




San Mateo County Veterans Commission

Annual Report to the Board of Supervisors

April 10, 2018






Mission

The mission of the Veterans Commission is to promote programs and policies that address the unmet needs of veterans in San Mateo County



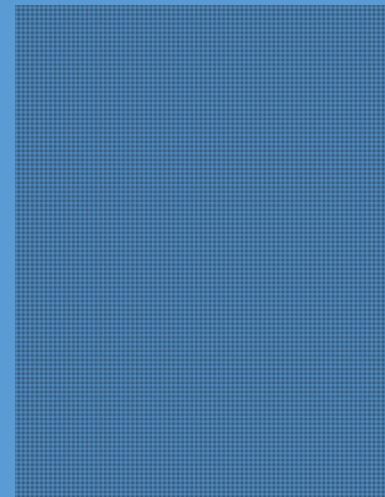
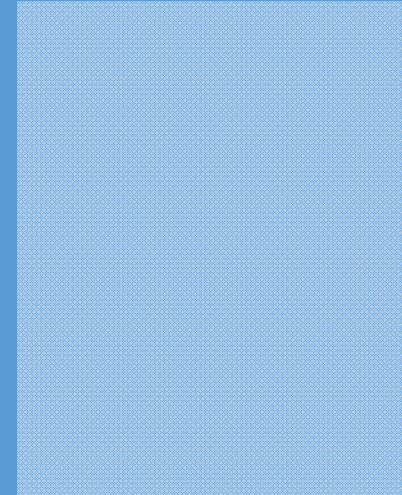
Commission Duties

- Advise and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding veterans related issues
 - Provide a public forum for input from the veterans community to identify unmet needs
 - Work with existing veterans' advocacy and service organizations to help coordinate care and benefits
 - Act as an advocate for veterans on policies, procedures, legislation and programs affecting veterans and their families
- 



2017 Priorities

- Veteran Access to Benefits and Services
- Housing and Homelessness
- New Commissioners





Access to Benefits and Services

- Hosted Second Annual Veteran of the Year Luncheon
- Supported County Veterans Stand Down in May
- Partnered with PenTV to produce *Thank You for Your Service, Now What*
- Promoted County's Veteran ID Card
- Provided public forum at Commission meetings for government and non-government partners providing veterans services





Housing and Homelessness

- Actively worked with Human Services Agency and other agencies to find homes and shelter for homeless vets and those in need
 - At year end counted 63 homeless veterans with only 17 unsheltered
- Actively monitored and supported several apartment development projects:
 - Willow Commons, Menlo Park
 - Bay Meadows Bridge Apartments, San Mateo
 - Gateway Project, Millbrae
 - Colma Veterans Village, Colma
 - Republic Properties Corp. Project, Redwood City

Housing and Homelessness

- Actively worked with the Central Peninsula Church on tenant-based voucher program to expand number of participating landlords
- Actively supported program to use donated RV vehicles to house homeless veterans
- Assisted a Boy Scout working on his Eagle Scout Project in providing 168 backpacks for homeless veterans and veterans in need



Commissioners

- Three Commissioners resigned for personal reasons
- Appointed three new alternates and promoted two original alternates and one new alternate to full voting Commissioners





2018 Priorities and Programs

- Host Third Annual Veteran of the Year Luncheon (11/8)
- Develop a marketing and communications plan using social media to increase veteran awareness of benefits and services
- Actively support the Human Services Agency's Women Veterans Summit (5/16)
- Continue Housing and Homelessness efforts

Recommendations

- Provide financial support for the marketing and PR social media plan – specific amount to be determined by planning committee
- Consider funding a program to provide mentoring services to veterans transitioning from active service, unemployed veterans seeing employment, veterans seeking career advice or other life issues.
 - Full-time person to run program
 - Volunteers to serve as mentors
 - Mentoring Committee to define program and budget



**San Mateo County Veterans' Commission
Special Strategic Planning Meeting
February 11, 2019**

External Scan Worksheet

- 1. What from the external scan stands out for you relative to the work of the Commission?**
- 2. Are there areas of effort that SMC shares with other groups?**
- 3. Does SMC need updated information from the local needs assessment?**
- 4. Are there any areas that other groups are addressing that should be considered by SMC?**

San Mateo County Veterans' Commission
Strategic Planning Process 2019

Internal Scanning Summary

Suggested Strategic Plan Priorities (grouped by categories)

Bullets in each category are Commission member suggestions

Increase Awareness & Access to Veterans' Services

- Promote more ways to come to the County Veterans office for help
- Public outreach and education on veteran's issues
- Expanding to Underserved communities - Widowed, Dependents/Survivors, Women
- Could possibly include families of currently deployed veterans (George thoughts?)
- Confirm target families and loved ones
- Development of a strategic marketing plan which identifies various categories of vets that are not currently in the system to target them with category specific advertising campaign that is designed to entice them to come into the CVSO to register for benefits
- Sustain Veteran of the Year event - Continue the Veteran of the Year luncheon to raise awareness and recognize those who do so much for the veterans community
- Create a program to reach out to all County communities to create an awareness of our veterans
 - what are the needs of veterans
 - what is the county doing for them
 - what needs are not being addressed or met
 - how our veterans are serving the community

Collaborate with and Support other Veteran Serving Agencies

- Develop standing linkage to County Vet support groups (HA, HSA, Libraries, etc.)
- Linkage to all County Services for Vets (Data Mining, Resources)
- Rolodex/Resource Mapping of Vet Services available to CVSO/County customers
- Increase awareness and utilization of veterans benefits and services
- Identifying and understanding any gaps in services and making recommendations to fill those gaps

- Networking/Communication btw Veteran's groups
- Support and actively participate in county sponsored events targeted at helping/supporting our veteran population (Stand downs, symposiums, etc.)
- Actively represent the Commission and county on behalf of veterans
- Participate as speakers at veteran community events (Memorial Day, Veterans Day)
- Actively work with nonprofits whose mission is to help veterans find housing, employment and other services

Promote Education and Employment for Veterans

- Many veterans in SMC are underemployed while fast growing local companies recruit nationally and globally for workers.
- Mentoring for a new career Opportunities for Veterans to serve in their community (find a purpose that feels meaningful and connects to the civilian population and other veterans.)
- Continuing to help veterans successfully transition back to the civilian job market
- Employment

Implement Professional Development/Training for Commissioners

- Training for Commissioners: Human Resources style trainings on harassment, discrimination and equality so that commissioners can keep up with the important positive changes taking place in the active service and in the American workplace.
- Commission Strategic Plan Development - and standing Meeting/Connectivity/Duties to create sustainable plan
- Public meeting training (rules of order and Brown Act rules)

Update Needs Assessment Data

- Confirm # of veterans not yet in VSO database
- Build plan (with metrics) to contact all veterans not in database

Measure Progress and Impact

- Develop measures of success / performance for Commission or Commission priorities

- Build plan (with metrics) to contact all families and loved ones
- Mature relationship with HSA to see if we can make impact in numbers
- Progress assessment against Needs Assessment - County Departments report on various needs identified.

Promote Housing for Veterans

- Support local efforts to increase housing for veterans
- Housing

Advise Board of Supervisors on the following:

- Homelessness
- Veterans housing
- Benefits

Mental Health / Suicide

- Ensure adequate resources for veterans and their families struggling with mental health issues and/or homelessness
- Mental Health

The following issues were mentioned only once:

Increasing involvement of veterans in the veterans community

Development of a Veterans specific location that would be dedicated to servicing veteran-only needs

General Healthcare

Discounts at local merchants and events

Identify CVSO Best Practices and review what has been previously tried by HSA/CVSO to increase engagement and outreach

Summary of Commission Strengths

Taken from Internal Survey Responses

- Connection to All the local Veteran Organizations so we can communicate with a large number of veterans.
- We have many veterans who have successfully transitioned into good careers that can tie other veterans into different industries.

- We are a fairly diverse group, from different branches of the military, officers and enlisted, and different time periods of conflicts, who followed different paths to get here. Lots of good intentions in the group.
- Current commission is experienced - most commissioners are in their second term.
- There has been a small amount of turnover and very little absenteeism.
- All of the members are passionate about the needs of veterans and compassionate to the struggles that some veterans have.
- Most commissioners are ready and willing to lead committees or openly discuss issues.
- Most of the commissioners relatively on the same page making it easier to make forward progress
- People from many different walks, expertise, etc.
- Commissioners as a whole are committed to improving the Veteran's situations.
- Commitment to look for answers and areas where commission can make positive impact for veterans and be their voice to the County Supervisors.
- Collaboration relative to technical, business and political arenas.
- Diversity of commissioners with respect to experience and representation in our community.
- Great leaders on commission.
- Dedication to tasks and goals.
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- Great leaders on commission.
- Dedication to tasks and goals
 - Ron's housing work is great
 - George's rolodex of veterans orgs/groups is great
 - Hank's ability to network across senior officials is great
- All members are veterans.
- Most members display a passion for doing something to help veterans.
- Lots of varied experience – life experience, professional and military experience.
- Commissioners are very dedicated and want to make a difference.
- I'm new to the Commission (and an alternate) so I'm still in learning mode. I think the Commission will benefit from the Strategic Planning process and having measurable goals.

Summary of Commission Weaknesses

Taken from Internal Survey Responses

- We basically have no authority to delve into items that concern veterans for fear of stepping on toes. Just a recommending body to Supervisors.
- We need to promote more through our staff to get veterans into the office for help.
- I also think that most of our job as to the office is competing with so many other facilities that offer the same
- It feels as if we can go from one meeting to the next with few action items. When a subcommittee does rally around an idea, it can take a long time to figure out what exactly we are trying to accomplish.
- The path to executing an idea can be confusing as it usually is restricted in that it needs to follow procedures within the county, and adhere to Commission guidelines. So often several calls go by and we have little to show for it, as we try to settle on the exact wording of our request, or recommendation. Some of this is just County Commissions in general, I suppose.

- The commission struggles to reflect the diversity found in the community and in military service.
- Occasional inability to avoid the appearance that the commission approves of or is in agreement with a speaker or presentation.
- Same 5 commissioners are on all of the Sub Committees...for the last 3 years pretty much – need better participation or expect less of commissioners
- Need to term out some commissioners who don't want to do much beyond attend commission meetings. Since the commission can't task any county staff, how is it supposed to accomplish anything unless the Commissioners themselves do some of the heavy lifting.
- CVSO office seems to have a limited responsibility or charter and resources are focused internally.
- Commission does not have ability to directly task CVSO or any other group so relatively challenging to get some things done.
- Do not have regular/built linkage between County groups that support Veteran's and Commission. We don't know what good they are doing or what gaps exist.
- We don't really know enough to make any recommendations to the Board of Supervisors to take action.
- Lack of direction – what should happen each meeting? Who should we or CVSO be reaching out to, why, and should we have standing engagements set up to bring that information in and potentially act on
- Need to stay focused on a very specific set of priorities and not be distracted by *one off* issues
- Length btw meetings
- Communication gaps limiting effectiveness as group

Summary of Commission Areas for Growth

Taken from Internal Survey Responses

- Agenda building
- Community engagement
- Having a strategic plan in place for how to effectively and efficiently operate would help
- Aligning forces with other commissions, government orgs, et al. could be a force multiplier
- Getting everyone actively involved beyond just attending Commission meetings

Summary of Perceived Biggest Impact to Date

Taken from Internal Survey Responses

- Veteran of the Year Luncheon is a complete success and promotes the Commission. It puts the Commission out in the open and recognizes special people and businesses.
- Annual Veteran of the Year awards lunch is by far the biggest success. The event has given the community a venue to highlight the good work being done for veterans and honor individuals who do the work. There have always been many small events around Veterans Day each year, but in just three years this event has quickly become the main event in the County and because of its growth it is actually bringing the greater community together.

