by telephone, cell phone, text message, email, and social media when there is a threat to the health or safety of residents. [Click here to sign up!](#)

- **GI Bill® Students:**

On December 21, 2021, COVID-19 legislation that permits you to receive the Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) at the resident (in person) rate, while taking approved courses converted to online training due to COVID-19 will end.

What does this mean?

This means that **starting December 22, 2021, you will no longer receive the MHA at the resident (in person) rate for classes taken online.** When enrolling for courses after that date or any subsequent term, you will need to enroll in approved resident (in person) classes to continue receiving your MHA at the resident rate. Otherwise, you will receive the online rate (half the national average). To find out more about your MHA rate, visit the [GI Bill Comparison Tool](#).

Additionally, many GI Bill programs are not normally approved for online training; they are only approved for resident (in person) training. This is especially true for most NonCollege Degree (NCD) programs but is also the case for any non-accredited degree programs. These programs are only currently approved for GI Bill benefits for online training because of the COVID-19 legislation set to end on December 21, 2021. If your program is one that is normally only approved for resident training and is only approved for online training due to the COVID-19 legislation, **you will need to return to resident (in person) training after December 21, 2021**, if you want to continue receiving GI Bill benefits.

How will this impact me?

If you choose to continue **training online after December 21, 2021, your GI Bill benefits, such as a monthly housing allowance, will stop, and you may end up owing a tuition debt to your school** (the Department of Veteran Affairs will charge your school a prorated tuition and fee debt which your school may, in turn, pass on to you). If you are unsure whether your program is normally approved for online training or if it is only approved for online training due to the special COVID-19 legislation, you should consult with your School Certifying Official (SCO).

Next Steps

To prepare for the change and learn more about the expiration of the COVID-19 special rules, **check in with your SCO** and visit the [COVID-19 Student FAQs](#).

Respectfully,
Education Service

RESOURCES

- **Veterans Crisis Line** - If you are having thoughts of suicide, call [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255), then PRESS 1 or visit <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>
- For emergency mental health care, you can also go directly to [your local VA medical center](#) 24/7 regardless of your discharge status or enrollment in other VA health care.
- **Vet Centers** - Discuss how you feel with other Veterans in these community-based counseling centers. **70% of Vet Center staff are Veterans.** Call [1-877-927-8387](tel:1-877-927-8387) or find one [near you](#).
- **CALVET**
- [VA Mental Health Services Guide](#) - This guide will help you sign up and access mental health services.
- EDC Veteran Services Webpage update is now complete. Please go to: [Veteran Affairs - El Dorado County \(edcgov.us\)](#).
- **VA Veteran Identity Theft Helpline: [1-855-578-5492](tel:1-855-578-5492)**
Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., ET
Visit the website for more information:
<https://www.va.gov/IDENTITYTHEFT/index.asp>

American Legion Service Officer Report
11/28/21

Left behind

A tale of three ladies.

1. She was left behind by her Veteran husband. Seems to be in their house. Frequent customer of Jim Goodspeed, Service Officer, VFW Post 10165. Texted me a Thanksgiving greeting. Her voicemail does not work, so I texted back.

2. Her Veteran husband is incarcerated. Her daughter died, and her husband went after the party at fault. She reached out for some counseling. Referred her to Senior Peer Counseling. She can only stay one more month where she is. Money is tight. She hopes when he gets through Vet Court, they can apply to the Redding State Veterans Home, and live happily ever after.

3. Her significant other ran off, got a little drunk, and landed in jail. He just started at River City Recovery, and should be successful. Meanwhile, when the big rain came, a structure got flooded, and she used up all the money she had fixing it. Property taxes are now due.

Referred all three of them to Star Walker at the county, who seems to be the administrator of a Friends of Seniors program called the Senior Emergency Fund. If they qualify, they can each get a one time \$500 assistance.

Thank you, Kathi Lishman, and Friends of Seniors!

Happy holidays.

David Zelinsky
Service Officer

American Legion Service Officer Report
12/10/21

While walking.

Morning walk.

Dem calls. Transient from Washington state. Windshield broken. VFW and Legion member. Hopes Nation's Finest (formerly Sacramento Veterans Resource Center) will take him on as SSVF (Supportive Services Veteran Families) client.

SSVF is similar to HUD-VASH. A VA funded program for homeless Veterans to get housing. SSVF has a charity running the support, while HUD-VASH has VA staff running support.

The VFW connection makes me think combat zone, which makes me think of Tim Whalen, Vet Center, and key person at El Dorado Veterans Resource Center. a program of Military Family Support Group.

The homeless part makes me think of Rene Evans of Only Kindness.

I give him the phone numbers.

He follows up.

Looks like EDVR will cover the windshield. Only Kindness will get his auto insurance reinstated, and a few nights in a motel until Monday, when, hopefully, he becomes a client of Nation's Finest.

I dealt with DEM years ago as a transient. I guess that's how he got my name and number. He is applying to be a corrections officer in south Sacramento.

So far, he is doing everything right.

He is grateful, but, by following up, he is earning his good fortune.

Wish him luck.

Afternoon walk.

JEM has been in the criminal justice system on a domestic violence matter for quite awhile.

"When is someone going to get me into Vet court?!"

I explain that all I can do is advocate and connect him to the Vet Court team.

I also explain the the court's calendar had been down for months, essentially leaving me blind. It was finally up, but most of the data was not uploaded, so I could not see who was on the Vet Court calendar.

"I was just in Judge Ashworth's court, and she said that I was doing real good."

Wait a second. Sounds like, JEM is already in diversion, which is all that Vet court is.

To get into diversion, you essentially open an escrow. You put in an offer of a guilty plea, in exchange for an offer of diversion from the D.A. and the deal is closed when accepted by the court.

Do your program, and your charges are either reduced, or, more often, go away. Court fees are often waived too.

So far JEM has successfully completed eight anger management classes. The difference between civilian diversion, which is what he is going through, and Vet court, is, essentially, he does not have the services of a VA social worker, and he has to private pay for his class.

I explained to him that he was already in the equivalent of Vet Court. Gave him the phone number for Rene Evans of Only Kindness. Hopefully, they will cover the cost of his classes.

He was very happy, and hung up.

Another satisfied customer.

David Zelinsky
Service Officer
American Legion Post 119
530-919-8488

Proposed Veterans Affairs Commission Meeting Locations

2022

January – Placerville

February – Cameron Park/Shingle Springs/Somerset

March – Placerville

April – Placerville

May – Georgetown

June – Placerville

July - Placerville

August – Placerville

September – South Lake Tahoe

October – Placerville

November – El Dorado Hills

December – Placerville