

**CITY OF SURPRISE
VETERANS, DISABILITY, AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**January 14, 2026 | 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 January 14, 2026.

ROLL CALL

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

STAFF PRESENT:

Human Services & Community Vitality Director, Seth Dyson, and Administrative Specialist, Victoria Simmons.

CURRENT EVENTS REPORT

Chair Tree reported on the following:

- Join us for the 10th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Celebration and Service on Saturday, January 17, 2026, honoring the life and legacy of the inspirational leader. The event will begin with a motivational program centered on the theme: "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve," celebrating community building and service to others. Following the program, volunteers will have the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and enjoy hands-on service projects that directly benefit our local community. Registration is required to participate in the volunteer portion of this event. All volunteers over the age of 18 must complete their own registration form. For questions, contact Daisy Vargas at 623.222.1612 or daisy.vargas@surpriseaz.gov.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

- Commissioner Wisniewski
 - Attended Vet Fest Advisory Planning Committee meeting on November 18
- Commissioner Billcheck
 - Attended Vet Fest Advisory Planning Committee meeting on November 18

- Volunteered at St. Mary's Food Bank on November 25, during the holiday season
- Vice-Chair Kent-Partridge
 - Volunteered at St. Mary's Food Bank on November 25
 - Attended Adaptive Rec Winter Party on December 10
 - In partnership with Dysart School District
 - Toured new Surprise Community and Resource Center on December 17 and met a potential partner
 - Met with Billy's Place on January 7
 - Attended Vet Fest Advisory Planning Committee Meeting on January 13
 - Attended Mayor's Roundtable on Disabilities today
 - Learned about trends in group homes
 - Attended DES Winter Forum today
 - Changes to SNAP and AHCCCS benefits eligibility, more information to come
- Commissioner Manuel
 - Met with group of veterans casually to discuss issues in the community amongst veterans
 - Learned that Peoria is experiencing similar concerns within the veteran's community
 - Attended Vet Fest Advisory Planning Committee Meeting on January 13
 - Attended Mayor's Roundtable on Disabilities today
 - It was a great meeting and very informative
- Commissioner Fryer
 - Volunteered at St. Mary's Food Bank on November 25
 - Joined the MLK Day of Celebration and Service Challenge by submitting photos from volunteering at St. Mary's Food Bank and from the Veterans Day Parade
 - Attended Sensitive Santa event on December 13, hosted by Autism Society, City of Surprise and T.E.A.M. 4 KIDS
 - Met with representative from Valle Del Sol, it great to hear about what they have to offer
- Commissioner Maxfield
 - Attended Veterans Parade in November
 - Attended Mayor's Veteran Roundtable Meeting in November
 - Attended Grand Opening for Vanessa Horabuena's Art Gallery
 - Healing through painting
 - Attended Vet Fest Advisory Planning Committee meeting on November 18
 - Attended Teen Challenge Banquet
 - Faith-based program that assists people of all ages, with an 80% success rate
 - Attended Open the Floodgates of Heaven on November 15, at the Surprise Stadium
- Chair Tree
 - Attended Mayor's Roundtable on Disabilities today
 - Mayor of Glendale has a flag that has been flown over all the state capitals, with Arizona being the last. He would like to get the flag to the international space station to have it fly across the country.

STAFF REPORT

Mr. Dyson discussed:

- There will be a tour of the new Surprise Community and Resource Center on January 21 at 3 p.m. Please reach out to HSCV team if interested in attending.
 - Hoping to get new center open during the summer
- Annual HUD Point In Time on January 27
 - If you would like to volunteer, please get with Roxanne Zaad
- Next Veterans Roundtable is February 4 at 11:30 a.m.
 - Presentation on the Wall that Heals, more details to come on how to volunteer
- Billy's Place will be presenting to the Commission in February
- Thank you to those who were able to volunteer at the St. Mary's Food Bank during the holidays
 - St. Mary's Food Bank and Valley View Food Bank are always looking for volunteers
- Possible discussion about allocating the VDHS Commission budget at the next Commission meeting. If interested in discussing, please add as a future agenda item
 - There is talk about using funds for Vet Fest and or autism kits for Surprise public safety vehicles

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

None.

CONSENT AGENDA:

None.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS - PUBLIC HEARING:

None.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS - NON-PUBLIC HEARING:

Item 1 - Consideration and action pertaining to the November 12, 2025 Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission meeting minutes.

Vice-Chair Kent-Partridge moved to approve the November 12, 2025, Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Wisniewski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with 7 Yes votes.

Item 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.

Dr. Robert Rhoton, with Arizona Trauma Institute, gave a presentation on the topic “Why Community Support Matters” regarding healing trauma and reducing opioid harm.

Item 3 – Citywide – Discussion pertaining to event planning and logistics of the Vet Fest 2026.

Commissioners discussed details and logistics of event planning for Vet Fest 2026.

OTHER BUSINESS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- DDD to discuss upcoming updates
- DES to discuss their new presentation for medical and health care professionals regarding early intervention and developmental disabilities
- Discussion and possible action regarding VDHS Budget allocation
- Presentation from Brain Injury Association of Arizona
- Presentation from Teen Challenge
- Presentation from Turning Point, Faith

ADJOURNMENT:

Vice-Chair Kent Partridge moved to adjourn the meeting of the Veterans, Disability & Human Services Commission on January 14, 2026, at 7:39 p.m. Commissioner Billcheck seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with 7 votes.

Seth Dyson
Human Service & Community Vitality Director

Michael Tree
Veterans, Disability and Human Services Commission 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