



PENNSYLVANIA WAR VETERANS COUNCIL, INC.



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MINUTES April 7, 2022

CALL TO ORDER: A meeting of the Pennsylvania War Veterans Council was held on the above date and was called to order at 10:00 a.m. at The American Legion Department Headquarters by President Nathaniel Smith (VFW).

INVOCATION: Richard Denison (TAL)

SALUTE TO COLORS: Troy Michaels (TAL)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Troy Michaels (TAL)

ROLL CALL: Secretary James “Woody” Hogan (TAL). The following were present in person or by zoom:

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Michael Murphy, Woody Hogan, Bruce Foster (excused), William Whitmoyer, Troy Michaels, Richard Denison

AMVETS

Bern McDonald, Gerald Hawk

BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

William Albert

CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS

Nicholas Taylor (excused), William Wright

DISABLED AMERICAN VETS

William Hines, Samuel Petrovich, David Gui (excused)

JEWISH WAR VETERANS

KEYSTONE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

Chris Fidler, Constance Snavely

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

Dave Brady

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Robert Heister, Keith Beebe, Robert Gray, Charles Jackson

MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

Philip Arnold

PA CO. DIRECTOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Justin Slep, David Eisele

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Nathaniel Smith, John Getz Jr., Henry Mannella, Benjamin Mastridge (excused), David Gyger (excused)

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC

Larry Googins, Richard Hudzinski

It was determined the Pennsylvania War Veterans Council had a quorum in which to conduct business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A recommendation was made by President Nathaniel Smith (VFW) to approve the minutes from March 3, 2022. Motion made by Michael Murphy (TAL). Is there a question on the motion? 2ND by Bern MacDonald (AMVETS)

Nathaniel Smith, President: All in favor say Aye. Audience: Aye. None Opposed and Motion Carried

TREASURER'S REPORT – John Getz Jr. (VFW):

War Council – February \$26,461.18, no deposits, total withdrawals \$50.00, ending balance \$26,411.18.

Honor Guard – February \$27,600.00, no deposits, total withdrawals \$6,450.00, ending balance \$21,150.00.

Savings – February \$10,347.43, total deposits \$0.18, total withdrawals \$0.04, ending balance \$10,347.57.

Annual Dues yet to be paid – BVA and JWV

Any questions on my Report?

Nathaniel Smith, President: Motion to accept the treasurer's report? Motion made by Gerald Hawk (AMVETS) 2nd by William Hines (DAV). Any questions? All those in favor?

Audience: Aye. None Opposed and Motion Carried

REPORT

Brig. Gen. (PA) Maureen Weigl
Deputy Adjutant General, VA

Homes side of the house. So right now we have four residents that are positive at Del Valley and a few weeks ago so thankfully we've contained it. We still have six staff members, but it hasn't grown so we have not had any more COVID outbreaks in any of the other homes. We have about 939 census for the homes right now. So we're working on growing that we're doing a real big push up the elements to make sure we're really pushing them to start doing more admissions. It's a little uncomfortable position short staffed, we're not going to sacrifice quality. We're not going to go below the ratios we're supposed to but we're going to encourage them to be a little more aggressive too, so we get people off that waiting list. We do have a new Commandant of Soldiers and Sailors and a new Director of Nursing. Geno Merli had some leadership changes and we are interviewing for that Commandant position right now

Good news is Homes week going to be in June. So you're welcome to come to our homes. We have a lot of activities that we're planning on one of the fun ones but Pittsburgh Steelers are actually going to

fly from Pittsburgh to Erie on a Black Hawk with the TAG or DAG and they're going to pass out Steelers jerseys and kick it off on June 13. So if you want to have any Organization there supporting we'll have a big party. Black and Gold is the color obviously today so it'll be a fun time but there's a lot going on. I will make sure you get a copy of all the activities for all the homes. You can see what's going on. It's really exciting to get them back out and to get those back in to see them. We have some construction updates. Geno Merli new roof. Thankfully they are target to finish. So by June the roof should be done and then we have some pavement to work out on their patio so that the folks get outside but that's not going to stop anyone from using. Soldier and Sailors an expansion that should be completed by August. Hollidaysburg, we are still on target to go ahead and start that new construction because we have to put it out for best value which is a good thing. It delay us probably till October, November we will break ground but we have the money approved to help us build that facility. We were a little worried about that. So we will be moving forward that's a that's a great thing.

