



**Alameda County**  
**Veterans Affairs Commission**  
**General Meeting Minutes**  
Monday, September 15, 2025

Alameda County  
**Social Services Agency**  
6955 Foothill Blvd – Ste. 300  
Oakland, CA 94605  
<http://alamedasocialservices.org>

**CALL TO ORDER**

- Meeting called to order at 10:02 am
- Roll Call, Quorum Achieved.

| <b><u>In Attendance:</u></b> <i>(P=Present, E=Excused, A=Absent, O=Online Attendance)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>County Staff Present:</b>                                                                                                   |
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| G. Owens (Chair) = P      J. Loparo = E<br>O. Farmer (Vice Chair) = P      D. Boldt = P<br>R. Forbes = P      R. Cole = P<br>F. Jaffin = online      D. Reed = A<br>J. McLvain = P      S. Yohannes = P<br>K. Warner = P      A. Gordillo = P<br>J. Phair = online      M. Reed = A<br>S. Dolgin = P      D. Williamson = A<br>M. Gilmore = P      J. Jones = P<br>N. Harrison = P      D. Bitner = P<br>L. Brunner = A | Jennier Stephens-Pierre<br>Anthony Simpson<br>Jonathan Montano-Flores<br>Rhoda Turner<br>Diarra Piggue<br>Sonya Frost = online |

**AGENDA/DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

| <b>Item</b>                                                                          | <b>Discussion/Recommendations</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <b>Adopt Agenda</b>                                                                  | Meeting agenda adopted by Commission as read.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Remote attendance under AB 2449<br/>(Just Cause/Emergency<br/>Circumstances):</b> | Commissioners Phair (Physical limitation/disability) and Jaffin (Emergency circumstances) provided just cause explanations for attending online.<br><br>Motion to accept the online participation of Commissioners Phair and Jaffin in accordance with AB2449<br><br><b>Motion to approve:</b> Commissioner Omar Farmer (M)<br>Commissioner Dylan Boldt (S)<br><br><b>Motion Passed</b> |
| <b>Approval of Meeting Minutes</b>                                                   | Motion to accept meeting minutes from 8/18/2025:<br><br><b>Motion to approve:</b> Commissioner Michael Gilmore (M)<br>Commissioner Omar Farmer (S)<br><br><b>Motion Passed</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Public Comment</b>                                                                | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

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| <p><b>County Updates:</b></p>                                                                                                           | <p>Anthony Simpson, Veterans Service Officer stated the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There are presently five active Veteran Service Representatives.</li> <li>○ Outreach: Attended the Contra Costa Elk's Outreach Fair this past weekend, will participate in the Stand Down this Friday, and plan to attend Veterans Day events.</li> <li>○ Jennifer Stephens-Pierre, Director of AAA, announced that Diarra Piggue has been promoted and is now the liaison between the commissions</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Guest Speaker: LaShelle Burch,<br/>U.S. Department of Veteran<br/>Affairs</b></p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Veteran Suicide Prevention</p> | <p>LaShelle Burch, the Community Engagement Partnership Coordinator, presented a PowerPoint on Veteran Suicide Prevention. Discussion/Q&amp;A followed.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p><b>Sub-Committee Reports</b></p>                                                                                                     | <p>➤ <b>Outreach:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veteran Suicide Prevention Forum: Held Sept 3 at the Hayward Veteran Memorial Building, strong turnout and discussion.</li> <li>• Operation Greenlight: Letter to Alameda County mayors to light public buildings green will be sent. Libraries will be explored for participation.</li> <li>• Emergency Preparedness Forum — Oct 18, San Leandro Public Library (registration link shared in chat by Ryan Hughes).</li> <li>• Suicide Prevention Training: September 25 from 12:00–1:00 p.m. virtually by the VA San Francisco.</li> <li>• San Mateo VSO Stand Down: Sept. 25, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.</li> <li>• Las Positas “2.2 for 22” Challenge — Sun, Sept 28; link shared by Edgar Reyes (Veterans First).</li> <li>• Mental Health First Aid training for Military Veterans &amp; Families — San Mateo County Behavioral Health; QR code circulated.</li> <li>• Nomination Committee was added to ACVAC Subcommittee Assignments for 2025. Members: Shewee Yohanes, Bob Cole, Nate Harrison.</li> <li>• Extensive discussion re: eligibility/appearance of conflict on the Ad Hoc Nominating Committee.</li> </ul> <p>Motion to accept the creation of the Nominating Committee Ad Hoc as presented in agenda.</p> <p><b>Motion to approve:</b> Commissioner Omar Farmer (M)<br/>Commissioner Shewee Yohannes (S)</p> <p><b>Motion Passed</b></p> <p>➤ <b>Executive:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission met on August 29. Topics discussed included the upcoming Stand Down event, bylaws, the Navy birthday celebration, and the Nomination Committee.</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>➤ <b>Veteran Observance Days:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioner Owens noted that the Veterans Observances in October were Navy Day on October 13 and the National Day of Deployment on October 26.</li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Veteran Memorial Building:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioner Farmer noted they are working to locate the documentation on the Oakland Veteran Memorial Building's transfer from the county to the city to confirm the terms.</li> <li>• Priority is to resolve issues with the Oakland Veteran Memorial Building before moving forward with the Action Plan to enforce state law.</li> <li>• The next meeting will be held via Zoom next Friday.</li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>PAL Legislation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioner Phair noted that the California Legislature has adjourned for this session, so no further bills will be considered.</li> <li>• SB54 - Excludes VA disability pay from income calculations for court fee waivers (improves access for low-income veterans) passed.</li> <li>• AB81 - A study of women veterans' mental health; funding still needed in next budget .</li> <li>• SB694 - targeting deceptive practices by non-accredited benefit preparers, did not. We will revisit it next year and place it on the year-end agenda.</li> </ul> <p><b>Comment:</b> Anthony Simpson urged support for SB 694, emphasizing free accredited services, criticizing non-accredited fee-based groups, and noting accreditation is needed for proper VA claim representation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioner Phair recommended placing SB 694 on the year-end agenda to consider a PAL request for Board of Supervisors support in the next legislative session (two-year bill).<br/>Additional note (Jaffin/Phair): California military retirement income—first \$20,000 state-tax exempt (Governor's trailer bill); phase-out thresholds at \$125k single / \$250k joint federal AGI.</li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Stand Down:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summit Estate Recovery Center has joined as a new partner, with their logo featured at the bottom of the revised flyer.</li> <li>• The new flyer was presented, highlighting one of the new features: a raffle, shown at the bottom. Prizes will include phone cards, grocery cards, and gas cards. Commission members are encouraged to contribute if they would like to donate.</li> </ul> <p><b>Comment:</b> Jennifer mentioned that the CVSO will be donating gas cards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul> |
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|                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commissioner Farmer reported on Stand Down access, veteran homelessness, St. Vincent de Paul resources, and outreach.</li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Membership:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commissioner Phair reported that one final member is awaiting swearing-in, which will bring the commission to 22 members. The appointment has already been approved by the Board of Supervisors.</li> </ul> |
| <b>ORAL<br/>COMMUNICATION/ANNOUNCEMENTS</b> | Next meeting will be held at Las Positas in Livermore on October 20th                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>ADJOURNMENT</b>                          | Meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |