

## VA Town Hall Held May 9, 2017

by Bill Burke

The Santa Rosa Veterans and Family Advisory Council hosted a Veterans Town on Tuesday, May 10, 2017 at 6:00 pm at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building. VA staff and meeting attendees were welcomed by Lou Nunez, President of Amvets Post 40 and Vice-President of VVA Chapter 223, the sponsoring organization for the evening providing sandwiches and refreshments to all the attendees. About 70 attendees were introduced to the San Francisco and Santa Rosa Staff members including:

Bonnie Graham – Director of VA Health Care San Francisco  
Linda Chou – VA Researcher  
Paul Crews – Deputy VA Director San Francisco  
Victor Negron – (could not hear title)  
Matt Brower – Mental Health – San Francisco  
Debbie Grizzard – Santa Rosa Clinic Director

Meeting attendees were then invited to ask questions of the staff.

1. Ricky Barker – concerned about the issuing of nuclear and CPAP equipment
2. Ken Holybee – voiced concerns on the need to hire more staff especially at the SR clinic front desk
3. Jarron Peterson – concerned about bladder other issues related to agent orange
4. Unknown – concerned about staffing at Ft. Miley and the navigation of the claims handling process
5. Dean Gotham – Spoke to issues relating to the Choice Program, including billing issues and denial of services due to lack of provider payments by the VA
6. Kate O'Hare-Palmer – concerned of the practice of last day cancels, lack of information and contact info on websites, and the need for staff to look at the whole person not just the specific problem/issue.
7. Ted Sexauer – concerned about privatization of the VA healthcare system, especially the Choice program
8. Duane Dewitt – had no complaints but did voice concerns over the privatization issue. Also suggested using more emerging technology including tele-medicine
9. Eugene Lichtenstein – concerns over hearing and hearing aid issues. Also concerned over medicines being constantly out of stock.
10. Julia Sutton – spoke to hazardous exposure issues. Asked for special reviews on women's issues. Asked for same-sex providers for women if asked for. Pointed out that women's reproductive issues need attention now and will need much more in the future.
11. Brian McKeown – questioned if more resources will be directed at research of burn pits. Asked if any research results will be made publicly available. With regard to mental health cannot make mental health appointments on-line or send secure emails to mental health providers.
12. Fred Petucha – related excellent PTSD service at San Francisco facility. Asked about the status of handling "Moral Injuries".

13. Ken Holybee – Asked what is being done to address environmental health issues for children and grandchildren of Vets
14. Lauralynn Castle – expressed concern over the handling of sexual trauma cases at the Santa Rosa clinic
15. Peter Cameron – spoke to the homeless policy and housing issues and to further involve the VA
16. Dave Ritchie – asked how to involve the veteran community to lobbying. Also asked VA medical interfaces with Medicare.
17. John – related that researchers don't have access to patient data.
18. Brandon Stewart – indicated that clinic kiosks don't handle dermatology appointments – must use front desk. Suggested that a small office be established to handle sexual trauma cases.
19. Julia Sutton – concerned about the handling of medical providers. Pointed out the VA staff is displaying dismaying attitude of “proud to reject claims of veterans children”
20. Brian McKeown – asked if VA is doing any research on mefloquine as it related to opioid reduction. Alternatives to opioids need to be readily available.
21. Ted Sexauer – issue of auto assistance
22. Robert – issues of getting appointments at the Santa Rosa clinic and getting through the phone system to get help.
23. Chris Bingham – related he gets quality care at the clinic getting through the phone system to get help is a problem.
24. Jerron Peterson – concerned about derogatory comments being kept in medical records.
25. Joe Rick... - concerned about the sharing of medical records.

The VA staff responded to all the questions and concerns even if it only to take it under advisement. Several guests were helped in a one-on-one environment to attempt to resolve their individual issues.

Jack Tibbetts, Vice-Mayor of Santa Rosa made a few closing comments on the importance of local government being involved in Veterans Issues. The meeting concluded at 7:40 pm