



CITY OF LAS CRUCES

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

March 24, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brian Morrow, Member at Large - Vice-Chair
Daniel Ansbach, Special Forces #80
James Perry Ashby, American Legion #10
Lawrence "Sam" Bothern, DAV #10
Victor Eres, USMC
Len Hampton, Member at Large
Fred Madrid, Vietnam Veterans of America, Chap. 431
Brandon Robinson, Member at Large
James (JR) Turner, VFW 10124
James Bentley, MOPH

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Luke Rosendo Keith, VFW 3242 - Chair
Beverly Drum, UMW of Southwest
Christine Sautter, MOAA

STAFF PRESENT:

Charles Tucker, CLC Inspector General
Amber Dominguez, Administration

OTHERS:

Elaine Prickett
Dan Lucero
Jeffrey Eakman
Desiree Gonzales
Fernando Caro
Frank Duran
Isella Hernandez
David Hernandez
Mr. Chavez

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Morrow called the meeting to order.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ALL STAND FOR PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

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2 **3. ROLL CALL**

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4 A quorum was noted to be present.
5

6 **4. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA**
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8 Perry Ashby mentioned an item missing from the agenda, presentation by Elaine
9 Prickett.

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11 Motion to accept the agenda made by Sam Bothern; seconded by Dan Ansbach.
12 Motion passed unanimously.
13

14 **5. VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES – February 24, 2026**
15

16 Correction, page 2, line 30, "the Death March was stated", should be "started."
17

18 Motion to accept the minutes made by Sam Bothern; seconded by Perry Ashby.
19 Motion passed unanimously.
20

21 **6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
22

23 Remember Bataan Foundation.

24 Elaine Prickett spoke on behalf of the Remember Bataan Foundation. She
25 noted that no former POWs will be attending the memorial march this year,
26 whereas supporting POWs had historically been a central mission of the
27 organization. The Foundation has since shifted its focus toward education
28 and promoting awareness of the sacrifices made, particularly highlighting
29 that over 18,000 individuals were sent from New Mexico.

30 Ms. Prickett shared historical photographs from POW camps and requested
31 permission to hold a ceremony on April 9th in conjunction with the lowering
32 of the Garrison flag. The Foundation would also like to display banners at
33 the park. Representatives plan to arrive at 4:30 p.m. to set up, with the flag
34 lowering at 5:00 p.m., followed by a brief ceremony in collaboration with the
35 Marine Corps League, including the playing of Taps.
36

37 A motion to approve the ceremony was made by Sam Bothern and
38 seconded by Brian Morrow. The motion passed unanimously.
39

40 Honor Flight:

41 Elaine Prickett also provided remarks regarding Honor Flight. She
42 recognized Larry Fischer as a "Yellow Jacket," along with Perry Ashby, Fred
43 Madrid, and Len Hampton (forthcoming). She requested assistance in
44 enhancing the Honor Flight homecoming event in Las Cruces, noting that
45 El Paso typically sees greater attendance and community engagement.

Plans for this year include participation by the Gadsden School Steel Drum Band and a classic car show. Ms. Prickett requested support in promoting the event, securing sponsorships, and increasing City involvement. She noted that other communities, including El Paso and Alamogordo, host large-scale welcoming events, sometimes including parades and motorcycle police escorts. Police escort support has already been confirmed for travel to and from El Paso.

Larry Fischer, a Vietnam veteran, emphasized that Honor Flight serves as a meaningful way to welcome Veterans home and encouraged both the City of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County to fully support these efforts.

Visiting Angels presentation - Daniel Wilczak

Daniel Wilczak introduced Visiting Angels, noting his family's military legacy spanning from the Vietnam War to Operation Iraqi Freedom. He emphasized the organization's commitment to serving veterans through caregiving services coordinated with the VA.

Visiting Angels has operated nationwide for over 25 years and in Las Cruces for more than 10 years. The organization focuses on providing affordable, professional care and matching clients with caregivers based on individual needs. Services include free in-home consultations, and Veterans typically receive an average of 16 hours of care.

Community of Hope presentation - Kenyon

Not in attendance.

Dan Lucero with DAV #38.

Dan Lucero reported that a newsletter was distributed to members covering caregiving and other relevant issues. He highlighted several upcoming events from the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, including:

- A conference in Las Cruces
- A resource event in Sunland Park on March 26
- A meditation retreat on May 16 in Mesilla Park
- Medal of Honor Day on May 25
- POW/MIA Recognition Day on April 4
- Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans event on March 28

DAV #38 will also conduct fundraising events at Golden Corral from April 30–May 3 and May 29–31.

Jeffrey Eakman, Marine Corps League #478.

Jeffrey Eakman reported that New Mexico State University will host a Veteran's lunch from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Garcia Center. He noted

several upcoming April events, including a Department of Veterans Services event on April 17–18 at Encanto Park and a funeral honors competition on April 24. The Run for the Wall event is scheduled for May 14–15.

Veterans' Health Administration – Desiree Gonzales

Desiree Gonzales announced a Women Veterans Meet and Greet on March 27 from 10:00–11:00 a.m. at the Las Cruces Clinic (3401 Del Rey Blvd). A women Veteran's peer support group will begin meeting Mondays at 1:00 p.m. starting April 6. The contact is Marjorie Kindelan-Ray.

American Job Center – Fernando Caro

Fernando Caro announced that the Hiring Heroes event will take place on April 1, featuring 35 employers and eight resource organizations.

Public Comment – Rodriguez Family Memorial Request

Frank Duran, Isella Hernandez, and David Hernandez spoke regarding a memorial bench request. Ms. Hernandez shared that her stepson, Antonio Rodriguez, a Las Cruces native and U.S. Army soldier, served nine tours in Afghanistan and was killed in action in 2020. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

The family is seeking approval to fundraise for and install a memorial bench at Veterans Park in his honor, similar to another recently installed bench supported by Special Forces. Chair Morrow advised that a formal written proposal is required, including specifications for the bench and plaque. It was also noted that a Special Forces monument already exists at Veterans Park.

A motion to table the decision until the next meeting was made by Len Hampton and seconded by Sam Bothern. The motion passed unanimously.

Additional Public Comment – Mr. Chavez

Mr. Chavez discussed ongoing fundraising efforts related to the Bataan March and the installation of plaques at Veterans Park. He inquired whether Doña Ana County could assist with funding. He also commented on state-level funding allocations, noting the disparity between healthcare funding and veteran services.

7. AGENDA ITEMS TO DISCUSS - None

8. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

Len Hampton - Member at Large - Nothing to report.

Victor Eres - USMC - Reported that three funeral honors were conducted between February 24 and March 24. No Color Guards were provided. The Marine Corps League Rocky Mountain Division Conference will be held April 10–11 at the Elks Lodge. He requested clarification regarding Honor Guard participation for the Memorial Day Ceremony.

Fred Madrid - Vietnam Veterans of America - Reported participation in one event and two food drives. The 14th Annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans event will be held March 28. Upcoming food drives include Save-Mart (8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.) and Walmart on Rinconada (April 19, 7:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m.). He will attend a conference at the Pentagon from April 8–12.

Daniel Ansbach - Special Forces #80 - Nothing to report.

James Bentley - Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) - Saturday, March 21st, volunteered at water point #9 during the Bataan March on March 21..

James Perry Ashby - American Legion #10 - Reported that the auxiliary has been assisting disabled veterans at St. John's Mobile Home Park. Educational outreach has begun in local schools regarding proper flag retirement ceremonies. Three members attended American Legion College in Silver City. Upcoming support includes the American Hero Ride (April 13), Run for the Wall (including breakfast for 350 riders), and Honor Flight Mission #21 (April 23–25).

Brandon Robinson - Member at Large - Noted that research suggests Antonio Rodriguez may have been affiliated with Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

Lawrence "Sam" Bothern - Disabled American Veterans (DAV) #10 - Announced fundraising events at Golden Corral from April 16–19 and May 7–10, benefiting Just Be Kids.

Brian Morrow - Member at Large - Expressed appreciation for volunteers supporting the February 28 pancake breakfast and March 17 food drive. Reported strong community participation. Noted this will be his fifth Honor Flight. Another food drive is scheduled for April 19. St. Paul's has volunteered to obtain permits for upcoming events. Discussion was held regarding combining Memorial Day ceremony components.

Upcoming observances include Flag Day on March 28 and Bataan Memorial Day on April 9. The next VAB meeting will be held April 28.

James Turner - Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) 10124 - Reported successful launch of Wednesday wing nights. The post received a \$20,000 building grant for cleaning and painting, with work planned for May.

9. STAFF LIAISON REPORT

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2 Mr. Tucker reported that Memorial Day appreciation certificates were
3 distributed to Zia Natural Gas, Flowerland, and Baca's Funeral Home. One
4 certificate remains to be presented to the Las Cruces High School Junior
5 ROTC Honor Guard.
6

7 **Donations for Veterans Park**

8 Mr. Tucker stated that the City Attorney has reviewed and approved the
9 memorandum regarding fundraising for the Veterans Wall. The Mayor has
10 also discussed potential funding sources, including outreach to Senator Ben
11 Ray Luján for possible contributions. Additional efforts are being made by
12 Mr. Mattiace. Combined funding sources are expected to meet project
13 needs.
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15 Mr. Tucker requested that organizers provide a list of all Memorial Day
16 contributors to ensure proper recognition. Mr. Chavez reiterated his
17 suggestion for County involvement and emphasized the importance of
18 establishing funding priorities. Mr. Tucker noted that the County does not
19 have a dedicated veterans board or liaison, and any proposals would
20 require direct engagement. All VAB recommendations must also receive
21 City Council approval.
22

23 Len Hampton proposed forming a subcommittee to establish priorities. Mr.
24 Tucker agreed to present recommendations to the County in his role as
25 liaison. Mr. Chavez also suggested a City program to collect worn flags with
26 a \$1,000 allocation.
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28 A motion to establish a subcommittee for prioritization was made by Len
29 Hampton and seconded by Brian Morrow. The motion passed. Volunteers
30 include Len Hampton, Fred Madrid, Mr. Chavez, and Charles Tucker.
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32 **10. ADJOURNMENT (10:35)**
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34 Motion to adjourn made by Perry Ashby; seconded by Brian Morrow. Motion
35 passed.
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Chairperson