



# Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee Minutes

February 20, 2025 Microsoft Teams  
Live Streamed via City's website:  
<http://www.elpasotexas.gov/videos>  
Television on City 15

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofelpasotx/videos>

## MINUTES

### Members Present

Ron Jackson  
George Elsaesser  
Donna Juarez  
Donald Brown  
Melissa Harcrow

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1. **Call to Order.** 10:09 AM
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Roll Call.** 4 of 9 - Quorum not met.
4. **Citizen Comment Period: El Paso County Veteran of the Year- Debo' A. Wakefield-**  
Discussion of Old Glory Memorial, located on Diana & US-54, request for district sponsorships to maintain flags, Honor Flight Advocacy, and advocacy for veterans filing for VA disability claims, particularly aging Vietnam-era veterans. **El Paso County Veterans Advisory Board Update – Mr. Barnes-** Rebuilding the Advisory Board with new members, strengthening collaboration with county and city leadership, and enhancing veteran outreach through community partnerships. **Mu Beta Phi Military Fraternity – Mr. Lazarus Fraser-** New chapter in El Paso as of December 2023 that focuses on community service and veteran support. **Gentiva Hospice – Nicole Castaneda-** Only VA-contracted hospice serving El Paso, services include end-of-life care, family bereavement support, and VA benefit assistance, challenges with VA approval processes, leading to delays in hospice access. **Don Haskins Elementary School – Military Student Valentine's Day Project-** Students created handwritten Valentine's Day cards for veterans, cards distributed to Veterans Treatment Court, VA Homeless Program, and local veterans' organizations, students shared their experiences as military children and why they wanted to support veterans.
5. **El Paso VA Health Care Clinic Update – Mark Rielo**
  - a. VA services remain fully operational despite executive orders.
  - b. Women's PACT Act VA Enrollment Event – March 15, Beast Rec Center..
  - c. Congresswoman Veronica Escobar's VA Event – February 28, Nolan Richardson Rec Center.
  - d. New VA Health Clinic construction update: Steel framework to begin March 2025 near William Beaumont.
  - e. New women's health clinic and urgent care planned for the East Side.
6. **Monthly Subcommittee Updates:**
  - a. Employment: Interest in veteran employment initiatives with City of El Paso & Texas Workforce Commission. Plan to host a Veteran Trade Fair in

Paul Albright - Chief Military Officer

City 1 | 300 N Campbell St. | El Paso, Texas 79901 | (915) 212-1447



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- collaboration with Economic Development Office.
- b. Homelessness: No meeting held this month.
- c. Mental Health: Veteran detox services require pre-authorization through VA or veterans will receive a personal bill and VA authorizing 5-day intensive outpatient treatment for eligible veterans.
- 7. Annual Council Update Scheduled for April 28, 2025:**
  - a. Discussion on Council Update.
- 8. Military and Veterans Affairs Division Update**
  - a. El Paso Days in Austin (legislative event)
  - b. Military family designation as a protected class initiative
  - c. Bridge Fellowship Program for transitioning service members – next cohort begins in April 2025.
  - d. Borderplex Veterans & Family Caregiver Expo – March 21-22.
  - e. Coffee with Veterans Initiative.
- 9. Announcements:**
- 10. Future Agenda Items**
  - a. Presentation by Team Red, White & Blue.
  - b. Update on veteran-owned business registry project.
  - c. Review of executive order impacts on VA mental health services.
- 11. Next VAAC Meeting:** Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 10:00 AM MDT Hybrid- in person.
- 12. Adjourn.** 11:09 AM.

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Approved By: