

**OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 11th, 2023, 9:00 A.M.  
Vezey Veterans Complex  
2132 NE 36th Street  
Oklahoma City, OK 73111**

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING:**

The Oklahoma Veterans Commission held a Regular Meeting on Monday, December 11, 2023, at 9:00 AM at the Vezey Veterans Complex, 2132 NE 36th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73111. A Notice of this meeting was filed with the Secretary of State's Office on November 15, 2023. The agenda of this meeting was also properly posted at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to this meeting pursuant to the provisions of Title 25 O.S. § 311. Cass Newell served as the Clerk of the Commission for this Meeting. The Agenda and Minutes of the meeting actions are set out below.

**AGENDA:**

**CHAIRMAN ROB ALLEN:**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Allen called the meeting to order at 9:29 AM

**II. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM**

**A. ROLL CALL**

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to call the roll. The roll was taken as follows:

Commissioner Allen – Present  
Commissioner Ellington – Present  
Commissioner Martin – Present  
Commissioner Offel – Present  
Commissioner Orr – Present

**B. DECLARATION OF QUORUM**

The Chair declared that a quorum was present.

**III. VERIFICATION OF PROPER NOTICE OF MEETING AND POSTING OF THE AGENDA.**

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to verify proper notice to the Secretary of State and posting of the agenda. The Clerk verified that Notice of this meeting was filed with the Secretary of State's Office on November 15, 2023, and the agenda was posted to the front door of the ODVA Central Office and was available at the reception desk of the ODVA Central Office on December 6, 2023, at 9:00 AM. The agenda was posted to the ODVA website on December 6, 2023, at 8:44 AM.

**IV. INVOCATION**

Commissioner Ellington led the Invocation.

**V. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Commissioner Martin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**VI. INTRODUCTION OF ODVA STAFF AND OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Secretary of Military & Veterans Affairs John Nash  
Executive Director Greg Slavonic  
Deputy Director Shawn Kirkland  
Director of Homes Rob Arrington  
Chief Financial Officer Lisa White  
Construction Programs Administrator Nisha Young  
ODVA General Counsel John Settle  
OVC Counsel John O'Connor  
Assistant Attorney General James Crawford

**VII. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME TO VISITORS AND GUESTS**

Chairman Allen welcomed all visitors and guests to the Commission meeting and asked if anyone would like to introduce themselves to the Commission. Mr. Mark Morgan, Oklahoma Veterans Alliance Community Executive Liaison was in attendance. The Chairman acknowledged and welcomed the visitors and guests.

**VIII. BUSINESS**

**A. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 13, 2023, OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING.**

Chairman Allen asked the Commission if there was any further discussion.

Commissioner Martin made the motion to approve the October 13, 2023 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Orr seconded the Motion

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to call the roll.

Commissioner Allen – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 5 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Chairman Allen declared the motion passed.

**B. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 27, 2023, OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING.**

Chairman Allen asked the Commission if there was any further discussion.

Commissioner Martin made the motion to approve the October 27, 2023 meeting minutes.

Commissioner Offel seconded the Motion

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to call the roll.

Commissioner Allen – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 5 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Chairman Allen declared the motion passed.

**C. REPORTS, WITH DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING:**

**1. HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: COMMISSIONER SIDNEY ELLINGTON:**

Commissioner Ellington gave report regarding employee turnover since last Commission meeting, direct care staff and direct care vacancies, and 2023 terminations and resignations agency wide.

**2. COMMISSIONER BRETT MARTIN:**

Commissioner Martin reported on the Veteran Suicide Task Force and the Governors Symposium to Prevent Veteran Suicide. The Veteran Suicide Task Force is now standing. Commissioner Martin covered membership, of the Task Force and reported its meetings are conducted the third Wednesday of each month at the State Capitol. The Task Force has one year to investigate and submit a report to the Governor.

Commissioner Martin also reported the American Legion’s Be the One program will be adopted by the Oklahoma Veteran Suicide Task Force and The American Legion visited the Norman Veterans Center with the “Riders”. Executive Director Slavonic recognized Alfonzo Garza as the ODVA Task Force Representative.

**D. GENERAL HOUSEKEEPING, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING: CHAIRMAN ROB ALLEN:**

**1. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING STRATEGIC LONG-TERM PLAN DISCUSSION FOR FY24 AND BEYOND.**

Commissioner Allen suggests scheduling a strategic planning meeting for Fiscal Year 2024, to set the goals and objectives for next year and beyond. General Counsel Settle recommends presenting the strategic plan to the Commission at the next meeting in February 2024. Commissioner Allen scheduled a strategic planning committee meeting for January 5, 2024. The Executive Committee members, Commissioner Allen and Commissioner Martin, along with ODVA Director Admiral Slavonic and any other staff members necessary will establish the Strategic Plan to be presented to the entire Commission at its February 2024 meeting.

**2. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE STATUS OF THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED DURING THE SEPTEMBER 23, 2022, MEETING OF THE OVC:**

Committees at present are:

- i. Healthcare – Offel and ODVA staff;
- ii. Construction/Development – Orr;
- iii. Legislative – Ellington;
- iv. Human Resources – Ellington and Martin;
- v. Audit – Martin

Commissioner Allen will consider adding other staff to these committees at the February meeting.

