

2018 NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT



**NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ACHIEVEMENTS
AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

*“With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, **to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan**, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”*
– **Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, March, 4, 1865**

Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255, press 1)

The Crisis Line, mandated by the Joshua Omvig Veteran Suicide Prevention Act of 2007, provides immediate support to veterans, service members and their families.

December 31, 2018

Mayor Bill de Blasio and Council Speaker Corey Johnson:

We are excited about the progress for our New York City Veterans over the past year and look forward to continued success and improvement. Our vision is that New York City has the most effective local veteran programs of any large city in the nation. The guiding principle by which we seek to achieve this is by prioritizing policies and initiatives by how they support veterans' continued service as citizens. Through this lens, all New York City residents benefit from programs that support veterans.

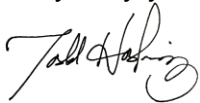
The Department of Veteran Services ("DVS") reached its second full year in operations and shifted from establishing its basic infrastructure to laying the foundation for more sustainable operations and improved effectiveness. The core strategies and programs that support our veteran community in New York City have been largely established and we believe that the DVS has incorporated our guiding principle into their planning. This strategy will lead to an effective use of city resources over time.

In 2019, it will be important for the DVS to capitalize on the infrastructure it has built for these programs. For example, VetConnectNYC was formally launched in November 2018 to coordinate connecting veterans with services and it is critical that this is promoted and operates smoothly. This pattern holds true for the other marquis initiatives such as Veterans on Campus where the basic framework has been established and execution will be key. Finally, critical to the effectiveness of any program is awareness, and we believe that the DVS must invest more heavily in its communications and outreach capabilities.

On the legislative front, we look forward to the continued support of the City Council for our veteran programs. We believe that these programs yield a great return for our city and that all New Yorkers benefit from these investments. We hope that the judicious approach that the DVS has taken in deploying resources will afford it more budget and resource support in the future. Actions that are beyond the DVS's scope such as extending the Minority and Women Owned Business status to veteran owned firms and expanding funding and resources for Veterans on Campus would benefit both the veteran community as well as all New Yorkers.

New York continues to lead the nation in its veteran programs and we believe that all New Yorkers have benefited from these initiatives. We appreciate the leadership that each of the City Council and the Administration has shown in support of our veterans.

Very truly yours,



Todd Haskins
Chairman

NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Each of our members' terms expired during the year and new appointments / re-appointments were meaningfully delayed by both the Administration and the City Council. As of December 31, 2018 9 of 11 members had current appointments; one member's term has expired but we expect him to be reappointed and the fifth appointment by the City Council remains unfilled. Given the limited visibility officers were not selected during 2018 as decided by the members present at each meeting as it was unclear who would be a member of the Board going forward. We expect to hold elections during our first meeting in 2019.

UPDATE – GET DATES OF APPOINTMENT / EXPIRY FROM DVS OR APPOINTEES

Board Member	Borough	Email (@gmail.com)	Term Expires	Appointment
Joe Bello ¹ Secretary	Bronx	JBelloVABNYC	June 30, 2018	Council
Tiffany Daugherty	Manhattan	TDaughertyVABNYC	February 17, 2021	Mayor
Charles Greinsky	Staten Island	CGreinskyVABNYC	August 23, 2020	Mayor
Todd Haskins Chairman	Manhattan	THaskinsVABNYC	February 17, 2021	Mayor
James Hendon	Bronx	JHendonVABNYC	February 17, 2021	Mayor
Charles Hernandez	Bronx	CHernandezVABNYC	March 31, 2021	Council
Peter Kauffmann	Queens	PKauffmannVABNYC	August 23, 2020	Mayor
Wendy McClinton	Brooklyn	WMcClintonVABNYC	June 4, 2021	Council
John Rowan	Queens	JRowanVABNYC	November 19, 2021	Council
Annette Tucker Osborne	Brooklyn	AOsbourneVABNYC	August 23, 2020	Mayor
VACANT	TBD	TBD	TBD	Council

¹ Note: Joe Bello's term has expired but we believe that he will be reappointed by the council.

RATIONALE FOR LOCAL VETERAN POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Why Should the City Support its Veterans?

We believe that New York City as well as the non-profit and private sectors have both the moral and economic imperatives to support our veterans. New York City benefits from these investments:

- ✓ **Freedom and Security – the Moral Imperative:** All citizens of New York benefit from the freedom and security provided by our armed forces. The Federal Hall National Memorial reminds us of the observation of our first President, George Washington who noted that *“the willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by our nation.”* In our order to ensure our continued success it is critical that we support those who have served.
- ✓ **Federal Spending and Tourism – the Short-term Economic Imperative:** New York City also benefits disproportionately from federal spending and tourism. Activities and venues such as Fleet Week, New York’s July Fourth Celebration, New York City Veterans’ Day Parade (*“America’s Parade”*), the Intrepid Sea Air and Space Museum, and the Canyon of Heroes all are connected to our nation’s military veterans and produce significant commerce. Additionally, many of New York City’s programs qualify for federal funding which makes them more effective and economically efficient for the City. Lastly, as the economic capital of the world, many Veteran Service Organizations (VSO’s) and veteran-focused non-profits have either chosen to call New York City their home or host significant operations and events here, which also adds to the commerce and culture of the city. All of this provides a compelling rationale to support strong local veteran policies.
- ✓ **Veterans Make Great Citizens – the Long-Term Economic Imperative:** Veterans and their families are truly this country’s greatest renewable resources and attracting them to New York City supports our continued success. Veterans tend to have higher earnings and lower unemployment than non-veterans once their transition is complete. Veterans also tend to be more civically active and have lower incarceration rates than non-veterans. Increasing our veteran population will continue to add to the vibrant fabric of culture in the city.

These moral and economic imperatives provide a sound rationale for investment in local veteran policies and programs particularly since many of these provide a direct and measurable positive economic return for New York City.

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE: SUPPORT VETERANS' CONTINUED SERVICE AS CITIZENS

In order to provide discipline in prioritizing resources, the VAB has worked with DVS to establish a guiding principle through which all potential investments should be considered and prioritized. All programs should be viewed through the lens of how they **support veterans' continued service as citizens**. This aligns with the long-term economic imperative that veterans make good citizens and that the City benefits by attracting them in greater numbers.

Some veterans face unique challenges related directly or indirectly to their service. However, veterans are not victims. They actively chose to serve and providing support to allow them to continue their service as citizens is an important investment. Prioritizing based upon this principle has the added benefit of reinforcing the fact that all New Yorkers benefit from these programs, regardless of veteran status.

Wherever possible we should seek programming that reinforces and supports this principle. For example, we should partner with non-profits and VSOs for which this is a central tenet of their mission. Further, we should invest in programs and resources which help veterans improve such as education, employment support and programs which support personal self-improvement.

SUMMARY OF VAB ACTIONS OF IN 2018 AND PLANS FOR 2019

Below is a summary of the key activities for 2018:

- ✓ **Advised the Commissioner on the Development and Staffing of DVS:** The VAB was actively involved in discussions around key legislative, organizational, and policy initiatives. We also advised on hiring strategy and policy priorities.
- ✓ **Conducted 5 Meetings:** We successfully conducted five meetings in 2018, one in each Borough as mandated. The meeting on September 26 did not have a quorum and other meetings were less well attended than in years past. This is largely attributed to the confusion caused by not receiving appointments in a timely manner. Many of the members whose terms had expired did not expect to be involved with the VAB and as such stopped attending meetings. At year-end 2018 only 9 of 11 members had current appointments. We expect more robust attendance and a return to the conduct of business.
- ✓ **2019 Meeting Schedule:** We have tentatively scheduled the 2019 VAB Meetings on the following dates:

Date	Borough
Tue March 12 ²	Brooklyn
Wed April 16	Staten Island
Tue June 11	Queens
Wed September 25	Bronx
Thu November 28	Manhattan

- **Convened Government and other Leaders to Connect Veterans with Services:** At each of the VAB meetings members of the DVS, VA and representatives of other government and non-government organizations were present which created an opportunity to connect veterans directly with the services they offer.
- **Engaged with DVS, City Council and the Veteran Community on Strategic Priorities and Policies Relating to Veterans in New York City:** The VAB actively engaged with all three of its key stakeholders to help prioritize resources and raise issues. This has included meetings with several elected officials as well as members of the veteran community.

² Note: This meeting was rescheduled from February 12 due to inclement weather.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS – US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

In December 2018 the legislative and executive branches of the Federal government were unable to reach agreement on a budget which has led to a partial government shutdown. This impact veterans and members of the active armed services in two ways. First, veterans are disproportionately reflected among federal employees. Second, the US Coast Guard is part of the Department of Homeland Security and is the only branch of the military directly affected by the shutdown. The Administration and Department of Veteran Services have expressed their support for veterans and US Coast Guard personnel affected by the shutdown and have mobilized to help them obtain access to any City, State, non-profit or other services for which they may qualify.

The VAB has unanimously recommended to both the DVS and the City Council a more active approach to support as described below:

- **First:** DVS investigate the impact of the shutdown on Coast Guard members deployed or living in New York City and (1) make them aware of city services for which they may qualify, (2) provide them expedited emergency access for services they may not normally qualify given income limitations or other restrictions and (3) provide a no or low-interest loan to cover the amount of deferred income they are not receiving, which can be paid back as soon as the shutdown ends.
- **Second:** DVS investigate the impact of the shut down on veterans employed by effected Federal agencies and (1) make them aware of city services for which they may qualify and (2) provide them expedited emergency access for services they may not normally qualify given income limitations or other restrictions.

We applaud the proactive approach the DVS has taken and believe they are in the process of meeting the majority of the recommendations. However, if the federal government shuts down again, we recommend that the City consider making low interest loans up to the amount of the after-tax income of our US Coast Guard personnel living or assigned in New York City. We believe this would require action by the City Council to authorize such a program and ask that they work swiftly to do so should this shutdown continue.

HIGHLIGHTS OF EVENTS AND MILESTONES IMPACTING VETERANS IN NEW YORK CITY IN 2018

2018 continued to be an important growth year for veterans in New York City. The Department of Veteran Services has provided a summary of their activities and accomplishments for the year which is included in the following pages. Two achievements which we view as very important are highlighted below:

EMERGENCY RENT RELIEF FOR STUDENT VETERANS

In the fall of 2018 a system error in the disbursement of VA funds for most of the nation's students pursuing their degree under the GI Bill. As a result, many of New York City's 12,000 student veterans received incorrect payments which caused some of them to fall behind on their rent. In response, on October 29 New York City provided emergency rent relief to any affected student veterans who were at risk of eviction. This is a perfect example of a very successful local policy which supports and supplements the existing federal programs and should make New York City a more veteran friendly city. This program is aligned with the overall Veterans on Campus initiative established to attract veterans to study in New York City after they leave the military.

VETCONNECT NYC LAUNCHED

On November 11, 2018 New York City launched VetConnect NYC (www.vetconnectnyc.org), a platform where New York City veterans, service members, and their families can access a network of more than 80 public, private, and nonprofit service providers. This innovative program which is operated by the DVS in collaboration with Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Northwell Health, and the veteran owned tech business, Unite Us seeks to streamline the way in which veterans, service members and their families access resources and benefits throughout the five boroughs. We believe this is the first central clearinghouse for veteran services of any major city in the nation and should increase the utilization and effectiveness of the many programs available to veterans throughout the city.

As we have discussed frequently in prior reports and meetings, this is a critical program which we have called for the DVS to prioritize and we commend its launch. We encourage veterans with needs to log at www.vetconnectnyc.org and determine what services are available to them.



2018: Veterans Advisory Board Update

Loree Sutton, MD
COMMISSIONER

Jeffrey Roth
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

December 20, 2018

To the Chair of the Veterans Advisory Board,

The New York City Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) extends its heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for the tremendous work you and your colleagues on the Veterans Advisory Board do throughout the year advocating for and supporting this City's veterans and their families. We especially appreciate the insightful and informational year -end report that we understand you are in the process of drafting. To that end, DVS would like to provide you with some information that may be of use to you in assessing the achievements from this past year both at the Department of Veterans' Services and within the New York City veterans' community.

Overview of DVS accomplishments: 2018

Agency operations

After reflecting on our first full year of operations in 2017, DVS underwent a strategic restructuring to implement a Sustainability Plan in 2018: a series of steps that enabled us to reach our full operational capacity and achieve total independence as an agency. We did this by creating an administrative unit that took over the functions of budgeting, human resources and other administrative tasks that the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) had provided during our first 18 months.

DVS is also merging outreach teams from across the agency. By joining forces, DVS will be able to double its outreach capacity and cross-train each team member to provide a wider range of assistance to veterans and their families across New York City. And as always, DVS continues to work hand in hand with at-risk and homeless veterans to create connections for safe, permanent housing.

Finally, DVS expanded its capacity to connect constituents to services by completing its first major procurement project, the coordinated care network VetConnectNYC. Formerly known as NYServes-NYC, VetConnectNYC is part of the AmericaServes network that operates in 16 localities across the country. DVS is in the process of ensuring the agency staff, service provider network of over 80 organizations, and care coordination team run by Northwell Health, work together seamlessly to provide the best care for New York City service members, veterans, and their families. The network is currently accessible through the website www.vetconnectnyc.org, by phone at 1-833-VETS-NYC, or by speaking with any of our outreach team members. DVS looks forward to elevating awareness about VetConnectNYC in 2019 once we've fully integrated the network into agency operations.

Agency Initiatives

Ending Veteran Homelessness

This past February DVS reached a significant milestone, housing the 500th veteran since New York City launched its campaign to end veteran homelessness in 2011. The City brought the veteran homelessness population down from over 5,000 in 2011 to just over 500 in 2018 – a 90% reduction, compared with the national average reduction of 47% over that same time frame. Of the approximately 500 homeless veterans who remain without permanent housing, 95% of them reside in shelter and actively receive services to create pathways to affordable, sustainable housing solutions.

Veterans Success Network

DVS is committed to ensuring that veterans and their family members not only have a place to live, but the means to live with fulfilling and productive careers. To that end in 2019, DVS will be launching the Veteran Success Network, a three-pillared program designed to ensure veterans and their families get the education, personal connections, and career training necessary to create the best professional path that meets their needs. The Veteran Success Network will consist of:

- *Veterans on Campus (VOC)*: a coalition of over 80 colleges and universities in the New York City area with the highest concentration of GI Bill users. Through the Veterans on Campus network, DVS can connect with student veterans as they pursue their education, explore internships and summer jobs, and work with school administrators to ensure they have the knowledge to foster the most veteran-supportive campuses possible
- *Mentor a Vet*: a consortium of over 25 veteran mentoring organizations that DVS has convened to share best practices and create connections for cross-referrals, recognizing that each organization offer specialized mentorship opportunities. With the Mentor a Vet initiative, student veterans or veterans at any stage of their civilian life can connect with a mentor in their career field or who aligns with their personal interests, creating connections that support both personal and professional growth
- *Veteran Career Council*: DVS's newest program currently under development, the Veteran Career Council will create career pathways into several industries with both robust presences and ample employment opportunities in New York City, including City government employment, finance & banking, health care, real estate, technology, fashion, and media & entertainment

Outreach & Engagement

Our Peer Outreach Team of veterans and family members understand from experience how hard it can be to navigate services and benefits. We help every New York City service member, veteran or family member, regardless of era of service, branch of service, or discharge status to help constituents find services and benefits for which they're eligible. We do this through:

- *Satellite sites in all five boroughs:* DVS proudly serves all five boroughs, in person, with our Outreach Team staffing Veteran Resource Centers in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island five days a week
- *Digital outreach:* DVS shares information about programs and initiatives through various online channels, including a newsletter, Twitter, Facebook, and – starting in 2019 – a new podcast, entitled “SITREP,” sharing stories of NYC veterans & their families
- *Events:* Team DVS goes to where veterans live, gather, and celebrate service, attending hundreds of outreach events throughout the year across the city. At these events, our Outreach Team stands ready to provide personalized assistance, share information, or connect veterans and their families with external resources.

VetsThriveNYC

VetsThriveNYC is built on the premise that social determinants of health – including housing, education, employment, financial and legal stability – are vital for achieving and sustaining health and wellbeing. To this end, VetsThriveNYC relies on a collective impact framework rooted in the strength and resilience of community support, employing a coordinated care network, VetConnectNYC, to ensure veterans and their families have access to whole-of-life services for fulfilling their life goals, including continued service on behalf of others.

VetsThriveNYC also draws on the Core4 Whole Health Model. This 4-tiered pyramid upends the traditional clinically-focused approach, through:

- *Culture:* Educational and cultural initiatives, led by our Public Artist in Residence, Bryan Doerries and his Theater of War Productions
- *Connection:* Peer intervention & social support, led by the mentoring program ProVetus, based at Columbia University’s Teacher’s College
- *Community:* holistic services based in veterans’ home communities, including modalities such as meditation, yoga, acupuncture, service animals, and expressive arts therapies – to be launched in 2019
- *Clinical care:* clinic-based care and treatments, led by the Headstrong Project, who’s no-paperwork, no-hassle approach makes it easy to seek clinical treatment

In sum, VetsThriveNYC aims to increase individuals’ help-seeking behavior and social engagement, moving the front lines of healing from the clinic to the community.

Serving Underserved Veteran Populations

This past year, the City of New York ramped up its efforts to serve New York City's most underserved veteran populations. This includes:

- *Student veterans*: when the federal government fell behind on delivering the GI Bill benefits that our over 12,000 student veterans rely on as their sole means to pay rent, New York City's Department of Veterans' Services and Department of Social Services stepped in. DVS reached out to over 80 colleges and universities in NYC to let them know that any student veteran who was behind on their rent or worse, facing eviction, could get emergency rent arrears assistance from the City
- *Women veterans*: NYC is home to over 13,000 women who have served in uniform. Yet all too often their service is not given the recognition they're due. This year, through public - private partnerships we were able to dedicate the first monument to women service members and veterans in the New York City area – “Women Serve”—at Calverton National Cemetery to honor the service & sacrifice of women in the military
- *Disconnected veterans*: Not everyone who has raised their right hand to serve our country gets the same benefits from the federal government. Whether because of length of service or discharge status, hundreds of NYC veterans found themselves disconnected from benefits that could get them stable and permanent housing. DVS and NYCHA proudly volunteered to be the first city in the country to test out a new pilot program to help this population. This past year, over 100 of these formerly disconnected veterans and families received rental subsidies to move from transitional housing into safe and permanent homes. Thanks to HELP USA and the Robin Hood Foundation, these veterans also receive case management to ensure a successful transition to their new homes
- *Caregivers*: Nobody serves alone; families serve, too. And the caregivers who stand by our service members and veterans are all too often overlooked. We've teamed up with two national organizations – the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's Hidden Heroes Initiative and the Reimagine Project – to organize programs dedicated to shining a light on the tireless efforts of our veteran caregivers

Select Highlights & Milestones Impacting Veterans in NYC in 2018

January

- Fostering Knowledge-Sharing : DVS hosted an appointee to the Australian Veterans Review Tribunal to share best practices and DVS's story of transitioning from a mayor's office to a fully independent municipal agency
- Honoring Fallen Veterans: DVS representatives worked with documentary filmmakers to recognize the service of veteran service organizations who attend funerals of fallen veterans with no next of kin

February

- Supporting Military Caregivers: DVS hosted a Military Caregivers Convening Event with Elizabeth Dole's Hidden Heroes Campaign and Blue Star Families
- Forging Community Partnerships: DVS became a community impact partner with the National Veterans Intermediary, a national collective impact initiative by the Bob Woodruff Foundation that links veterans, service providers, and other stakeholders

March

- Embracing Arts as Public Health Intervention: DVS Public Artist in Residence Bryan Doerries adapted a reading of Streetcar Named Desire to address issues around domestic violence
- Celebrating Entrepreneurship: DVS partnered with WeWork and Bunker Labs for their Veterans in Residence Launch event

April

- Helping Veterans in the Justice System: Riker's Island Correctional Facility opened its veterans-only unit, the first of its kind in New York City
- Encouraging Careers in Public Service: DVS's Veterans on Campus initiative organized a panel discussion and networking event with representatives from 24 city, state and federal agencies to assist student veterans interested in exploring careers in the public service

May

- Honoring the Newest Coast Guard City: NYC was designated an official “Coast Guard City” by the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Paul Zukumpft in a ceremony at City Hall presided over by Mayor Bill de Blasio
- Convening Partners on Disaster Relief & Humanitarian Response: DVS convened military and agency leadership from the city, state, and federal levels for a day-long symposium, the Senior Leadership Seminar, at the start of Fleet Week
- Honoring Fleet Week at City Hall: Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson and Commissioner Loree Sutton hosted ranking staff officer Major General Brilakas and senior officers of the US Navy, US Marines, and US Coast Guard. During the event, Bryan Doerries staged a special performance of Theater of War

June

- Exploring Technology Careers: Commissioner Sutton participated in Google’s Veteran Workshop, a day long training program to prepare veterans for careers in the tech industry
- Knowledge-sharing with International Partners: Commissioner Sutton presented about DVS’s Public Artist in Residence program as a public health intervention in Athens, Greece

July

- Capturing Diverse Veterans Voices: On behalf of the NYC Charter Revision Commission, DVS partnered with the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, FDNY, NYPD, the New York City Veterans Alliance, and others to host a Town Hall soliciting veterans’ input to the charter revision
- Studying Veterans Treatment Courts: DVS participated in a discussion and tour at the Staten Island Veteran Treatment Court to better understand how to successfully support this model throughout the five boroughs

August

- Creating Partnerships for Crisis Response: DVS partnered with NYU's Veterans Future Lab to host a roundtable discussion with relevant stakeholders to discuss pre and post crisis collaboration across the public and private sector
- Welcoming Student Veterans: Through the Veterans on Campus initiative, DVS distributed a comprehensive Welcome Packet to 80 colleges and universities to assist student veterans in getting oriented to school in New York City

September

- Expanding Outreach Online: DVS began the groundwork for two new communications initiatives to ensure veterans and their families have access to the most up to date and relevant resources: redesigning the agency website and recording the initial sessions for an agency podcast
- Sharing NYC's Innovations Internationally: DVS participated in a United Nations General Assembly side event about innovation in government, highlighting the successes of the Housing & Support Services Veteran Peer Coordinator program

October

- Honoring Women Veterans: In partnership with the VA, Calverton National Cemetery, and private funeral homes including Dignity Memorial, DVS participated in the dedication and unveiling of "Women Serve," the first monument in the New York City area honoring the service and sacrifice of women service members and veterans
- Aiding At-Risk Student Veterans: DVS partnered with DSS to create an official letter for student veterans adversely affected by the VA delays in issuing GI Bill benefits, especially the BAH, directing anyone impacted to the eviction prevention program administered by DSS

November

- Streamlining Access to Resources: On Veterans Day, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the launch of DVS's first coordinated care network, VetConnectNYC, which serves as a single point of access for veterans and their families to be connected to services for which they're eligible
- Housing Disconnected Veterans: DVS and HPD marked the one-year anniversary of the HUD-VASH voucher pilot program, the first of its kind in the country, that opened pathways to house over 100 formerly disconnected veterans into safe, permanent housing
- Expanding Capacity to House Homeless Veterans: To help reboot efforts to end veteran homelessness in NYC, DVS expanded its successful Veteran Peer Coordinator program by 50%. DVS hired Maryhelen Rosales to be a full-time director for the Veteran Peer Coordinator program and, in November, was approved to hire a fifth VPC to work peer-to-peer with veterans in shelter
- Veterans on Wall Street (VOWS) "Fireside Chat" on Transitioning Veterans
DVS supported this year's VOWS by creating and participating in a "fireside chat" panel discussion on the challenges of transitioning service members and veterans. Commissioner Sutton, IVMF's Jim McDonough, and Veterans On Campus co-chair Gerry Byrnes discussed how New York City is tackling these challenges through collective impact and technology.

December

- Veterans Employment Pay for Success Program: DVS successfully contracted for New York City's first-ever employment Pay for Success program – a collaborative effort between the VA, DVS, and private-sector partners – to improve suitable employment outcomes for veterans with service-connected PTSD
- Capturing Veteran Stories: DVS recorded the first several sessions for its new podcast, SITREP, featuring the stories, successes, and challenges shared by members of the New York City veterans and family member community on topics ranging from homelessness, mental health, education, employment, and advocacy. First podcast episodes will be launched in January 2019, with additional new episodes to be released every two weeks through the summer

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are organized in two parts: (1) Policy and Legislative Recommendations for the Mayor and/or the City Council and (2) Strategy and Program Recommendations for DVS.

Recommendations for the Mayor and/or City Council

Fund a Campaign to Encourage Transitioning Veterans to Study at New York City's World-Class Colleges and Universities: Great progress has been made since the May 2017 launch of Veterans on Campus, and the administration's swift action to support veterans receiving the GI Bill in the wake of VA's basic allowance for housing error highlights the importance of such a program. DVS's swift action to provide emergency rent relief for veterans whose GI Bill benefits were impacted highlights the importance of this program. We believe New York City can benefit further from this program and give back to the veteran community by expanding the program to actively recruit veterans to study in New York City after they leave the service. This would brand New York City as a "veteran-friendly city" and also allow the city to benefit even more from the GI Bill.

Add Resources for Contracting Capability for DVS: This has been a top priority of the VAB for each of the last three years and we believe it continues to be valid today. One of the most fundamental aspects of a City Agency is having direct control over contracting resources and lacking this ability has hampered DVS's effectiveness. As excited as we are about the launch of VetConnectNYC, it was delivered nearly a year behind schedule in part due to the lack of contracting authority. DVS is not currently funded or staffed to allow for this capability and contracts to local Veteran Service Organizations or non-for-profits that provide direct service to veterans are currently executed through the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). In addition to prioritization, there are unique contracting attributes that VSOs often carry, such as not being a 501(c)(3), which confuse and slow down the completion of contracts and disbursement of funds when centralized through DCAS. This should be rectified in the budget process this year.

Establish a Preference for New York City to Contract with Veteran Owned Businesses: The Federal Government, State Government and most major US corporations maintain preference programs to contract with veteran owned businesses and yet New York City does not. This sends the wrong message to our veterans the City Council and/or administration should change this. The cost to administer such a program would be minimal as it could be administered through the existing Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise ("MWBE") program. Veterans come from all backgrounds and as such many veteran owned business already qualify for the MWBE program. For New York City to be a leader in local veteran policies it absolutely must find a way to support veteran entrepreneurship and veteran owned businesses through a contracting preference.

VAB Membership and Providing Resource Support: As noted, many of our members' terms expired this year and re-appointments or replacements were not completed in a timely manner. Even today, two seats to be appointed by the Speaker of the City Council remain unfilled. It is critical that these remaining positions be filled and that future VAB appointments are made in a timely manner. Further, some form of part time operational resource support from either the DVS, another City organization or some form of paid internship would aid in record keeping and continuity.

Invest in Resources to Evaluate and Document the Impact of Our Programs: Our vision statement includes reference to the *most effective* local veteran policies. These words were chosen carefully, and we are committed to recommending policies and programs focused on veterans that benefit all New Yorkers. In order to accomplish this, DVS must be provided with the appropriate resources.

We call upon the Administration and the City Council to provide additional funding specifically dedicated to evaluating and documenting our programs including:

- ✓ Document benefits and efficiency: We believe that New York City has created extremely effective veteran programs and that these are a model for the country. Documentation will allow us to prove that we have been good stewards of resources and attract additional State and Federal resources. Further, the documentation hereof will highlight the value that these programs provide to all New Yorkers.
- ✓ Document lessons learned: The veteran population in New York City is a relatively small one compared to many other constituencies. Documenting the lessons learned from our programs could allow us to scale them to larger populations, thereby benefiting all New Yorkers. This model is already being applied to our veteran homeless and treatment court programs and we are encouraged by the opportunity to share our successes with other populations in the City.
- ✓ Conduct a Veteran Census: In order to create thoughtful policy we must understand our veteran population. Towards that end, we recommend that a Veteran Census or other form of population study be conducted in the near-intermediate future. This is in addition to resources focused on evaluating our programs.

Advocate for the Consistent Application of Policies for Veteran Treatment Courts: Work with the five District Attorney's Offices and the Office of Courts Administration to create consistency throughout the boroughs for the use of Veterans Treatment Courts. This would provide equal treatment to veterans in all five boroughs, reduce costs to the criminal justice system, and reduce crime given the favorable recidivism statistics experienced through these programs.

Support the Restoration of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument on the

Hudson: Since 1902 the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument has towered over the Hudson on the Upper West Side of Manhattan as one of the most significant memorials to the Union Soldiers who served from New York in the Civil War. It serves as a constant reminder of the sacrifice made by New Yorkers during the civil war. The monument has fallen into disrepair and requires approximately \$25 million in improvements to make it viable. We recommend that our elected officials continue to work with State and Federal officials to find funding to save and preserve the monument. We commend the efforts of Manhattan Borough President, Gail Brewer and others who have been leading these efforts and encourage continued support.

DVS Strategy and Program Recommendations

Develop a Comprehensive Veterans Outreach Plan: We continue to believe that the DVS' communications and outreach capabilities must be enhanced and expanded. DVS is building great programs and their effectiveness is impacted by the awareness of those eligible for the programs – communications and outreach infrastructure is critical. This has been highlighted on many occasions in the past and oversight hearings have been hosted by the Committee on Veterans on this topic, but we do not believe that enough progress has been made.

Expand Veterans on Campus-NYC: New York City is the nation's largest importer of college students, with 110 colleges and nearly 600,000 students. This supports both the positive migration of educated citizens to the city and has the added benefit of attracting Federal to the City as most transitioning veterans have access to the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Each veteran who obtains a four-year degree in the city provides more than a quarter of a million dollars of economic activity with the majority of this in the form of direct federal spending on the Basic Allowance for Housing.

Recommit to Mission Home, New York City's Fight against Veteran

Homelessness: New York City has been an innovative leader in its fight against veteran homelessness. That said, this year observed an increase in veteran homelessness from 535 as of December 2017 to 605 during the Point in Time (PIT) count in January 2017. It is important that we consolidate our gains and continue to make progress towards functional zero. It should be noted that New York City has continued to make progress in fighting street homelessness among veterans after having been declared free of street homelessness by the US Housing and Urban Development with the formal PIT count identifying only 8 street homeless veterans each of whom declined support.

Specific recommendations include:

- ✓ Continue to work towards Functional Zero: We commend the DVS, HRA and all New York City agencies and partners involved in the fight against veteran homelessness and call upon them to continue the bold objective of reaching functional zero.
- ✓ Build a Comprehensive Prevention Plan: Activities to prevent veterans from becoming homeless are already underway, but these should be expanded and the lessons-learned captured and tracked in order to share best-practices. Prevention is almost always less expensive than the cost of someone becoming homeless.
- ✓ Document our Success: DVS should spearhead an inter-agency effort to document the success of Mission Home. The report would include existing and innovative strategies that were used, details on how city and private resources were used to leverage federal dollars, and what strategies are being used to maintain this success in the long term. DVS should also work with the Mayor's Office of Budget and Management, New York City Independent Budget Office, or other relevant independent econometrists to conduct an economic impact study of the programs

and include this in the report. It will also be critical to highlight the aggregate state and federal dollars we have attracted to our city so that the public better understands the benefits that our veteran programs bring to New York City. It will also be important to demonstrate to state and federal authorities that we have used these resources wisely

- ✓ Share our Success Across the City: As a relatively small population in the City with access to federal and state resources, we have been able to find new pathways to success in our fight to eliminate veteran homelessness. For example, in 2016 on average an individual in the New York City shelter system was homeless for 355 days. Among the veteran population, that was a median of 79 days and we can use these lessons learned to help the broader system.
- ✓ Continue to share our Success with other Cities throughout the Nation: Continue to meet with federal and state officials to highlight the successes New York City has had and ask for more resources to advance this worthy cause. Highlight that we have been good stewards of their resources where possible. Since New York City began its fight against veteran homelessness in 2011, we have realized an approximately 90% drop in homelessness, which compares very favorably to the 47% drop nationwide since 2010, according to HUD.

Invest in Resources to Encourage and Support Veteran Engagement in the Political Process: 2018 saw the largest number of freshman veterans reach office in a decade with 19 new lawmakers having veteran service and a record. While engagement has been very successful at the national level, New York City has not fared as well with only one City Council Member having served in the military. Consistent with our guiding principle of supporting veterans' continued service as citizens, the DVS should invest in programs that support veteran engagement in the political process. They should do so by partnering with existing organizations supporting this mission such as New Politics, Veterans Campaign and the NYC Veteran Alliance which has hosted a Get Ready to Run Program training veterans on how to get involved.

Build-Out VetsThriveNYC: As part of the pioneering ThriveNYC mental health initiative, 2016's landmark legislation created funding to provide support for specific mental health initiatives for veterans in need. DVS' ThriveNYC team successfully implemented the VetsThriveNYC Whole Health and Community Resilience Program which includes citywide targeted outreach to engage veterans, military families and caregivers through education, connection to services, and resources tailored to the specific needs of the individual. Also as part of this program, DVS' Core4 Whole Health Model™ shifts the conversation to concentrate on what matters most to veterans and their families regarding the many areas of life that can affect their health and well-being. It is designed to foster hope, healing and wholeness through informed access to clinical treatment, community holistic services, peer/family/community social support and cultural initiatives and the arts. Through the Core4 Whole Health Model™ outreach, the WHCR team connected veterans and their families to peer services, creative writing programs, community art workshops, musical and theater groups, storytelling experiences, and other art-based and cultural events to help facilitate the healing

process and launch their human journey towards wholeness. We expect these programs to expand and become more effective as they are fully resourced and with the implementation of VetConnectNYC.

Develop a Plan to Celebrate Veterans throughout History: A critical part of the mission of the DVS is celebrating veterans and what they have brought to our nation and to New York City. The next five years will mark a series of landmark anniversaries including the centennial of both the end of World War I and the first Veterans Day Parade (now dubbed “*America’s Parade*”) and the fifty-year anniversary of various milestones of the Vietnam War.

We recommend the following:

- Provide More Direct Outreach and Support for the Centennial of the Veterans’ Day Parade: The United War Veterans Council (UWVC) has served as custodians of the parade with support from the city notably through NYPD presence, and providing cleanup after the parade. The Centennial New York City Veterans Day Parade is an opportunity to showcase the rich and proud history that New York has in celebrating its veterans and increase the economic impact of the parade; this would include attracting international attendance. To support these efforts, we recommend that DVS take an active role in: 1) supporting the efforts of the UWVC to engage foreign government and non-profit entities; 2) directly engaging and recommending participation from NYC based international entities including consulates and United Nations representatives; 3) promoting volunteer opportunities to the DVS network.
- Utilize Fleet Week to Convene Other Leaders and Showcase the City: Fleet Week is a time-honored New York tradition and should be utilized as an opportunity to convene leaders from across the nation to discuss veteran policy. This will allow New York City to continue to showcase leadership and aid in the veteran friendly branding of the city. Specific funding should be provided to support this convening.

Employment and Entrepreneurship: Stable employment is a critical element of supporting veterans continued service as citizens. Whether something as simple as paying taxes or more significant such as volunteering actively or engaging in the political process, stable employment is required.

Towards the end of ensuring that our veterans remain employed in well-paid jobs, we recommend the following:

City Employment: The government is the largest employer in the city and it simply must lead by example. Additionally, there are many City and State agencies that face potentially acute labor shortages, such as the MTA, where a large proportion of its skilled labor is eligible for retirement over the next five years. Transitioning service members could be a cost-effective pipeline for talent. We must develop citywide veteran employment programs. These include classifying veterans as a protected class where appropriate so that they can be provided with a hiring preference, supporting agencies creation of veteran employee support networks,

and recruiting initiatives for attracting transitioning veterans to various city employment opportunities. We should seek collaborative commercial and non-profit leaders to develop programs to such as those run by the Home Builders Institute which trains transitioning veterans for careers in the homebuilding industry.

Private Employment: Critical to supporting veterans continued service as citizens is supporting their stable employment. New York City does not control private employers; however, it can act as a facilitator to private companies who want to hire veterans. These programs can potentially be revenue-neutral through Federal government employment programs for veterans, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) program, which can provide businesses up to \$9,600 in tax credits per eligible veteran hired if those tax credits are then redeployed in the city.

- Create a Private Employment Support Program: Create a comprehensive private employment support program to educate and support private employers in New York City in establishing veteran hiring initiatives. This could include actions such as creating a veteran employment program handbook highlighting the benefits of a veteran hiring program, as well as actions required and resources available to execute such a program, hosting periodic training sessions on this topic and promoting the benefits of hiring veterans, and veterans connecting veterans to vetted and specialized non-profit and free resources available. Many of the country's leading experts on veteran employment programs and coalitions of employers are active in New York City including the Veteran Jobs Mission, Veterans on Wall Street, the Arcadia Group and Miligistix. We recommend that DVS continue to seek opportunities to convene and collaborate with these groups.
- Track Outcomes: Establish policies to track outcomes for long-term unemployed veterans who have obtained employment, WOTC credits for employers, and other key performance indicators.

Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship is the lifeblood of the America. According to the Small Business Administration from 2012 Census Bureau Data, veterans own 9% of small businesses, while only comprising 6.7% of the population. Nationally, veteran owned firms generated \$1.14 trillion in receipts annually and employed 5.03 million people. State and Federal government provide a great deal of support to small businesses in the forms of training, contract support, financing and other benefits. As such, New York City should support its veterans who seek to become entrepreneurs through a comprehensive program. The program should include, among other attributes, the following three specific items:

- Create an Outreach Program to Educate Veteran Business Owners of the Inclusion in the MWBE Program: Once the Administration or City Council act to include veteran-owned businesses under the MWBE Program, execute an outreach plan to ensure that veteran entrepreneurs are aware of the change.
- Connect Veteran Entrepreneurs to Resources: In order to support and

encourage entrepreneurship, programs should be created to connect veteran entrepreneurs to resources. Specialized resources are active in New York, including: the Coalition for Veteran Owned Business (CVOB) through the Institute for Veteran and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University, Veterans Future Lab at NYU, Bunker Labs and more.

