

Fulton County Veterans Empowerment Commission, Inc.

Thursday, March 17, 2022 at 1 p.m.

Zoom Recording (Passcode: CFgk+jS7:)

https://zoom.us/rec/share/Oh5IBhG73wcof7dXfCTBKE150FeqtjdNwLA3ZagPxVe-pSCHtwLX0T1wcMgD6YA.9A_UMXQeRw-f4BQu?startTime=1647537044000

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

Shawn Hanley, Chairman

- The meeting was called to order at 1:10 p.m.

****A QUORUM WAS PRESENT****

Roll Call

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

Approval of March 17, 2022 Agenda

- Anthony Merritt made a motion to approve the March 17, 2022 agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Ratification of February 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes

- Richard White made a motion to approve the February 17, 2022 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Remarks / Update

- This will be a permanent section in meeting agendas in case the Chairman forgets any agenda items.
- Spoke with Carlos Thomas and Stanley Wilson yesterday and believes all areas of concern provided by VEC members in previous meetings are addressed in the RFP draft.

Update from Department of Community Development: Director Stanley Wilson and Carlos Thomas

- Carlos Thomas presented the document titled “Veterans Services Program (VSP) RFP Operational Framework and 2022 Timeline”:
 - The RFP process, key dates, as well as the role of Veterans Empowerment Commission members were highlighted.
 - Key input is needed from VEC members regarding potential priorities that can be included on pages 2-4.
 - Would like the VEC to begin considering how members will be represented and participate on the external evaluation committee.

Q & A between Department of Community Development and VEC

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Shawn Hanley, President:

- What documents are public as of today? Advised VEC members to not share the RFP yet because it has not been released by Fulton County.
 - Carlos Thomas: The PowerPoint presentation has been presented to the Board of Commissioners and is available to the public. However, the RFP framework document is still in draft form and should not be shared yet. VEC members are requested to provide input on pages 2-4 before the release of the RFP by the Fulton County Purchasing document on April 4, 2022.
- A subcommittee will be created that includes five VEC members, including a chairman, that will be on the RFP evaluation committee. Please email Shawn Hanley if you are interested in being a member and an announcement will be made in the upcoming weeks. Subcommittee members are expected to follow ethical guidelines and other Fulton County RFP evaluation procedures. The Community Development department as well as the County Attorney's office will meet with the subcommittee separately prior to the April 4, 2022 RFP release date.
 - Lauren Hansford: Would like more time to review the VEC Bylaws, Code of Ethics and other County Purchasing Code before commenting on what is allowed. Will be prepared for the subcommittee meeting and work with members to ensure all guidelines are followed throughout the RFP process.
 - Carlos Thomas: All evaluators are unable to talk about the RFP once it is sent out. The BOC must also follow these rules to limit unfair advantages. There will be an orientation with the subcommittee where conflict of interest forms and more helpful information will be shared.
- How do we inform the public of the RFP?
 - Carlos Thomas: The Purchasing Department will send out notification to registered users once the RFP goes live. Additionally, the Fulton County External Affairs Department sends out press releases for RFPs and the VEC members can also send out the press release and share with all interested organizations. The RFP will be done online completely, and additional resources will be provided to applicants throughout the process.
 - Fran Calhoun: The Department of External Affairs will share this RFP since it is a new program, but other RFP press releases are only shared by request. This RFP will be available online and the user-friendly website can be shared by anyone.

Eldson McGhee, Vice-President

- At the press conference it was mentioned that the funding will be available beginning in May but now the timeline presented states awards will not be announced until June. What has changed?
 - Carlos Thomas: This timeline was approved by BOC and is on track according to the County Purchasing rules which must be followed and take time. The award recommendations will be presented to the BOC for approval in June, the contract

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period is June-December, and actual funds will reach organizations in July after the first invoice is received.

- Concerned about only 501c3s being allowed to apply. 501c19s are currently excluded even though Veterans organizations often fall under this category and are technically nonprofits. Requested this exclusion be taken back to the BOC for approval and the RFP updated.
 - Carlos Thomas: County general fund dollars are being used and are allocated to nonprofit agencies only. Provided examples of how organizations are allowed to partner with 501c3s if they do not have the 501c3 status or all qualifications.
 - Stan Wilson: Will look up more information on 501c19s since they do seem to be focused on Veterans.
 - Jasmine Campbell informed everyone the next BOC meeting will be held after the current RFP start date of April 4, 2022.

Dr. Samantha Brown-Parks, Secretary

- Is there an expected division of funds between categories?
 - Carlos Thomas: The BOC did not advocate for each category to have a specific amount of funds so they will be disbursed based on the number of applications. Explained Community Service Program model that will be used.

Richard White

- Do we already have a certain number of requests, or will we have to wait until after evaluations are complete to determine the funds for each category?
 - Carlos Thomas: This information will not be determined until after the RFP submission deadline of April 29, 2022. The funding is limited to \$1 million so this might run out depending on the number of applications in all categories and amount of funding available relative to score thresholds.

Anthony Merritt

- All VEC members should be trained on ethics even if they are not members of the subcommittee.
 - Shawn Hanley and Patricia Lewis agreed with this suggestion.

Patricia Lewis

- Does Fulton County have data or performance measures related to Veterans that can be shared, such as the number of homeless veterans? This will help benchmark changes.
 - Carlos Thomas: Performance measures are included in the RFP that requires applicants to share their data under each category in order to demonstrate the need for funds. My department does not have any data on the local level currently but VEC members will be helpful in gaining this type of data and agencies funded will have to report uses throughout the contract.
- Is the \$1 million renewed annually?

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- Carlos Thomas: BOC allocates funding in January each year, currently no funding decisions have been made for next year. The VEC can make recommendations for needs next year based on the results of this \$1 million program.
- Shawn Hanley: Next year the VEC will be able to add more items in the RFP and potentially seek more funding from the BOC. Potential changes to suicide rates and hotline functions were provided as an example.

Old Business

Eldson McGhee, Vice-President

- Sent seven items to committee members at the last meeting but it was not presented. Would like to make a motion to approve these recommendations.
 - Shawn Hanley: Items should be specifically added to the agenda for next month to allow members time to review. Apologized for forgetting and requested Eldson McGhee resubmit his proposal and it will be placed on April agenda.
 - Patricia Lewis: Does not remember items specifically but does want his voice to be heard at the next meeting.

New Business

Shawn Hanley, President

- Reached out to Commissioner Arrington to determine the purpose of the 501c3 status of the VEC. No money will be handled by VEC unless done through the 501c3 and funds must be raised independently by the VEC. Believes it is a big request to ask VEC to raise money for Fulton County, indirectly, which is the expectation from Commissioner Arrington's Chief of Staff.
 - Patricia Lewis: Should the VEC apply for grants as a 501c3?
 - Shawn Hanley believes grants are a separate matter.
 - Eldson McGhee: Does not believe money will be raised for Fulton County, but it will be for Veterans, so he is willing to fundraise.
 - Shawn Hanley suggested he create an event and be the lead fundraiser. However, all members fundraise for other organizations and might not be able to assist and still does not agree with this request.

Eldson McGhee, Vice-President

- VEC will be funded based on impact. Concerned that 501c19s are not included in this process and feels they need to be represented in the RFP process. Encourages members to reach out to BOC to make this change.
- Suggested there needs to be more VEC meetings so all districts can be updated and spread outreach at the same time.
- Requested members go to [Sons of Atlanta](#) to buy a brick and show support.
 - Shawn Hanley: Knows that everyone wants to help organizations they are involved with, but he will not make fundraising requests. Suggested Eldson

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McGhee is not included on the evaluation committee to allow him to help steer organizations and raise awareness of the RFP process.

Announcements

Patricia Lewis

- Working with [Meals on Wheels Atlanta](#) and they recently received money for Veterans including home repair and meal delivery. Please send her email to interested candidates.
 - [Shawn Hanley](#) requested a personal reminder email.

Eldson McGhee, Vice-President

- March 29, 2022 is Vietnam Veterans Day and he plans to send relevant event notices to all VEC members soon, participation is encouraged.
- [Vietnam Veterans of America](#) has land in Piedmont Park and bricks can be bought that represent the nine cities in Fulton County during this time.

Shawn Hanley, President

- Calendar invites have been sent out for recurring meetings the third Thursday of each month at 1 p.m. by Fran Calhoun.
 - [Fran Calhoun](#): Zoom meetings links are not included in the meeting invite and will be updated monthly. Please inform her if meeting dates change.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.