

## Minutes

### Transition Military and Veterans Affairs Committee

Date: August 2, 2023

Location: City Hall, Exam Room 3 Mezzanine

117 West Duval Street

Jacksonville, FL 32202

Chair: VADM Rick Snyder

Attendees: Dee Quaranta, Joe Tavares, Harrison Conyers, Austin Belet, Peter Harding, Derek Collins, Dr. Keshon Chambliss, Wendy Layton, Jaclyn Crecilius, Noah Moran, Demetris Harrison, VADM Rick Snyder, Ann Marie Johnson, Bob Adelhelm, Joe Snowberger, Melina Buncome, Deborah Fonzelle, Sandra Boyd, Errol White, Mark McManus, Lisa Penn.

1. Meeting Called to Order 4:05 PM VADM Rick Snyder
2. Minutes from prior meeting (7/26/23)- to be amended and emailed for approval.
3. VADM Snyder provided a brief overview and introduced Dr. Keshon Chambliss, as a new committee member. VADM Snyder stated that the Transition Report (draft) is due to the Administration on August 8, 2023, and that Committee Chairs will meet August 15, 2023. The final Transition Report is due to Mayor Deegan by August 29, 2023. He mentioned that the Veterans Community Center issues such as what services are offered, staffing, hours of operation will be worked out by the Administration.
  - a. Joe Tavares questioned why the Veterans Community Center is a long-term goal. VADM Snyder explained that the center is a focus area that will require time and investment by the administration to determine the correct site, budget, staffing levels, etc. that will stretch beyond the short and mid-term time frame.
  - b. Joe Tavares mentioned that the request to have the Mayor attend monthly Veterans/Military events is overly ambitious.
4. Old business-None
5. New Business:
  - a. Review of Transition Committee Draft Key Needs: 1. *Develop a current understanding of the demographics and location of the Veterans and military population, including those who are homeless. This will assist in effective location of services for military and Veterans.*
    - i. Moved by Austin Belet and seconded by Errol White. Unanimously approved.
  - b. 2. *Increased availability and access to affordable health care, especially for military families, Veterans and homeless. Mental and dental care are most in*

*need. 3. Increased awareness and care for substance abuse prevention and recovery.*

- i. Joe Tavares moved to combine Key Needs 2 and 3, seconded by Bob Adelhelm. Unanimously approved.
- c. 3. (reordered from 4 after combination of previous needs) *More affordable and safe housing with associated improved educational services.*
  - i. Joe Tavares asked about rent control legislation. It was explained that rent control is outlawed by State of Florida statute.
  - ii. Lisa Penn spoke about the Rental Partnership Program which is a n agreement between the military bases and landlords to offer discounted rent for active-duty military.
  - iii. Key need 3 (formerly 4) moved by Bob Adelhelm and seconded by Errol White. Unanimously approved.
- d. 4. *Better coordination and collaboration amongst Veteran Serving Organizations.*
  - i. Bob Adelhelm Moved and Joe Tavares seconded. Unanimously approved.
- e. 5. *Establish a Veterans Community Center or centers.*
  - i. VADM Snyder explained that more discussion needs to happen regarding expectations and specifics.
  - ii. Joe Tavares agreed with VADM Snyder's comments that further discussions on services, staffing, budget needs to happen at the Administration level.
  - iii. Bob Adelhelm advocated for a community center concept to foster Veteran socialization.
  - iv. VADM Snyder mentioned that the center needs to provide space for Veterans groups/organizations to meet with multiple office space for Veterans services.
  - v. Dee Quaranta felt strongly that the center needs to include services to Veterans and prefers a Resource center model so that it can be fully utilized.
  - vi. VADM Snyder expressed that he felt that both a service model and socialization model can be achieved at the same location.
  - vii. Lisa Penn prefers multiple locations located across Duval County
  - viii. Bob Adelhelm stated that the committee needs to start with one location and focus on expansion at a later date.
  - ix. Joe Tavares moved, and Dr. Keshon Chambliss seconded the motion to approve this Key need. Unanimously approved.
- f. 6. *Provide improved military transition resources including employment, Department of Veterans Affairs liaison, and education.*
  - i. Harrison Conyers mentioned that MAVD attend CAPSTONE at both Navy bases.

- ii. Errol White requested that a priority be placed on military service member and family orientation. Wendy Layton mentioned that the Trident Ministry Team at NS Mayport is already addressing this issue.
  - iii. Wendy Layton moved to amend the key need to include childcare availability and spouse support resources to this need. Dee Quaranta seconded.
  - iv. The amended key need was moved by Wendy Layton and seconded by Joe Tavares. Unanimously approved.
- g. Others:
  - i. VADM Snyder mentioned that Veterans suicide prevention support will be a key need to be added.
  - ii. Joe Tavares asked that disabled Veterans transportation (currently provided through JTA Connections) be mentioned.
  - iii. Wendy Layton-mentioned that we need a website created to direct military families to affordable childcare.
    - 1. Dee Quaranta stated that Cecil Love is the staff person with CareerSource to provide military spouse support.
    - 2. Errol White mentioned the childcare availability is a vital resource for military families.
- h. VADM Snyder conducted a prioritization exercise which yielded the priority key needs in the following order:
  - i. Increased availability and accessibility for healthcare, especially for Veterans, military families and unhoused Veterans and their families. Mental health and dental care services are most in need. Special attention should be paid to suicide prevention and substance abuse prevention and recovery.
  - ii. Improved collaboration and coordination amongst the many VSOs who support military service members, Veterans, and their families. The valuable services they provide are sometimes stove piped and duplicative. Currently, support is coordinated through an informal network.
  - iii. Develop a better understanding of the military, military members, Veterans, and family members demographics, needs and contributions. A better understanding will help focus additional support where it is most needed.
  - iv. Increase awareness and availability of military member, Veteran, and family support services. Especially needed are employment assistance, childcare and educational services.
  - v. More affordable safe housing and improved educational services in areas with affordable safe housing. Junior military families and at-risk Veterans are most in need.

- vi. Provide a Veterans Center(s) to foster focused support and provide a safe space for Veteran and military networking and mutual support.
- i. Short-term focus areas
  - i. *The Mayor commit to monthly attendance at military and Veteran events/installations.*
    - 1. Bob Adelhelm moved to change this to quarterly vice monthly, Joe Tavares seconded. Unanimously approved.
  - ii. *Establish a city-led standing military and Veterans affairs advisory commission that reports to the Mayor to ensure Veteran and military voices are heard and their needs are given appropriate attention.* Austin Belet moved and Errol White seconded. Approved.
  - iii. *Establish a city supported forum and technology solution to enhance VSO communication and coordination.* Dr. Keshon Chambliss moved, and Bob Adelhelm seconded. Approved
  - iv. *Conduct a study and use existing data to map out the location of the military and Veteran population.*
    - 1. Mark McManus mentioned that the DCPS has the military impact forms.
    - 2. MAVD has zip code data on all clients served.
    - 3. Wendy Layton moved an Austin Belin seconded. Approved.
  - v. *Coordinate with local military leadership to better leverage the military community for their volunteer services.* Joe Tavares moved, and Bob Adelhelm seconded. Approved.
  - vi. *Review, assess, update and implement as appropriate, intergovernmental support agreements.* Ausitn Belin moved, and Joe Tavares seconded. Approved.
  - vii. *Conduct a review of the terms of the city's VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena naming rights agreement and an independent audit of compliance with the agreement.* Joe Tavares moved, and Bob Adelhelm seconded. Approved.
  - viii. *Review the results of the environmental impact study for the basing of F-35 aircraft at Jacksonville International Airport.* Bob Adelhelm moved, and Austin Belin seconded. Approved.
  - ix. *Review the policy for inclusion on the Veterans Memorial Wall.*
    - 1. Bob Adelhelm stated that any review could be worked out informally with the MAVD Director.
    - 2. Moved by Bob Adelhelm and seconded by Austin Belin. Approved.
- j. Mid-term focus areas:
  - i. *Increase marketing funding and staffing for MAVD to increase awareness and usage of services that are currently available.*

- ii. *Advocate for increased state funding for and provide increased city funding for the Purple Star Campus Program certification in Duval County Public Schools.*
- iii. *Increase funding for the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps programs at Duval County Public Schools.*
- iv. *Explore city subsidized housing or rental partnerships for military and high need populations, to the extent permitted by law.*
- v. *Advocate for a VA hospital in the Jacksonville area.*
- vi. *Leverage existing Department of Defense funding programs such as the Defense Community Infrastructure Program, Defense Infrastructure Grant Program, and Defense Reinvestment Grant Program to improve local infrastructure.*
- vii. *Entire mid-term list moved by Errol White and seconded by Austin Belin.*
- k. *Long-term focus areas:*
  - i. *Improve critical infrastructure needs that support assured access and resiliency for NS Mayport and USCG Sector Jacksonville near Mayport.*
  - ii. *Improve electrical power resiliency for military installation in Duval County.*
  - iii. *Advocate for increased Department of Defense investment in Jacksonville.*
  - iv. *All moved by Joe Tavares and seconded by Bob Adelhelm. Approved.*

6. Public Comment:

- a. Joe Snowberger advocated for a community conversation regarding Veterans homelessness, specifically those at-risk of being homeless, elderly, Veterans with pets/service animals. He stated that the gap between those that qualify for HUD VASH and those at-risk Veterans that are above those levels needs to be addressed.
  - b. Derek Collins mentioned that 2019 had the highest level of Veterans suicide in the community. By 2-021 there had been a 46% decrease in NE Florida. Duval County data shows that suicide amongst younger age groups was more prevalent. Firearms are the most common instrument of suicide. Mr. Collins stated that an expansion of resources in the community is important for continued success.
    - i. Joe Tavares asked what led to the decrease in suicides. Derek Collins mentioned the 211 Call number and increased resources for the Fire Watch..
  - c. Jaclyn Crecilius-Jacksonville Area Legal Aid stated that housing related issues and the risk of losing housing are driving forces that JALA is currently dealing with.
7. Move to adjourn at 6:14PM Austin Belin and seconded by Bob Adelhelm.