- Support the Tradition of Veteran Vendors: New York City has a tradition of supporting veterans interested in operating as street vendors going back to the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. To ensure that veterans who choose to vend excel, the DVS should develop a training program to ensure that veterans are educated on the regulations and can ply their craft with professionalism. DVS should also partner with private industry to create programs for veterans to finance and acquire equipment which will support their success. Further, the Department of Consumer Affairs should give due consideration to veteran status in awarding licenses.

Veteran Treatment Courts: We are proud that Veteran Treatment Courts (VTCs) have now been established in each of the five Boroughs and we believe that these are tremendous programs for both veterans and taxpayers. According to the Vera Institute of Justice the average cost to incarcerate a prisoner in the State of New York is \$60,076, the most expensive state in the country nearly twice the national average of \$31,286. Further, as of the first three years of existence, the Buffalo Veteran Treatment court has a 0% recidivism rate. While we would not expect that to be sustained, it has clearly been more successful than other such courts.

Regarding VTCs, we recommend the following three actions:

- ✓ Consistent Application across the Boroughs: In order for the City to benefit most from the program, we ask that the policies be applied consistently throughout New York City. Veterans should have equal protection and application of the law throughout all of New York City's Criminal Courts. We urge the five NYC District Attorney's Offices work with the Office of Courts Administration to create guidelines for which offenses should be referred to treatment courts.
- Measure Outcomes: In order to ensure that the City gets the maximum benefit from these programs, we recommend that outcomes be measured and that each of the VTCs have a standard set of reporting data, which should be provided at least to DVS in its coordinating function and the New York City Council Committee on Veterans in its oversight capacity. A working group should be convened to determine which data should be collected, but it should include at least number of cases referred, outcomes, recidivism rates, costs, and key lessons learned in the application of the program so we can ensure that it continually improves.
- ✓ Share Lessons Learned: Anecdotal evidence suggests that VTCs have had more favorable outcomes as measured by recidivism rates than the other treatment courts, potentially due to the peer support model employed. If true, lessons learned in the success of the VTCs should be shared with the other treatment courts so that all New Yorkers benefit from these investments in programs for veterans.

Create Innovative Funding Strategies: While the majority of the resources and funding for the services that DVS provides will be provided by various government sources, there are times that the most innovative public policy will require other sources. New York City as the financial capital of the world should be at the forefront of innovation in funding and establishing public / private partnerships.

DVS should actively investigate the following potential funding strategies:

- ✓ 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) Funding: New York City has been at the forefront of establishing opportunities for government collaboration with private citizens via 501(c)(3) non-profit funding mechanisms. DVS may also qualify for the establishment of a Veteran Service Organization under 501(c)(19) which could allow it to access different pockets of funding for veteran focused programs. All should be considered and evaluated.
- ✓ Social Impact Funding: Social Impact funding is at the forefront of finance innovation and could have many applications for veterans given the opportunity for clear observable outcomes. DVS should evaluate opportunities to apply this technology to create innovative funding solutions for the veteran space.
- ✓ Real Estate: The availability of long-term affordable housing is a clear choke-point in the fight to end veteran homelessness. New York City is home to many of the most powerful real estate firms in the world, and we should seek opportunities to collaborate with the real estate community to create long-term housing solutions.

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for January 23, 2018 meeting held at:

Brooklyn Workforce 1 Career Center
9 Bond Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Members

Present:

Todd Haskins (Manhattan)	Samuel Innocent (Brooklyn)
Charles Hernandez (Bronx)	Joe Bello (Bronx)
John Rowan (Queens)	Mariel Juarez (Brooklyn)

Absent/Unavailable:

*Pat Devine (Bronx)	*Anthony "Tony" Odierno (Manhattan)
Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)	Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)

*--Term Expired/Does not wish to be reappointed.

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:15 PM.
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience.

Old Business: Elections were not held. It was agreed upon by the members in Executive Committee that with the majority of VAB members three-year terms finished, the board would look at holding elections at the April meeting. The Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary would stay in place until then and the board would ask the Mayor and City Council Speaker to re-appoint or appoint new individuals as soon as possible.

New Business: The chair reviewed the board's **Annual Report** to the Mayor and Speaker of the City Council and discussed what the report does in terms of informing and giving recommendations. As part of the report, the chair discussed:

Three reasons as part of public policy to support veterans: (1) Moral (2) Federal dollars brought in and spend from veterans and family members and (3) that veterans are a great investment.

The board's meeting dates and how moving forward there will be pre-scheduling of the meeting dates (barring any unforeseen circumstances).

The board's recommendations to the Mayor and Speaker regarding veterans issues and DVS, which include:

- (1) Contracting ability by DVS.
- (2) Properly fund the Veterans on Campus Initiative. Tie in to fund a campaign to assist returning veterans (which would be return on investment).
- (3) Better support for Veteran Entrepreneurs (through DVS and SBS).
- (4) Encouraging the Mayor and Council to support budgeting consistency for DVS.

Regarding DVS, the board made the following recommendations to the Commissioner:

- (1) DVS develop better communications (add more investment).
- (2) Provide more resources to assist veterans in post-secondary education.
- (3) Vets on Campus: Continue to build the coalition of Colleges and Universities supporting the Vets on Campus initiative, including support for veterans to ensure that they complete the degrees they are pursuing.
- (4) Continue with Mission Home (reducing Veteran Homelessness).
- (5) Build out VetConnectNYC.
- (6) Provide resources to support veterans in political engagement.
- (7) Provide deeper support for veteran entrepreneurs in programs like Bunker Labs, NYU Tandon, etc.

Lastly, the Chair highlighted the fact that many of the board members three-year terms have expired and that it's difficult to conduct business with the lack of clarity of who is involved. He called for the Mayor and Speaker to appoint or re-appoint members to the VAB as quickly as possible.

Presentations:

DVS: Commissioner Sutton welcomed everyone in attendance. She introduced her staff in attendance (Team DVS) and welcomed the new City Council Veterans Committee Chair Chaim Deutsch to the meeting. Commissioner Sutton gave a brief update on VetConnectNYC (currently NYServes) and stated that it will be launching sometime in the spring and that the name change will reflect ownership (by the City) and branding.

CM Deutsch: Councilman Deutsch introduced himself and shared that he has been a member of the City Council for four years and has worked in City government for 17 years. The Councilman also shared that his parents are holocaust survivors who were liberated by the U.S. Army. He stated that he good at listening to people regarding what's needed. The Councilman then discussed homelessness and stated that he is looking to hold his first hearing at a homeless shelter so that he and his colleagues are able to visualize the issue/problem and come up with solutions. He also stated that his questions will have meaning to it. The Councilman then briefly discussed the MTA and half-fair metrocards for veterans. He stated that he is sending out a letter (tomorrow) to the MTA in support of this measure. The Councilman also discussed "Cold War" status in regard to home owner's tax-exemption, DRIE (Disabled Rent Increase Exemption) and SCRIE (Senior

Citizen Rent Increase Exemption). He stated he would like to create a VRIE (Veterans Rent Increase Exemption). He finished by stating that “we will accomplish a lot over the next four years.”

AC Othman: DVS Assistant Commissioner Othman introduced new members of DVS. He briefly discussed the “Vets on Campus” program, which is taking off this year. He also stated that DVS will be work with VOWS (Veterans on Wall Street) this year and finished by talking about Fleet Week, which will be from May 23 to May 29.

Public Comments: Board member Mariel Juarez (Brooklyn) hosted this part of the meeting. The following individual(s) gave public comments to the board:

Ronda Sherwin: Veterans Financial Coach with AFS Corp. Ms. Sherwin stated that her organization offers free financial coaching for veterans on all income levels. She brought fliers that were on the table for anyone interested.

Melissa Bryant: IAVA. Ms. Bryant stated that she runs the DC shop for IAVA and that she does all the legislative work. Ms. Bryant stated that IAVA is the only veteran’s organization that works here and discussed their RRRP program and what it does.

Corey Ortega: NYC Veterans Alliance. Mr. Ortega gave greetings to the board and discussed his organizations first civic leadership workshop held in February. He shared that by mid February they would be putting out a policy agenda. He also briefly discussed the NYServes network and stated that they make referrals to the network. Lastly, he invited the board to visit Civil Hall when it holds its Manhattan meeting.

Rob Piechota: Director, Small Business Development Center at City Tech (CUNY-Brooklyn). Mr. Piechota talked about contracts for veterans. He also discussed how only 400 veterans are registered with SBS, which is feeble numbers. He also discussed the PricewaterhouseCoopers report on supporting veterans owned businesses from late 2014. He stated that we are horrible as a voting block and that we need to state the case for veterans’ small businesses. Lastly, he talked about SBDC (what they are) and stated that contracts are out there.

There were no more public speakers.

Board member Sam Innocent briefly talked about **WorkForce1** and that he is the Veterans Specialist here. He stated that if any veteran is looking for employment to reach out to him. He also stated that if anyone knew of any employers looking for veterans to reach out to him. Lastly, he said that he can help individuals with updating their resumes.

Monique Rada from DVS shared upcoming Theater of War dates/locations and briefly discussed local and national caregivers.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: April 2018

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for April 11, 2018 meeting held at:

Staten Island Borough President's Office
10 Richmond Terrace, #120
Staten Island, NY 10301

Members

Present:

*Todd Haskins (Manhattan) *Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)
Joe Bello (Bronx)

Absent/Unavailable:

*Pat Devine (Bronx) *Charles Hernandez (Bronx)
Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn) *Sam Innocent (Brooklyn)
*John Rowan (Queens) *Mariel Juarez (Brooklyn)

*-- Term Expired.

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:15 PM.
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience.

Old Business: The minutes for the January 2018 VAB meeting in Brooklyn were approved.

New Business: The chair reviewed what the board is and its mandate. The chair also briefly discussed the board's **Annual Report** to the Mayor and Speaker of the City Council. The chair again stated that the majority of the board members three-year terms have expired and that it's difficult to conduct business with the lack of clarity of who's involved. The chair further stated he has had conversations with Commissioner Sutton and the Council regarding this. The chair put forth a motion to send a formal letter from the board asking the Mayor and Speaker to appoint or re-appoint members to the VAB as quickly as possible. Board member Charles Greinsky seconded.

Presentations:

DVS: Assistant Commissioner Othman welcomed everyone in attendance and introduced the DVS members with him. AC Othman discussed DVS's relationship with the VAB and how the board is independent of DVS. AC Othman then discussed his role at DVS and explained how DVS works on Homelessness, Housing, Whole Health and Economic empowerment.

AC Othman then introduced **Colonel Jeff Rynearson**, Deputy Commander for the 353 Civil Affairs Command in Staten Island. Col. Rynearson thanked the board and talked about Civil Affairs (Reserves). He discussed how in natural disasters they lend expertise to help local communities and how they help those on the ground work with and understand civilian populations in an area of operation to lessen the impact of military operations on them during peace, contingency operations and war.

Board member Charles Greinsky discussed the NYC Department of Finance (Real Estate Taxes) and how State Senator Andrew Lanza and Assemblyman Mike Cusick were instrumental in getting the law for property tax exemption passed

NYC Dept. of Finance. A representative from the NYC Department of Finance gave a presentation on the number of tax exemptions, including DRIE and SCRIE and then discussed the various veterans' exemptions that are available. The main three exemptions:

- Honorably Discharged (Served during a specific period) – 15%
- Combat Veteran Exemption (Period of War) – Additional 10%
- Disabled Veteran Exemption – Assessed value multiplied by 50% of the veteran's disability rating.

The representative stated that individuals can qualify for all three exemptions if eligible. The representative also stated that the NOPV – show exemption value went down which caused some panic but the agency has been working on it and veterans did gain more. The representative also discussed the process for veterans to apply and shared that if you submit the application and paperwork by mail it goes to New Jersey and takes about 60 days to get notification from the agency that they have received it and at least 60 days to review.

For more information on veteran's exemptions and to register, visit:

<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/finance/benefits/landlords-veterans.page>

Public Comments: Board member Charles Greinsky hosted this part of the meeting. The following individual(s) gave public comments to the board:

Giovanni Taveras: Mr. Taveras stated that there was no outreach and that he is seeing many veterans on drugs and alcohol. He is also concerned about "fly by night" schools taking advantage of veterans using the GI Bill. He cited the Business Institute in Staten Island. The chair talked about "Veterans on Campus" and stated that they were looking for additional funding. Lastly, Mr. Taveras discussed the NYS WMBE and how the State gives contracts to businesses owned by disabled veterans but one for veterans but NYC does not this program.

Cheryl Dupries: Ms. Dupries represented the Native American Community. Ms. Dupries stated

that veterans are not finding employment and having major issues with housing and that city workers have been unprofessional. She stated that the process needs to change and one-shot deals are not working. Ms. Dupries shared that she retired in 2010 and was deployed four times to Iraq. She worked for Civil Affairs. Lastly, Ms. Dupries discussed PTSD and how programs like CWT (Compensated Work Therapy) are being cut.

Olivia Meier: Ms. Meier talked about the NYC Veterans Alliance and gave an update on their March to City Hall week.

Ryan Hegg: Representing the United War Veterans Council (UWVC) Mr. Hegg discussed the history of the UWVC and how they were revived by Vietnam Veterans in the late 80's to save and restore the NYC Veterans Day Parade. Mr. Hegg explained how over the past five years the UWVC has transitioned from a Vietnam-Veteran led organization to one led by Desert Storm and Post 9/11 veterans. As a result, there has been some recent restructuring - they have a new Executive Director - and they are rebuilding their relationships in the boroughs and organizing non-partisan "platform neutral" events honoring service. UWVC is also focusing on two areas: Legacy and Education and Services (with emphasis on Health and Wellness). The goal is to expand offerings (carefully) with partners.

Mr. Hegg then discussed the **World War I Centennial Parade**. He stated that NYC was central to America's war effort and as such, the UWVC is looking to establish NYC's parade as the gold standard for this observation with a focus on veterans and education. Mr. Hegg stated that UWVC reps will be traveling to various overseas commemorations and working with DVS to identify opportunities to carry official greetings from NYC. Mr. Hegg stated that UWVC has already begun preliminary preparations for this event and that the parade website will be going online in the next couple of weeks. Lastly, Mr. Hegg stated that the goal is to mobilize the NYC Veterans community to not only mark this important historical centennial but to lay the foundation for serving veterans for the next 100 years.

There were no more public speakers.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: September 2018

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for June 12, 2018 meeting held at:

American Legion Post 483
240-08 135th Avenue
Rosedale, NY 11422

Members

Present:

*Todd Haskins (Manhattan)
Joe Bello (Bronx)

*Sam Innocent (Brooklyn)
*John Rowan (Queens)

Absent:

*Pat Devine (Bronx)
Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)
*Mariel Juarez (Brooklyn)

*Charles Hernandez (Bronx)
*Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)

*-- Term Expired.

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:40 PM.
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience.
- Legion Post 483 Commander (Mr. Willie McDonald) gave greetings to the Board members. He also welcomed everyone and stated that he would like to see these meetings held at other posts to share knowledge. The chair thanked Mr. McDonald for hosting the VAB meeting.

Old Business: The minutes for the April 2018 VAB meeting in Staten Island were approved.

New Business: The chair reviewed what the board is and its mandate: eleven-member body, appointed by the Mayor and Council Speaker. The chair pointed out that nine members terms have expired with some resigning. The chair stated that he has advised the Speaker and Mayor on this issue thru Commissioner Sutton. The chair then briefly discussed the board's **Annual Report** to the Mayor and Speaker of the City Council.

Presentations:

DVS: Assistant Commissioner Othman welcomed everyone in attendance and introduced the DVS members with him. AC Othman discussed DVS's relationship with the VAB and how the board is independent of DVS. AC Othman then discussed what DVS does and what his role at DVS is. AC Othman briefly discussed two initiatives: Veterans on Campus and the Mentor a Veteran initiative.

AC Othman then discussed items moving forward which include: Employment outcomes (improving) and Entrepreneurial (Support for Veteran Business Owners).

Commissioner Sutton then spoke about the VAB Process for members. She reiterated what the Chair said by stating that she has reached out to the Mayor and Speaker's Office regarding re-appointments/appointments to the board. She stated that over 35 people applied for the board and individuals were currently being vetted. The Commissioner stated that she hoped we would have notification from the Mayor and Council Speaker within the next couple of weeks.

The chair talked about initiatives from the VAB's Annual Reports (which are online). While there is a total of 20 in the report, the chair focused on six. They are:

- (1) Ending Veteran Homelessness
- (2) Expand Women Owned Businesses
- (3) Veterans on Campus (Fairness)
- (4) Expanding Communications and Outreach
- (5) Veterans economic value to the City (State and City). Doing pilot program in NYC.
- (6) GI Bill BAH for Staten Island that is on par with the rest of the City.

Public Comments: Board member John Rowan hosted this part of the meeting. The following individual(s) gave public comments to the board:

Carlos Carino: Mr. Carino is the Deputy Director for Community Outreach and was representing the City Council Speaker. He thanked the board for their service and was there to observe and listen.

Keith Rivera: Mr. Rivera represented the Queens Vet Center. He shared what the VA does, and what the Vet Center is and does and how it services veterans without charging. Mr. Rivera gave everyone the address for the Queens Vet Center: 75-10 91st Avenue, Woodhaven, NY. Lastly, Mr. Rivera explained how they don't just help veterans but families too. He also took a few questions from the audience.

Commissioner Sutton then stood up to talk about NY Serves and how it should be coming online in late summer/early fall. Its being rebranded to VetConnectNYC. The Commissioner stated that there are 75 providers and the coordinating team is being run by Northwell Health. The Commissioner stated that this is necessary and timely to reach out to veterans, families and servicemembers. This began a free flow conversation on what a veteran is / engagement.

Tyrone Roark: Representing the VA Regional Office, Mr. Roark talked about the VA Regional Office and how they work to help those with MST/Homelessness, etc. Mr. Roark talked about the need for transportation for veterans.

Kristen Rouse: Representing the NYC Veterans Alliance. Ms. Rouse talked about what they are, their calendar and what they are doing. She also stated that if anyone was interested in membership to see her.

Cheryl Dupris: Ms. Dupris represented the Native American Community. Ms. Dupris talked about suicides and stated that veterans are not finding employment and having major issues with housing and that city workers have been unprofessional. Ms. Dupris discussed PTSD and how programs like CWT (Compensated Work Therapy) are being cut and how there needs to be training to recognize PTSD and that there is a need for better statistics.

Tynisia Colon: Representing Team RWB in Queens, Ms. Colon gave a presentation on what RWB does and the Queens Chapter. Ms. Colon also answered several questions from the audience.

There were no more public speakers.

Board member Sam Innocent briefly talked about the Brooklyn Workforce1 recruitment event coming up.

Board member John Rowan talked about Veteran courts.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: September 2018

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for September 26, 2018 meeting held at:

Lincoln Hospital
Bronx, NY

Members

Present:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| * Joe Bello (Bronx) | *John Rowan (Queens) |
| * Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn) | *Charles Hernandez (Bronx) |

Absent:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| * Todd Haskins (Manhattan) | *Charles Greinsky (Staten Island) |
| * Pat Devine (Bronx) | |

*-- Term Expired.

Minutes

- No quorum was established;
- All members appointments have expired at this point

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: November 28, 2019

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary

New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for November 28, 2018 meeting held at:

David N. Dinkins Municipal Building
1 Centre Street
New York, NY

Members

Present:

Todd Haskins (Manhattan)	Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)
* Joe Bello (Bronx)	John Rowan (Queens)
James Hendon (Bronx)	Tiffany Daugherty (Manhattan)
Peter Kauffmann (Queens)	

Absent:

Charles Hernandez (Bronx)	Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)
Annette Tucker Osborne (Brooklyn)	

*-- Term Expired.

Minutes

- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting at 6:23 PM.
- All VAB members, including new members appointed by Mayor de Blasio (November 20, 2018) introduced themselves to the audience.

Old Business: The minutes for the June 2018 VAB meeting in Queens were approved. There are no minutes for the September meeting in the Bronx because the board did not have quorum.

New Business: The chair reviewed what the board is and its mandate: eleven-member body, appointed by the Mayor and Council Speaker. The chair discussed the delay in elections for the board until next year at our first meeting.

Presentations:

DVS: Commissioner Sutton welcomed the new board members and everyone in attendance. She also introduced DVS members in attendance. Commissioner Sutton talked about the Veterans Day announcement regarding VetConnectNYC (formally NYServes). She discussed what it is, what it will do and how it will be an access multiplier for services. The Commissioner stated that the

coordinating team is being run by Northwell Health and that they will be looking to add organizations to VetConnectNYC. The Commissioner also talked about setting up stand up offices in each borough. Finally, Commissioner Sutton talked about the ongoing delays with the GI Bill (BAH). There are 12,000 student veterans and an unknown number of them have not received BAH since August. DVS is working with DSS on a focused assessment to provide a backstop to help those student veterans in need. The Commissioner stated she will keep us posted. The chair thanked the Commissioner and followed up by saying that we need to attract and support student veterans who want to come to NYC for school.

Public Comments: Board member Tiffany Daugherty hosted this part of the meeting. The following individual(s) gave public comments to the board:

Mike Munoz: Mr. Munoz works for the NYC Veterans Alliance. Talked about a lunch and learn that they are holding on the VA. Also asked that if anyone was interested in membership to come see him and that they were having a holiday mixer on December 17.

Cameron Mease: Mr. Mease works for Brooklyn Defenders. They are involved with the Veterans Court in Brooklyn and works with the VA's VJOs. He is looking to network and outreach for services for those veterans that do not qualify for VA benefits. Board member Wendy McClinton talked about the HVRP program.

NYC Dept. of Finance: Sonia Villamil from the NYC Department of Finance gave a presentation on the number of tax exemptions, including DRIE and SCRIE and then discussed the various veterans' exemptions that are available. The main three exemptions:

- Honorably Discharged (Served during a specific period) – 15%
- Combat Veteran Exemption (Period of War) – Additional 10%
- Disabled Veteran Exemption – Assessed value multiplied by 50% of the veteran's disability rating.

Ms. Villamil stated that individuals can qualify for all three exemptions if eligible. Ms. Villamil also discussed the process for veterans to apply and shared that they will help "handhold" the paperwork if veterans are uncomfortable mailing the paperwork to New Jersey.

For more information on veteran's exemptions and to register, visit:

<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/finance/benefits/landlords-veterans.page>

Cheryl Dupris: Ms. Dupris represented the Native American Community. Ms. Dupris talked about the need for veterans to register their DD-214s. She talked about the need to coordinate with advertising so that veterans would register their DD-214s so that people will have the veteran's information when they pass away.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting: February 12, 2019

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary