

# Minutes Tempe Veterans Commission February 14, 2024

Minutes of the TEMPE VETERANS COMMISSION held on Wednesday, February 14, 2024, at 6:00 PM. – 7:30 PM., via Microsoft Teams and Tempe Public

**(MEMBERS) Present:**

Juan R. Garcia  
Romaldo Gonzales  
Beno Thomas  
William D. Gorman  
Melanie A. James  
José Moreno  
Gwendolyn “Gwen” DeNeal  
Jim Lange  
Dennis Forman

**(MEMBERS) Absent:**

Aaron McBride  
Ryan E. Swearingen  
Phillip Kraft, Chair

**City Staff Present:**

Abe McCann, Veteran Services Coordinator

**Public Appearances**

There were no public appearances.

**Guest Appearances**

There were no guest appearances.

**Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order**

**MOTION: Commissioner Garcia moved to START the meeting**

**SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner James; Motion passed unanimously.**

**ABSENT: Aaron McBride, Ryan E. Swearingen, Phillip Kraft**

**Agenda Item 2 – Attendance**

Chair Kraft, Commissioner Swearingen, and Commission McBride could not attend this meeting.

**Agenda Item 3 – Public Appearances**

There were no public appearances.

**Agenda Item 4 – Chair’s Remarks**

Chair Kraft was absent; Commissioner Thomas spoke in place. Commissioner Thomas briefly talked about the future leader of the Veteran Commission.

**Agenda Item 5 – Commission Ordinance Update**

VS Coordinator McCann discussed Ordinance No. O2024.02. McCann outlined the reasoning behind this change to the ordinance and the date the City council officially adopted this change. Moreover, Commissioner Thomas and VS Coordinator McCann warmly welcomed Romaldo Gonzales.

**Agenda Item 6 – Commission Appointment Update**

The Commission officially welcomed all its newest commissioners: Melanie James, Jim Lange, Gwen DeNeal, and Dennis Forman. Upon their introductions, the rest of the Commission greeted them, and each other member briefly mentioned their background.

### **Agenda Item 7 – Commission Attendance Expectations**

VS Coordinator McCann discussed the expectations he had for every one of the commission members. Outlining the City's expects a minimum of nine official meetings throughout the calendar year. He also discussed the potential for a break during the summer. Finally, he assured them that the role of the commission is to have a positive outcome to the lives of veterans, their families, and the Tempe community.

### **Agenda Item 8 – 2024 Goals Discussion.**

Commissioner Thomas initiated the discussion by focusing on attendance. He presented the idea that the commission's meeting frequency could be adjusted seasonally, noting that July and the holiday season might seem like natural breaks. Yet, he suggested these periods could also offer opportunities for the commission to undertake significant work.

Commissioner Garcia echoed his support, expressing his belief that maintaining a consistent meeting schedule would prove advantageous.

VSC McCann pointed out that the city didn't strictly require the commission's current protocols. This freedom allows the commission considerable flexibility in arranging its meetings. However, he emphasized that any changes to the meeting format, timing, or location would need to comply with the city's public notification requirements.

Following VSC McCann's remarks, the commissioners explored hosting meeting at events that could serve to further public engagement opportunities. They enthusiastically discussed leveraging these gatherings to solicit feedback from the broader veteran community, potentially enriching the commission's work. Additionally, Commissioners Thomas and Gonzales proposed exploring opportunities for broader inter-organizational collaboration across the valley, which could be facilitated by the meetings and related venues. The commission agreed to provide VSC McCann with a compilation of proposed meeting ideas a week before the finalization of the March agenda.

### **Agenda Item 9 – Commission Member Updates/Announcements**

Commissioner Garcia shared insights from his recent meeting with the Tempe Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee. They discussed the committee's upcoming award ceremony in March, various educational initiatives aimed at supporting veterans' spouses, Jr ROTC, and ROTC students, and concluded with the announcement of a forthcoming show at Luke Air Force Base.

Commissioner Thomas raised concerns about the University of Arizona's financial constraints, noting these limitations could hinder the institution's capacity to expand educational offerings.

Commissioner Moreno provided a brief overview of the VA's Million Veteran Program, outlining its benefits and the rationale behind the department's actions.

Commissioner Forman announced that on February 29th at 4:00 PM, VFW 720 will host a special event to welcome Vietnam Veterans. He also mentioned that on April 6th at 5:00 PM, the American Legion will be hosting a Big Band event. VSC McCann outlined several city-led initiatives. He mentioned that on May 6th, a Community Salute event will honor Jr ROTC participants. Additionally, on February 27th, the city plans to launch a Veterans Business Opportunity Center dubbed "Reboot to Business," designed to link veterans with resources, business advice, and further opportunities. Discussions between the city and the Arizona Department of Veteran Services have taken place to explore the use of city facilities for a range of programs, including counseling and telehealth services, with more details to be finalized later. McCann also shared that the Tempe Diablos have awarded a grant to Tempe Veterans Services to enhance its offerings.

Commissioner Gonzales mentioned an upcoming event on March 6th at El Jefe, where commissioners have the opportunity to host a table, should they be interested.

### **Agenda Item 10 –**

VSC McCann- New leadership must be an election.

Any items for future agenda should be sent to VSC McCann

The commission has money for shirts!

**Agenda Item 11 – Adjournment**

**MOTION: Commission Member James**

**SECOND: Motion Seconded by Dennis Forman**

**AYES: Commissioners Juan R. Garcia, Romaldo Gonzales, Beno Thomas, William D. Gorman, José Moreno, Gwendolyn “Gwen” DeNeal, Jim Lange**

**ABSENT: Aaron McBride, Ryan E. Swearingen, Phillip Kraft**

The next meeting will be on March 13, 2024.

Minutes Prepared by: Jorge Benavente

Reviewed by: Abe McCann

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, Chair  
Tempe Veteran Commission