



**Agenda      Regular Meeting of the Veterans  
Advisory Board  
February 17, 2026 at 5:30 PM  
Monica Roybal Center  
737 Agua Fria Street, Santa Fe**

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**Procedures for Veterans Advisory Board Meeting**

**Join on Zoom:** [https://santafenm-  
gov.zoom.us/j/84030088562?pwd=ajZRV2pEMjM0SUlucmJCNk40U3FPQT09](https://santafenm.gov.zoom.us/j/84030088562?pwd=ajZRV2pEMjM0SUlucmJCNk40U3FPQT09)

**Meeting ID:** 840 3008 8562

**Passcode:** 586934

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes
5. Public Comment
6. New Business
  - a. Discussion and Possible Action: Presentation of Draft Strategic Plan by the subcommittee
  - b. Discussion and Possible Action: New Committee Candidate(s) (Gary Donato, Chairperson)
  - c. Discussion and Possible Action: New Brochures and Business Cards (Gary Donato, Chairperson)
  - d. Discussion and Possible Action: January 26th Meeting with the Mayor (Gary Donato, Chairperson)
  - e. Discussion and Possible Action: February 4th Meeting with the Cabinet Secretary (Gary Donato, Chairperson)
  - f. Discussion and Possible Action: February 24th Briefing with the Syracuse Group (Gary Donato, Chairperson)
7. Old Business
8. Presentations

9. Matters from the Committee

10. Matters from Staff

- a. Discussion and Possible Action: Revise Website Content and Location (Daniel Lopez, Equity and ADA Manager)

11. Next Meeting:

- a. March 17, 2026  
5:30Pm to 7:30PM  
737 Agua Fria Street / Santa Fe, NM  
(Meetings to be conducted via a Hybrid Platform)

<https://santafenm.gov.zoom.us/j/84030088562?pwd=ajZRV2pEMjM0SUIacmJCNk40U3FPQT09>

12. Adjourn

Closed captions are provided for this meeting. Persons with disabilities in need of additional accommodations, contact the City Clerk's office at 505-955-6521, five (5) working days prior to meeting date.



## Santa Fe Veterans Advisory Board

### Strategic Plan 2026-2028

#### VISION

Helping military veterans and their families thrive in Santa Fe, New Mexico

#### MISSION

The Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) advises the Mayor and Santa Fe City leadership on issues relating to military veterans, their needs, and the care they receive from the City of Santa Fe and ancillary groups within the city.

#### VALUES

Our values – Respect, Integrity, Selflessness and Excellence (RISE) – are derived from our military service and devotion to the nation.

- (R) Respect. We will respect each other and those we meet in all ways, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or political views.
- (I) Integrity. We will conduct every aspect of our work with the highest level of integrity and truth.
- (S) Selflessness. We will be selfless in seeking out the best outcomes for our veterans and their families.
- (E) Excellence. We will seek to achieve excellence in all we do as veteran advisors.

#### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The VAB advises the Mayor and the Santa Fe City Council on all matters related to military veteran programs, policies, and procedures. Through regular meetings, this diverse group of veterans ensures the lines of communication are maintained and cultivates an active community in support of veterans within the City of Santa Fe. The VAB will:

- Serve as a source of information related to the status, resources, and services available in the community for the large population of veterans.
- Identify and review the entire range of services currently available to veterans and recommend ways to strengthen such services.
- Evaluate and recommend programs, policies and practices designed to alleviate veteran's difficulties in meeting needs for essential services and other areas affecting them.

- Maintain awareness among both the public and private sector of veterans' full potential and of the importance of veterans' contributions to the sustainability and development of our community.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Goal 1: Strengthen Veteran Community Collaboration**

- Objective 1.1: Meet with and build collaboration among veteran organizations in northern New Mexico.
- Objective 1.2: Assist in synchronizing support and services to veterans among the veteran organizations in northern New Mexico.
- Objective 1.3: Participate in all veteran-related community events in Santa Fe.

### **Goal 2: Grow Veterans Programs**

- Objective 2.1: Increase funding and program support to reduce the number of veterans experiencing homelessness.
- Objective 2.2: Establish reviews of veteran-related programs through assessment of quantifiable performance metrics.

### **Goal 3: Expand Awareness and Communication**

- Objective 3.1: Create greater community awareness of issues important to veteran groups through outreach and influence opportunities.
- Objective 3.2: Strengthen and expand communication related to veterans' issues on city web pages, social media platforms, and other communications venues.

### **Goal 4: Strengthen and Grow Health Care and Mental Health Services for Veterans**

- Objective 4.1: In coordination with the Santa Fe Veterans Center and the New Mexico Department of Veteran Services (DVS), work to implement the recommendations of the Syracuse University IVMF study.
- Objective 4.2: Work with the city and county of Santa Fe and DVS to expand the CONNECT Network to other counties in northern New Mexico.
- Objective 4.3: Collaborate with DVS and other veteran organizations to secure additional funding from the legislature and the VA for veteran health care and mental health treatment in rural areas of New Mexico.
- Objective 4.4: In coordination with DVS and other veteran organizations, work to reduce the incidents of veteran suicide in New Mexico.



## Appendix 1 to Veteran’s Advisory Board Strategic Plan 2026-2028

### Goal 1: Strengthen Veteran Community Collaboration

#### Objective 1.1: Meet with and build collaboration among the veteran organizations in Northern New Mexico

##### Initiatives

**1.1.1** Assign Veteran’s Advisory Board (VAB) members to serve as liaisons with local veteran organizations. Liaisons will report back to VAB on activities and events of interest to VAB and share with them info on VAB activities. **Completed**

- Department of Veteran Services: Chair Donato and Vice Chair Brinegar
- MOAA: Chair Donato and Jim Williams
- Veteran’s Alliance: Chair Donato
- VFW: Chair Donato
- American Legion Post 1: Stephen Kapin
- American Legion Post 12: Chair Donato
- Vietnam Veterans of America: Larry Hinkle
- Veteran’s Center: Chair Donato and Vice Chair Brinegar

**1.1.2** Strengthen partnership with Veteran’s Alliance board by having VAB Chair serve as ex-officio member of Veteran’s Alliance board. **Completed**

**1.1.3** Invite representatives of other veteran organizations to attend VAB meetings and make short presentations on their activities in support of local veterans. **Ongoing**

#### Objective 1.2: Assist in synchronizing support and services to veterans among the veteran organizations in northern New Mexico

##### Initiatives

**1.2.1** Ensure consistent contractual and funding support for Santa Fe Veteran’s Navigator. **Ongoing**

**1.2.2** Assist Veteran’s Navigator by serving as a clearing house of information on services available from other organizations, both veteran-specific and local charitable activities. **Ongoing**

**1.2.3** Where appropriate, coordinate directly with local organizations such as Agape House, The Life Link and Chaplain Joe’s Street Outreach, all of which provide support to homeless veterans as part of their overall community service. **Ongoing**

## Objective 1.3: Participate in all veteran-related community events in Santa Fe

### Initiatives

- 1.3.1 Lead and coordinate the city's annual Veteran's Day ceremony on November 11. Reinstitute the parade on Veterans Day. **Ongoing**
- 1.3.2 Participate in annual veteran's events including Memorial Day, Vietnam Veteran's Day, and dedication and award ceremonies involving local veterans. **Ongoing**
- 1.3.3 Encourage and assist, where appropriate, local junior ROTC organizations, which are run by military veterans, and their activities. **Ongoing**



## Appendix 2 to Veteran’s Advisory Board Strategic Plan 2026-2028

### Goal 2: Grow Programs for Veterans

**Objective 2.1: Increase funding and program support to reduce the number of veterans experiencing homelessness.**

#### Initiatives

**2.1.1** Coordinate with VAB-funded Veteran Navigator to identify concrete options to help un-housed veterans find housing, whether temporary, transitional or permanent. **Ongoing**

