



# 2015 NEW YORK CITY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD REPORT

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A REPORT ON NEW YORK CITY'S VAB ACTIVITIES FOR 2015  
AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2016

*“With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, **to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan**, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.” – **Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, March, 4, 1865***

Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255, press 1)

The Crisis Line, mandated by the Joshua Omvig Veteran Suicide Prevention Act of 2007, provides immediate support to veterans, service members and their families.

December 31, 2015

Mayor de Blasio and Council Speaker Mark-Viverito:

2015 was an historic year for veterans in New York City. Through legislation and increases in funding for veteran services a strong foundation has been laid for future success. Therefore, as we proceed into 2016 we must seize the opportunity to build upon this foundation to deliver the most comprehensive and effective local veteran policies and services in the nation. We look forward to working with the administration and the City Council to realize this opportunity.

### **Why Local Veteran Policies are Important:**

As the largest city in the United States, the moral imperative for New York City to support its veterans is clear. The economic imperative is less well known but no less important as investments made in support of this population benefit all New Yorkers. Activities and venues such as Fleet Week, New York's Fourth of July Celebration, America's Parade, the Intrepid Sea Air and Space Museum and the Canyon of Heroes all are connected to our nation's veterans and provide significant commerce and character for our city. To quote Commissioner Sutton "veterans are our city's leading renewable natural resource" and our city benefits from attracting them to New York and creating a supportive environment for them to continue their service as our citizens."

### **What we have Accomplished**

2015 was a watershed year for the City of New York:

- Legislative achievements have laid the foundation for New York City to become the leader in local veteran policy. Local laws 24, 25 and 113 have reformed the Veteran's Advisory Board and called for the establishment of the Department of Veteran Services to better coordinate veteran activities.
- Significant investments were made in the Mayor's Office of Veteran Affairs ("MOVA"). As the budget was increased more than any other time in MOVA's 29-year existence, and staffing was more than tripled during the year.
- A citywide effort to end veteran homelessness has made significant progress. This included collaboration across multiple federal state and city agencies and the non-profit and private sectors. Veteran homelessness dropped by more than 50% and the city continues to make progress towards our stated goal of reaching "functional zero."
- Veterans were also included in a number of marquis outreach programs including the municipal ID Card (IDNYC) and ThriveNYC.

Even though we are still in the early stages of this investment, outside entities have taken note of the progress made. For example, the US Interagency Council on the Homeless (USICH) recognized New York City for "effectively ending chronic veteran homelessness" and Commissioner Sutton was the only local official to be recognized among the "We are the Mighty" 25 veterans poised for impact in 2016.

### **The Road Ahead**

The single most important strategic initiative will be to establish the Department of Veteran Services with a clear mission and the resources required to succeed. At the

tactical level, we must continue our campaign to end veteran homelessness and ensure policies are in place to sustain these achievements. Integration with ThriveNYC and community outreach through programs such as the veteran designator within the IDNYC program must be fully built-out. New investments to partner with our educational institutions and economic empowerment are vitally important to attract veterans to our city.

Future policy and program initiatives should be oriented around supporting opportunities for veterans to continue to serve as local citizens. Consistent with the theme of service we must share our successes with other local agencies and convene leaders from other cities to share experiences. As good stewards of Federal and State resources this leadership will support their continued investment in New York City.

**Acknowledgements:**

None of the successes we have had would have been possible without the support of our committed partners. We have the most passionate and dedicated advocates in the nation. They are the eyes and ears of the community and their tireless efforts are critical to our success. MOVA has taken quantum leaps forward and now has the potential to become a world-class government organization. They have built consensus and support from across city government and as a result have garnered more focus and resources for our veterans. Lastly, the City Council's Committee on Veterans has provided visionary leadership which led to the landmark legislation signed into law last year.

New York City has made great progress over the last year but the job is far from complete. We call on our elected officials to continue to with these investments and make New York City the leader in veteran policies and services.

On behalf of the New York City Veteran Advisory Board,

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Haskins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "H".

Todd Haskins  
Chairman

## NEW YORK CITY VETERAN ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Borough</b>	<b>Email (@gmail.com)</b>	<b>Term Expires</b>	<b>Appointment</b>
Joe Bello Secretary	Bronx	JBelloVABNYC	June 4, 2018	Council
Patrick Devine	Bronx	PDevineVABNYC	November 19, 2017	Council
Charles Greinsky	Staten Island	CGreinskyVABNYC	August 23, 2017	Mayor
Todd Haskins Chairman	Manhattan	THaskinsVABNYC	February 17, 2018	Mayor
Charles Hernandez	Bronx	CHernandezVABNYC	March 31, 2018	Council
Samuel Innocent Vice Chairman	Brooklyn	SInnocentVABNYC	August 23, 2017	Mayor
Mariel Juarez	Brooklyn	MJuarezVABNYC	February 17, 2018	Mayor
Jules Martin	Manhattan	JMartin1VABNYC	February 17, 2018	Mayor
Wendy McClinton	Brooklyn	WMcClintonVABNYC	June 4, 2018	Council
Anthony Odierno	Manhattan	AOdiernoVABNYC	August 23, 2017	Mayor
John Rowan	Queens	JRowanVABNYC	November 19, 2017	Council

## RATIONAL FOR LOCAL VETERAN POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Serving in the United States Armed Forces, whether on Active Duty, the National Guard or the Reserve component demands exceptional bravery, strength and courage, not only from the men and women who serve but from their families at home. New York State has the fifth largest veteran population in the United States with nearly one million residents who have served their nation (including over 67,000 women veterans who volunteered to serve) and is the third largest military state with 90,000 residents who currently serve in our armed forces. Almost 12,000 service members are deployed from New York State at any given time, with the majority coming from the New York City area. Although large-scale military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have officially concluded, the United States has been engaged in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) for over a decade and we expect that the demands on our military to answer our nation's call will continue.

### Why Should the City Support its Veterans?

Some have suggested that the burden of caring for our veterans should be born only by the Federal Government. We do not agree and believe that New York City as well as the non-profit and private sectors have both moral and economic imperatives to support our veterans. While human and hard capital is required, New York City will benefit from these investments and they will more than pay for themselves over time:

- **Freedom and Security – the Moral Imperative:** First and foremost all citizens of New York benefit from the freedom and security provided by our armed forces. The Federal Hall National Memorial reminds us of the contributions of our first President, George Washington who noted that *“the willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by our nation.”* In our order to ensure our continued success as a nation it is critical that we ALL support our veterans and New York as the economic capital of the world benefits from that blanket of freedom more than any other city.
- **Federal Spending and Tourism – the Short-term Economic Imperative:** New York City benefits disproportionately relative to other cities from federal spending and tourism, and our veteran policies support the continued attraction of these resources. Activities and venues such as Fleet Week, New York's July Fourth Celebration, America's Parade, the Intrepid Sea Air and Space Museum and the Canyon of Heroes all are connected to our nation's military or veterans and provide significant commerce for the city. Further, as the economic capital of the world, many Veteran Service Organizations (“VSO”s) and veteran focused non-profits have chosen to call New York City their home or host significant operations or events here which also add to the commerce of the city. These activities and venues provide a compelling economic rationale for supporting strong veteran policies.
- **Veterans Make Great Citizens – the Long-term Economic Imperative:** Veterans are truly this country's greatest renewable resources and attracting them to New York City supports the continued success of our city. It is no surprise that the so-called “Greatest Generation” had the highest proportion of citizens who served in the armed forces. Veterans tend to have higher earnings and lower unemployment than

non-veterans once their transition is complete.<sup>1</sup> Veterans also tend to be more civically active and have lower incarceration rates than non-veterans. Recently transitioned veterans also carry with them Federal Benefits such as the Post 9/11 GI Bill which add to the economic resources of the city and educational systems such as CUNY.

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<sup>1</sup> Overall unemployment among veterans is lower than the population as a whole while unemployment among post 9/11 veterans remains higher than average. This highlights that veterans transitioning back to the civilian world are a critical constituency for policy investment.

## CHANGES TO THE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

The members of the New York City Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) are charged with advising the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA) on all matters concerning veterans in New York City, including making recommendations concerning city policies and laws related to veterans and their families.

In February 2015, Intro 619-A (Local Law 25) and 611-A (Local Law 24) were signed into law by Mayor Bill de Blasio.

**Local Law 25** (Intro. 619-A) requires the board to meet five (5) times per year – once in each borough, with notice of each public meeting provided in accordance with the public notice requirements of article 7 of the public officers law, and with each public meeting recorded and broadcast in accordance with subdivision d of Section 1063 of the New York City Charter. It also gives the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA) the responsibility of ensuring that notice of any public meeting of the Veterans' Advisory Board is posted on its website with the date, time and location of each public meeting, and that such notice is posted not less than one week prior to each public meeting. Lastly, it requires the board to include in its annual report of activities; policy and legislative recommendations for the Mayor's Office and the City Council.

**Local Law 24** (Intro. 611-A) expanded the number of Veteran Advisory Board members from nine (9) to eleven (11) and required Advisory Board members to have e-mail addresses dedicated exclusively to the conduct of the business of the board, which must be published publicly by the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs.

In April 2015, Mayor Bill de Blasio and City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito announced seven (7) new members to the Veterans Advisory Board along with two (2) reappointed members.

In July 2015, City Council Speaker Mark-Viverito announced (1) new member and (1) returning member to the Veterans Advisory Board.

In August 2015, the board voted on and selected its Executive Committee:

- Todd Haskins (Chairman)
- Samuel Innocent (Vice Chairman)
- Joseph A. Bello (Secretary)

Each member of the VAB is serving a three (3) year term; the Executive Committee roles are reelected by the members of the VAB annually.



## SUMMARY OF ACTIONS OF THE VAB IN 2015 AND PLANS FOR 2016

### Below is a summary of the key activities for 2015:

- **Met or Exceeded all Legislative Requirements:** The VAB met or exceeded legislative requirements. However it was a rebuilding year as we implemented the changes required by Local Laws 24 and 25.
- **Advised the Commissioner and members of the Administration and City Council on a Variety of Policy Matters:** The VAB was actively involved in the discussions around key legislative, organizational and policy initiatives.
- **Enhanced Working Relationship with MOVA:** A central tenant of any advisory body to be successful is that it must have the trust of the entity it is advising. As such, many of the initial actions taken by the board were designed to enhance communication and improve trust between MOVA and the VAB. These included discussion of the use of confidential information and more frequent informal communication between MOVA and the VAB regarding its key initiatives.
- **Conducted 6 Meetings including at least one in each Borough:** With the adoption of Local Laws 24 and 25 and the appointment of all new board members by the middle of the year it was operationally difficult to comply with the law in its first year. However, we as a board made this a priority and hosted meetings in every Borough by year-end. Given these operational challenges, notice was posted in accordance with the letter of the law, however we do not believe that they were well publicized and as a result many of the meetings were not as well attended as would be ideal.
- **Local Representatives Host the Public Session:** In keeping with the spirit of more community engagement we instituted a policy whereby one of the representatives of the Borough in which the meeting is held hosts the public forum for that meeting. This provides more opportunity for members of the board to actively participate in the meeting and to highlight issues which may be particularly important for that specific Borough.
- **Established Committees:** The VAB has a number of members who have experiences across a wide range of topics relevant to veteran policy. In order to more effectively and efficiently align those talents to various policy initiatives the board has established five committees. They are:
  - Housing
  - Healthcare
  - Economic Empowerment
  - Communications
  - Legal Services

### In 2016 the VAB plans the following initiatives:

- **Shape the Department of Veteran Services:** The most important activity of 2016 will be to work with MOVA and the community in order to shape the capabilities and mission of the DVS. During the meetings we host leading up to its establishment we will create opportunities for the community to engage and participate in this process.
- **Revise the By-Laws of the VAB:** The VAB has been working with legal counsel to revise the By-Laws and expect to complete this activity in 2016.

- **Encourage Increased Community Engagement:** The VAB plans to encourage increased community engagement. This is particularly important as we enter the critical formative period of the DVS, as well as implementations of the ThriveNYC plan that includes veterans. We also plan to make the board's meeting schedule more accessible by providing more advance notice and hosting them at each respective Borough Hall so they are more predictable. We will also enlist the help of the Borough Presidents and other officials to encourage attendance.
- **Advocacy for Legislative Policies:** Now that many of the internal and operational issues have been revised we expect to advocate more systematically for legislative and policy initiatives both within the city and outside of the city where such policies impact New York City.

## SUMMARY OF 2015 EVENTS FOR NEW YORK CITY

2015 was a momentous year for veterans in New York City. The below timeline highlights a number of the key initiatives and accomplishments throughout the year:

- **January – MOVA Completes 90 Day Assessment:** The beginning of the year saw the Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Veterans Affairs complete a total top-to-bottom review of the entire office as well as review of the veteran’s community and its issues. This effort, which informed the Mayor’s Strategic Plan, highlighted a number of key areas of development for MOVA and the city’s veteran policy.
- **February – Revamp of the Veterans Advisory Board:** Mayor Bill de Blasio signed into law Local Laws 24 and 25 which modified both the structure of the VAB expanding its members from 9 to 11 as well as adding numerous additional operating requirements designed to increase access to the community. Specifically, the new law changed the meeting requirements from quarterly to at least one in each Borough and also mandated that the meeting be held publicly to provide for additional connectivity with the community.
- **May – Fleet Week:** New York City successfully hosted another fleet week and MOVA supported a number of ceremonial activities throughout this period designed to honor our service members and veterans. Also, the Mayor hosted a roundtable which included senior military leaders representing all five services and the VAB to discuss issues related to transition and reintegration. Additionally the First Lady hosted a shipboard roundtable which included military spouses from all five services where topics relating to military/veteran stressors, strengths and opportunities were discussed. We believe that these events had an impact on policy and communication.
- **July:**
  - **Significant Budget Increase and Investment in Human Capital:** The expansion of the MOVA budget from \$0.6mm to \$1.9mm represents the largest increase in its 29 year existence. Throughout the year much of this has been invested in human capital. Since January 2015, MOVA’s full-time authorized staff has more than tripled from 6 to 20. The majority of these new hires are veteran coordinators who provide direct services to veterans such as benefits counseling, peer mentoring and access to community resources including mental health, housing and employment support. The capstone of this investment in capability is the adoption of Local Law 113 which calls for the establishment of the Department of Veteran Services. This action will no doubt require additional resources and bring capability to bear. In our assessment these investments while still in process have already generated significant return for the city and its veterans and will prove to be even more successful as the pace of change slows and the team can focus on provided vital services to our city’s veterans. The budget increase also put money into the City’s fight to end veteran homelessness.
  - **Veteran Designator added to IDNYC Municipal ID Card:** New York City included a veteran designator to its municipal ID card program – the first large city to do so. Those with this card are provided complimentary access for a year

to over 30 cultural institutions in the city which is a wonderful way to welcome the newest veterans to the city. At year-end approximately 3,000 veterans have received a municipal ID card with the veteran designator.

- **New VAB Members In Place:** The last of the newly appointed or reappointed members of the VAB were announced in July allowing the board to effectively begin its efforts for the year. Mayor Bill de Blasio and City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito announced seven (7) new members to the Veterans Advisory Board along with two (2) reappointed members.
- **October – MOVA Moved to One Centre Street:** In October MOVA moved its offices to One Centre Street, the David N. Dinkins Municipal Building in honor of one of the city’s most celebrated veterans. This meaningfully improved the environment in which the staff and the VSOs which are also housed in the office space operate.
- **November:**
  - **Veterans Week:** The city hosted another successful Veterans Week. In addition to significant participation in “America’s Parade” by city officials New York City also witnessed the additional of a symbolic new Flag Ceremony. In recognition of those who have served the flags of all five services joined the National, State, City and POW-MIA flags throughout the period designated as Veterans Week.. This visible symbol of respect for our military, veterans and their families highlights the city-wide support. Lastly, the Mayor continued the tradition of hosting the Mayor’s Veterans’ Day breakfast in honor of service which included approximately 250 civic, military, veteran and VSO advocacy leaders shortly before many of these same leaders participating in America’s Parade, the largest Veterans’ Day parade in the nation.
  - **America’s Parade:** Though hosted by the United War Veterans Council, the administration has a strong hand in the success of America’s Parade. This is also an example where New York benefits from its veteran programs through both commerce and communications. This year, according to the United War Veterans Council, 264 organizations participated in the parade and the NYPD estimates that there were ~50,000 participants with ~600,000 spectators. The parade was televised in a number of cities and viewed by approximately 96,000 viewers and it was also streamed live through Military.com allowing for great advertising for the city. It has been estimated that this resulted in \$7.2mm of economic activity for New York City.
  - **Commitment to Invest in Veteran Mental Health as Part of ThriveNYC:** The Mayor, along with first lady Chirlane McCray released New York City’s Mental Health Roadmap (Thrive NYC). In the report lists several initiatives that will help veterans and their family members, including integration of the 311 system to the VA’s Veteran Crisis Line, expanding the Veterans Outreach Team and the creation of a Veterans Holistic Treatment Fund.
- **December:**
  - **Establishment of the Department of Veteran Services:** Mayor de Blasio signed into law Intro. 314-A (**Local Law 113**) which creates a new Department of Veteran Services. This new bill will transform the Mayor’s Office of Veterans Affairs into the new Department in July 2016 and provides the Department with the responsibility to cooperate with federal, state, and local agencies to inform

and assist members of the armed forces, veterans and their families in matters relating to: educational training and retraining services and facilities; health, medical, and rehabilitation services and facilities; provisions of federal, state, and local laws and regulations giving special rights and privileges to members of the armed forces, veterans, and their families; employment and re-employment services; and other appropriate matters. Additionally, this bill amends the New York City Administrative Code to require the Department to publish information on its website concerning resources intended to assist veterans in obtaining employment, and to consult with city agencies to identify job postings for inclusion on the Federal veterans' job bank. Finally, the bill requires each city agency to designate an employee to act as a liaison with veterans within the agency, and the Department to provide periodic training to the veterans' liaisons, as well as to post on its website the names of the liaisons at each city agency.

- **Recognized by the USICH as Effectively Ending Chronic Veteran Homelessness:** On December 29 the US Interagency Council on the Homeless ("USICH") certified that New York City had effectively ended chronic veteran homelessness. While we recognize that there is further work to be done, this is an important recognition of the city's broader efforts to end veteran homelessness.
- **Progress Towards "Functional Zero":** Homelessness is a difficult subject because it is never really "ended" in a large city; in fact in New York City nearly 100 veterans and their families become homeless in any given month, so as a policy matter we strive to reach "functional zero." For New York City this level is approximately 300, with the goal of placing identified homeless veterans in permanent housing within 90 days. As of December 31, 2015 approximately 760 veterans or their families were housed in shelters in New York down from 1558<sup>2</sup>, a more than 50% drop. This contrasts with only a 5% drop in homelessness overall (from 60,939 to 57,839) and highlights that the administration has used the additional resources targeting veteran homelessness effectively.

For the benefit of all New Yorkers, we have advised MOVA to closely monitor its efforts in order to determine which policies, processes and procedures are most effective. These models can possibly applied to other at-risk populations in the city in order maximize the value of the city's investment in its veterans for the benefit of all New Yorkers.

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<sup>2</sup> Official number reported to HUD following the point-in-time survey in January 2015

## STAFFING OF THE MAYOR’S OFFICE OF VETERAN AFFAIRS

In 2015 there were substantial changes to the structure and staffing of MOVA. Below is a summary of the positions of the office on January 1, 2015 and January 1, 2016. In addition to those listed below, the inclusion of veterans as part of the ThriveNYC program will provide an additional \$0.5mm of funding which will be used primarily for additional community outreach staffing. The job descriptions and number of personnel is still being finalized but we expect approximately 6 additional staff members from this initiative. MOVA has managed the pace of change well and has filled 17 of the 20 positions. At year-end only three remain unfilled and each are part of an active search to identify the best possible candidate.

	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016
1.	Commissioner	Commissioner
2.	Deputy Commissioner	Deputy Commissioner
3.	Chief of Staff	Military & Social Services Coordinator
4.	Military & Social Services Coordinator	Social Services Manager
5.	Social Services Manager	Administrative Coordinator & Special Assistant to the Commissioner
6.	Administrative Coordinator & Special Assistant to the Commissioner	Senior Policy Analyst
7.		Peer to Peer Coordinator
8.		Peer to Peer Coordinator
9.		Peer to Peer Coordinator
10.		Peer to Peer Coordinator
11.		Peer to Peer Coordinator
12.		Community Outreach Manager
13.		Community Outreach Specialist
14.		Community Outreach Specialist
15.		Community Outreach Specialist
16.		Community Outreach Specialist
17.		Community Outreach Specialist
18.		Assistant Commissioner & Senior Advisor for Strategic Initiatives
19.		Project Manager
20.		Americorps VISTA

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2016 AND BEYOND

While we have made great strides in the last year, great opportunity lies ahead. The following sets forth a number of key policy recommendations for the Mayor and the Speaker to consider.

- **Capabilities and Structure of the Department of Veteran Services:** It is rare that new city agencies are established and it will be critical to identify the capabilities and structure required of the DVS in order to realize the mission and vision which is identified. It is important that the public who advocated so hard for this legislation has a voice in identifying its required capabilities and structure and it will be critical that our elected officials follow-through with the appropriate funding and resources in order for New York City to make good on this solemn promise to its veterans.
- **Mission and Vision Statement:** Every military unit, whether permanent or temporary has a mission statement. This is a critical foundational statement which provides context and purpose to the organization and helps prioritize its actions. In establishing the Department of Veteran Services (“DVS”) we have a unique opportunity to engage stakeholders in shaping and developing a formal mission statement for the department and concurrently a vision statement for New York City. These should aim to capture the spirit of our veterans and what they can contribute to our city and should avoid highlighting “veteran as victim” policies.
- **End Veteran Homelessness:** The recognition by the USICH that New York has ended Chronic Veteran homelessness is a great milestone; however the true goal of these efforts is to end veteran homelessness. . Even once “functional zero” is achieved this mission will not be complete as veterans are at risk every day and nearly 100 new veterans become homeless every month. The city must continue its vigilance in this endeavor
- **Communication:** New York City has made significant investments in its veteran population – more than at any other time in at least the last two decades and more than the vast majority of large cities in America. Despite this fact, a perception remains particularly among the veteran community that New York City is not supportive of its veterans. We believe much of this stems from an underinvestment in communication and this will be a critical area to improve if we are to achieve success in our broader objectives. The administration and MOVA should review its communications policies and procedures and seek significant enhancements in capability for the DVS. This should include a revised website, social media, community calendar and refined processes which will increase the community’s awareness of opportunities to serve and benefits for which they may qualify.
- **Outreach to Other Local Governments:** As the leader in local veteran policy for large cities, New York City should convene leaders from other local governments to share best practices and continue to engage with Federal and State authorities on ways to improve veteran policy nationwide. Taking this leadership role will give New York City access to additional Federal and State resources from which our city and its veterans can benefit. We have proven we are effective stewards of resources provided by Federal and State Agencies and we believe we should be provided with additional resources.

- **Education:** New York City is the nation’s largest importer of college students with 110 colleges and nearly 600,000 students. We should work actively with these institutions to create efficient pathways to attract veterans to our city. Not only does this support positive migration of educated citizens into the city, but this effort also carries with it the added benefit of Federal investment as the majority of transitioning veterans have access to the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Specifically, the city should partner with its local colleges and universities to create a joint marketing and outreach effort to transitioning veterans considering educational opportunities to “continue their adventure” by studying in New York City.
- **City Employment:** This city expects to face significant shortfalls in many of its high paying jobs. MOVA has made good progress in highlighting those job opportunities to veterans, however we believe this program can be expanded and the city investigate more formal outreach to bases in the north east to help recruit talented veterans. This effort will benefit city agencies as much or more the veterans themselves by reducing talent acquisition costs and increasing the quality of the applicant pool.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Consistent with New York City’s investment in entrepreneurship the city must develop a strategy around supporting veteran owned businesses as they establish and grow. New York should adopt a veteran owned small business preference program. The city should also investigate opportunities to partner with the civilian sector to support continued development of small businesses.
- **Veteran Census and Data Capabilities:** Effective policy is informed by data. Unfortunately the city’s data regarding its veteran population is severely lacking. In order to be effective and relevant New York must have more current and comprehensive data about its veterans and MOVA should invest in resource and capability towards this end. This should be integrated with the new communications plan to make it as efficient and real-time as possible and also ensure that linkages are set to provide data regarding veterans to other agencies and levels of government where appropriate.
- **Invest in Federal and State Relationships:** We believe New York has among the most comprehensive and effective veteran programs and policies of any city in the nation. We should seek to expand our relationships with the Federal and State governments in order to ensure that the City receives the corresponding support. The recent recognition by the USICH of our ending chronic veteran homelessness demonstrates that New York City is a good steward of the capital and resources provided by Federal and State governments.
- **Review and Expand Veteran Treatment Courts:** As was highlighted in the September 18, 2015 City Council hearing on this topic, Veteran Treatment Courts have been proven effective in a variety of jurisdictions including New York City. Currently these are operating in 3 of the 5 boroughs. These programs should be reviewed with a Veterans Legal Task Force in order to ensure consistency across the boroughs and that we city is achieving a favorable return on this investment. Also, a veteran treatment court should be established in Manhattan and Staten Island.
- **Identify and Measure the Impact of Veterans and Veteran Policies and Activities:** As noted in this report, we believe that sound veteran policies have a



positive impact on all New Yorkers, not just veterans. These benefits range from the economic impact from activities and venues such as Fleet Week, America's Parade, the Intrepid Sea Air and Space Museum and the Canyon of Heroes, to the federal resources such as GI Bill educational benefits and State and Federal programs which support veteran housing or medical care to the economic impact of veteran owned businesses among others. MOVA should find opportunities to identify and quantify these resources so that all New Yorkers are aware of the benefits of these investments.

- **More Engagement with Community through the VAB Meetings:** As the board continues to advise on and support policy initiatives which benefit the city it would be helpful to have more engagement from the City Council and local elected and appointed officials at the meetings. This will increase awareness of the topics which are important to the veteran community and help drive effective policy.

## **MINUTES FROM 2015 VETERAN ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS**

The minutes for each of the six meeting hosted by the VAB follow.

**New York City Veterans Advisory Board  
346 Broadway 3ed Fl. East Wing  
New York, NY 10013**

**Meeting at office of Council Member Eric Ulrich  
Chairman - NYCC Veteran's Committee**

250 Broadway Rm. 1555

January, 26 2015

**Re: Into No's 600, 611, 619**

**Attending-**

Redmond Haskins

Eric Bernstein - NYCC General Council,

Jason Hansman

Vince McGowan

***On the conference call line –***

Marvin Jeff-Coat

Pat Devine

Lee Cavino

- This meeting achieved its quorum of 5 members

**The meeting concentrated on the 3 pieces of legislation;**

**Intro No. 600** - sponsored by Council Member Vallone & 11 other members

**Intro No. 611** - sponsored by Council Member Eugene & 5 other members Intro

**Intro No. 619** - sponsored by Council Member Ulrich & 12 other members

Copies of these documents had been distributed prior to the meeting.

Veteran Advisory Board Additional Recommendations

- Timely appointment of Committee members.
- No more than 90 days after a position opens.
- Definition of a Veteran consistent with NYS definition.
- Committee can meet in Executive Session
- Include Veterans Tax exemptions
- Add the note on all city paychecks "R U a Vet"
- Add SBA to list of those who report activity on Veterans activity

We were informed that this legislation is on a fast track and we should be hearing more on how it is developing

# New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for April 21, 2015 meeting held at:  
**Family Justice Center, Manhattan**  
**80 Centre Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor \* New York, NY 10013**

## MINUTES

### Members Present:

Todd Haskins  
Charles Hernandez  
Samuel Innocent  
John Rowan  
Anthony "Tony" Odierno

Jules Martin  
Vincent McGowan  
Pat Devine  
Mariel Juarez  
Paul Rieckhoff

### Absent:

Charles Greinsky – Called in  
Lee Covino – Called in  
Wendy McClinton  
Anthony Giovinco

### Start time 1700 Hrs.

### Executive Session

- Board members introduced themselves to one another
- Legal counsel distributed copies & explained current local law and subsequent laws, rules & regulations that guide the actions of the NYC VAB

### Public Session

- Introduction of NYCC Veterans' Committee Chairperson, Eric Ulrich
- Introduction of the MOVA Commissioner Loree Sutton
- Board members introduction
- Review of Agenda & minutes from previous meeting by Vince McGowan
- Old Business – NYC Small Business Services exclusion of veteran owned business from goal orientated program was addressed
- New Business-
  - 1) Established Board protocols & Electing VAB Chairperson was raised
  - 2) Established meeting schedule for the remainder of 2015
  - 3) Suggestions on how VAB should operate moving forward
- The floor was open to the public for questions/comments

### Meeting Adjourned: 2000 Hrs.

# New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for August 19, 2015 meeting held at:

**Brooklyn Workforce 1 Career Center**  
9 Bond Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

## Members

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### Present:

Todd Haskins (Manhattan)	Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)
Charles Hernandez (Bronx)	Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)
Joe Bello (Bronx)	Samuel Innocent (Bronx)
John Rowan (Queens)	Anthony “Tony” Odierno (Manhattan)
Jules Martin (Manhattan)	Vincent McGowan (Ex-Officio)

### Absent:

Pat Devine (Bronx)	Mariel Juarez (Brooklyn) – Called in.
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## Minutes

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- John Rowan, Interim chair commenced the meeting.
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience.
- **Elections** were held and the following individuals were elected to one (1) year terms:
  - Todd Haskins - Chair
  - Samuel Innocent – Vice Chair
  - Joe Bello – Secretary
- Todd Haskins assumed chair duties.

**Old Business:** None

### Presentations:

**MOVA.** Commissioner Sutton greeted the board members, welcomed the newly appointed members and congratulated the newly elected officers. She briefly overviewed jobs available at MOVA, the IDNYC card and workforce1. The Commissioner also announced that MOVA would be moving to 1 Centre Street in September and that Ms. Nicole Branca is the new Assistant Commissioner & Senior Advisor for Strategic Initiatives. She also introduced members of her staff to the board and audience.

**Workforce1.** Daniel Nisbett Jr. gave a briefing on who they are and what they do. They announced that 16 veterans were hired as teacher's assistants with the Department of Education and talked about jobs for veterans at the Barclay's Center.

**IDNYC.** Mr. Luke Hayes talked about the IDNYC Card and the veteran's designation. He also discussed the benefits available to veterans and stated he would be available for any questions.

**Ft. Hamilton.** CSM Fauntleroy talked about America Serves and how the DoD is working with them. Talked about the need to get veterans into jobs as DoD pays over 800 million in unemployment benefits. To help with this, he stated that two directives were signed last December. One was to give Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) access to the base (Fort Hamilton) and the other one gives access to non-profits and non-DoD base members and their families. Lastly, CSM Fauntleroy stated that he will be transferring soon.

Catherine LaPorte from MOVA discussed jobs available within NYC and the September 10<sup>th</sup> "Hire Our Heroes" job fair.

**Public Comments:** The following individuals gave public comments to the board:

**Trent Love:**

**Robert L. Swann:** Talked about NYC Vendors issues and City Relations.

**Robert Furman:** Talked about the Brooklyn Preservation Department and the burial of veterans. Want to commemorate the Battle of Brooklyn by establishing a memorial park at 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 9<sup>th</sup> Street in Park Slope Brooklyn as it's believed that the Marylanders who died fighting were buried in that area.

**Dr. Robert Farley:** Talked about Vendors, Homelessness and Clothes for veterans. Stated that he provides free legal services for veterans and that he will be operating out of a McDonalds in every borough because he was not being offered any space at the new MOVA location.

**Dondi McKellar:** Talked about NYC Vendors. Stated that there are 20,000 vendors operating in NYC and only 853 licenses are available. Talked about specialized disabled veteran's food vending permits (V-permits, which have no caps). Stated he, working with the Street Vendors Project have submitted a proposal to the Speaker's Office.

**Howard Dalton:** Talked about NYC Vendors. Discussed 35a, a state law which governs how to vend in New York City.

**Bill Moses:** Stated that he work for the Department of State since 1997 and is now looking for a venture in which to serve veterans.

**New Business:** None.

**Meeting Adjourned.**

**Next Meeting:** October 2, 2015 (Bronx)

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary

# New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for October 22, 2015 meeting held at:

**Bronx Library Center**  
310 East Kingsbridge Road  
Bronx, NY 10458

## Members

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### Present:

Todd Haskins (Manhattan)	Samuel Innocent (Bronx)
Charles Hernandez (Bronx)	Mariel Juarez (Brooklyn)
Joe Bello (Bronx)	John Rowan (Queens)
Anthony “Tony” Odierno (Manhattan)	
Vincent McGowan (Ex-Officio)	

### Absent:

Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)	Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)
Pat Devine (Bronx)	Jules Martin (Manhattan)

## Minutes

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- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting. (5 PM)
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience.

**Old Business:** The board reviewed the minutes from August (Brooklyn). The Chair followed up on **Rev. Robert Farley** comments during the public session, in which he stated he was not being offered space at the new MOVA location. In speaking with Commissioner Sutton, this statement was not true as he was offered space but wanted a bigger location, which MOVA could not accommodate. He has a standing offer to return to MOVA if he should chose so in the future. The minutes were accepted by the board. The chair also informed the board and audience that our last two meetings for 2015 will be on November 16<sup>th</sup> and December 7<sup>th</sup> respectively.

### Presentations:

**MOVA.** The Chair stated that we were given a briefing earlier by Deputy Commissioner Laporte and MOVA’s VAB liaison Latisha Russaw regarding the structure changes currently taking place. MOVA has increased from 4 to 19 people and they’re in the process of putting an outreach specialist in each borough with each individual being an overlapping backup to another borough. The chair stated that MOVA is in the process of completing interviews for those positions. The chair also announced that MOVA has moved into their new space at 1 Centre

Street and while they are unpacking, they are up and running. Lastly, the chair talked about the upcoming veteran's week and that if any of the board members or audience knew of any events, please make MOVA aware of it.

**IDNYC.** Mr. Mohammad Kaba talked about the IDNYC Card and the veteran's designation. He also discussed the benefits available to veterans and stated he would be available for any questions.

**Vince McGowan (UWVC).** Ex-Officio McGowan talked about this year's Veterans Day parade (Americas Parade). This will be the 95<sup>th</sup> consecutive parade and it will start at 11 AM. There will be three (3) hours of consecutive parade coverage from WPIX-11.

**Public Comments:** Board member Charles Hernandez hosted this part of the meeting. The following individuals gave public comments to the board:

**Trent Love:** Talked about creating a multi-media virtual tour of the Bronx. He is looking for help to develop an app. He has an African-American History presentation with QR Code.

**Latasha Peeler:** Talked about NYC street vendor's issues. She talked about the Harlem Vets Center facilitating a group called Vets4Vets. She also talked about the problems with Veteran Vendors v. Undocumented vendors, as well as the Black market and rent-a-vet problems. She passed out a letter that was sent to the City Council (copy given to the board) as well as the creation of a survey and meeting on November 18<sup>th</sup> with City Council Veterans chair Eric Ulrich. John Rowan asked her about Newspaper stands and Vince McGowan asked her to follow up on that. Lastly, Ms. Peeler talked about a 10-week guitar program that the Harlem Vet Center is conducting and how after the 10-weeks you get to keep the guitar.

**Paul Gill:** Stated he was an OIF vet. Talked about a shortage in the VA budget (\$2.9 million), the increase to MOVA's budget and what can they do with the new budget. He also talked the City of Boston and how its veteran's budget is \$45 million and how NYC allocates less than half of that. Lastly, he talked about Intro. 314 and the need to create a Veterans Department in NYC.

**New Business:** The chair recognized **Joe Mondello**, who was appointed by Bronx Borough President Rubin Diaz Jr. as the Chair of the Bronx Veterans Advisory Council. Joe gave greetings to the members on behalf of the Borough President and talked about some of the items the council has worked on and is currently working on. He thanked the board for its work and looks forward to us coming back to the Bronx in 2016.

**Racquel Levine** from NYLAG, a legal non-profit organization that provides assistance to veterans, spoke about how they have a volunteer based project that helps connect veterans to benefits. They currently have a grant from the City Council.

**Meeting Adjourned.**

**Next Meeting:** November 16, 2015

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary



# New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for November 16, 2015 meeting held at:

**Queens Borough President's Office**  
120-55 Queens Blvd  
Kew Gardens, NY 11415

## Members

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### Present:

Todd Haskins (Manhattan)	Samuel Innocent (Bronx)
Charles Hernandez (Bronx)	John Rowan (Queens)
Joe Bello (Bronx)	Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)
Jules Martin (Manhattan)	
Vincent McGowan (Ex-Officio)	

### Absent:

Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)	Pat Devine (Bronx)
Mariel Juarez (Brooklyn)	Anthony "Tony" Odierno (Manhattan)

## Minutes

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- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting. (6 PM)
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience.

**Old Business:** The board reviewed the minutes from October (Bronx). The minutes were approved. The chair reminded the board and audience that our last meeting for 2015 will be on December 7<sup>th</sup> in Staten Island (location TBD).

**New Business:** The chair asked the board for a vote of support commending the Mayor and City Council for establishing a Veterans Department in NYC. The vote was unanimously approved.

### Presentations:

**MOVA.** Commissioner Sutton and Deputy Commissioner Laporte gave updates on:

**Homelessness:** Current number is at 800 moving quickly towards 700. The system has been fully developed to get to functional zero by the end of the year. Current entry is 100 vets per month into the system with a 90-day turnaround. The City has been making available the information regarding incentives to landlords to take in veterans. Assistant Commissioner Branca has obtained a 250K grant from Deutsche Bank to assist with preventative care.

**Mental Health:** The Commissioner announced that the First Lady of New York City will be announcing the Mental Health Roadmap very shortly.

**IDNYC:** There was a brief discussion on the IDNYC numbers in regards to veterans and how Queens has the largest number of veterans of any borough and the word needs to get out.

**Personnel:** Deputy Commissioner Laporte introduced new outreach personnel for MOVA. There is also a social media person now. There was a reminder that MOVA has increased its numbers and that they're in putting an outreach specialist in each borough with each individual being an overlapping backup to another borough. They are still looking for a Staten Island outreach person.

