



# Guam Veterans Commission



Minutes for 25 June 2021 at 1500

Cabinet (Large) Conference Room | Governors Complex | Adelup

Chairman: Jose San Agustin | First Vice: Roland Ada | Second Vice: Dan Mendiola | Finance Officer: Lee Weber

1. **Call the roll of officers and members**
2. **Quorum established**
3. **Pledge of allegiance**
4. **Call to order -- 1505**
5. **Recording of meeting minutes for minutes purposes ONLY**
6. **Review/discussion of previous minutes 28 May 2021**
  - a. Motion to approve by Lee Weber
  - b. Second by GY671
  - c. All in favor, none against
7. **Recognition of guests/Community**
  - a. Julian Bordallo, Casework Manager from Congressman Michael San Nicolas' office.
  - b. AmeriCorps VETCORPS
8. **Report of Officers**
  - a. Chairman
    - i. We are beginning to see shrinking in numbers of members. When we started off, there were some folks from an organization that wanted us to start doing an outreach so that we can start improving and developing our organizations. One way to do that is to show up at the commission meeting so that we can continue to discuss that interest. Chairman would like for GOVA to take a look at the possibility of upcoming months and when we are able to do this. We have non-profit organizations out there that are doing their own thing in the interest of Veterans. What's happening though, is there are confusing messages out there in doing the job of what GOVA is doing. I want to make sure that we collaborate all this information to GOVA and GVC so that we speak the same language. If there is an organization out there doing their own thing and it is something that will profit the Veterans and their families, we welcome that!! It's very important for us to come together as a commission and make sure that the information that is being disseminated out there is factual and not misleading. It becomes our responsibility to pull aside whoever it is that is presenting and inform them the correct information so we are not giving Veterans and their families false hope.
    - ii. I've been continuing to engage with Veterans, along with their families and friends, that have yet to come forward and say that they need help. Although it's painful to report, just in the past month there have been 3 individuals that passed away. Among those 3, the family of a Marine Vietnam Veteran kept asking if he needed help, to which the



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Veteran said that he doesn't. Chairman mentions that he passed away from a diagnosis and illness that is Agent Orange related. The Veteran had the mentality of declining help so it can be given to those who need it. Chairman contacted GOVA 4 days ago to make contact with another Veteran to do a home visit. This Veteran was a Navy Submariner who served from 1972-1983 and currently has stage 4 cancer.

- iii. Just yesterday, Chairman was informed that there is an Army Veteran who has been injured from Afghanistan and doesn't want any help at all and wants nothing to do with the VA. Chairman is soliciting us as an organization and as an individual, that if these people do surface, we do our part in encouraging them to seek help. Many of them are possibly in denial and/or want nothing to do with the military once they get out. It becomes our obligation to inform them that they are owed something and it's our time to take care of them.
- iv. Chairman reports of a very high-ranking Veteran who has been perusing eyeglasses from the VA for 2 years, but to no avail. He goes to get his prescription and in turn the VA says he needs to have another eye exam although the Veteran was just there to get his glasses. Chairman feels that as a commission, we need to figure out what the problem is here. Chairman addresses Julian Bordallo from Congressman MSN's office and asks for a meeting to discuss what the commission can do to get his side of the house to help situations such as this, as it is not going to cease anytime soon. Chairman includes that he and all this commission is determined to stand up and continue to go forward in identifying where the issue is and what can be done to address it.
- v. Chairman reports that there is a representative from CBOC that requested a Zoom meeting for this meeting. Chairman says that because he doesn't want to burden the Government of Guam and for now, the meetings will be in person; which is what's preferred. Chairman further adds that since they do work in CBOC, they are more accustomed to COVID safety protocols.
- vi. Finance Officer, Lee Weber, asks what is the Marine unit for the first Veteran the Chairman mentioned.
  - ↳ Chairman replies with, 1/9 (1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Marines) – The Walking Dead. Chairman indicates that there are only a few of them left. Chairman further adds that he doesn't think it was a matter of "pride" for the Veteran but merely due to being happy with who he is and to give to those who lost their limbs.
  - ↳ GY671 John Conception replies that there is more money to go around for everyone and that we shouldn't put Veterans aside for those reasons. Mr. Conception further adds that there needs to be more education on what's out there.