**E. REPORTS, WITH DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING:**

**1. OKLAHOMA SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND MILITARY: JOHNATHAN NASH, DISCUSSION WITH POSSIBLE ACTION:**

Secretary Nash commented on Governor Stitt’s visit to the ODVA on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Secretary Nash is in talks with OSU in partnering with ODVA regarding brain health studies related to veterans. Secretary Nash spoke about the OLDCC grant program working with communities based around military installations.

**2. ODVA: ADMIRAL GREG SLAVONIC, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DISCUSSION WITH POSSIBLE ACTION**

Director Slavonic introduced the ODVA Legislative Liaison Lisa Acevedo, she previously worked as a lobbyist for the Oklahoma Department of Education. Legislative Liaison Acevedo discussed meeting with Senator Stanley and Representative Josh West and gave an update on SB1215 which is expected to be heard on the floor February 2024. ODVA Claims and Benefits Administrator Randy Law discussed the number of veterans on the ODVA Registry regarding tax exempt status. A discussion regarding the implementation of the Veterans Registry and various issues surrounding it since it was originally established in 2021.

Director Slavonic reports the CPA firm, Tramman Group, has been selected to validate the financials of the ODVA.

Director Slavonic advised ODVA is ensuring all required training is completed and the agency average completion rate is 94 percent. Rob Arrington added RELIAS is a requirement in all of ODVA’s Veterans homes.

Director Slavonic stated the 2024 meeting schedule will stay in place and meeting dates will add or drop from the schedule as needed.

Discussed creation of an ODVA a 501 C (3) charitable foundation to provide additional services and programs for State Veterans Center residents and Oklahoma Veterans. General Counsel John Settle stated that the creation of a foundation would allow donations outside of the government appropriations for ODVA which would benefit the State Homes. He gave examples of other state agency non-profit foundations, OETA and the Department of Wildlife. OVC Counsel John O'Connor states he believes it is an excellent idea and creates a broader source of revenue and use of funds for the ODVA.

Commissioner Ellington made the Motion to authorize the ODVA staff to research the creation of an ODVA Charitable Foundation and present the Commission with a proposal to accomplish the goal.

Commissioner Martin seconded the Motion.

Chairman Allen asked the Commission if there was any further discussion. There was no discussion.

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to call the roll. The vote was as follows:

Commissioner Allen – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye.

The clerk notified Chairman Allen the Roll Call vote was five (5) Ayes and zero (0) Nays.

Chairman Allen declared the Motion to have Passed.

**3. ODVA: NISHA YOUNG, CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATOR, UPDATES, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:**

Ms. Young gave update on Ardmore Veterans Home Project, the design plan is 85% complete. Waiting on grant to start bidding process. Property is 266 acres and timeline would be 1.5 years from receiving grant for construction to begin.

Sallisaw project construction is 75% complete, Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (FF&E) is complete, a steel art project for the building has been donated. Estimated completion date is Spring 2024. Discussion regarding the ongoing process the ODVA staff is participating in to manage the completion of the project. Also, there will be a tour of the facility that will occur on January 24, 2024.

Union Soldiers Cemetery project is partnering with OU to GPS the property for unmarked gravesites before beginning construction. Wreaths Across America will hold a ceremony on December 16<sup>th</sup> and a similar ceremony will be held that same day at the Ardmore Cemetery.

A portion of the Union Soldiers Cemetery property will be deeded back to the State of Oklahoma. A digital copy of this presentation is available as an attachment to these minutes.

**4. ODVA: LISA A. WHITE, ODVA CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, DISCUSSION WITH POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING:**

Ms. White gave updates to ODVA FY23 budget. A digital copy of this presentation is available as an attachment to these minutes.

**5. ODVA: SHAWN KIRKLAND, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, REPORTS, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION RE:**

Mr. Kirkland gave update regarding Talihina Home closure and current operating expenses for the facility.

**6. ODVA: ROB ARRINGTON, DIRECTOR OF HOMES, REPORTS, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION RE:**

Mr. Arrington gave update regarding occupancy of the homes which is now 76% overall. Contract personnel is down by 44% and state employees are up by 60%. Reported on the state veteran center resident counsel programs at the centers.

**7. ODVA: JOHN M. SETTLE, ODVA GENERAL COUNSEL, REPORT RE:**

Mr. Settle introduced Janet Morrow, Director of Risk Assessment and Compliance and Assistant Attorney General Julie Corley, assigned to Risk Management, Office of Management and Enterprise Services. Their presentation discussed ODVA acquiring supplemental liability insurance for ODVA litigation expenses and costs.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**X. DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS BY THE OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION AND DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF AGENDA ITEMS IN ADVANCE OF MEETING.**

Chairman Allen set January 22, 2024 as the deadline for submission of agenda items for the next Meeting.

**XI. OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING.**

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING:**

February 5, 2024, 9:00AM

1776 E. Robinson Street

Norman, OK 73070

**XII. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING ADJOURNMENT.**

Commissioner Martin made the motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Orr seconded the Motion.

The Motion is not debatable.

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to call the roll.

Commissioner Allen – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 5 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Chairman Allen declared the Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.