



CITY OF SURPRISE
Veteran, Disability and Human Service Commission
16000 N. Civic Center Plaza
Surprise, AZ 85374
 Wednesday, January 14, 2026 @ 6:00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS

- A. Call To Order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Pledge of Allegiance
- D. Current Events and Reports
- E. Staff Reports
- F. Veterans, Disability and Human Services Commission

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

INSTRUCTIONS: In order to address the Board\Commission, you will need to fill out a Call to the Public Form available at the front counter, and then turn it in to the Secretary before the meeting begins.

Note: A.R.S. 38-431.01(H) - During this time members of the public may address the Board\Commission only on issues within the jurisdiction of the Board\Commission which are not an item on the agenda. At the conclusion of the open call, the Board\Commission may respond to criticism, may ask staff to review the matter or may ask that the matter be put on a future agenda. No discussion or action shall take place on any item raised.

CONSENT AGENDA:

REGULAR AGENDA ITEM - PUBLIC HEARING:

REGULAR AGENDA ITEM - NON-PUBLIC HEARING:

- | | | | |
|----|----------|---|------------------------------|
| 1. | Citywide | Consideration and action pertaining to the November 12, 2025 Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission meeting minutes. | Human Svcs and Comm Vitality |
| 2. | Citywide | Presentation and discussion pertaining to the topic "Why Community Support Matters" regarding healing trauma and reducing opioid harm, by the Arizona Trauma Institute. | Human Svcs and Comm Vitality |
| 3. | Citywide | Discussion pertaining to event planning and logistics of the Vet Fest 2026. | Human Svcs and Comm Vitality |

- G. Other Business and Future Agenda Items
- H. Adjournment

KRISTI PASSARELLI, CITY CLERK

POSTED: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 @ 11:00am

SPECIAL NOTE: PERSONS WITH SPECIAL ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS, INCLUDING LARGE PRINT MATERIALS OR INTERPRETER, SHOULD CONTACT THE CITY CLERK'S OFFICE @ 623.222.1200 OR CLERK@SURPRISEAZ.GOV, BY NO LATER THAN 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THE REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING TIME.



CITY OF SURPRISE
Veteran, Disability and Human Service
Commission

Council Meeting Date: January 14, 2026 Contact Person:
Submitting Department: Human Svcs and Comm District: Citywide
Vitality
Staff Recommendations: None

Consent: No Regular: Yes Public Hearing: No Report/Discussion: No

Agenda Wording:

Consideration and action pertaining to the November 12, 2025 Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission meeting minutes.

Motion:

I move to approve the November 12, 2025 Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission meeting minutes.

Background:

N/A

Objective Analysis:

N/A

Policy Compliant:

This item is compliant with city and council policies.

Financial Impact:

None

Budget Impact:

None

FTE Impact:

None

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 11.12.25 VDHS Commission Minutes - DRAFT
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**CITY OF SURPRISE
VETERANS, DISABILITY, AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**November 12, 2025 | 6:00 PM
City Council Chambers
16000 N. Civic Center Plaza
Surprise, AZ 85374**

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Tree called the Veterans, Disability, and Human Services Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at Surprise City Hall, 16000 North Civic Center Plaza, Surprise, Arizona 85374, on November 12, 2025.

ROLL CALL

In attendance were Vice-Chair Julie Kent-Partridge, Commissioners John Billcheck, Allison Wisniewski, Olivia Fryer and Charles Manuel.

Absences: Chair Michael Tree (excused) and Commissioner Dr. Gwen Maxfield (excused).

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

STAFF PRESENT:

Community Initiatives Supervisor, Danielle Osborne.

CURRENT EVENTS REPORT

Chair Tree reported on the following:

- The City of Surprise, in partnership with ARIZONA@WORK, is hosting a free hiring event to connect job seekers with employers currently hiring in the West Valley. The hiring event will be held tomorrow, November 13, from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. at the Surprise Regional Library, 16089 N. Bullard Ave. Job seekers can meet potential employers and establish professional relationships in a convenient, time-saving setting.
- Join us on November 22, from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the Surprise Recreation Campus, for the 2025 SciTech Festival. The festival is a high-energy, hands-on celebration of science, technology, engineering, art, and math (S.T.E.A.M.) for all ages. This free community event showcases real-world innovation through engaging exhibits from educational, civic, and business organizations, and local innovators. As a signature event of the Arizona SciTech Institute, the festival also highlights career pathways to spark interest in S.T.E.A.M. fields and the industries shaping our future. For more details, or to register to become a Sponsor or Exhibitor, please visit surpriseaz.gov/SciTech

- City of Surprise administrative offices will be closed Thursday, November 27, and Friday, November 28, in observance of Thanksgiving.
- The Community is encouraged to join us on Saturday, December 13, 2025 from 8 - 11 a.m. for our December Day of Service. Partnering with JustServe, volunteers will help separate, sort and bag new socks for distribution to A New Leaf, Faith House and the City of Surprise Fire-Medical and Police Departments to give back to our community members in need. Registration will open on November 17. For more information or to register, please visit surpriseaz.gov/DayofService
- The City of Surprise is excited to present the 4th Annual Sensitive Santa Experience, in partnership with the Autism Society of Greater Phoenix and T.E.A.M. 4 Kids, celebrating their 12th Annual event. This sensory-friendly celebration is designed for individuals with special needs, offering a calm environment free of long lines, bright lights and loud noises. This event will take place on Saturday, December 13, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Surprise Stadium. For assistance or more information, email ashley.stevens@surpriseaz.gov or call 623.222.2284.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

- Commissioner Billcheck
 - Attended Mayor's Veterans Roundtable on November 5
 - Received updates on veteran services organizations who are currently assisting veterans and discussed future Vet Fest event
- Commissioner Fryer
 - Attended West Valley Impact Collective on October 23, presented by AZ Impact for Good and City of Surprise
 - Very informative and many non-profit organizations in attendance
 - Attended Special Olympics Tournament
 - Attended Gain Night on October 25
 - Attended Yes Day for Autism on October 26, in Tempe
 - Large outdoor Resource Fair for anyone in the autism and disability community
 - Attended Veterans Day Parade on November 11
 - Challenge Coin awarded to Christian Brothers Automotive
- Commissioner Manuel
 - Attended Veterans Day Parade on November 11
 - Attended Mayor's Veteran Roundtable on November 5
 - Invited by West Valley Chamber of Commerce to attend a dinner
 - Was one of three to be awarded a \$10,000 scholarship for service animal training
 - Challenge Coin awarded to Circle K Global Finance Manager for Donations; dinner tickets were purchased and donated for veteran awardees to attend the event
- Commissioner Wisniewski
 - Attended Gain Night on October 25
 - Attended Senior Heritage Apartments ribbon cutting
 - Attended Veterans Day Parade on November 11
- Vice-Chair Kent-Partridge

- Attended Senior Heritage Apartments ribbon cutting on October 8
- Attended Vet Fest Planning Committee Meeting on October 14
- Attended Division of Developmental Disability Lunch and Learn on October 15, on autism spectrum disorder
- Attended VA Mental Health Advocacy Council Meeting on October 23
- Attended Gain Night on October 25
- Attended Mayors Veteran Roundtable on November 5
- Attended Veterans Court Meeting on November 6
 - More details to come
- Attended VFW 1433 BBQ on November 8
- Attended Veterans Day Parade on November 11

STAFF REPORT

Ms. Osborne discussed:

- We are inviting the community to share their acts of service, big or small, by participating in the annual #SurpriseCelebratesMLK Challenge. The challenge encourages community members of all ages to embrace service as a path to greatness.
 - To be part of the challenge, participants are asked to share photos, videos, or creative expressions that answer the question: “How do YOU serve?” Submit your stories of service at surpriseaz.gov/MLKChallenge, or post them on Facebook, Instagram or X with the #SurpriseCelebratesMLK by December 31st to be included in the video showcase at the MLK Day of Celebration and Service on January 17, 2026.
- Thank you to all for participating in the Veterans Day Parade. Our Grand Marshal, Leo Pooley, was in attendance and was thrilled to be part of the event.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

None.

CONSENT AGENDA:

None.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS - PUBLIC HEARING:

None.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS - NON-PUBLIC HEARING:

Item 1 - The City Clerk will administer the Oath of Office to Charles Manuel, who has been approved for reappointment to the Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission for a four-year term, expiration on June 30, 2029.

City Clerk, Kristi Passarelli, administered the Oath of Office to Charles Manuel, who has been reappointed to the Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission for a 4-year term.

Item 2 – Citywide – Consideration and action pertaining to the October 8, 2025 Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission meeting minutes.

Commissioner Billcheck moved to approve the October 8, 2025, Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Wisniewski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with 5 Yes votes and 2 absences (Tree and Maxfield).

Item 3 – Citywide – Presentation and discussion pertaining to the Northwest Valley Veterans Association.

Rodney Hage gave a presentation on services offered through the Northwest Valley Veterans Association.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- Presentation by Operation BBQ Relief

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Wisniewski moved to adjourn the meeting of the Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission on November 12, 2025, at 6:41 p.m. Commissioner Billcheck seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with 5 votes and 2 absences (Tree and Maxfield).

Danielle Osborne
Community Initiative Supervisor

Julie Kent-Partridge
Veterans, Disability and Human Services Commission Vice-Chair

The foregoing instrument is a full, true, and correct copy of the original document on file in the office of the City Clerk, City of Surprise, Arizona.

ATTEST BY: _____
Victoria Simmons
Administrative Specialist

DATE: _____

DRAFT



CITY OF SURPRISE
Veteran, Disability and Human Service
Commission

Council Meeting Date: January 14, 2026 Contact Person:
Submitting Department: Human Svcs and Comm District: Citywide
Vitality
Staff Recommendations: None

Consent: No Regular: Yes Public Hearing: No Report/Discussion: No

Agenda Wording:

Presentation and discussion pertaining to the topic "Why Community Support Matters" regarding healing trauma and reducing opioid harm, by the Arizona Trauma Institute.

Motion:

Presentation and discussion only.

Background:

This item is a presentation by the Arizona Trauma Institute entitled "Why Community Support Matters," regarding trauma healing and reducing opioid harm. Presentation by Dr. Robert Rhoton PsyD, F.A.A.E.T.S., founder of the Arizona Trauma Institute.

The City of Surprise assumes no responsibility for the policies or positions presented or for the presentation of its contents.

Objective Analysis:

To promote quality of life, accessibility and equity for all residents of Surprise, including those who are veterans or who experience disabilities, through cooperation with Surprise residents and any veterans, disability and human service organizations that serve the residents of Surprise.

Policy Compliant:

This item is compliant with City and Council policies.

Financial Impact:

None

Budget Impact:

None

FTE Impact:

None

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Surprise 01-2026 - Updated
-

WELCOME

Dr. Robert Rhoton

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SURPRISE

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Why Community Support Matters



Dr. Robert Rhoton PsyD, F.A.A.E.T.S.
Founder of the Arizona Trauma Institute

Robert.Rhoton@aztrauma.org

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the Social Environment

Understanding how social factors influence lifelong health and recovery outcomes

Highlight the influence of the social environment on lifelong health.

ACEs demonstrate how family, neighborhood, community, and relational bonds profoundly impact an individual's lifelong physical and mental health outcomes.

Challenge outdated models blaming character or education.

Past approaches wrongly attributed behavioral issues to character flaws or lack of education, overlooking trauma-induced reactive behaviors shaped by adverse experiences.

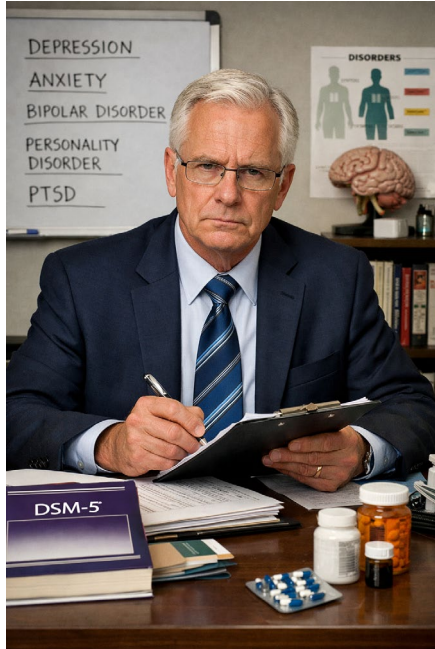
Emphasize the social environment's role in mental health and recovery

The third key lesson from ACEs research shows that the social environment significantly shapes mental health trajectories and recovery outcomes after trauma.

Advocate for systemic reforms in key sectors

Scientific findings call for reforms in mental health, legal, and educational systems to incorporate trauma-informed practices reflecting the impact of ACEs.

Traditional Understanding of Mental Health and Addiction



- Problems were (intrapyschic) **within the mind or psyche**, referring to internal psychological processes, conflicts, thoughts, or emotions that happen inside a person, separate from external interactions.
- Often seen as character attributes, based on symptoms that represent significant deficits.
- There was a significant authoritarian structure passing judgment, assigning (disease) labels, and, quite often, indirectly increasing shame and eroding self-worth.

What we learned from ACEs in the next slide

- ✓ Environmental and social determinants that lead to toxic stress elicit entirely biologically correct responses.
- ✓ These are NOT characterological defects; they are the impact of the social environment.
- ✓ They often impact people 50 years after the experiences that caused the initial biological shifts.



The Importance of Protective Factors in Recovery

Foundational elements reducing relapse risk and supporting sustained recovery

Protective factors reduce relapse risk

Relapse prevention is about actively building strengths. Protective factors fortify recovery. By deliberately strengthening factors like stable housing, a sober support network, healthy routines, and access to counseling, you create a buffer against risk. These elements fill the void that addiction once occupied, reducing the need for maladaptive coping.

Recovery capital concept

Recovery Capital is the total sum of the internal and external resources that support recovery. This includes physical health, coping skills, supportive relationships, stable housing, and a sense of purpose. The greater the recovery capital, the more resilient and sustainable the recovery.

Key protective factors

True prevention and recovery thrive in strong communities.

- **Deep Social Connection:**
- **Shared Purpose & Ritual:** Community gardens, faith-based groups, and cultural festivals offer meaning, identity, and positive routine.
- **Collective Efficacy & Resource Hubs:** Schools can be developed as vital resource hubs.

System-Level support

Effective prevention and sustained recovery require foundational systems-level supports.

- These include **integrated healthcare**
- **Economic and housing stability**
- **Public education systems** as a hub for Coordinated community responses.
- **Policies and funding** that destigmatize addiction and invest in infrastructure.

Stable Housing as a Protective Platform

Housing's Role in Recovery: Enhancing stability and reducing risks for individuals in recovery



Reduce high-risk environments with stable housing.

Stable, recovery-focused housing significantly lowers contact with high-risk situations that can trigger relapse or harm.



Support routine, employment, and overall functioning

Providing stable housing helps establish daily routines, maintain employment, and improve overall life functioning, critical to recovery.



Demonstrate positive substance outcomes and cost-effectiveness

Stable housing correlates with improved substance recovery outcomes while being a highly cost-effective intervention within recovery programs.



Implement housing access speed as a clinical quality metric

Prioritizing rapid access to housing reduces risks of treatment dropout and overdose—timeliness as a key clinical quality measure.



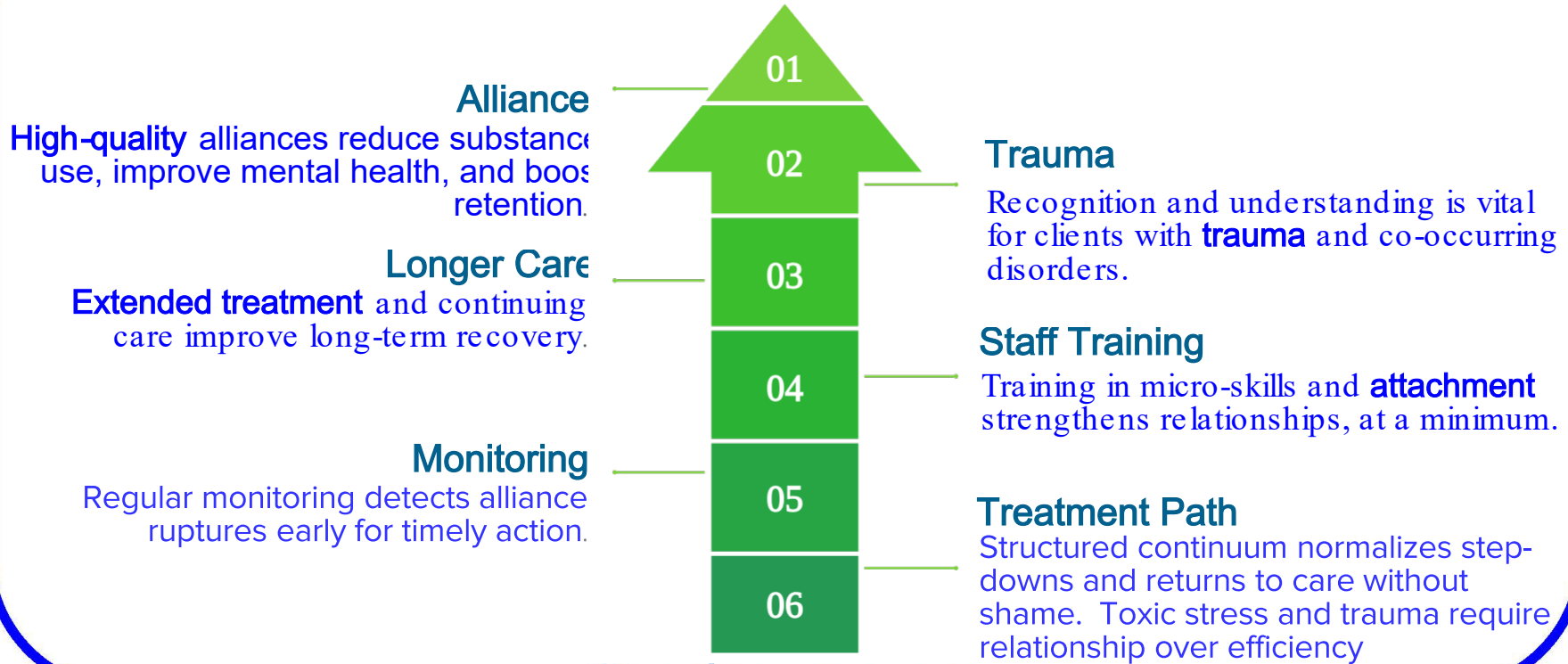
Resident autonomy with peer support and employment services

Empowering residents by honoring their autonomy and integrating peer support alongside employment services enhances recovery and engagement

Employment and Economic Stability in Recovery

1. **Link employment to improved recovery outcomes** Employment is associated with lower substance use and more positive recovery trajectories, demonstrating its critical role in sustained recovery
2. **Implement evidence-based employment strategies, including attendance contingencies, supported employment programs, and therapeutic workplaces:** Facilitate stable employment among individuals in recovery.
3. **Recognize benefits of parttime and low-wage jobs:** Even part-time or low-wage employment contributes positively to recovery by providing structure, income, and social support.
4. **Recommend rapid job placement and coaching** Quickly connecting individuals to jobs with ongoing coaching improves employment retention and supports recovery goals.
5. **Advocate flexible schedules and employer training** Flexible work schedules that accommodate recovery needs, and employer training on recovery-friendly policies, foster supportive workplace environments that emphasize accountability and support.

Therapeutic Alliance and Sustained Treatment Engagement



Family Cohesion and Communication: Adult Perspective

1. Strengthen bonds with partners and kin to reduce relapse risk.
2. Engage family members to support accountability and stress regulation
3. Incorporate family participation in treatment planning
4. Prioritize family engagement tracks and coach staff for conflict communication
5. Recognize complexities from histories of betrayal, separation, or loss
6. Learn to communicate constructively (example Appreciative Inquiry)

Family Cohesion for Youth and Children

1. Reduce youth substance use through strong family bonds.
2. Enhance emotional security and coping skills via family cohesion
3. Prioritize family stabilization in prevention efforts
4. Promote family-focused prevention approaches
5. Support family stabilization through community connections

Supportive Adult Relationships for Children

- 1. Ensure the presence of a protective adult to reduce substance use risk:** Having at least one protective adult significantly lowers the risk of substance use among youth facing adversity, acting as a crucial resilience factor.
- 2. Address youth isolation and mistrust:** Youth often experience social isolation and mistrust, which can complicate the formation of meaningful, supportive adult relationships.
- 3. Mitigate the impact of high turnover in human services:** Frequent staff changes in human services disrupt the development of long-term supportive bonds essential for youth well being.
- 4. Foster stable adult-youth relationships in programs:** Child welfare and community programs should prioritize cultivating stable, long-term adult-youth connections to support healing and resilience.
- 5. Recognize the time needed to build sincere connections:** Building genuine, trusting relationships requires significant time and consistent effort, underscoring the need for patience in supportive interventions.

Supportive Adult Relationships for Adults

1. Mentors, sponsors, peer specialists, and supervisors serve as buffers against stress and cravings, supporting adults in recovery.
2. Strong social networks during treatment promote abstinence from substances and lower the risk of suicidal thoughts among adults.
3. Maintaining reliable relationships depends on stable workforce conditions, as trust between adults and support providers is delicate.
4. Recommendations include investing in peer workforce development and embedding connections to mutual help or secular groups that align with client preferences.
5. Remember that an isolated adult needs a safe connection to achieve adequate self-governance, necessary for growth and resilience.

Cultivating Meaning, Coherence, and Sustainable Purpose

Beyond Burnout Prevention

Preventing burnout and moral injury requires more than reducing stressors; it demands actively cultivating a Sense of Coherence (SOC) across roles.

Meaning as a Nutrient

Meaning is an essential, renewable resource for mission-driven professionals—it fuels sustainable engagement and resilience.

Building Coherence Systematically

Sustainable service is not taskbased; it's meaning-made. SOC's pillars—comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness—must be protected and grown.

Reframing the Challenge

Shift from asking how to endure the work to how to make it meaningful, integrating SOC into the daily fabric of service roles.

The Crisis of Meaning

The Paradox of Purpose in Bureaucratic Systems

- **Purpose vs. Procedure:** Professionals enter service roles driven by mission, yet face systems mired in rules, paperwork, and regulatory complexity.
- **Systemic Stressors Erode Meaning:** Key eroders include compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, public scrutiny, and systemic inertia that obstruct purposeful work.
- **From Pathology to Possibility:** Shifting from a 'pathogenic' model (fighting dysfunction) to a 'salutogenic' one (fostering meaning and coherence) enables sustainable service.
- **Framing the Core Question:** Not just 'how to reduce the problem,' but 'how do we create systems where people can thrive with purpose amid challenge?'



From Pathogenic to Salutogenic

A Shift from Treating Symptoms to Cultivating Resilience

Pathogenic vs. Salutogenic

The pathogenic model treats burnout after it occurs. The salutogenic model focuses on proactively cultivating health and resilience.

The New Health Question

Instead of asking 'What causes disease?' salutogenesis asks 'What promotes well-being and meaning under stress?'

Creating Conditions for Thriving

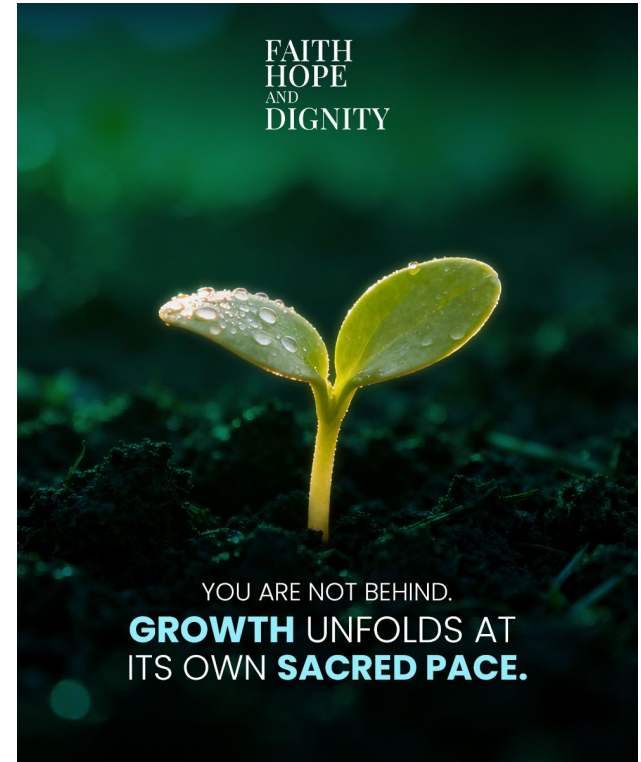
Supportive systems focus on manageability, coherence, and meaning, not just workload metrics or compliance.

Building Sustainable Engagement

Proactive design of roles and workflows can make public service emotionally sustainable, not just operationally functional.

The Foundations: Faith, Hope & Dignity

- **Faith: Trust and Belief:** Trust in one's own judgment, in colleagues, and in the mission of the system provides stability and courage amid uncertainty.
- **Hope: Meaningful Possibility:** The conviction that effort leads to change, even incremental, sustains motivation in the face of systemic inertia.
- **Dignity: Irreplaceable Worth:** Respect for self and others affirms the importance of the work and counters the dehumanizing effects of bureaucracy.
- **Interdependent Resources:** These aren't just abstract virtues, they're active resources that fuel resilience and deepen engagement.



Thank You Dr. Robert Rhoton

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CITY OF SURPRISE
Veteran, Disability and Human Service
Commission

Council Meeting Date: January 14, 2026 Contact Person:
Submitting Department: Human Svcs and Comm District: Citywide
Vitality
Staff Recommendations:

Consent: No Regular: Yes Public Hearing: No Report/Discussion: No

Agenda Wording:

Discussion pertaining to event planning and logistics of the Vet Fest 2026.

Motion:

Discussion only.

Background:

The commission will discuss logistics surrounding the 3rd annual Surprise Vet Fest in 2026. The discussion will include details on the event planning as well as any needed action in order to make the event a success.

Objective Analysis:

To promote quality of life, accessibility and equity for all residents of Surprise, including those who are veterans or who experience disabilities, through cooperation with Surprise residents and any veterans, disability and human service organizations that serve the residents of Surprise.

Policy Compliant:

This item is compliant with City and Council policies.

Financial Impact:

N/A

Budget Impact:

N/A

FTE Impact:

N/A

ATTACHMENTS:
