

Fulton County Veterans Empowerment Commission, Inc.

Thursday, May 19, 2022 at 1 p.m.

Zoom recording: https://zoom.us/rec/share/WuW-z40B2GyseqYks_MtJJ4R2zWfz_HoyJt6ijP3NZmluIO0N-NGqHHbIi4KtR5f.6w7f5HbgcGDXsqbn

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 1:02 p.m.

Roll Call

- **Members Present:** Shawn Hanley, Dr. Samantha Brown-Parks, Eldson McGhee, Michael Mizell, Richard White, Michael Moore, Patricia Lewis, Anthony Merritt
- **Members Absent:** Jim Garcia, Stephen Leake, Craig Kidd
- **Staff Present:** Fran Calhoun (External Affairs), Jasmine Campbell (External Affairs), Lauren Hansford (County Attorney's Office), Joey Logan-Pugh (County Attorney's Office)

Approval of May 19, 2022 Meeting Agenda

- Vice Chairman Eldson McGhee made a motion to approve the May 19, 2022 meeting agenda. Secretary Dr. Samantha Brown-Parks seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ratification of April 21, 2022 Meeting Minutes

- Rick White made a motion to approve the April 21, 2022 meeting minutes. Treasurer Mike Mizell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

- Chairman Shawn Hanley: Old business references any business discussed previously and new business covers new topics such as information in recent emails sent to all members.

New Business

Shawn Hanley, Chairman:

- Requested Fran Calhoun resend Veteran Suicide email to all members.
- Provided overview of new federal RFP that might allow grants to become available to states. The Grand Challenge VA RFP includes 35 states. Private sector company

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information will be available after the solicitation is complete and can be obtained by VEC.

- Suggested next year's VEC RFP be open to private sector due to increased data resources compared to nonprofits.
- Requested each member bring one issue close to them that is not considered in the current RFP. Will allow discussion and debate on all issues to promote future enhancements to VEC RFP.
- Informed members that due to three members being active on the current RFP scoring board, VEC is unable to discuss RFP process revisions until awards are made. Requested Vice Chairman Eldson McGhee exclude this matter in his new business discussion.

Veteran Suicide Prevention Discussion

- Patricia Lewis: Recently appointed and attended meetings of Governor's Veterans Suicide Taskforce. Believes mental health support in addition to jobs can help suicide prevention for veterans.
 - Chairman Shawn Hanley requested updates on the taskforce be presented to VEC to ensure alignment with state.
- Treasurer Mike Mizell: Numerous organizations handle the topic of suicide prevention but there is no central organization to house all resources. The State should locate all relevant veteran organizations in one place.
 - Vice Chairman Eldson McGhee: Recently partnered with [Vet22](#) which is an organization that only handles suicide prevention with veterans. Will discuss upcoming projects with Chairman Shawn Hanley offline.
 - Rick White: Agreed that there are several organizations with great intentions but there is no clearinghouse which includes empirical data on suicide causes. Believes lack of a job is a big contributor to veteran suicides and more prevention is needed. [Vetlanta](#) links veterans to employment opportunities to help morale and prevent suicide.
 - Secretary Dr. Samantha Brown-Parks: National suicide prevention hotlines follow the same guidelines and address issues relevant to veterans. VEC must figure out how to gather all resources that will help with prevention in Fulton County. Failed suicide by veterans is a key area that can be looked at as well.
 - Anthony Merritt: Provided example of veterans who took their lives outside the VA to show they were not receiving adequate service and benefits.

Eldson McGhee, Vice Chairman:

- Concerns were submitted to members via email this week but would like to withdraw seven motions due to lack of review time; discussion can occur at a later date.

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- Chairman Shawn Hanley: Will place seven motions on next meeting agenda for discussion.
- VEC is an advisory board that can work as a nonprofit and must get organized. “Review and Recommendations for Fulton County” document brings attention to what the focus of the VEC should be and includes recommendations on branding such as townhalls. Currently the VEC is working behind the scenes but needs to have an office to reach veterans more.
 - Treasurer Mike Mizell: Unsure how to go about setting up townhall meetings across the County. Believes informational meetings can be set up and sponsored by Fulton County staff with veterans organizations as a first step to learn community concerns. However, not sure if there is a designated person in each Fulton County department that handles veterans issues.
- Bylaws provide VEC the authority to complete tasks, create an office, and fundraise. Members should create an office with volunteers conducting outreach and completing delegated tasks. Activity reports will be presented at each VEC meeting.
 - Treasurer Mike Mizell: Does not believe VEC is authorized to have daily operations. Will participate in townhalls if they are in the evening hours, most members have full-time jobs.

Townhall Discussion

- Michael Moore: Suggested members ask County Commissioners to put together a meeting in their district to help determine support and biggest need areas.
- Secretary Dr. Samantha Brown-Parks: Outside sponsors would be helpful to gain community support.
- Chairman Shawn Hanley:
 - Has attended lots of townhall meetings for veterans and VEC must tailor agenda because 90% of questions will be about benefits and medical issues.
 - What is the purpose of the townhall?
 - Vice Chairman Eldson McGhee: Would like the townhalls to provide information to all VSOs instead of being open to the public but will go along with VEC decision.
 - Treasurer Mike Mizell: Target homelessness first and future townhall meetings can help identify problems and organizations working on those issues in Fulton County already. VA representative needs to be present and marketing will be critical.
 - Suggested pilot program include one townhall to allow outcomes review and must have commitments from panel of experts. Townhalls usually are for venting not education so instead pilot should be called an “Introduction to the Fulton County Veterans Empowerment Commission, Inc.”

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- Anthony Merritt: Suggested VEC be specific when making townhall announcement to help control conversations at meeting.

Motion made by Chairman Shawn Hanley that requests Vice Chairman Eldson McGhee draft a proposal for the inaugural townhall meeting of the Veterans Empowerment Commission, Inc., including timelines, by next meeting date. Treasurer Mike Mizell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- Proposal can be updated at the next meeting but should include: location, date, time, and commitments from expert panelists. Would like to allow 30 days of marketing before townhall.

Announcements

- Vice Chairman Eldson McGhee: Will email announcements
- Treasurer Mike Mizell: Will participate in Walton County parade soon and plans to discuss what Fulton County is doing for veterans as well.
- Patricia Lewis: Fulton County Mental Health Fair on May 28th

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 2:18 p.m.