**2.1.2** Better assess the number of un-housed veterans in Santa Fe by coordinating directly with local non-profits who aid those experiencing homelessness (e.g., Agape House, The Life Link, Chaplain Joe’s Street Outreach Ministry, New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness, St. Elizabeth’s Shelters). This includes adding specific veteran-related questions to intake forms used by these non-profits. **Ongoing**

**2.1.3** Explore additional funding to alleviate veteran homelessness with the VA, DVS and the NM congressional delegation. **Ongoing**

**2.1.4** Work with DVS and the Vet Center to identify homeless vets in Santa Fe who would be willing to take advantage of temporary housing and services available at the Veteran Integration Center (VIC) in Albuquerque. **New initiative**

**Objective 2.2: Establish reviews of veteran-related programs through assessment of quantifiable performance metrics.**

#### Initiatives

**2.2.1** In coordination with DVS, employ the Syracuse University IVMF metrics-based analytical tool for evaluating local veteran-related programs. **Ongoing**

**2.2.2** Offer the evaluation tool to all local organizations providing assistance to veterans, to include training these organizations on how to use the tool. **Ongoing**

**2.2.3** Collate and evaluate data collected by the organizations, providing feedback to them and periodic assessments to the mayor and city council. **Ongoing**



## Appendix 3 to Veteran's Advisory Board Strategic Plan 2026-2028

### Goal 3: Expand Awareness and Communication

**Objective 3.1: Create greater community awareness of issues important to veteran groups through outreach and influence opportunities**

#### Initiatives

**3.1.1** Conduct regular briefings to mayor and City Council on veteran issues and activities of the VAB and other veteran organizations. **Ongoing**

**3.1.2** Offer to brief local service organizations on veteran issues. **Ongoing**

**3.1.3** Meet regularly with DVS, providing them feedback on local veteran issues and opportunities to meet veteran needs. **Ongoing**

**Objective 3.2: Strengthen and expand communication related to veteran issues on city web pages, social media platforms and other communication venues.**

#### Initiatives

**3.2.1** Establish a communication and outreach committee on the VAB to coordinate messaging on veteran issues across all local communication platforms. **Ongoing**

**3.2.2** Create periodic articles on veteran issues and opportunities for incorporation on city web pages, social media platforms and local print media. **Ongoing**

**3.2.3** Offer local media the opportunity to interview VAB members on community issues of importance to veterans. **Ongoing**



## Appendix 4 to Veteran's Advisory Board Strategic Plan 2026-2028

### Goal 4: Strengthen and Grow Health Care and Mental Health Services for Veterans

**Objective 4.1: In coordination with the Santa Fe Veteran Center and the New Mexico DVS, work to implement the recommendations of the Syracuse University IVMF Study.**

#### Initiatives

- 4.1.1** Improve communication, including a feedback loop, between the various organizations providing health care and mental health services, including the Veteran Integration Center (VIC) in Albuquerque, the Santa Fe Veteran Center, and DVS. **New initiative.**
- 4.1.2** Collaborate with DVS to expand health and mental health care services in Northern NM through a combination of additional VA funded clinics, mobile clinics, and private providers under contract to the VA. **New initiative.**
- 4.1.3** In conjunction with DVS, expand capability to transport veterans in rural areas to the nearest clinic or provider. **New initiative.**
- 4.1.4** Work with DVS to oversee funds provided by the Highly Rural Grant that include support to veteran transportation and hiring more healthcare providers. **New initiative.**

**Objective 4.2: Work with the city and county of Santa Fe and DVS to expand the CONNECT Network to other counties in northern New Mexico.**

#### Initiatives

- 4.2.1** Ask DVS to contact through their Veteran Service Officers appropriate city staff in Espanola, Taos, Las Vegas, Raton and Farmington to brief them on the CONNECT model and encourage them to replicate it at their locations. **New initiative.**
- 4.2.2** Once a CONNECT Network is established in northern New Mexico, work with DVS to expand it throughout the state. **New initiative.**
- 4.2.3** Work with DVS and the Syracuse team to develop and deploy a data-sharing capability across the network. **New initiative.**

**Objective 4.3: Collaborate with DVS and other veteran organizations to secure additional funding from the legislature and the VA for veteran health care and mental health treatment in rural areas of New Mexico.**

#### Initiatives

- 4.3.1** Secure additional funds either from the legislature or the VA for the acquisition of additional mobile clinics until DVS has secured the 18 recommended by the IVMF team. **New initiative.**

**4.3.2** Ensure each mobile clinic has access to a Veteran Services Officer, and health care provider and a mental health therapist. **New initiative.**

**4.3.3** Establish a capability at DVS to administer this mobile network, in coordination with NM Healthcare Services. **New initiative.**

**Objective 4.4: In coordination with DVS and other veteran organizations, work to reduce the incidents of veteran suicide in NM.**

#### **Initiatives**

**4.4.1** Work with the Vet Center to expand their suicide prevention program. **New initiative.**

**4.4.2** Consult with the legislature on developing a Red Flag Law, focused on veterans in NM, that will stand up in court. **New initiative.**

## Meeting with Mayor Garcia (Jan 26<sup>th</sup> 1530)

1. **New Member to VAB – Ari Jonty.** Awaiting appointment letter for both new VAB Chair and new member – clerk will correlate to guidelines.
2. **Veteran Art in Hallway.**
  - a. Mayor agreed to keep the art rotation cycle. He would like to see some signage/plaque clarifying for the public what the art is all about – SIMPLE.
3. **Lorraine’s material.**
  - a. Mayor interested in concept of Project Lifesaver and will contact Lorraine separately for more details.
4. **Space for Post 12**
  - a. Mayor took on the request and will personally work with the executive team to push the request and legality/liability forward. He will get back to me “within a couple of weeks” with a response or request for meeting to update.
5. **250<sup>th</sup> celebration.**
  - a. He didn’t know of any plans and it has not come up in meetings or Council.
  - b. Provided him with information on Governor’s statewide actions/plans = website for more information.
  - c. He requested the VAB work with veteran groups to come up with some ideas for a city-wide for the celebration.
6. **Multi-year Veteran Alliance Contract**
  - a. Henri is no longer with the city. Handed the Mayor email from Elizabeth Martin. He will contact her and Henri’s replacement to get more information.
  - b. I discussed prior problems of funding and the necessity for continuance of program. He agreed that there is need to mitigate funding issues and will get back to me with what he found out.
7. **Veteran Parade – huge issue among veteran groups.**
  - a. He seemed to be fully supportive and will bring the issue up with the executive team.
  - b. He recommended if continue to have ceremony in Convention Center (he’s all for this) then may a route could start at the Bataan Memorial and end at the Convention Center.
  - c. He is tasking the VAB to look at viability and provide plan to city as this would be a City-Sponsored event.
  - d. I previously met with Deputy Chief Ben Valdez who was all in favor of resurrecting the parade. He’s willing to work with VAB on planning and route management.
8. **VAB Strategic Plan**
  - a. The Mayor would like to see more on suicide prevention and better coordination between service agencies on homelessness.
  - b. He would also like to see celebratory events that engage the city to also be part of the Plan.
  - c. He would like to see a draft for review before finalization.
9. **VAB Meetings**
  - a. He questioned why in Agua Fria building. Why not, if schedule not conflicting in Council Chambers and or Councilor’s conference room. I would propose this to the VAB and get back to him.
  - b. Invited him to a meet/greet with VAB at Feb 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. He appreciated the invite and will make attempt to be there even if for a short time.
  - c. He emphasized that members of the VAB who liaise with veteran and community groups his thanks and gratitude for what we’re doing to bring city and veterans together.

Overall good meeting as he took on and summarize action items he would work on and those for the VAB. His emphasis is to bring groups together; engage the city more; advertise those engagements more fully across all platforms (Veteran group sites and city social media sites. Let’s let our citizens and community know what we’re doing. He also seemed to listen more attentively to requests and recommendations stressing he would “put requests forward to the executive team as an action item”.

**MEETING WITH CABINET SECRETARY MEETING**  
**2/4/2026 1400-1515**

**1. Go over notes of Gary's meeting with the Mayor**

- a. No major comments, see below on parade and 250<sup>th</sup>.
- b. Gary stated the 2026-2029 strategic plan from VAB in progress should be ready for draft review by DVS sometime in next two weeks.

**2. Lots of questions as to why no 2<sup>nd</sup> VSO in Santa Fe (constant)**

- a. VSOs based on population density of veterans. For example, Albuquerque has (Bernalillo Co. 55,402) veterans; Santa Fe (Santa Fe Co. 8,698) veterans. *\*VA VetPop 2026 Data*
- b. CabSec noted during his tenure added 7 new VSOs.
- c. CabSec noted that attempts made to increase number of tribal Service Officers and others (i.e. posts) interested. Set aside 36 slots for training, 7 showed up and were trained.
- d. Gary asked about more training and would push for great input from posts. CabSec agreed based on demand.

**3. Review/discuss VIC "state wide agenda"**

- a. Discussed VIC state wide agenda – expansion of transitional to rental/landlord based housing and goal to have in-person outreach as well as coordination with local partners. DVS agreed and had it as action item to support and assist as needed.

**4. Veteran's Day comments/revisions for 2026**

- a. Gary noted need for department flag array on dais as well as screen revealing veteran related activity and events (i.e. Bataan gathering, fourth of July; banners, and post activities). DVS agreed and offered assistance (PIO)
- b. Discussed more tables and PUSH for more veteran attendance at the event.

## **5. Parade for Veteran's Day**

- a. DVS on board to assist noting support from broader community.
- b. Gary relayed Mayor's idea for parade route and tasking VAB with reporting back as this would be a city sanctioned event
- c. CabSec noted prior route from NM Military Museum staging/possible short event in NMMM down Old SF Trail to Convention center.
- d. VAB will put together committee including Police, Fire, Veteran Groups, DVS and VAB to come up with plan and

## **6. 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

- a. Gary provided DVS with Governor's plan for celebration.
- b. DVS will conduct further research as to Gov's committee and how DVS fits into that plan.
- c. DVS will assist/provide guidance as needed. This is a citizen wide celebration not specifically veteran oriented – Gary agreed.
- d. VAB awaiting more information from Mayor's office/Council

## **7. Any news on another GVAC meeting**

- a. CabSec noted recently had meeting to discuss member loss; age gaps across state Posts/etc. and transportation issues.
- b. GVAC just about ready to publish quarterly meeting location, date/time and agenda for the year. Gary noted as VAB chair he will attend.

## **8. Commander's Call Carlsbad??**

- a. Issue primarily centered around state cemeteries; Taos capitalization; expansion Angel Fire, Ft. Stanton, Gallup as well as the preparatory ("NMDVS received a grant opportunity letter") work at Carlsbad. Also noted were other upgrades, restoration, and continuation of restoration work at state cemeteries.
- b. Commander's Call aimed at gaining input from surrounding Posts and Carlsbad Council. Bringing the various stakeholders together for conversational purposes.

## **9. What can the VAB do for DVS?**

- a. Expand information to the posts to be “solution oriented” regarding veteran activities and events.
- b. PUSH for more action on preventing veteran suicides. According to latest report (2024 based on 2022 data) veteran suicides comprise 17.6/day
- c. Build connections between DVS and related organizations to continue/expand programs to significantly decrease veteran homelessness.
- d. CabSec emphasized the existence of a Veteran Chamber of Commerce (New) Mexico State Veterans Chamber of Commerce)
- e. Continue to be the conduit between organizations, state and local officials and the veteran community.

OVERALL – great meeting, lasted longer than planned but very informative. Attendees included CabSec; Deputy Sec and Gary Donato (Chair of Santa Fe Veteran Advisory Board). Gary noted at beginning the positive feedback from veterans attending the American Legion Mid-Winter Conference of CabSec presentation and especially willingness to hold one-on-one discussions outside meeting room.