



CITY OF LAS CRUCES

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

January 27, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Lawrence "Sam" Bothern, DAV #10 - Chair
James (JR) Turner, VFW 10124 - Vice-Chair
Daniel Ansbach, Special Forces #80
James Perry Ashby, American Legion #10
Victor Eres, USMC
Len Hampton, Member at Large
Luke Rosendo Keith, VFW 3242
Fred Madrid, Vietnam Veterans of America, Chap. 431
Brian Morrow, Member at Large

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Beverly Drum, UMW of Southwest
Brandon Robinson, Member at Large
Christine Sautter, MOAA
VACANT, MOPH

STAFF PRESENT:

Charles Tucker, CLC Inspector General
Amber Dominguez, Administration

OTHERS:

Jennifer Terrazas
Jerine Kiser
Victoria Alarcon
Melody Pruitt
Sandy Johnson
Amin Henriquez
Desiree Gonzales
Dan Lucero
Rod Gajewski
Jim Bentley

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bothern called the meeting to order.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

1 ALL STAND FOR PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

2
3 **3. ROLL CALL**

4
5 A quorum was determined to be present.

- 6
7 ○ Elect a chair and alternate chair for the next two years

8 Luke Keith nominated himself for Chair.

9 Brian Morrow nominated himself for the alternate Chair.

10
11 Motion passed unanimously.

12
13
14 **4. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA**

15
16 Motion to accept the agenda made by Perry Ashby; seconded by Brian Morrow.
17 Motion passed unanimously.

18
19 **5. VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES - November 25, 2025**

20
21 Page 1, line 44 Len Hampton is a Member at Large. Page 3, line 43 should be Bill
22 Garcia.

23
24 Motion to accept the minutes with amendments made by Victor Eres; seconded by
25 Perry Ashby. Motion passed unanimously.

26
27 **6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

28
29 Jennifer Terrazas, a co-group leader of the Mesilla Valley Quilts of Valor. They
30 are hoping each representative of the various veteran organizations will share the
31 information with their groups. They would like to present more quilts of valor in
32 Las Cruces and Doña Ana area. The area they cover is from Lordsburg to
33 Alamogordo and everything in between. They started in 2003 with a woman who's
34 son was a gunner overseas in Iraq. She saw a dream about wrapping her
35 distressed son in a quilt. They hope to give the current quilts in the chambers to
36 veterans here, and other veterans of the VAB. The Mesilla Valley Quilts of Valor
37 have existed since 2017. Their mission is to cover service members with a quilt.
38 The quilt is an award and not a gift, recognizing the service and severe sacrifice
39 made.

40
41 Jerine Kiser gave more information on the specifications of the quilts. There are
42 specific standards, 60 x 80. They use certain fabric and materials, high quality
43 100% cotton, red, white, and blue are popular but any patriotic or comforting theme
44 is acceptable. Quilts are machine or hand, tied or tufted are prohibited. Each quilt
45 is labeled with Quilt of Valor and recipients name and names of the piecer and the
46 quilter.

1
2 Victoria Alarcon stated all members of armed forces are eligible with an honorable
3 or general discharge status. Posthumous awards are not permitted. Their website
4 has instructions for nominating. There is a ceremony when presenting the quilts.
5

6 Melody Pruitt stated there are different ways for people to get involved in what they
7 do. Help in making the quilts, called a LongArmy (machine) quilting. Donations
8 always welcome.
9

10 Juliette Holguin thanked all the veterans for their service. For presenting at other
11 organizations as desired. Group leaders name and phone number on the back of
12 a business card.
13

14 Jennifer Terrazas stated each quilt costs about \$200 to make. They are not a
15 member of Honor Flight but do support it. The Honor Flight quilts are not full size
16 quilts, wall hangings of 24 x 36.
17

18 Amin Henriquez, Chief for Center for Development Civic Engagement for El Paso
19 VA. He is a 25-year veteran, US Army retired. The new Avenida clinic here in Las
20 Cruces is going to expand some of the services. New PAC team, new nurses,
21 new LVN, new medical team for mental health, PT, OT, audiology, pharmacy tech,
22 radiology, eye clinic, optical shop, full behavioral health team, and whole health
23 team, dieticians, My Health E Vet, receptionist, CommuniCare services
24 representative. The new building in process in El Paso is on schedule to be
25 completed in 2029. Encourage people to take the surveys they receive. Tele-
26 Town-Hall is monthly and using feedback to feed some of the formats. CPO
27 program for labs by outside provider, but can now get that done through the VA.
28 There should be no co-pays for VA authorized care. Contact officers with concerns
29 (915) 564-7899. If go to urgent care, have 72 hours to document that and call,
30 otherwise you will receive a bill, or call (844) 724-7842 for emergency care or (915)
31 564-7842. Dental eligibility in the VA is limited and based on eligibility. For dental
32 they recommend VA DIP (877) 222-8387. Eligibility questions call (915) 564-6100,
33 extension 6150. Pharmacy services, the app is awesome. Need an ID Me Account
34 to get onto My Health E Vet. He brought Desiree Gonzales who is an expert on
35 this process. The app has all your appointments, medications, if you need refills,
36 or letters. Main VA has after hour care. They do have flu vaccines available.
37 Upcoming events are the Whole Health Open House January 29th 10:00 to 12:00
38 at main VA. January 30th Fabens Veteran Popup outreach event, 9:00 to 3:00.
39 Rio Valley Women's Club, 521 Mike Markle St, Fabens, TX, 79839. West side
40 clinic is back open. Dental is not at the Avenida de Mesilla clinic yet.
41

42 Dan Lucero asked about the new buildings, pharmacy, and authorizations.
43

44 Amin Henriquez stated the new buildings are expansion but not shutting down the
45 old buildings. New clinic here will have a pharmacy tech and pharmacy. You do
46 have to go through your primary care team to get authorizations. There are a total

1 of 65,000 veterans in the Las Cruces and El Paso area, and only 30,000 are
2 registered with the VA. For rides, there is DAV Mesilla Valley 10, Joe Ortiz (575)
3 915-4899. There are currently seven VA vehicles available in Las Cruces and El
4 Paso and 13 drivers. They need 48 hours for scheduling a ride. They also have
5 Veteran Transportation Services (VTS) and established driver and a van. Desiree
6 Gonzales stated the pharmacy here will not be a full pharmacy, but a short fill, and
7 with a pharmacist.

8
9 Rod Gajewski he introduced the new representative for the Purple Heart Veterans,
10 Jim Bentley. He will be on the board when Council appoints him.

11
12 Jim Bentley stated he moved here from Missoula, Montana in 2005. He has been
13 with the Purple Heart Group for several years. Born and raised in South Dakota.
14 Attended college University of Montana. Entered the Army, Vietnam Veteran. He
15 is married with three children.

- 16
17 ○ Honorable Judge James T. Martin - update on the Veterans Treatment
18 Center

19
20 Honorable James Martin stated he is a district judge in Las Cruces. He has
21 been a district judge for 20 years here in Las Cruces. He is also a veteran,
22 281st Transportation Company. The treatment court has been going on for
23 25 years. The veterans portion started about 10 years ago. Renamed to
24 Treatment Court as they provide drug and alcohol treatment, mental health
25 treatment services to veterans involved in the justice system. The idea is
26 to integrate veterans back into the community. Get them stabilized, help
27 with housing if needed, help with education if needed. He has a great team.
28 He has a great veterans justice outreach coordinator (VJO) is Montewis
29 Price is a great resource. In addition to actual treatment providers they have
30 a mentor component, Beverly Drum and Cassandra Thomas. He welcomes
31 any more volunteer veteran mentors. They have started an alumni group
32 that has become critical to their success.

33
34 They have now achieved Gold status, which is recognition by the
35 Administrative Office of the Courts under the state supreme court. In the
36 last six years their graduates are very successful. They track the graduates
37 for five years. Nationally is a 70% success rate, state of New Mexico is
38 about 85% success rate, our Third Judicial Program has a 100% success
39 rate. He thanked the VAB and their support.

40
41 First contact for help would probably be Beverly Drum. Second point of
42 contact is Rachel Urdialez, who is a court employee. They have graduated
43 40 veterans. Currently have eight clients, but capacity for 12-14. He has
44 been with the program the last six years and has graduated 15-18.

1 Juanita De Lira Gabitzsch, constituent services rep with Senator Heinrich. She
2 was just here offering services if there is a need.

3
4 Victor Vasquez with Senator Lujan. Thanked Fred and the Vietnam Veterans
5 Association for the invite to the Christmas Party. The senator is coming for a visit
6 in the next four to five months. He is not campaigning. He wants to find out what
7 people's issues are. If there academy graduates, he needs names and numbers.
8 Looking for point of contact for military construction, White Sands. He has
9 someone from Holloman. Thanks the VA.

10
11 Don Ernest he is representing the Organ Mountain Veterans Coffee Group. They
12 are a nonprofit veterans organization and meet up in Organ, New Mexico every
13 Monday morning at 0900. He is soliciting the board's support and the support of
14 all the organizations. Their group with VFW Post 6917 taking care of Slumbering
15 Mountain Cemetery for over 10 years. Slumbering Mountain Cemetery is five
16 acres, which was organized during the original Organ townsite, 1860s. There are
17 over 40 veterans in the cemetery for which they take care of. They have tried to
18 acquire the ownership of the five acre cemetery. Over the years the site has
19 transferred to the state of New Mexico. They have Representative Sarah Silva
20 and Representative Rebecca Dow helping them to move the ownership to more
21 local control. Last month they met with the county commission and presented the
22 idea that the county take over the ownership of the cemetery. They hope to acquire
23 30 acres of BLM land directly east adjoining the cemetery and to have a New
24 Mexico State Veterans Cemetery.

25
26 Victor Vasquez stated he has been working on that project but it is not a state
27 cemetery, it would be a national cemetery. He will need everyone's help to find a
28 place that is 75 miles away from Ft. Bliss. Ft. Bliss national cemetery is looking
29 for new property, probably near the new clinic at William Beaumont. Xeriscape
30 cemetery, no grass. By March he should have white paper completed and he will
31 present to everyone.

32
33 Chair Bothern asked about who at the state would approve this. Don Ernest stated
34 he talked to people in Gallup with a new cemetery themselves. To help, call Don
35 Ernest (912) 667-8702.

36
37 Victor Vasquez stated there are currently three state cemeteries, one in Gallup, on
38 in Taos, on in Ruidoso. A fourth one is in Carlsbad. Point of contact is Ed Mendez
39 or Dave Walker. If you get a state cemetery will never have a national cemetery
40 in the area. State cemeteries have to fall under the 75 mile rule, look at where the
41 land is at. Money is always an issue.

42
43 Jerome Hanway from Right at Home. They do in-home care service for elderly,
44 and specialize for veterans. Once veterans are service connected, then services
45 can also help with spouses of veterans. Goal is to get veterans connected to the
46 VA so they can take advantage of the services they have earned. He is planning

1 on come to the VAB monthly. His number is (575) 636-1335. Their main location
2 is in San Diego.

3
4 **7. AGENDA ITEMS TO DISCUSS**

- 5
6 ○ Karen Woods - Veterans Park

7
8 Karen Woods stated they want to make a wind phone. Put on in Veterans
9 Park along the tree line behind the pavilion. This will give people quiet time
10 or whatever. The phone has no transmission lines, speak to whoever you
11 have lost, and speak with them. The sign on the phone will say, "This phone
12 never rings. It will be connected to everywhere and nowhere all at once. It
13 is for everyone who grieves, someone who they lost. It is to say I love you,
14 share memories, or to say goodbye you never got to say. Pick up the
15 phone, dial their number, and let the wind take your words." She would like
16 support from the VAB. Besides Park and Rec to verify location, it will have
17 no cost to the city. She would like VAB and Parks and Rec Board approval
18 and on to City Council.

19
20 Motion to approve by Luke Keith; seconded by Brian Morrow. Motion
21 passed unanimously.

22
23 Karen Woods invited everyone to a free pancake breakfast on February
24 28th at VFW 10124, 9:00 to Noon.

25
26 **8. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS**

27
28 **Len Hampton - Member at Large** - Past weekend he attended a state department
29 VFW conference in Albuquerque. They are currently pushing the Major Richard
30 Star Act.

31
32 **Daniel Ansbach - Special Forces #80** - They have supported the Bataan
33 Memorial Death March at White Sands for the last 25 years. They will not be
34 supporting any more, due to not enough people/volunteers.

35
36 **Victor Eres - USMC** - From November 25, 2025 through December 22, 2025 the
37 Honor Guard provided funeral services for eight fallen veterans. Also provided
38 three person working party in the assistance of laying wreaths at Hillcrest
39 Cemetery. From December 22, 2025 to present, they have done four funerals for
40 fallen veterans. They had a working party this past Saturday for the reunion of the
41 Honor Flight.

42
43 **Fred Madrid - Vietnam Veterans of America** - The food drive on February 1, and
44 the first Sunday of every month 8:00 to 2:00. Second one at Rinconada Walmart,
45 on February 15th from 7:30 to 2:00. He thanks Sam and Brian for their help.

1 Tomorrow he heads to Washington, DC as he is the President of New Mexico State
2 Council of Vietnam Veterans of America.

3
4 **Luke Rosendo Keith - VFW 3242** - Over the holidays they did support a couple
5 Christmas parties. They had one for the Weed and Seed youth group. Also
6 requested support for Major Richard Star Act.

7
8 **James Perry Ashby - American Legion #10** - They have done a lot of home
9 improvement. They are working on a 40 year old building that has needed a lot of
10 work, new AC/heating. Recently they had break-in and stole items from a
11 museum. Also completed redo of the kitchen. They have bingo Tuesday,
12 Wednesday, and Thursday nights, which is their major fundraiser. Every month
13 they donate to Honor Flight, paying for 12 veterans to go every year. Their auxiliary
14 happens with CBOC every Wednesday and provide coffee and sweets. He is a
15 chaplain for the American Legion. They have buddy checks to check on veterans.

16
17 **Brian Morrow - Member at Large** - Thanked everyone for joining the meeting
18 today. The next flag detail will be on March 28th at 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Thanked
19 Charles for ordering the second flag. He would like to set up a flag detail to be
20 sure everything is fine and in place. There was on January 1st, but weather
21 prevented sending up the flag that day. Memorial day, permits will be picked up
22 by St. Paul's Methodist church. Everything is going to be the same for the daytime.

23
24 **James Turner - Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) 10124** - Thanked Brian for the
25 taking the responsibility of the flag and flag schedule.

26
27 **Lawrence "Sam" Bothern - Disabled American Veterans (DAV) #10** - Nothing
28 to report.

29
30 **8. STAFF LIAISON REPORT**

31
32 Charles Tucker stated they have been working with Mr. Turner, Ms. Archuleta
33 about the names for the veterans wall to go on the new plates. Each plate is going
34 to cost around \$800. There are about 30 people, one from WWII to OEF and OIF.
35 Going to need five plates. The city does not have money. Need to come up the
36 funds some other way, maybe fundraising from each of the organizations. Let him
37 know of anyone that has served in combat to get them on the list.

38
39 The new ordinance, want to get it up before Council on February 17th. If there are
40 changes in the verbiage please let him know. It is recommended that if a board
41 position is open, fill it with an at large person until getting some for that specific
42 spot.

43
44 He appreciated the volunteering today, for chair and vice-chair. The cleat on the
45 flagpole has been removed.

1 **9. ADJOURNMENT 10:45**

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Motion to adjourn made by Perry Ashby; seconded by Dan Ansbach. Motion passed.

10 _____
Chairperson