- Created the Veteran of the Year Luncheon. This is a central event where military veterans and their supporters can meet and honor each other's service. Although this doesn't directly help the lives of say, a homeless veteran, it makes the issues of veterans front and center and is a great networking event where people connect over their passion for helping veterans in various capacities. Awarding those who do so much for our community, and never expected to be recognized, makes for a touching ceremony, and I believe it may encourage more people to think about what service they may put themselves toward.
- Annual lunch to celebrate veterans is great.
- Veteran of the Year luncheon for ability to gain a wider awareness of our county's veterans and giving the Commission credibility
- Veteran of the Year event
- Veteran of the Year gala – Helping to unify veteran's-centric groups while honoring them
- Awareness – The Veteran of the Year Lunch and general community engagement have made many aware of the Commission and the CVSO office and efforts by the County.
- Endorsing the Gateway at Millbrae housing development, to bring below-market housing units to 80 Veterans. This is still in the works, but we spoke at events, wrote letters and pushed as much as we could to support and I believe this helped.
- Supporting various housing projects to provide veteran-allocated units
- Materially helping with veteran homelessness and housing
- Advocacy at housing hearings to advocate for veterans housing is great
- Recommendation to Make all county Parks free of charge for Veterans. This sprung out of the County ID program, where we were trying to get private businesses to offer discounts to veterans, in exchange for getting highlighted in the County websites, and to drive more traffic to there businesses. We tried to do it with our own knocking on doors and cold calling but had almost no success. Eventually, we decided let's offer something to our veterans which is under the counties control. This incentivizes Veterans to learn about the County Veteran ID card, which can only be obtained through our VSO, which drives more bodies through the door.
- Commissioner Ron Dickson has personally placed several veterans in housing, with the members of his mid-peninsula church. I don't see this as a Commission effort, however, as proud as I am of the work he is doing. It is really his own effort, nevertheless, it is a great accomplishment, and his being on the commission is a major asset. He led the Subcommittee on housing and did great work at that point, and has continued to work solo as I believe it is faster and he has time since he is retired.

- Homelessness – While the Commission has been more a participant and supporter of various efforts and 1 member in particular through his church has directly made some impacts, the County services as a whole have done a terrific job to get it to functional zero.
- Ron’s work on getting housing for local homeless vets is amazing
- The biggest impact has been the research and action taken on the issue of veteran homelessness
- Another positive win was the Commission’s support for the Women Veterans Forum
- Women Veterans Summit
- I think the number one accomplishment is the establishment of credibility of the commission as an entity which has the ability to effect change in a positive way. We are tightly integrated with the Board of Supervisors who supports the efforts of the commission. Our 4 year tenure has allowed us to gain the knowledge and experience that will allow us to deliver a more robust set of priorities going forward.
- George’s advocacy around the Bay area is great
- Involving other members of the community in helping veterans, e.g. Boy Scouts
- Veterans Stand Down participation
- Raising awareness of veterans, patriots and organizations involved in promoting veteran well being

**San Mateo County Veterans' Commission
Special Strategic Planning Meeting
February 11, 2019**

Internal Scan Work Sheet

- 1. Is there agreement about current strengths? Is anything missing?**
- 2. Is there agreement about areas that need improvement? Is anything missing?**
- 3. What suggestions from members about priorities resonate with the group?**
- 4. Do you have other priorities to suggest?**

List of Values Articulated by Other Veterans' Groups

- a. **Maximize existing resources** and funding
- b. Ensure that **public funds are spent wisely** and with positive impacts
- c. Promote actions that are a **“hand up, not a hand out”** to advance veterans recovery, stability, self- reliance and dignity
- d. Advance demonstrated **best practices and promising approaches**
- e. Increase the commission’s formal communications, influence and **collaboration with community leaders and providers**
- f. **Interdependence** – We will work collaboratively with community nonprofits and other veteran organizations to assure the best possible outcome of services for veterans
- g. **Inclusiveness** – we respect people, value diversity and are committed to equality
- h. **Openness** – we are committed to a culture of teamwork and collaboration
- i. **Ongoing Education**
- j. **Data-Driven decision making**
- k. **Participation**

San Mateo County Veterans' Commission

Planning for Impact
Special Meeting Feb. 11, 2019

Veterans' Commission

- Role of a facilitator in planning
- Commission participation
- Keeping the plan relevant and actionable

Veterans' Commission Proposed Group Agreements

- Speak respectfully
- Speak one at a time
- Participate as fully as possible
- Allow the facilitator to guide the process

Veterans' Commission Strategic Plan

- Defines a 2-3 year framework for the Commission's activities within the context of SMC's Vision 2025
- Is implemented through annual work plans
- Is a commitment to ongoing planning, implementing, evaluating and updating

Veterans' Commission Elements of a Strategic Plan

- Environmental scan
- Vision, mission, values
- Goals and strategies
- Implementation work plan
- Monitoring and updating

Veterans' Commission

Proposed Timeline for Strategic Planning

- **Initiate planning (February)**
 - Environmental Scan, Mission, Values
- **Goals and Objectives (March)**
- **Approach to Monitoring/Review**
 - Confirm Goals/objectives, ID measures
- **Adopt Plan, Define Work Plan – (May)**

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Veterans' Commission is to promote programs and policies that address the unmet needs of veterans in San Mateo County

Veterans' Commission

SMC Vision 2025

- * **Healthy Community** - Our neighborhoods are safe and provide residents with access to quality health care and seamless services.
- * **Prosperous Community** - Our economic strategy fosters innovation in all sectors, creates jobs, builds community and educational opportunities for all residents.
- * **Livable Community** - Our growth occurs near transit, promotes affordable, livable connected communities.
- * **Environmentally Conscious Community** - Our natural resources are preserved through environmental stewardship, reducing our carbon emissions, and using energy, water and land more efficiently.
- * **Collaborative Community** - Our leaders forge partnerships, promote regional solutions, with informed and engaged residents, and approach issues with fiscal accountability and concern for future impacts.

Veterans' Commission

External Scanning

Identifies opportunities and threats outside the control of the Commission

Discussion – External Scan

- 1. What from the external scan stands out for you relative to the work of the Commission?**
- 2. Are there areas of effort that SMC shares with other groups?**
- 1. Does SMC need updated information from the local needs assessment?**
- 2. Are there any areas that other groups are addressing that should be considered by SMC?**

Veterans' Commission

Internal Scanning

Identifies strengths/resources/priorities of Commissioners and prior accomplishments that will contribute to the future success of the Commission's work

Discussion – Internal Scan

- 1. Is there agreement about strengths? Is anything missing?**
- 2. Is there agreement about weaknesses/areas for growth? Is anything missing?**
- 1. What suggested priorities resonate with your group?**
- 1. Do you have other priorities to suggest?**

Values that guide the work of the Commission

- a. **Maximize existing resources**
- b. Ensure that **public funds are spent wisely**
- c. Promote “**hand up, not a hand out**” actions
- d. Advance demonstrated **best practices and promising approaches**
- e. Increase **collaboration with community leaders and providers**
- f. **Interdependence** work collaboratively with community nonprofits and other veteran
- g. **Inclusiveness** – we are committed to equality
- h. Openness – we are committed to a culture of **teamwork and collaboration**
- i. **Ongoing Education**
- j. **Data-Driven decision making**
- k. **Participation**
- l. **Other?**

Progress on Strategic Plan – to date

- ✓ Mission Statement
- ✓ Alignment to SMC Vision 2025
- ✓ External Scan
- ✓ Internal Scan
- ✓ Value Statement

Next Step: March 11, 2019

1. Work on Goals and Objectives for inclusion in Strategic Plan
1. Think about how to measure progress for each objective