

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2022**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 29

**SUBJECT: PRIORITIZING OUR VETERANS: ESTABLISHING A CENTER FOR
MILITARY AND VETERAN REINTEGRATION IN EAST COUNTY
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

San Diego County has the largest concentration of military personnel in the world with 120,000 active-duty personnel, and almost 250,000 veterans, according to the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers. The majority of our active-duty service members are split roughly evenly between the Navy and the Marine Corps, serving among our eight military bases in the County. The military is directly and indirectly responsible for 340,000 jobs in the County, which makes up almost 10 percent of the total local civilian labor force. Our region's history is closely linked to the military; however, this connection extends beyond active-duty service, resulting in military personnel and veterans collectively accounting for approximately 35 percent of the entire San Diego County population. The regional economy and community are linked to both the military's presence and our ever-growing veteran population.

Through government agencies and public and private veteran support organizations, our region's veterans have a vast range of assistance programs available to them. Many of these services directly address primary barriers to veteran employment, through technical skill development and job placement, and by addressing broader issues of psychological and cultural reintegration into both the work world and private civilian life. Several local organizations assist in housing and resource navigation, education, behavioral health services and specialized counseling.

The U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is responsible for providing benefits such as health care and other services to military veterans after they leave the service. Additionally, the County of San Diego has made it a priority to serve our veterans through initiatives such as our Vet-Connect Program, the Veteran Service Representative (VSR) Outreach Program, participation in the CalVet Transition Assistance Program (CalTap), supplementary transition assistance program, outreach activities through our Live Well on Wheels vehicles, self-sufficiency service enrollment, and increasing the hiring of veterans in the County. In addition, the County currently offers services at our four County-operated Offices of Military and Veteran Affairs (OMVA) and Military and Veterans Resource Centers (MVRCs) in the South, Central, North Inland, and North Coastal regions of the County, which provide benefit information, assistance, and other support to San Diego County veterans and their families.

San Diego's respect for veterans and unwavering patriotism are a significant part of the lifeblood of the region. East County is home to the largest number of military veterans in our region, with 57,455 veterans spread throughout incorporated cities and rural communities. However, District 2 is the only Supervisorial District that does not have a County-operated MVRC, despite having the largest number of veterans residing there.

Several veterans and veteran organizations have pointed out that individuals exiting the military can experience difficulty and confusion when attempting to identify and navigate the resources that they need or desire. The Center for Military and Veteran Reintegration (CMVR) is a recognized national model for helping veterans smoothly transition from the service. CMVRs serve as a one-stop shop and hub for service members, veterans, and their spouses, to successfully prepare them for civilian life. Designed to be a model pursuant to the *Navy Seal Chief Petty Officer William “Bill” Mulder Transition Improvement Act of 2021*, CMVRs assist veterans and their families in successfully reintegrating into local communities via coordinated and integrated services under one roof. These include services such as education and employment assistance, entrepreneurship, wellness, home ownership, and financial assistance.

The County should evaluate our current approach and consider offering services provided through the CMVR model. We can also consider providing innovative, intergenerational additions such as a recreation and community center with programming, senior services, a co-working space, behavioral health services, and telemedicine. A CMVR can streamline military and veterans organizations’ efforts, consolidate organizations into a one-stop shop, and offer an expanded array of resources for veterans. We recommend evaluating the CMVR model for a location in East County which will provide a great opportunity to study a new approach to serving our veterans, as well as bringing these services to an underserved area of the County.

Today’s action seeks to bring a veterans resource center to East County, and to evaluate current gaps and barriers in services of our existing County-operated MVRCs, through a pilot at the Central Region MVRC. This action will reimagine and improve MVRCs to expand services, explore adopting and shifting to a CMVR model at every County-operated MVRC, investigate ways to increase collaboration, and streamline efforts of government agencies and other private and public organizations that exist to serve veterans. It will also establish stronger partnerships with military leadership and spread awareness of these facilities, allowing County veteran resource centers to be recognized as the main reintegration centers when military personnel exit the service.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON AND CHAIR NATHAN FLETCHER

1. In accordance with Section 401, Article XXIII of the County Administrative Code authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to issue a Competitive Solicitation for consultant services specializing in veterans wellness and services to explore the feasibility for the implementation of the Center for Military and Veteran Reintegration (CMVR) model and expanded and novel services at existing County Military and Veteran Resource Centers (MVRCs), as well as the establishing of an East County Veterans Center, and upon successful negotiations and determination of a fair and reasonable price, award contracts for a term of one year, with one option year and up to an additional six months if needed, and to amend the contracts as needed to reflect changes to services and funding.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to identify potential sites and existing County facilities within the County’s Second Supervisorial District to establish a reimagined CMVR, with associated veterans housing, and to return with an implementation plan in one year for consideration.

3. Direct the CAO to take the steps necessary to implement a pilot program to reimagine veterans services and centers in a new East County facility as well as the Central MVRC through expanded and improved services, with future plans of expansion to all other County MVRCs.
4. Direct the CAO to foster partnerships, actively seek funding for program implementation, and to work with the California Department of Veterans Affairs, local military leadership, and state and federal agencies to establish recognition of County-operated veterans service facilities to improve awareness efforts and institute County MVRCs as primary hubs of services for military personnel transitioning to civilian life.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Our military members are willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice to keep us safe. It is our responsibility to take care of our veterans, almost half of whom are people of color, including assisting with challenges associated with transitioning from military service to civilian life. Assistance can be provided to develop transferable skill sets, provide healthcare supports, be successful as a civilian, and more. Today's action seeks to expand services and create more accessible resources for vulnerable populations of veterans leaving the service, such as enhanced assistance for job training and navigation, social and emotional support, and housing navigation and financial assistance. This support is expected to increase employment opportunities and the wellbeing of this underserved population.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Approval of this action correlates to the County of San Diego's sustainability goals by improving the health and wellbeing of our veterans who often need specialized services. This action also focuses on collaboration with existing veterans organizations and community partners to increase and streamline equitable access to services for our underserved veteran populations.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for Recommendation 1 are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-23 Operation Plan in the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA). If approved, this request will result in costs and revenue of approximately \$100,000 in FY 2022-23, for the hiring of a consultant to conduct the assessment as outlined in Recommendation 1. The funding source is existing General Purpose Revenue currently allocated to Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA). At this time, there will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

There may be future fiscal impacts based on recommendations from today's action, including Recommendations 2 and 3. It is estimated that the costs for the Department of General Services to conduct the property search, due diligence, and planning activities would be approximately \$550,000. Funding for these costs and any associated future costs will need to be identified by the HHSA and will proceed once identified.

Recommendations for future costs would return back for consideration and approval by the Board as needed. The department will monitor its budget and return to the Board with mid-year action to adjust the budget as necessary and/or incorporate future budgets as funding becomes available.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

The recommended actions will positively impact businesses by expanding opportunities for job navigation and training for veterans, as well as services related to entrepreneurship and associated technical operational assistance. These efforts will help to grow the workforce in various trades and fields and stimulate the local economy through commerce and the creation of jobs.

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Fletcher, seconded by Supervisor Anderson, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended.

AYES: Vargas, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Fletcher, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter