CITY OF LAS CRUCES

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

May 26, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Luke Rosendo Keith, VFW 3242 - Chair
Brian Morrow, Member at Large - Vice-Chair
James Perry Ashby, American Legion #10
Lawrence "Sam" Bothern, MOAA
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
Adrian Veseth-Nelson, Member at Large
Thomas Chapin, DAV 38

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Daniel Ansbach, Special Forces #80

STAFF PRESENT:

Charles Tucker, CLC Inspector General
Amber Dominguez, Administration

OTHERS:

Jerome Hanway
Dan Lucero
Mr. Chavez
Hector Sanchez
Ken Miyagishima
Desiree Gonzales

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Keith called the meeting to order. A quorum was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ALL STAND FOR PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

3. ROLL CALL

A quorum was noted to be present.

4. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

Motion to accept the agenda made by Sam Bothern; seconded by Brian Morrow. Motion passed unanimously.

5. VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES – April 28, 2026

James Perry Ashby requested to delete the complete last two sentences of page 4, line 43, 44, 45,

Motion to accept the minutes with corrections made by Victor Eres; seconded by Sam Bothern. Motion passed unanimously.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Jerome Hanway with Right at Home stated they are trying to become a provider for the VA and in that process they have done paperwork, etc. They are approved by the VA and TriWest as of September 2025. Then they need to be onboarded by the local VA which would be El Paso and Albuquerque. There have been two other onboarding dates in December and May that they were not included in. There are three companies on VA.gov approved by TriWest and VA that are New Mexico providers that are in the same situation awaiting onboarding. He came to the board last month for some support to push on El Paso VA to onboard. Northern Doña Ana County, Luna County, Sierra County, Hidalgo County, and Grant County are all struggling to have providers and care for veterans. He has been told by Albuquerque VA that there are enough providers and that they just need to wait. The El Paso VA stated they would be onboarded in late January/early February, but have heard nothing since then. Jerome is hoping to get some support from the board. Interim Health here in Las Cruces is in attendance here today. Both of those companies have waited over a year to provide care for veterans. He has heard that El Paso providers are being brought to New Mexico to provide care. The reimbursement rates have changed, in Texas it is $48 an hour, in New Mexico it is $54 an hour. Board Member Sam Bothern asked for Jerome Hanway to do up a letter that each of the organizations on the board could sign. They have helped veterans as they are contacted via VA.gov, even though they are not getting reimbursed. He has a veteran he is working with who has cancer. El Paso VA keeps saying they do not need any more help, even though the gentleman asked specifically for Right at Home. Home Instead has some of the very same stories. They have another location in El Cajon, California and care for about 130 veterans, without the issues they are having here. He was encouraged to include the individual narratives he has spoken about and gather statistics from this area. Dan Lucero stated several meetings previously they had the Chief for Center Development and Civic Engagement from the VA, Admin. Enriquez. He has begun to invite various speakers to the DAV 30 meeting every month and he will be the

presenter for June. When Dan has problems at the VA there is a Patient Advocate that might help also. Jerome Hanway stated he sees this working so well in California and coming here to fight to give assistance to veterans makes no sense to him. Charles Tucker stated the VA has an Inspector General and if there is something not working for the VA you can go to him. Also speak to any senator's representatives that are attending this meeting. Jerome Hanway stated San Diego has over 200 providers, in this area there are 12.

Dan Lucero stated he attended the memorial event yesterday at the park. He congratulated board for all organizations involved.

Ken Miyagishima stated he also attended yesterday's event. Congratulations to all. There was some discussion that the board was looking for money from the City for some plaques for the wall. There is a state law called the Anti-Donation Clause that if it benefits a particular individual or group it is in violation of the Anti-Donation. In 2012 he had a foundation he used primarily for veterans who were losing their utilities. When he left as Mayor there was a balance of about $6,000. He tried to give it to the City. It may still be sitting there. He will donate that for the plaques. Viola with the City will know about the account. Board Member JR Turner mentioned they had various donations at this time for the plaques.

Mr. Chavez stated, good job, but no flyer that was put out and so some confusion with the agenda particular with the article in the Bulletin that stated events started at 12:00 and 8:00. Might help to put a flyer out via social media. He talked to Mayor Enriquez and wanted to see if he could give some money for the plaques. He sent the board an e-mail that the county was trying to work on something too. He asked about the CBOC, it is a year late. Desiree Gonzales works for the Center for Development and Civic Engagement. At this time they do not have anything that has changed. They are making progress on the Las Cruces CBOC and on track for late fall. There was a structural fire (outside) and it did get pushed out a bit. The nurse manager did go for a site visit last week. Mr. Chavez asked about a trail at the park and who funded it and when was that approved. Charles Tucker stated there has always been a trail from in front of Marshalls that goes along the bottom of the dam and comes back in along the park. A whole new construction is being done. Something is being build right next to the covered area. Charles Tucker will look into it. Mr. Chavez also mentioned establishing a nonprofit for this organization. Board Member Len Hampton stated no, but there is a nonprofit that funds can pass through.

Hector Sanchez stated when he was on the board used to have the Parks members representatives at the meeting every month. He is hoping that will continue in the future. Their cord ceremony was May 8th. It is a very important ceremony because it highlights those veterans that have graduated from NMSU and Doña Ana Community College. He cannot explain how big this event this is in terms of success they try to do because he does not believe there is something you can give a veteran more priceless than an education for them to transition from

a military life truly to civilian life. They had 66 veterans that graduated from NMSU. Also 27 Doña Ana Community College that gradated. Also four members with the Student Veterans Organization. This organization meets regularly and volunteers within the community for various events. They received a red, white, and blue cord which symbolizes their service to our country. It is authorized for them to wear during commencement. Also during the ceremony they give them a challenge coin to continue learning, as learning is a lifelong endeavor. He will be attending next months' WAVES (Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists) conference. He hopes to speak with the secretary as the issue they are having with their online students, (NMSU Global). Veterans can attend school while going to work, raising families. At NMSU the average student is 19, the average veteran is 30. The VA has viewed online separately as regular schooling. A full online student does not get a full housing stipend, compared to a full time residence. They are pushing to get the VA to change this. But it is law and so it needs to be changed legislatively. Board Member Chapin stated by regulation it says for spouse and children but the qualifications for children are biological or adopted. He has adopted his grandchildren to help them with college. Hector Sanchez stated that Chapter 35 is a unique benefit to the veterans. The only way to give that benefit to children and spouse is going 100% disabled. When he started being director at NMSU 70% of beneficiaries were veterans, about 30% were dependents. As of this semester 60% of beneficiaries are dependents, 40% are veterans. They have over 350 dependents using Chapter 35. Also another program GI Bill post 09/11 that can also be transferred but that is just one-to-one, and get about 200 of these. Dan Lucero stated each of the veterans organizations have a legislative branch that they put together agendas that they would like to present before congress. This maybe an avenue to bring up legislative issues. Board Member Luke Keith has heard conversations of this in DC already.

7. AGENDA ITEMS TO DISCUSS - None

- Discuss letter request by Jerome Hanway to Senator Heinrich re: El Paso VA - **SEE ABOVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

8. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

Len Hampton - Member at Large - They held a Memorial Day ceremony at Slumbering Mountain Cemetery that was well attended. The New Mexico Veterans and Families Foundation received a request from a veteran that needed assistance, and that was provided. He left information in the back regarding the foundation is having a 5th Annual Golf Tournament in October. VFW Post 6917 had committed $800 to the name plaque project.

Adrian Vesth-Nelson - Member at Large - Nothing to report.

Victor Eres - USMC - From April 28th to May 26th the color guard and El Perro Diablo Detachment color guard provided military funeral honors for six fallen veterans to include Colonel Paul Roach on May 7th. Also the detachment color guard participated in three color guards, Run for the Wall May 14th, and Run for the Wall at Veterans Memorial the following day, and for Memorial day. The candlelight vigil was cancelled but had a group ready to serve. One of the VFW's asked if they could help them with one of their ceremonies at Hillcrest. This kind of solidifies that some of the organizations should start their own color guard because they could not be in two to three places at once. Some of their members are going through health issues also.

Fred Madrid - Vietnam Veterans of America - They had one event and two food drives. On Sunday at Hillcrest, NMSU soldiers put in about 900 flags from 9:00 to about 11:30. Food drive at Save-Mart on Valley Drive every first Friday from 8:00 to 2:00. And another food drive at Walmart at Rinconada on the 20th at 7:30 to 2:00.

Presentation - Jeff Eakman of the Marine Corps League presented to past president Raymundo Rivera III an achievement medal and certification. Ken Miyagishima stated as long as he can remember El Perro Diablo have been doing the color guard duties everywhere and thanked them thoroughly. Fred Madrid thanked the board.

Dan Lucero stated in the last edition of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services monthly newsletter there was an article about how they provide training for color guards.

Fred Madrid also stated they put in $200 for the plaques.

Thomas Chapin - DAV 38 - The veterans home on Oak Street had a dryer that was donated and ended up being a fire hazard as it kept breaking down. They replaced that dryer. The New Mexico DVS offices are going to be closed for training June 1-5. VA PACT Act clinic at the El Paso VA main hospital July 26th, this will be huge, live music, food trucks, arts and humanities. Fund raisers are: Golden Corral May 29-31, May 30th Mesilla in the courthouse parking lot for a yard sale/ garage sale. Community is on board with lots of donations of goods for sale.

James Bentley - Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) - Nothing to report.

James Perry Ashby - American Legion #10 - They had some elections for the officers at the post. They did breakfast for the Run for the Wall bikers for over 300 people. He also has a check for $800 for the plaques.

Brandon Robinson - Member at Large - Nothing to report.

Brian Morrow - Member at Large - Honor Flight participants eat breakfast at 6:00 when coming back, then a small lunch at the airport, but have nothing after that so returning hungry. He asked the VFWs if they want to support the Honor Flight with providing some food/dinner. Memorial Day was a success. He thanked various businesses/people for Memorial Day contributions. He would like to see more restaurants do catering. He asked how many events did VFW support on Memorial Day. He is proposing to have Memorial Day Month, so not to cram so many events into one day. He also mentioned Veterans day and making it more than a day event. Next Honor Flight is June 6th. June 14th flag day. He will be absent for the June VAB meeting.

Lawrence "Sam" Bothern - MOAA - Nothing to report.

James Turner - Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) 10124 - They hoped to have a Home Depot grant that is still pending for next month.

Luke Rosendo Keith - VFW 3242 - They are planning a first responders luncheon the first week in July. Advertised for old, unused bicycles for Bikes for Tikes. They donated $200 to the plaques. Memorial Day they had their ceremony at Hillcrest. He was approached last meeting about resources; help with rent. Suggested the veterans corner online to add links for the resources. Charles Tucker stated once he has the information he will get it added to the website. But there is certain verbiage for handicapped readable.

Adrian Vesth-Nelson stated for resources there is a national resource online. That will show what is available overall, and able to drill down by location at lot of times what is available. The attempts to make a national resource directory have been met with challenges.

James Perry Ashby stated they helped two veterans last month. If they provide resources, they will write a check directly to the agency/business where the debt is occurring.

Brandon Robinson stated he created a Facebook page for the VAB.

Dan Lucero stated he does a newsletter on a monthly basis for DAV 38 with information from various online sources. He will forward to the board.

9. STAFF LIAISON REPORT

Charles Tucker stated there are $1,800 for the plaques, $800 from Len, $800 from Perry, and then $200, and another $200, almost there. Need $3,870. He received a call from Jose Diaz, who's wife has been waiting four years to get on the wall. And he is going to ask his VFW to get money together and needs a point of contact to send the money to once collected.

The construction in the park is a sidewalk that leads to the trail. The bathrooms up there have just been redone. The pulley on the flagpole at the park is still in need of oil. Suggestion of the fire department helping with the flagpole.

Len Hampton is the executive director of New Mexico Veterans and Families Foundation and are here to help veterans.

JR Turner mentioned the mesquite tree next to the flagpole at Veterans Park, that I needs to be trimmed due to the flag being larger.

From Semper Fi and American's Fund Housing and Security Initiative offers financial assistance to veterans nationwide; entry into housing, first months' rent and/or deposit (veteran must be unhoused), and eviction prevention. Veteran cannot have a felony conviction or be a sex offender, no dishonorable discharge, or fewer than 180 days of service.

Sam Bothern mentioned a PACT Act deadline coming up and affects veterans who were in a combat zone and they left military between September 11, 2001, and October 1, 2013. Right now they do not have to have a VA disability to sign up for healthcare. After September 30, 2026, they will have to have a disability to sign up.

10. ADJOURNMENT 10:30)

Motion to adjourn made by Len Hampton; seconded by Sam Bothern. Motion passed.

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Chairperson