

Veterans Empowerment Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 18, 2022 at 1p.m.

Meeting Recording:

https://zoom.us/rec/share/3J1c77lsWyfJBXyDXUHOYoWZZnHykw9QXXNJZHYypEErefrqGHBcGzrFmCjA8Cl_17QmhMmdHauTtl0g

POST AGENDA MINUTES – RATIFIED

This document has been ratified or approved by the Fulton County Veterans Empowerment Commission, Inc. and is not binding on the County or any officer.

Call to Order/Welcome

- The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m.

Roll Call

- **Members Present:** Jim Garcia, Richard White, Michael Mizell, Patricia Lewis, Shawn Hanley, Dr. Samantha Brown-Parks, Eldson McGhee, Anthony Merritt
- **Members Absent:** Stephen Leake, Michael Moore
- **Staff Present:** Carlos Thomas (Community Development), Fran Calhoun (External Affairs), Jasmine Campbell (External Affairs), Patrick O’Connor (County Attorney’s Office)

Approval of August 18, 2022 Meeting Agenda

- Jim Garcia made a motion to approve the August 18, 2022 Meeting Agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Ratification of June 16, 2022 Meeting Minutes

- Treasurer Michael Mizell made a motion to approve the June 16, 2022 Meeting Minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

Shawn Hanley, Chairman

- Sent letter to Fulton County Board of Commissioners on August 17, 2022 which stated the Veterans Empowerment Commission would like to focus on advisory role, not pursue becoming a nonprofit. Will send copy of letter to Patrick O’Connor and provide all members an update on responses from Commissioners.
- RFP Awards have been made and this process is complete; provided overview. Plans to meet with the Board of Commissioners to lobby for annual \$1 million funding in budget, encouraged members to request 2023 funding.

RFP Discussion

Eldson McGhee, Vice-Chair

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- Believes RFP needs to be rewritten and was too bureaucratic. Submitted an Open Records request for additional information. Will submit recommendations to update version for next year.
 - Shawn Hanley suggested inviting Stanley Wilson, Fulton County Director of Community Development, next month to address concerns.
 - Fran Calhoun: Contacted Carlos Thomas to request applications and awards be emailed to all members. Explained Fulton County procurement requirements and format cannot be changed. However, the scope of work can be adjusted by the Veterans Empowerment Commission.

Jim Garcia

- Suggested President and Vice-President be members of scoring committee in the future.
 - Shawn Hanley explained conflicts of interests and volunteer selection.
- Offered to buy lunch for members for the next meeting to encourage more in-person meetings.
 - Chairman Shawn Hanley prefers virtual meetings and suggested in-person meetings be centered around a Veterans Day event and only a few times a year.
 - Rick White is unable to attend a meeting on Veterans Day.

Michael Mizell, Treasurer

- Explained awarded contracts serve all of Fulton County, not a certain district. Provided an example of an award recipient where half of funds will go to administrative costs, believes this should not be allowed. Would like to get a list of who bid and who was awarded to monitor success.
- Shared recent radio visit with Chairman Robb Pitts who stated he had additional ideas to fund Veterans' issues in Fulton County.
- Suggested RFP scope be narrowed to focus on Homeless Veterans next year.
 - Chairman Shawn Hanley suggested each member prioritize top three items to help narrow the scope.
 - Rick White supports narrowing focus and prioritization of RFP next year. Would like to know if organizations awarded will be required to report on how funds are spent.
 - Fran Calhoun explained members should contact the Fulton County Community Development department to coordinate reporting to the Board of Commissioners annually or quarterly to help justify budget requests.
 - Secretary Dr. Sam Brown-Parks: If RFP is a recurring budget item, each year we should focus on one area. This will allow us to address several issues over time while keeping our focus narrow.

Carlos Thomas, Community Development Department Representative

- Confirmed he will find out if his department will oversee RFP process next year. If so, staff will work with VEC to determine focus and gain feedback.

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- Provided overview of Fulton County budget process and status. Suggested members contact appointing Commissioner and make a formal request to the County Manager for all RFP budget requests.
- Emailed award list to all members and explained grant process including payments and service oversight. Staff is currently conducting virtual site visits to ensure services in contract are being performed.
 - Chairman Shawn Hanley: Will Veterans Empowerment Commission member be allowed to join site visits?
 - Carlos Thomas: No but all site visit reports and final reports due the second week of January can be provided to members.

New Business *(Due to the number of issues to be discussed, some agenda items may be delayed until future meetings.)*

Shawn Hanley, Chairman

- 2023 Georgia Legislative Session begins in January. Creating two long-term care homes will be discussed by a Senate committee in the Fall. One will be in Metro-Atlanta and would like for the location to be in Fulton County. Requested Fulton County's state lobbyists meet with members next month to prepare for upcoming legislative session.
 - Fran Calhoun explained Fulton County's contracted State and Federal lobbyist teams as well as Legislative Agenda process. Will contact Stanley Wilson to request department's formal submission of any VEC recommendations for the 2023 Legislative Agenda. Requested Jasmine Campbell send all members department legislative agenda survey.
- Serves on Georgia Veterans Services Board and will report on relevant legislative issues to members. For example, Georgia Veterans Services Board received grant for suicide prevention which will require state legislation.
- VEC does not want to be a nonprofit but we do need to apply for Federal Grants from VA
 - Fran Calhoun: Departments are authorized to submit grants and a third-party external grant writing team can be requested by Fulton County departments. Unaware of any current federal grants related to Veterans awarded to Fulton County at this time. Suggested any grant requests be submitted to Community Development department since the director must submit requests to External Affairs Department.
 - Carlos Thomas: Limitations to grants that County governments can apply for so this must be considered when reviewing potential funds, more options available for nonprofits. Fran Calhoun agreed to send eligible grants to all members for review.
- Requested each member determine top three issues the next RFP can address. Members will determine scoring and voting for prioritization at a later meeting.

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Announcements

Mike Mizell, Treasurer

- City of Johns Creek will have an event for Veterans with Johns Creek Symphony Orchestra on Saturday, November 12; will share details with members once finalized.
- Georgia Veterans Services will create a statewide roster of all organizations and companies doing work for Veterans. Requested members submit all relevant groups to Shawn Hanley and Patricia Lewis in the next month to be included.

Rick White

- Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony will take place on Saturday, November 5 in Columbus, GA at noon. The Governor and General Assembly is currently trying to be move the Hall of Fame to State Capitol museum.

Eldson McGhee, Vice Chairman

- Vietnam Veterans of America is celebrating 20 years in Atlanta on Saturday, October 8 at 6 p.m. with the first Veterans Community Appreciation Ball. Will send invitations to members and Fulton County Staff for this free event.

Fran Calhoun

- Fulton County will join the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers for [Operation Green Light for Veterans](#). Participation includes lighting County buildings green in support of Veterans November 7-November 13.
- Confirmed meetings are open to the public and townhall will require Zoom webinar format.

Jasmine Campbell shared website: <https://fultoncountyga.gov/veteransempowermentcommission>

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.