

Date: August 2, 2024

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager *TM*

From: Alison King, Director of Health and Human Services *AK*

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: Veterans Affairs Commission 2023/2024 Annual Report

In accordance with the Long Beach Municipal Code 2.28.090, the Veterans Affairs Commission's 2023/2024 Annual Report is attached for consideration.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Gina Overholt, Veterans Commission and Office of Veterans Support Coordinator, at (562) 244-9072.

ATTACHMENT

CC: DAWN MCINTOSH, CITY ATTORNEY
DOUGLAS P. HAUBERT, CITY PROSECUTOR
LAURA L. DOUD, CITY AUDITOR
APRIL WALKER, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
TERESA CHANDLER, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
MEREDITH REYNOLDS, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
GRACE YOON, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
TYLER BONANNO-CURLEY, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
KEVIN LEE, CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER
MONIQUE DE LA GARZA, CITY CLERK
DEPARTMENT HEADS

2023/2024 Annual Report for the City of Long Beach Veterans Affairs Commission as outlined in the Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC) Chapter 2.18.90 – ADVISORY BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES.

Objectives and Functions

The general objectives and functions are identified in a memo entitled “Creation of Veterans Affairs Commission,” hereafter referred to as the Commission, dated November 11, 2014. The Commission was established via Ordinance number ORD-16-0003, which added Chapter 2.60 to the Long Beach Municipal Code on February 11, 2016.

- a. The purpose of the Commission is to serve as an advisory body to the City Council concerning the well-being of military veterans in Long Beach.
- b. The Commission shall provide recommendations on matters pertaining to the affairs of veterans residing within the City.
- c. The Commission may evaluate and recommend programs, policies, and practices designed to assist veterans in multiple capacities, and act as a central clearing house for information, programs and services relating to veterans in the Long Beach community.

The memo also described the Commission as a way to honor veterans’ service and to “highlight the many achievements of those who have dedicated a portion of their lives to protecting our country.”

The Commission produced a Veterans Strategic Plan wherein it recommended that an Office of Veterans Support (OVS) be established to carry out the goals, objectives and strategies identified in the plan. The City Council approved the recommendation, and the Office of Veterans Support (OVS) was established on October 1, 2022, with one full-time staff person. The Commission now advises the OVS on its plans and priorities, ensuring that they align with the strategic plan.

Accomplishments

The City Council approved \$50,000 in structural funding for the Long Beach Veterans Day Celebration in FY 2024. With structural funding, the 2023 event expanded to include the largest Veterans Resources Fair in recent memory, with 38 local, City and community-based organizations participating, and an extended Veterans recognition ceremony with special guest speakers and elected officials. The Veterans Day subcommittee, comprising members of the Commission and other Veterans, supported the Office of Veterans Support with administering the resources fair and the ceremony and recruited volunteers. Nearly 40 event attendees who identified as Veterans (43 percent), as family members or friends of Veterans (41 percent), or as “other” (16 percent), completed an event survey. Mental health care and crisis intervention topped the list of the types of services attendees would like to see more in the resources fair. Finally, the top three ways respondents heard about the event were through social media (35 percent), friends and colleagues (20 percent) and their neighborhoods or communities (10 percent). A little less than one-third of resource fair organizations completed surveys wherein 90 percent said the resources fair “very effectively” or “effectively” helped them interact with Veterans in the community.

The City Council approved \$10,000 in one-time funding in FY 24 for a pilot Veterans banner program. The Veterans banner subcommittee, comprising members of the Commission, developed a selection process, issued a call for nominations, selected the honorees, and supported the Office of Veterans Support with administering the program. A total of 25 banners were installed on Carson Street

between Clark and Woodruff on May 20, 2024. Short bios of the selected honorees may be viewed here: longbeach.gov/veteransbanners

The OVS successfully secured a \$5,000 sponsorship to support Honoring Our Heroes: A Sunset Ceremony, the City’s Memorial Day commemoration. Now in its second year, Honoring Our Heroes was a successful, well-attended event, that not only celebrated and honored our military members who perished in the line of duty but also the history of the Navy in Long Beach. The Honoring Our Heroes subcommittee, comprising members of the Commission and other Veterans, supported the Office of Veterans Support with administering the event. Event surveys were completed by 30 attendees, 93 percent of whom rated the event as “great” and the same percentage indicating they would “definitely” or “likely” return next year.

It is a time of transition for the Commission with two new Commissioners onboarding between March and May and four Commissioners exiting as of July 1, 2024, after serving four consecutive terms. The Commission looks ahead to an infusion of new members and new energy in the coming months. Commissioners (both exiting and new) completed a survey to reflect on the Commission’s impacts and their own experiences and to make recommendations. Respondents were most proud of the pilot Veterans banner project and the Veterans Strategic Plan.

Reports and Recommendations Presented to City Council

Since submission of the last report, the Veterans Affairs Commission did not present any reports or recommendations to the City Council. No subject matters were referred to the Commission by City Council. The Commission did, however, present to City Council on the Long Beach Veterans Day Celebration and Honoring Our Heroes: A Sunset Ceremony, the City’s Memorial Day commemoration, on October 21, 2023, and May 21, 2024, respectively.

Meetings Held in 2023/2024

Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, the Commission held a total of 11 meetings. Meetings were held in July, September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May, and June.

Attendance Records for all Members

<i>CD</i>	<i>Name</i>		<i>Absences</i>
1	Jesse	Blanco	1
1	Jim	Goodin	None (joined in May 2024)
2	Ken	Olson	None
3	Mike	Shaknovich	3
4	Josh	Smith	2
5	Vic	Hill	None (joined in June 2024)

6	Lance	Santiago	3
7	Ryan	Antes	1
8	Sylvia	Contreras	2
9	Juanita	Doplemore	1

Lance Santiago (CD 6) resigned from the Commission in December 2023 and the seat has been vacant since that time. Jesse Blanco (CD 1) resigned from the Commission at the March 2024 meeting: Jim Goodin replaced him. Council District 5 was vacant until June 2024, when Vic Hill joined the Commission.

Number of Public Hearings Conducted

The Commission did not conduct any public hearings between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024.

Funding Expended to Support the Body

Total amount of funds expended to support this Commission: \$140,104.

City Personnel Assisting the Body

Health Department

- The Resource Connections Division Officer (in the Collective Impact Bureau) supervises the Commission Coordinator.
- The Public Affairs Office and Public Information and Engagement Program staff (in the Communicable Disease and Emergency Response Bureau) assist with planning and strategy related to public relations and promotion. This includes graphic design of all collateral (flyers, postcards, banners, and social media graphics), social media content, website updates, media releases and approvals, and newsletter support.
- Public Health Emergency Management Division Logistics staff provides logistics support for the Veterans Day and Memorial Day events.
- The Collective Impact Bureau Secretary provides administrative support.
- The Performance Improvement and Accreditation Coordinator and the Health Data and Analytics Officer developed survey instruments for the Veterans Day and Memorial Day events.

Other Departments

- The City Attorney’s office reviews and approves Commission meeting agendas (as of May 2024) before they are publicly posted. A City attorney presented on the Brown Act and Roberts Rules at the Commission meeting in February 2024.
- The City Clerk’s Office provided support in the form of trainings in OneMeeting, the City’s new meeting tracking software, and continues to provide support as needed.

Recommendation as to Whether the Body Should be Abolished, Modified or Continued

We recommend that the Veterans Affairs Commission be continued. Continuing this body demonstrates the City's exemplary commitment to supporting its Veteran population.