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- vii. Chairman indicates that education is what we need when going out to do outreaches. The other part to it is getting Veterans properly linked to a Veteran Organization that suits them. Taking care of each other is a good reason to be part of these organization. While fees may be associated, Chairman states that it can be delt with some other way.
- viii. Executive Director for WPVCF and AmeriCorps/VETCORPS, Marlene Rivo, chimes in regarding eyeglasses for the high-ranking individual... She indicates that she has gotten her eyeglasses from the VA and that their process is actually very streamlined. Ms. Rivo got a referral from her VA doctor. The VA informed her of a provider (Dr. Lombard's clinic) who is part of the care in the community and she received her eye exam. She was told to choose the glasses what she wanted and since VA's limit is \$150, she would have to pay out of pocket for the excess. Ms. Rivo further adds that information we need to know is, does the person has a VHIC card and what is his percentage? Does the person have patience to navigate the VA Benefits website to find out? Ms. Rivo asks if it's something as simple as that, do we refer to the Congressman's office or can it be addressed within this commission?
  - ↳ Chairman responds that he always mentions that if it can be delt within our level, we should take action. If it's above and beyond, it should be taken up to the Congressman's office.
  - ↳ Mr. Concepcion adds that a good rule of thumb is that if something is taking more than 2 weeks, do a secure message via MyHealthVet directly to their PACT (Patient Aligned Care Team) team. It is Mr. Concepcion's recommendation because they do have 3-5 days to answer and it's always recorded. He further adds that 2 years is just way too long.
  - ↳ Chairman concurs with Mr. Concepcion and advises those who go out and do outreaches to take this information with them and don't limit yourselves with what's on your agenda – take these instances that are actually happening and share with the community.
  - ↳ Treasurer states in that while the responses are quick, a lot of Veterans don't utilize MyHealthVet.
  - ↳ GOVA's Tanya Eubanks adds on to the Chairman's response about a Veteran who passed away and didn't have service-connected disabilities because it wasn't perused until the very end. She mentions coming across several Veterans who have the mindset of giving the benefits to the ones who truly need it. Mrs. Eubanks stresses to those Veterans that in the event they pass away from a service-connected disability, it can enable their surviving spouse to receive benefits afterwards. She further adds that this is one way to take care of the



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family by ensuring that the Veteran follows through with their claims. Even though some Veterans may be content with whatever service-connection they do have, things may progress throughout the years. This is where filing for a secondary claim comes in, or filing for an increased rating. For the surviving families, Mrs. Eubanks states that it's important for Veterans to stay on track because the families can potentially be taken care of after the fact. If the Veteran passes away from a non-service-connected condition, the family would theoretically receive a burial reimbursement of up to \$300, whereas a service-connected death would result in up to \$2,000 in burial reimbursement on top of potential Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC).

- ↳ This is definitely one thing to push out there when doing outreaches, which GOVA intends to start but it's important to first have a policy in place. Mrs. Eubanks indicates that GOVA will establish a SOP for outreach because they want to ensure they are held accountable and have a process to follow when going out and presenting to the community. GOVA will collaborate with all Veteran Organizations, including the Benefits Office in Tiyan, to stop the spread of misinformation. Mrs. Eubanks shares that they've had Veterans come to GOVA getting very upset because they were promised certain things; come to find out that they were denied for everything.
- ↳ Mrs. Eubanks says that when it comes time to filing an appeal, the person who helps the Veteran outside of the State Office is not able to represent them due to not being accredited by the VA. Accredited VA Reps have the legal ability to prepare, present and prosecute claims under laws administered by VA. GOVA has had hearings with Veterans before the Veterans Law Judge these past few weeks with a big gap in their file. The Veteran may have started with us in 2006 and then went elsewhere. Now that it's time to present for their appeal, there's so much missing information. Mrs. Eubanks reiterates the importance of collaboration to prevent instances like this from happening and includes that it's one of GOVA's biggest mission moving forward. ***(This portion to be continued under GVAO report)***
- ↳ Chairman therefore tasks Mrs. Eubanks to initiate collaboration.
- ↳ MOPH and K57 VetTalk Host, Tom Devlin, shares that they get beat down a lot on the radio show when Veterans call in. What Mr. Devlin has gotten consistently on the show is that they've lost confidence on the Federal side in certain areas, not the local side. The COVID vaccine issue has been brought up on the radio as well as a discussion with the Admiral. Mr. Devlin shares that he



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received a call from Hawaii to get the COVID vaccine. Because he has a house out in Hawaii (thinking he's there in Hawaii) to make an appointment. Here on Guam, when you have on the average 3,500 Veterans that utilize the CBOC, you can get the CBOC clinic that has nurses, doctors and technicians to give 3,500 a vaccine whether they go there once or twice, and it can be administered in the parking lot. How long have we had this COVID issue? Mr. Devlin states that the problem is that Veterans already know that. The attitude in many cases is that the Federal VA can't take care of us when we most need them on this small island of Guam. Mr. Devlin further adds that they've failed, simply, a small island in giving that small island of Veterans the vaccine; even though Veterans can go get it from Public Health. The moral contract that the Veterans Administration has with the Veterans of the United States of America, is that when we need them the most, they'll be there to help us. But when we needed the VA the most this time, to get the vaccine, they've dropped the ball. Mr. Devlin states that it's not the workers but to a greater degree, it's somebody in Washington because they've given these vaccines to the CBOC and hospitals in the states; why not on Guam? Guam, a small island that has a VA clinic, doctor, nurse and technicians... Veterans on Guam, specifically, could not get COVID vaccine if they wanted. Mr. Devlin gets this topic often on the radio show and he calls the Congressman out on the air. Mr. Devlin also adds that he tells the callers to call the Congressman's office (if they ever answer the phones). When was the last time the Veterans community heard from the Congressman's office? He states that this is a big thing. Sitting here as a group, trying to discuss these things, sometimes you've got to "make it simple stupid". Mr. Devlin adds that they give Veterans the flu shot in the parking lot. The idea is, the commission needs to respectfully get tough with elected leaders because a lot of Veterans feel that the Veterans Administration on the Federal side has dropped the ball on something as small as this; it's not a million-dollar surgery.

- b. First Vice – NTR, currently off island.
- c. Second Vice
  - i. There's a lot to learn from this commission just by listening to everyone. Second Vice supports all that has been said. There is a lot of things to consider: where we are at and how far away are we with the distribution point, which is very important. Second Vice states that we are not a standalone VA entity and that Honolulu is responsible for us because everything goes through them in most cases (e.g., money, materials, etc.). Second Vice speaks to Mr. Devlin's comment in saying it's possible that Honolulu did not



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properly regulate the vaccine procedure. A bulk of the vaccines were given to Honolulu because they are the Pacific breakdown point and medical services for our VA here on Guam and this region. We go to Tripler for almost everything.

- ii. In every situation that we have had in this commission, Second Vice believes that just by making the meeting, we are gaining a lot of knowledge to go on-on-one with a lot of the Veteran issues. The Chairman can't go out every single day to have coffee and breakfast with all the Veterans. But, when any of us do happen to engage with a Veteran who isn't knowledgeable with procedures or has been trying to get answers, if you happen to know then tell that person. Help that person. Second Vice advises not to send them to attend the commission meeting and complain because it's the wrong way. Direct these Veterans to those who are in fact knowledgeable of whatever the situation is.
- iii. Second Vice asks Mrs. Eubanks how many at GOVA do the same work that she does.
  - ↳ Mrs. Eubanks reports that there are 4 accredited reps at the Asan office but on Guam there are a total of 5.
- iv. Second Vice asks if we have standardized meeting so we are all current with new information.
  - ↳ Mrs. Eubanks indicates that they all do in fact receive the same information.
- v. Second Vice asks if GOVA receives periodic training to be updated on new procedures and annual trainings.
  - ↳ Mrs. Eubanks responds that they have to in order to maintain accreditation, which is a requirement of VA's Office of General Council to renew their TRIP (Training, Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation) training every year.
- vi. Second Vice asks if we are being "hurt" by someone coming to GOVA informing you that there is someone out there telling them the wrong things? Does that complicate your work?
  - ↳ Mrs. Eubanks states that it has nothing to do with us at the office and it's the Veterans they care about. When they come in and are so frustrated to the verge of wanting to give up, our office attempts to defuse the situation and tries to give them a positive outcome. Mrs. Eubanks further adds that the ultimate decision lies with the Department of Veterans Affairs, not with the State office. It is their job at GOVA to make sure they give Veterans proper guidance, the most accurate information on processes and eligibility criteria, and thoroughness when preparing their claims. Mrs. Eubanks often tells her clients that painting a picture to the VA is sometimes necessary because they weren't there during the Veteran's time in service. Overall, it will show the current disability and how it



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relates to their time in service. A lot of the times, a Veteran will come back because their claim was denied. It's important for them to fully read their denial letter because not only will it tell them why they were denied, there could be favorable findings which will tell the Veteran what's needed in order to prove service connection, and then our office will work with the Veteran on that piece.

d. Finance Officer

- i. Finance Officer reports that we're still broke.
- ii. To continue the previous discussion, Finance Officer is not aware of any significant local VA driven educational outreach program and asks the commission if anyone has ever heard of one, to which no one responds. Finance Officer states that one of the biggest problems he faced as a disabled Veteran is that he literally had to search for information. If there is someone in charge of the CBOC office, the Finance Officer is not aware, hasn't heard of anything and doesn't know if they exist; perhaps it's someone in Honolulu. The problem he sees is that there is no program to reach out to Veterans on an ongoing basis telling them where to go, what to look for, what to ask for, who to talk to about what kind of problems you have – Finance Officer has never heard of such without finding on his own which is very frustrating. He also was one of those Veterans who says he doesn't need anything but then having been approached by some disabled Veterans who have reminded him that they know his history and that he needs to do this... you've earned it and paid the high price. However, that's not happening and we need to find out how to get it out there. Finance Officer adds that it can't get out there by means of this commission because there's no money and no one is giving the commission money to do it. Somebody is empowering us to do this and sits in her office, but talk is cheap. Give the commission something to use to get the work out to people. We can probably get a free dollar for every dollar we spend easily, or a 2 for 1, but we got to have something to start with. Finance Officer concludes with a person can go to their boss to let him know that his advertising could get him a lot more votes if directed in a different way.
  - ↳ Second Vice indicates that some time ago there used to be a 2-hour VA orientation over at CBOC and as part of continuing education, it went on every 3 months. The purpose was to getting a Veteran a VA card and all the resources necessary to get them started. It was a good means of communication but Veterans back then didn't like it so the program went under.
  - ↳ Financial Officer reiterates the fact that these Veterans were the ones who didn't want help and would rather give it to those who need it. He further adds that if there were a community outreach that gets to the Veteran mothers,



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fathers, children, spouses, etc. who will tell them to stop saying “no I don’t need this” and just giving those families the opportunity to bring that entity and their family member together; it doesn’t exist. Finance Officer further adds that if the Congressman really wants to do something, then he should get on the stick and get a communication program for Veterans families, friends and loved ones in order to get the information out there so they can get Veterans the care that they’ve earned and deserve.

- ↳ Ms. Rivo chimes in on the topic of outreach and agrees with what the Finance Officer says about education. She states that their federally funded subsidiary, AmeriCorps/VETCORPS, being in their first year actually has 4 focused areas geared towards Veterans and military families. Ms. Rivo says that when it’s her time to speak, she will concede her time to Andrea Cruz, who is the Program Director for AmeriCopr/VETCORPS, to elaborate more.
- ↳ Chairman requests for Ms. Rivo’s program to have a sit-down with GOVA so we can learn about what’s happening and discuss how can we develop an educational program and not just a lip service. He adds that this invitation is extended to Veteran Organizations and will be outside the Veterans Commission.
- ↳ Ms. Rivo explains that there is an issue because they are a federally funded program with protocols to follow. They have coordinated with the VA office from the very beginning and have been outreaching but their program is under the Serve Guam Commission, also under the Governor’s Office, and cannot be surveilled or tracked by the VA Office.
- ↳ Chairman agrees and understands but feels that it’s smart to collaborate and work together to create an efficient program and not shortcut it so the people can get what they need to know.
- ↳ Ms. Rivo reiterates her program being federally funded 100% and expresses that there are compliance measures they must follow. They can collaborate and partner with the commission and the State office but they cannot be the reporting body.
- ↳ Chairman prefers to utilize the entire hour to talk about things that are sensible and beneficial to the community and the Veterans.

## 9. Community Input

- a. Chairman invites Mr. Bordallo to share some of the things the Congressman’s office can offer us in terms of mending some of the issues being addressed.



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- i. Mr. Bordallo expresses his thanks for allowing him to be present. He shares that he would like to first speak to the commission as an 8-year active duty Navy Veteran who just came back to the island in 2017. He respectfully states that he doesn't want to represent in the capacity of the Congressman staffer and would like to share his experience when he came home to Guam transitioning out of the Navy. Mr. Bordallo was medically discharged and went through TAP (Transition Assistance Program) class which is mandated by law and every Veteran must attend. These classes prepare and educate them on what they're going to face when they get out of the service i.e., what they need to do, what they need to gather, what documents to obtain prior to getting their DD 214 since it won't be accessible once they're out, how to sign up for eBenefits, getting their records intact, linking up with the PEBLO (Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer) from the VA, Social Security, Department of Labor to do a workshop for Veterans, etc. Mr. Bordallo states that he's unsure when TAPs for transitioning service members came into law. He adds that the issue is prior to the mandate for those Veterans due to the lack of information. There are fewer service organizations here on Guam compared to the mainland where there are more funding and bigger organizations who are backed with better funding. It's hard to get information here and instead get the runaround. Mr. Bordallo says that he didn't even know what GOVA was without doing his own research. He concurs with the Financial Officer in saying that the underlying problem is education. He further adds that on the federal end, the congressional offices perspective in terms of advertisement, it's not the Congressman's prerogative to do so because that's not his agency. If the Congressman puts out wrong information on VA benefits, then he bares that burden. With the VA and relaying to the community what programs are out there for the Veterans, our office can assist and communicate with the VA and get with the constituent on a casework level to educate them. However, we cannot advertise what the VA has to offer because that is not our agency.
- ii. Mr. Bordallo speaks to the vaccine issue brought up earlier by Mr. Devlin and says that he will collect an email addresses so he can try to get an official response out. Mr. Bordallo emphasizes that the Congressman was alarmed as to why the allocations for Veterans mandated by law was not given to Guam through the CBOC. He further adds that there was a lot of red tape and numerous meetings with the heads of Honolulu VA. They've also contacted the CDC to track down where the allocations are. Nonetheless, Mr. Bordallo will be in contact with their leadership team to get an official response to Mr. Devlin.
  - ↳ Chairman says to bring it up at the next commission meeting.



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- ↳ Mr. Devlin mentions that he's interviewed the Congressman on the radio show and that he has his email address. Mr. Devlin says that he hasn't received a newsletter and adds that he's not the only one.
- ↳ GY671's John Concepcion chimes in with saying that they are to address the concerns from here on out and to provide them with their contact information.
- ↳ Mr. Devlin speaks his personal opinion in saying that it's not amongst anyone personally, but with the Congressman, it's a little too late. He adds that he's not the only Veteran who shares the same sentiment.
- ↳ Financial Officer asks for a show of hands on how many Veterans in this room have received the same discharge briefing that Mr. Bordallo did.
- ↳ GY671's Roy Gamboa shares that it was right around 2007-2008 when congress required TAP.
- ↳ Chairman adds that in 2006 it was being done in Okinawa.
- ↳ Chairman thanks Mr. Bordallo for his attendance as well as Mr. Concepcion for inviting him to the commission meeting.

## 10. Report of Committees

### a. GY671 – Suicide Awareness and Homelessness Initiative

- i. Mr. Gamboa reports that Ray Shinohara and John Concepcion assisted an individual who was homeless in getting him connected with WestCare, getting him clothes, putting money in his pocket, getting him food and assisting with transportation. Helping every single Veteran on a one-to-one basis is great but can be a challenge. What will work well is acknowledging what our limits are – coming out of our own individual pocket is noble however, there are more than enough organizations and groups out there that should be able to assist.
- ii. Mr. Gamboa states that Suicide Awareness and Homelessness Initiative will tie into what GY671 is going to do this coming Liberation Day. They attempt to do something at least every month to reach out. Mr Gamboa announces that GY671 is now taking over Battle Buddy Talk via Zoom, which is held once a week (Wednesday night) and open to all Veterans. You don't have to turn your camera on, there is no psychiatrist or social worker sitting in on the meeting. Mr. Gamboa says that there have been quite a few Veterans who have joined this meeting thinking that they were alone and the only ones suffering until joining the Battle Buddy Talk, which really helped them.
- iii. With regard to the Homelessness Initiative, Mr. Gamboa attends the OHAPP (Office of Homelessness Assistance and Poverty Prevention) every couple of weeks that the Lt.



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Governor's Office is in charge of and stays in communication with Sarah Thomas Nededog. He states that overall there was a 3 million dollar grant that was already awarded for a non-congregant homeless shelter and Veterans will also be able to take part in that that program.

- iv. Mr. Gamboa announces that GY671 is inviting all to join them in their event. They will be taking a leisurely stroll from the National Historic Park in Asan and take a hike stopping at 7 significant spots along the way. MOHP has offered a watering station by Skinner Plaza and there will also be one out in the front of Adelup. The hike will culminate at the back of Paseo where there will be food trucks, Veteran owned small business, etc. It's all about building a network.

### 11. GVAO Report

- a. Executive Administrative Assistant to Director Tim Aguon, Michelle Aguon, reports on his behalf the following:
  - i. Total Veteran burials for calendar year 2021, to date = 96
  - ii. Total Veteran burials for calendar year 2020 = 209
- b. Continuation from pg. 5 of Chairman's report: Mrs. Eubanks reports that last month the Department of Veterans Affairs sent a list to GOVA of all the Veterans who are going to be scheduled for appeals. Majority of those Veterans didn't have a POA established with their office. Mrs. Eubanks states that VA uses the term POA which is essentially an Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's Representative (VA Form 21-22). Without that, we are unable to represent the Veteran before a Veterans Law Judge. She further adds that because no POA was established prior to the Veteran filing an appeal, it required them to research the Veterans case and in order to properly represent them.
- c. Mrs. Eubanks expresses GOVA's thanks to all who have donated for Memorial Day. Those are as follows:
  - i. Cases of water from various Veteran Organizations
  - ii. 5 gallons of paint from various Veteran Organizations and private
  - iii. Umbrellas from Bank of Guam, Docomo and GTA
  - iv. Porta potty from Todu Mouleg
  - v. Burial flags for the cemetery's avenue of flags from the Director of VA's Honolulu Regional Office
    - ↳ FYI: These flags are only to be flown in the avenue of flags for the purpose of Veterans Day and Memorial Day ceremonies. More information here: <https://www.cem.va.gov/cem/grants/flags.asp>



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- vi. Monetary donations from various Veteran Organizations = \$850
  - ↳ Mrs. Eubanks reports that there was more money spent than there were in donations.
- vii. Receipts and certificate of appreciations for those in the commission will be passed out at the end of the meeting.
- viii. GOVA continues to wait on non-appropriated cemetery funds (reimbursement) from the VA for Veteran burials. Mrs. Eubanks states that the VA had a heavy backlog since COVID and only very recently have they been receiving courtesy copy letters from the VA, which they've been getting in bulk. GOVA has been sifting through those in hopes to find a check from the VA, but to no avail.
- ix. Chairman requests for a full breakdown on all expenses, status of equipment, at the next commission meeting.
  - ↳ Ms. Aguon reports that right now the equipment and supplies needed (some of which is purchased out of GOVA staff pockets) are a lowering devise, excavator, concrete and sand to make crypt covers and caulk.
  - ↳ Chairman reiterates the need for a full report to the commission by next meeting of GOVA's expenditures, equipment and their status, amount of appropriated funds, special funds, cemetery report. If there is no refund, simply state it as such. Chairman further adds that we shouldn't be spending our own money to keep the cemetery operating and to reach out to the commission.
  - ↳ Second Vice asks the Chairman when he left his position of Director for GOVA, how much money did they have, to which the Chairman responds that the cemetery fund had close to \$90,000.00 when he left back in 2017. Chairman further adds that this is why a report is important because it's supposed to be used only for the cemetery, not to rent the building or to offset the Government of Guam. The reason why Chairman did this as he exited, is to provide the next Director enough funds to keep the current place running. He says that this is the reason for perusing this avenue. Bottom line, a civilian and not working for the Government, they can spend their own money but GOVA's employees should not.

## 12. Veterans Organization Updates

### a. VVA 668

- i. Monthly meeting will be second Friday of each month, same time and place.



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- b. VFW 2917 -- Not present
- c. American Legion -- Not present
- d. MOPH -- Not present
  - i. Chairman request for Mrs. Eubanks to do a reminder phone call for next meeting.
- e. USAF Association
  - i. Anthony Quenga acknowledges Second Vice and Mrs. Eubanks in being correct in having to hold a Veterans hand to help them and reports that just before the pandemic hit, there were at least 5 local Veterans who were “*māmāhlao*” to go get it done. Mr. Quenga shares that he and GOVA’s VSO Ron Quinata went to his uncle’s house because the Veteran felt more comfortable there and as Mr. Quinata was asking questions, Mr. Quenga assisted in filling out the application. Mr. Quenga states that it really helped the Veteran out, considering it was right when the pandemic hit.
  - ii. Mr. Quenga makes a favorable mention pertaining to Congressman San Nicolas that he takes a hard hit all the time. Mr. Quenga says that he can deny what he hasn’t done but Congressman did meet with him 3 or 4 times. In one of those meetings, Congressman was able to urge the Secretary of the Airforce to do something to which the Congressman was very helpful in that respect.
  - iii. Another favorable to Congressman San Nicolas, last year Mr. Quenga was on his death bed and the Congressman called him at Naval Hospital and they spoke for 40 mins. Congressman said for him to be patient and focus on getting healthy. Mr. Quenga shares this because the good things that people do are never publicized, and so, he states this for the record.
- f. 3rd Marine
  - i. Chairman reports that they are doing a burial ceremony to pay tribute for the late Marine Cpl. Michael S. Burgess who passed away in June. He is being cremated today and interment to follow tomorrow at 1000 at the Guam Veterans Cemetery. Cpl. Mike served in 1968 and was the co-owner of the Tire Depot. Chairman shares that the wife wanted a uniform as a remembrance of him that he solely deserved. As a result, Chairman was able to provide her with a complete set of dress blues.
  - ii. 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division meeting is set for tomorrow at 1300 at Pete Trinidad’s residence in Mangialo.



# Guam Veterans Commission



Minutes for 25 June 2021 at 1500

Cabinet (Large) Conference Room | Governors Complex | Adelup

Chairman: Jose San Agustin | First Vice: Roland Ada | Second Vice: Dan Mendiola | Finance Officer: Lee Weber

g. Navy League

- i. Finance Officer reports that they are still battling with an office down at Naval Station and perhaps come about with the command changes.
- ii. A presentation was made this morning and the National Award for JROTC went to Father Duenas (again) who had the best JROTC Unit in the United States.

h. Barrigada Veterans -- Not present

i. Dededo Veterans -- Not present

j. Korean Vietnam Veterans -- NTR

k. IAPGVP -- Not present

l. GY671

- i. Mr. Concepcion shares his frustration with the commission because ever since he's been coming to these meetings, he witnesses it time and time again that a representative from a Senator's, Congressman, Governor's office, etc., gets slated. Mr. Concepcion adds that it's not their fault because they're coming here to see what they can do. We often wonder: Where are they at? Why are they not helping me out? Why are they not answering my emails? Why are they not answering my calls? Mr. Concepcion announces that he's growing tired of it and if it persists, he won't be a part of the commission. Mr. Concepcion says that Mr. Bordallo took time out to come here and while he understands people may think that behind closed doors nothing is happening, regardless of who it is and without defending the Congressman's office, it just needs to stop. If we are going to ask for help, and on the contrary start giving unnecessary gestures, yelling, and the like, no one is going to want to help us. Mr. Concepcion reiterates that he's tired of it and wants nothing to do with this commission if it's going to continue. Mr. Bordallo came here to take notes and pass along information. This behavior of kicking the messenger is continuously happening to dozens of representatives and as a result, they never come back. Then we wonder where are they and why are they not helping. Mr. Concepcion says that if we want something done and if we want help, we need to treat them with respect and dignity – then maybe we'll get some help. He further adds that he did in fact walk through their doors, was assisted, was heard and discussed solutions instead of complaining. That is why Mr. Bordallo was here at this meeting.

- ↳ Second Vice chimes in asking Mr. Concepcion not to detach himself from this commission because they are depending on him and his group to link up the older Veterans with the new ones, which is important. Second Vice asks Mr. Concepcion to reconsider that thought.



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- ↳ Mr. Concepcion states that the tactic behind it is to not to go in and shoot all the time.
  - ↳ Chairman shares that when he first took over the commission, he did indicate that the voice of every individual in the room will be heard and that every comment or recommendation will be taken and tabled. He recognizes that every individual will be rendered appropriate respect. Chairman thanks Mr. Concepcion for bringing this up, which makes perfect sense since we are now dealing with a different slew of folks, agencies and organization and we need each other to come together and make things happen. Chairman offers his apologies and will be in contact with Mr. Bordallo.
  - ↳ Mr. Gamboa fully coincides with Mr. Concepcion and sees the frustration being at a boiling point. He adds that the commission is supposed to exist to assist and help Veterans and Veteran Organization, but it's hard to see it. Mr. Gamboa has been attending these meeting for many years and states that we are going to continue to exist with or without the commission. He adds that we come here as a courtesy because we want to provide the commission with what we are doing and how we've been helping Veterans. Mr. Gamboa says that kicking down the non-Veterans to some extent is not helping our cause and our image. For many years, no one wants to listen because there is no unified voice. One of the biggest things we are trying to do is bring every one together, no matter what era they came from. When we have that power of 14-15% of the total voting population of this island, nobody cares or listens because they get beaten up all the time. A lot of the naysayers are not in attendance anymore. He adds that we come here with the most positive outlook and get sick and tired of hearing nonsense and complaints where it's just easier to tune it out. What we need to continue making progress and having the positive outweigh negative.
- ii. With that being said, Mr. Gamboa announces some good news! Reading on behalf of the Lt. Governor is a letter addressed to the Guam Veterans Council, Guam Office of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans of Guam, announcing the U.S. Department of Interior's award of 3.3 million in funding for 17 different projects that includes \$40,000.00 for the Veteran Affairs Accredited Representative Training (See attached Letter from Lt. Governor). Mr. Gamboa reports that this is a grant he worked on and is very near and dear to him. Help is on the way!! He adds that if anyone doesn't have a VSO in their organization, we will be able to train them. Guidelines will be established very soon. This training will be the same that GOVA VSRs have gone through. A maintenance grant will be forthcoming to ensure continuation of training that comes



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year after year. The monies for this will include equipment for the selected individuals to work effectively and efficiently. A space will also be provided and when it's not in use by the trained individuals, it can certainly be reserved to hold meetings with Veteran Organizations.

## **13. Ex-Officio Members**

- a. Program Director of AmeriCops/VETCORPS, Andrea Cruz, announces that they are currently recruiting 70 members to assist the Western Pacific Veterans Community Foundation in their efforts to assist in the focus areas on homeless Veterans, environmental stewardship, disaster preparedness and capacity building. Capacity building involves us in working with organizations and collaborating, so for what we do not offer, we can point them in the right direction. In regards to Finance Officer's concern, one of their special projects outside from farming, is for Veterans to have basic fundamental skills of computer which is tied to their required special Saturday projects (every 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month) to have a workshop on basic skills. Ms. Cruz solicits opportunities to accommodate the 70 members they are recruiting. Requirements include 17 years of age or older, U.S. Citizen and the will to serve our Veterans. A stipend of \$528 is included for being a member and an education award of up to \$3, 097.50. This program is held accountable to high standards their services are monitored by the Federal Government.

## **14. Auxiliary Members**

- a. VFW Auxiliary 1509's Rosie Fejeran reports that their organization has been accepted to be a Group Sponsorship/Location Coordinator for Wreaths Across America!!

## **15. Unfinished Business**

- a. Korean War Veterans License Plate (GOVA)
- b. Off Island Travel Checklist (Table)
- c. Rev and Tax Non-Profit Certification Documents
  - i. ↑ Chairman reports that all unfinished business will remain until we decide that it's done with or no need for us to take further action.

## **16. New Business**

## **17. Announcements**

## **18. Conclusion**

- a. Chairman concludes in expressing his appreciation everyone's input. He sees that a lot of progress is being made and is requests for help from all the organizations, like GY671 for



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keeping an eye on his back and making sure we are not going astray and that we continue to do good things for Veterans, their families and the organizations that exists.

**19. Next Meeting**

- a. 23 July 2021, 1500 in the large conference room at Adelup.

**20. Adjournment -- 1641**

**LOURDES A. LEON GUERRERO**  
GOVERNOR



**JOSHUA F. TENORIO**  
LT. GOVERNOR

**UFISINAN I MAGA'HÅGAN GUÅHAN**  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF GUAM

June 25, 2021

Guam Veterans Council  
Guam Office of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans of Guam

Buenas yan Hafa Adai Veterans,

It is my honor to announce that on June 23, 2021 The US Department of Interior awarded over \$3.3 Million in funding for 17 different projects to benefit government agencies, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations. Included in this award is a grant to fund the training of 10 VA accredited Representatives for our island. This award also includes funding for office equipment to allow for each VA Accredited Representative the ability to assist veterans efficiently.

Currently, our island has 5 registered VA Accredited Representatives serving an estimated 10,000 Veterans. However, it is estimated that an additional 12,000 or more Veterans are not registered with the Guam Office of Veterans Affairs. This is key to providing Veterans with assistance to services, benefits, and healthcare through the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

Securing this award is the first step in our commitment to helping the Veterans of Guam. To ensure that services are available to our Veterans, we are actively seeking to establish a one-stop center that Veteran Service Organizations can use for meetings, training sessions, and presentations. Moreover, the 10 additional VA Accredited Representatives will be able to utilize the space and equipment to better serve our Veteran population.

My team at the Guam State Clearinghouse in collaboration with the Guam Office of Veterans Affairs will coordinate with all Guam Veteran Service Organizations to establish a list of potential candidates for training. All necessary qualifications and standards will be followed based on the US Department of Veterans Affairs guidelines.

Senseramente,

Joshua F. Tenorio  
Lieutenant Governor