

MINUTES
WAR MEMORIAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES
VETERANS COMMITTEE

Thursday, July 10, 2025

The Veterans Committee of the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco met in-person at 1:01 p.m. on Thursday, July 10, 2025, in the Trustees' Board Room, War Memorial Opera House, Chair Kopp presiding.

ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present: Chair Kopp, Trustee Gatti, Trustee Newstat, Trustee Rocco and Trustee Wright
Vice President Horn, *ex officio*

Committee Members Absent: President Wilsey, *ex officio*

Staff Present: Kate Sofis, Managing Director; Rob Levin, Assistant Managing Director; and Francesca Cicero, Board Secretary

REGULAR ITEMS

War Memorial Policy Regarding Waivers for Veterans Organizations: Chair Kopp opened the meeting regarding the policy on fee waivers for veterans' organizations renting the venues. Board Secretary Cicero explained there were three documents included in the Board packets – the American Legion War Memorial Commission's "Green Room and Herbst Theatre Fee Waiver Request Policy and Procedures", passed at their July 1, 2025 meeting; a version of the War Memorial Policy from the June meeting that was revised to directly reflect the procedures approved by the American Legion War Memorial Commission; and a redline showing the same.

Chair Kopp asked for public comment. Mitchell Weller gave comment that the definition of non-profit in the policy should be expanded from solely 501(c)3 organizations and Gold Star families would be barred under the policy. CJ Reeves, Chair of the American Legion, urged the Committee to pass the policy and guidelines as set forth in the June Regular Board meeting last month and noted that no Gold Star family had ever been denied access, provided that the event was for veterans. Another veterans advocate from Post 599 gave public comment on veterans' relatives being removed. President Horn noted that is in the American Legion War Memorial Commission's (ALWMC) policy and that the ALWMC speaks for veterans in the War Memorial complex.

Trustee Wright asked how the American Legion War Memorial Commission is appointed. Board Secretary Cicero responded that in 1932, the Board of Trustees requested the Posts name representatives to meet with the Board of Trustees before allowing occupancy of the Veterans' Building. The Board received a resolution from each of the American Legion posts in San Francisco, authorizing the San Francisco County Council to act for those posts in connection with occupancy of the Veterans Building; and the County Council appointed the Commission to conduct its business with the Board of Trustees. Vice President Horn noted that in the 1920's, the American Legion Posts were made beneficiaries to represent veterans' interests under the Trust, which was fought against at the time by non-American Legion veterans organizations. It ultimately went to the San Francisco voters, who approved the Trust and the Charter Amendment establishing the War Memorial. The American Legion War Memorial Commission has the legal authority and responsibility to represent veterans interests in the buildings, which is comprised of the remaining Posts of the American Legion. Any non-American Legion veterans organizations must go through the ALWMC, which has the legal responsibility and authority to speak for veterans interests in the buildings. He noted that the Chair of the ALWMC is asking for the War Memorial policy to be passed.

There was a discussion about IRS codes and non-profit organizations and the benefits that are permitted under the tax code and asked if there were any organizations that had been denied fee waivers. CJ Reeves responded that Post 599 had submitted a request for a fee waiver for the High School for the Arts and the fee waiver was denied by the ALWMC, as the High School for the Arts event was not on behalf of veterans. He stated that another waiver that was granted was for a Casino Night that was on behalf of the American Asian Foundation and Miss Asia Global, who were not veterans-related organizations. Vice President Horn noted that he does not want the Board of Trustees to be in between a Post and a non-Post veterans organization.

Trustee Rocco asked CJ Reeves whether the policy had been passed at the ALWMC meeting and he responded that it was passed by a majority of the members. Vice President Horn remarked that it appeared to be that one side prevailed within the American Legion War Memorial Commission, and the side that did not is now coming to the Board of Trustees asking it to overrule the ALWMC, and moved that the policy with the changes reflected in the American Legion War Memorial Commission's policy, be adopted, which was seconded by Trustee Gatti. Trustee Rocco stated that the policy is not anti-veteran and asked for an amendment that the policy be expanded beyond 501(c)3 organizations and replaced with "nonprofit," and the amendment was adopted. Mitchell Weller stated that he would procure a private determination letter from the IRS.

Christopher Scott from Post 599 made public comment about a fee waiver for the Casino Night. Mitchell Weller explained that the intended beneficiary was Post 599 and veterans were given free admission to the event. Trustee Rocco asked if the Post 599 Commander voted for the ALWMC policy and he answered that he voted for it but that he had not seen the final version presented to the Board. Stefanos Zygomalas stated that this was a problem of communication and clarified that the Casino Night event was voted on by the American Legion War Memorial Commission prior to the event occurring.

Chair Kopp moved to continue the agenda item to the next meeting in August and requested the City Attorney review the pertinent documents and asked for a similar review by the American Legion, which was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment is an opportunity for members of the public to directly address the Trustees on items within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board, but not on the agenda.

There being no additional public comment, Chair Kopp closed public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Chair Kopp adjourned the meeting at 2:02 p.m.

Francesca Cicero
Board Secretary