**Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes Monday March 13, 2023**

Present: Donna Villiancourt; Hank Scherf; Caroline Schockler; Fred Baer; Cody Stephenson; Mary Carvalho; Brandon Jones.

Staff: Ed Kircyzun, Selina Toy Lee; Samay Chhun; Alex Ayag

Public Comments By: None

Meeting called to order at 6:32 pm - Pledge of allegiance - Roll call taken – 7 present/ 4 absent.

**Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Speakers organized by Brandon and Mary Ryan Founder of Veteran Rites - Located in Washington State.**

Focus on healing the person (Veteran) as a whole –

Nonclinical setting.

12 days in the wilderness with 4 fasting days –

Tradition from Native American on how to approach and deal with mental health.

Treating the whole person while focusing on 3 main questions:

1. What is the purpose?
2. Where do I belong?
3. And Who can I trust? –

Programs also focus on how to bring people home from war and find self-worth before seeking help from other resources.

-Structure for Vets to keep the purpose alive as well as having other Vets participate Dr. Robert Spencer and Dr. Darvy Patel San Mateo Health Association - Transforming lives of people who are coming back from conflict

Mani focus is on mental health,

* domestic violence,
* and gun violence –

Need community resources help fill the gap by making mental health a primary intervention and not secondary –

Could use other offices such as the Veteran Commission to help with gun violence initiatives –

Seek help with surgeon general to talk or write report on gun violence –

Nexus between suicide, mass shootings and gun violence

LaShielle Burch VA Palo Alto Health Center - Suicide Prevention: Part of governors’ challenge with emphasis on Veterans community –

With high rates of suicide, what should community do to learn what is going on and how to prevent it from happening –

100% in the communities learning, listening, and attending different programs.

-Want to support any offices or organization who wants to be a part of Mental Health awareness - Currently building a community in different counties and targeting colleges coalition focusing on college students who are Veterans

Topic Discussion Action/Next Steps Veterans Commission Business (Continued) Kathleen Mink (LCSW) and Dr. Margaret May –

Help students and or Vets enroll in healthcare and how to navigate the system –

There is a 24/7 crisis line; Northern California Region has 3 major health systems –

Kathleen works with college students at Skyline college. There are mental health workers planted in Skyline, Eureka, and SF City Colleges –

Goal is to be where Veterans are with high rate of Veterans using GI bill in Bay Area –

Considerations for Veterans Commissions to assess:

1) Difficulty accessing SMART TEAM in San Mateo County

2) Continue education for law enforcement for both Mental Health and Medical

3) Build community collaboration and continue to partner with one another to develop relationships Dr. Margaret May –

Identifying Veterans who needs acute care –

Biggest problem is transporting Vets with Mental Health to a VA facility –

Currently has 2-unit placement each can accommodate up to 20 beds available. –

Issues with Vet is the 51/50 Mental Health Law where they are hold for 72 hours for psychiatric/mental health problems –

Transportation shouldn’t be a barrier with proper education for both law enforcement and ambulance -Consider having county guidance to educate about Veterans mental health and how to navigate transporting Vets with Mental Health to VA Health Systems

Veterans Committee Recruitment - Upcoming committee meeting to move 2 alternate commission Mary and Caroline to permanent position –

Legislative update: San Francisco Veterans Affairs is asking for support for bill AB46 and AB726

-Bill AB46- California only state to tax retired veterans’ benefits. Bill is to exclude military retirement benefit payment

-Bill AB726- Exempt property tax for Veterans with 100% service connection up to first $120,000 exempt