**Public Comments:** Board member John Rowan hosted this part of the meeting. The following individuals gave public comments to the board:

**Dr. Fritz Fils-Aime:** President of Haitian American Veterans Association (HAVA). He talked about deported veterans from Haiti and Mexico and how we must help them. Most of them are Vietnam Veterans and the largest deported veterans are living in Mexico. He also talked about starting a Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) chapter in Haiti. John Rowan told him they would talk.

**Stanley Scriven:** Stated he works for Easter Seals and does outreach to veterans.

**Gerald Cherenfant:** Introduced himself as a US Navy veteran (retired) and has just started working at the Brooklyn Vet Center.

**Rhonda Mona:** Stated that she was an Army Reservist (OIF/OEF) and was looking for services.

**Ryan Graham:** Introduced himself as the VFW Queens County Commander. 6 years Air Force. Anyone looking to join the VFW, come see him. Talked about how the Queens VFW did Community Service on Veterans Day and the Flushing VFW Post did a 5K walk that raised money for the community.

**Paul Narson:** Introduced as the President of VVA Chapter 32. Talked about the need for better communication and how he wants others to come to Queens to work with veterans there. Stated that he didn't march in this year's Veterans Day parade (and neither did a number of others) because they are too old. Talked about how the Queens Veterans Day parade is growing but the VFW and Legion didn't come out. Need to better coordinate with them in the future.

There was a brief discussion on the Indigent Burial Program for Veterans. Paul Narson and John Rowan discussed the program (VVA and VFW) and MOVA stated that they were looking for more organizational friends for this program.

**Meeting Adjourned.**

**Next Meeting:** December 7, 2015

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary

# New York City Veterans Advisory Board

Minutes for December 7, 2015 meeting held at:

**Staten Island Borough President's Office**  
10 Richmond Terrace #120  
Staten Island, NY 10301

## Members

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### Present:

Todd Haskins (Manhattan)  
Joe Bello (Bronx)  
Vincent McGowan (Ex-Officio)

Samuel Innocent (Bronx)  
Anthony "Tony" Odierno (Manhattan)

### Absent:

Charles Greinsky (Staten Island)  
Mariel Juarez (Brooklyn)  
Charles Hernandez (Bronx)  
Wendy McClinton (Brooklyn)

Pat Devine (Bronx)  
Jules Martin (Manhattan)  
John Rowan (Queens)

## Minutes

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- Todd Haskins (Chair) commenced the meeting. (6:30 PM)
- All VAB members introduced themselves to the audience.

**Old Business:** The board reviewed the minutes from the November meeting (Queens). The minutes were approved.

**New Business:** The chair asked the board for a vote of support commending the Mayor and First Lady on the Mental Health Roadmap (ThriveNYC) regarding Veterans in NYC. The vote was unanimously approved.

The Chair also announced the creation of five (5) sub-committees to the Advisory Board. They are: (1) Housing (2) Healthcare (3) Economic Empowerment (4) Communications (5) Legal Services.

### **Presentations:**

**MOVA.** Commissioner Sutton talked about the Year in Review. She discussed her initial listening tour, IDNYC, MOVA's new office location, additional staffing to the office, the new Mental Health Roadmap and the new Department of Veterans Services.

**Personnel:** MOVA Deputy Commissioner Laporte gave an update on new outreach personnel for MOVA and made introductions. She reminded the audience that they will be trained on doing claims and will be certified by the State Division of Veterans Affairs. She also stated that a DAV & VA Outreach coordinator would soon be embedded with MOVA. Deputy Commissioner Laporte also talked about employment and how New York City is hiring. Lastly, she spoke about the Home Owner Tax (State) for owners.

**IDNYC.** Mr. Luke Hayes (Field Director) talked about the IDNYC Card and the veteran's designation. He also discussed the benefits available to veterans and stated he would be available for any questions.

**Public Comments:** Board member (Vice Chair) Samuel Innocent hosted this part of the meeting. The following individuals gave public comments to the board:

**Michelle Paton:** Talked about the systematic closing of the Brooklyn VAMC. She stated that she was at a rally that was held in July and that she doesn't want to go to the Manhattan VAMC. Talked about the closing of the surgery wing and how it's slated to be an outpatient clinic. She asked how we (the board) can help.

**Cedric Smith:** Stated he works for Black Veterans for Social Justice. He also talked about the possibly closing of the Brooklyn VAMC and how we need to rally. He is concerned about affordable housing for veterans (vs. income based housing). Mr. Smith stated that veterans need to rally for housing with the state support. He also talked about and showed pictures of "Liberty Village", a veteran's village in Amityville, Long Island.

**William Smith:** Also works at Black Veterans for Social Justice (BVSJ). Talked about veteran housing and programs at BVSJ. He asked if anyone needs help to reach out to them.

**Lee Covino:** Former Vice Chair of the VAB. He talked about the Veterans School Tax Exemption and how the City is not following the law and how veterans need to write their elected officials to get the city to respond. He asked if the board could help. Joe Bello stated he had spoken with the Public Advocates office regarding this and would follow up with him.

Joe Bello shared information regarding the Haitian American Veterans Association (HAVA) Golden Gloves Boxing fundraiser on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at Club Amazura, 91-12 144<sup>th</sup> Place, Jamaica, NY. The chair thanked everyone for coming out and reminded everyone that today was the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. He also stated that information on the board & its members can be found on MOVA's website.

**Meeting Adjourned.**

**Next Meeting:** TBD, 2016

Submitted by: Joe Bello, Secretary