

**MINUTES
of the
SECOND MEETING
of the
MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**July 17, 2018
University of New Mexico-Taos
115 Civic Plaza Drive
Taos**

The second meeting of the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee was called to order by Representative Rodolpho "Rudy" S. Martinez, co-chair, on July 17, 2018 at 9:40 a.m. at the University of New Mexico-Taos (UNM-Taos) in Taos.

Present

Rep. Rodolpho "Rudy" S. Martinez, Co-Chair
Sen. Bill Tallman, Co-Chair
Sen. Craig W. Brandt
Sen. William F. Burt
Rep. Harry Garcia
Sen. Michael Padilla
Rep. Bob Wooley

Absent

Rep. David E. Adkins

Advisory Members

Rep. George Dodge, Jr.
Sen. Carlos R. Cisneros
Rep. Jim Dines
Rep. Jane E. Powdrell-Culbert
Rep. Debbie A. Rodella
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana
Rep. Jim R. Trujillo

Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon
Rep. Cathrynn N. Brown
Rep. Randal S. Crowder
Sen. Richard C. Martinez
Sen. William H. Payne
Sen. John Pinto
Rep. Dennis J. Roch

Guest Legislator

Rep. Roberto "Bobby" J. Gonzales

Staff

Jeret Fleetwood, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Peter Kovnat, Staff Attorney, LCS

Guests

The guest list is in the meeting file.

Handouts

Copies of all handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file.

Tuesday, July 17

Introduction

Committee members and staff introduced themselves.

Welcome

Dr. Patrick Valdez, chief executive officer, UNM-Taos, welcomed the committee to UNM-Taos and gave the committee some background about his service in the U.S. Air Force and about family members who have served in the military. He then provided the committee with an overview of UNM-Taos, which is the only higher education institution in a 50-mile radius. He said that remaining affordable to the local population is critical to the school's mission.

The university offers some two-year degrees as well as high school equivalency credentials, which were formerly referred to as general education development certificates, or GEDs. Often, Dr. Valdez said, adults returning to college after many years need remedial courses in areas such as mathematics. The university's enrollment has gone down recently, but that is happening nationally. The fact remains that universities are still serving more students than they were 10 years ago, he said. However, in the case of UNM-Taos, the decline in enrollment has resulted in less funding despite the good news that retention rates are going up.

In relation to veterans, UNM-Taos has the only veteran Upward Bound program in the state. The university applied for and received a grant to establish the program.

A committee member asked if the university is working with any local partners to provide training that is specific to employer needs. Dr. Valdez noted that the nursing school coordinates with the local hospital, but he said that, generally, students seeking specific jobs leave Taos to get a four-year degree.

In response to an inquiry into the retention rate for veteran students, Patricia Gonzales, director of student affairs, UNM-Taos, said that the school is working to create a system to determine the veteran student retention rate and that the Upward Bound grant money is being used to figure out how to do that.

Brandy Corry, program manager, UNM-Taos, said that while UNM-Taos does not currently have a veteran outreach center, it is working toward establishing one.

The committee thanked the presenters for their commitment to veterans and all New Mexicans.

Northern New Mexico College — Veterans Service Center (VSC)

Rudy C'de Baca, Northern New Mexico College (NNMC), told the committee that he was homeless as a child, but that all changed after his father earned an education at New Mexico

Highlands University. That opportunity, funded by the G.I. Bill, helped pull his family off the streets of Pecos.

He said that the VSC at NNMC uses the model of United Service Organizations, also known as the USO. Sixty percent of the people the VSC supports are dependents of veterans, not the veterans themselves. Mr. C'de Baca also said that Espanola has a problem with homelessness, and often the NNMC VSC is the first place of contact for homeless veterans in the community. He said that NNMC is looking into purchasing secondhand living pods for homeless veterans. After the pods have been used to house people affected by natural disasters, they become available to the homeless. However, he said, municipal ordinances have caused delays in the VSC's attempts to place pods in cities and towns.

In response to a question, Mr. C'de Baca said that 70 veterans are currently enrolled at NNMC.

Regarding requests to the legislature, Mr. C'de Baca asked that the veteran education project fund all VSCs across New Mexico. Currently, only the NNMC VSC and the Santa Fe Community College VSC are fully funded. The Central New Mexico Community College VSC and the UNM VSC, with 800 and 1,300 veterans respectively, are mostly staffed by volunteers due to lack of funding.

Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG)

Sandie Gaiser, MRCOG, discussed the importance of wind power and the attempts to find common ground among wind farm developers and factions concerned about encroachment on military flight paths.

She said that stakeholders are being engaged and that, although currently only Lincoln County has passed an ordinance permitting wind turbines, there is interest in creating ways to keep the process transparent to all parties. It is imperative to have all interested parties at the table, she said.

Ms. Gaiser asked for legislative support for these initiatives, including ongoing appropriations to fund an energy compatibility project.

When asked whether wind turbines can be designed in such a way as to cause less of an encroachment issue, Ms. Gaiser said that the technology is changing, but she is not an expert on that technology and cannot answer definitively.

A legislator said that he set up a meeting between Commissioner of Public Lands Aubrey Dunn and what the legislator referred to as "Big Air Force". Before that meeting, the two groups had never compared maps of wind energy development with maps of flight paths and protected air space. The legislator said that there needs to be better coordination and better military base planning.

The legislator asked how often the steering committee meets and what time lines have been set. In response, Ms. Gaiser said that the group has only met once, and it is currently waiting for a web-based tool to come online. Until that tool is created, she said, there will not be much for stakeholders to discuss. She said that the steering committee wants to require the wind developers to use the web-based tool so that everyone knows what the plans are.

Another committee member asked if any neighboring states have adopted this legislation. Ms. Gaiser said that Oklahoma does not have a web-based tool but did create a permitting process that gives the military an opportunity to see proposals.

In response to a question about the amount of money spent in Sandoval County by the U.S. Department of Defense, Ms. Gaiser said that she would look into it and get back to the committee with that information.

Museum of the American Military Family

Allen Dale Olson, board member, Museum of the American Military Family, said that his daughter founded the museum as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. He also said that there is an admission fee but no paid staff.

The museum is currently located next to Molly's Bar in Tijeras, he said, but it has outgrown its current home and is looking to relocate to a larger space. He said that the organization has spoken to the Cultural Affairs Department and its State Historic Sites and Monuments Division. There have been discussions about moving to Museum Hill or the Armory for the Arts, which are both in Santa Fe, he said.

After presenting a video, Mr. Olson said that a collections expert has assessed the collection and has recommended ways to better preserve items. The museum is now working to do just that.

Veterans' Services Department (VSD)

Edward Mendez, director, State Veterans' Cemetery Program, VSD, provided an update on the State Veterans' Cemetery Program in New Mexico. A groundbreaking is planned for in November in Angel Fire. Construction is to begin in January 2019, with completion in the summer of 2020.

Mr. Mendez also said that property for the Carlsbad veteran cemetery is being transferred to the VSD.

Not Forgotten Outreach, Inc.

Don Peters II, executive director, Not Forgotten Outreach, Inc., said that the organization recently acquired a huge new property, and it has plans to build apartments, tiny homes, greenhouses and much more. Mr. Peters discussed all of the different ways that the organization is working to improve the lives of veterans and the local community.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m., and the committee members went on a tour of the Not Forgotten Outreach, Inc., property.