

CITY OF MESA
HUMAN RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD (HRAB)
Ad Hoc VETERANS TASK FORCE (VTF)
January 8, 2014 Minutes

The Ad Hoc Veterans Task Force of the City of Mesa met on January 8th, 2014 at 4:00 pm
in Suite 250, Second Level, Large Conference Room, 20 E. Main St.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Denise Heap, Chair
Cheryl Anderson
Mark Tompert

MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Ruth Giese
Justin Smothers

1. Chair's Call to Order.

Ms. Heap called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

2. Items from Citizens Present.*

There were no citizens that requested to speak.

3. Discuss, consider and take action on request to support Veterans-related legislation under review by the Arizona General Assembly in 2014.

Ms. Heap requested that the discussion and consideration of agenda item be postponed until a later date to allow for delivery of information. Mr. Tompert seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously.

4. Discuss, consider and take action on request to support Cardinal Capital Management Veterans housing project.

Ms. Heap and Mr. Tompert discussed the background of the housing project. Ms. Heap stated that tax rebates were available to real estate development firms that invest in Veterans housing projects. Ms. Heap proposed postponement of the request to support Cardinal Capital Management due to lack of information. Mr. Tompert seconded the proposed postponement of the request for the City of Mesa's Human Relations Advisory Board Veterans Task Force Team to support Cardinal Capital Managements Veterans housing project proposal.

Ms. Heap requested that the discussion and consideration of agenda item be postponed until a later date to allow for delivery of information. Mr. Tompert seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously.

5. Discuss, consider and take action on Mesa Disabled American Veterans medical-use transport vehicle funding request.

Ms. Giese stated that she spoke with Jody Sorrell, City of Mesa Transit Director, who stated that the Transit Department does not currently have funding to allocate transportation grant. Ms. Giese then stated that the Transit Department's budget is funded through the City of Mesa's General Fund. According to Ms. Giese, Jody Sorrell offered to investigate what funding or grant opportunities are available for Veteran medical-use transport vehicles through the Maricopa Association of Governments. Mr. Tompert stated that 5310 grants exist through the federal Transit Authority for the elderly and disabled and that the City of Phoenix currently oversees the program. Mr. Tompert and

Ms. Giese agreed that there is currently no grant funding available through the City of Mesa for this specific request.

Ms. Heap requested that the issue not be referred to the Human Relations Advisory Board for consideration at the January meeting. Mr. Tompert seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously.

6. Discuss and consider ongoing structure of VTF and regular meeting schedule.

Mr. Tompert asked Ms. Giese to clarify the different structure and role of Ad Hoc Veterans Task Force and the Veterans Task Force Team. Ms. Giese provided background about how and why the Veterans Task Force was created. The Veterans Task Force was assembled more than one year ago as a platform for Veteran community members to provide the City of Mesa with recommendations. Ms. Giese mentioned that she originally envisioned the Veterans Task Force as a temporary advisory group, whereas Ms. Heap stated that she originally envisioned the Veterans Task Force as a more permanent body. Ms. Giese believes that the Veterans Task Force has benefitted community stakeholders by providing opportunities for networking and collaboration.

Whether the Veterans Task Force Team should meet monthly was discussed. Mr. Tompert suggested that the Veterans Task Force Team meet on a quarterly basis. Ms. Giese advised that the Veterans Task Force Team could also meet if time sensitive issues needed to be addressed. Mr. Tompert added that the Human Relations Advisory Board operates in a deliberate manner and does not tackle issues quickly. He then stated that the Human Relations Advisory Board is not structured to function quickly as it is not a "solutions organization." Mr. Tompert explained that the function of the Human Relations Advisory Board is to present information to elected officials. Ms. Heap mentioned that she believes the Veterans Task Force Team is making forward progress and getting things accomplished. Specifically, Ms. Heap cited accomplishments with the Mesa City Courts and Public Schools.

Ms. Giese voiced her concerns that members of the Veterans Task Force Team may not fully understand their role and responsibility as a work group. Ms. Heap recommended that the Veterans Task Force Team start meeting quarterly, with one meeting being held in May 2014. Mr. Tompert suggested that David Lucier, Co-Chair of the City of Mesa's Veterans Task Force Team, be invited to a City of Mesa Ad Hoc Veterans Task Force meeting to clarify the purpose and role of the Veterans Task Force Team as an advisory group. Mr. Tompert described the mechanisms and processes that determine attendance at City of Mesa public meetings.

Ms. Heap asked Mr. Tompert about his thoughts on the meeting frequency of the City of Mesa's Ad Hoc Veterans Task Force. Mr. Tompert suggested that the Ad Hoc Veterans Task Force meet whenever Ms. Heap deemed a meeting necessary.

Mr. Tompert then discussed the key veteran-related findings contained within the recent National Council on Disabilities annual report. According to Mr. Tompert, the two critical veteran-related conclusions contained within the report recommend strategic action to decrease the backlog of Veteran claims through electronic information sharing and ensure compliance of transportation providers involved in the *Civic Access Program*. Ms. Heap requested that a copy of the report be sent to her.

Ms. Heap discussed that challenges that local governments face by not having access to Veteran records. She stated that many local government entities do not have the ability to access Veterans living in their respective communities. She then asked Ms. Giese to investigate what current relevant

legislation is under consideration by the Arizona General Assembly. Ms. Giese stated that she would ask the City of Mesa's intergovernmental liaison about this issue.

Ms. Heap suggested that future Ad Hoc VTF meetings will be scheduled for regular quarterly meetings and as needed. Mr. Tompert seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously.

7. Discuss and consider future agenda items, meeting dates, announcements, other housekeeping.

Ms. Heap informed Mr. Tompert and Ms. Giese that City of Mesa Human Relations Advisory Board member, Susan Lotz, recently resigned and that the full Human Relations Advisory Board would need to appoint a new Vice-Chair.

Ms. Giese asked Ms. Heap and Mr. Tompert about how they would like to address the lack of material provided by Veterans Task Force Team members related to agenda items number three and four. Ms. Heap stated that an additional meeting could be scheduled when the information is received.

The next Veterans Task Force Team meeting was scheduled for Thursday, February 20th, 2014.

8. Hear report from Justin Smothers, City of Mesa – VISTA Veterans Outreach Coordinator, on status and goals of VISTA assignment.

Justin Smothers informed Ms. Heap and Mr. Tompert that his VISTA Assignment Description was recently rewritten and submitted to the Mesa United Way for approval due to issues surrounding his involvement with the VA-HUD VASH voucher program. Mr. Smothers then described the overall goals and timeline of his year of VISTA national service in support of Veterans, Military Personnel, and Military Family Members in the City of Mesa.

No formal action taken by the Ad Hoc Veterans Task Force.

9. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00pm.

Submitted By:



Ruth Giese,
Diversity Program Administrator