I've talked many times telling you that our biggest problems is our shortage with nurse staff, CNAs etc for the homes. We actually have six hiring fairs coming up. Southwest is 21 April Geno Merli 27 April holidays are 25 May 7 June and until July 28 June. We're also pushed out here PA VetConnect connect so you will see that and I encourage all of you to do two things and I'm gonna ask a favor, follow DMVA on your social media sites as your Organization and follow me because I will take it and keep running them myself and pushing out all of the social media campaigns that we have probably throughout the year. That's just one way we have to get the word out so the ads are only as good as they are seen and shared.

PIRO side of the house 22-23 March, we actually had a workgroup to talk about the COLA changes, to talk about the reporting procedures and to talk about how to best leverage where we're going to put other VSOs that we have the money now for so the workgroup started they made some recommendations.

We held our first virtual town hall. It was pretty successful. We talked about suicide prevention we had how many people would be allowed over 80 folks dialed in. Next tele Town Hall is going to be meeting 18 May, we have 13 July and 14 August. Each of them will be different discussions. The next one's on aging, and we will potentially have the Secretary Torres is from the Department of Aging as well as Travis, our executive Director of long term care.

Unintelligible (MOAA): Question on numbers of suicide growing.

Brig. Gen. (PA) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General, VA:

Sadly, there was an article out that the Armed Forces Active Duty has seen an increase in suicides; our numbers have not drastically change. So there's some that say they've gone down a little bit. I haven't seen enough to say that it's still anywhere between 17 and 22 Veterans committing suicide a day. And the Active Duty has seen an increase this past year. It's the highest year they've ever had.

We've had staffing changes as well with PIRO so Pittsburgh field office is short. So he's in the middle of hiring but we're down two that's pretty significant because we're still short a county Director in Allegheny County. So that's our second largest county. Also short in Philly. So if you know anyone get with Justin and find out how you can potentially nominate folks for those two key positions. They're critical just as all of your organization's are those county directors are sometimes the first line of defense for all the Veterans back then they walk in their door. So anything we can do to help push that I would ask to do.

Veterans Trust Fund. We have our applications in there being reviewed. I'm still on the crazy campaign to grow the Veterans press on so we have two new folks are going to donate money once they give me the money. In the meantime, I encourage all the county directors to get with their county courts and ask them to let people have the option to donate a jury duty to the Veterans Trust Fund. We had six counties do that at the veteran courts and we raised almost \$60,000 just from people donating their jury pay. So if you know anyone in your counties that can do that or any of the judges, please that's just one way they can get and that's not just for the Veterans Court, that's any county can do that. I would just encourage any outside thinking you have to let people know because those Veterans trust I'm really goes to a lot of organizations. I'd love for every 77 nonprofit that applied for the grant to get a grant because what they do is critical.

GACVS next meeting is 11 May, September, we have some fun employment options. I told you that was one of my initiatives. So Comcast is going to hold a huge symposium in Philadelphia with all the CEOs of small, medium, large corporations and Comcast is going to sponsor that so we're hoping that's a big turnout so we can talk to employers about the value need to hire Veterans, what their what the gap is why they're not being able to hire Veterans, how we can get more Veterans back to Pennsylvania. And then Heinz is going to sponsor another event in Pittsburgh probably the same week so that's more to come once I have any kind of details on that.

Again, social media please follow us please follow me. You will see some commercials coming up too. For our ads on hiring folks that are at our nursing homes and if you know anyone at Vo Tech schools or any of you have relationships in your communities, nearby nursing homes with Vo Tech I'm trying to get to those organizations to tell let us talk to those kids that are studying healthcare and see if we can get them a job with the state so that's really that is my Report. Any questions?

Bob Gray (MOAA): Question. Homes Advisory Council meetings still held virtually?

Brig. Gen. (PA) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General, VA:

They're giving people the option. We encourage people to show up. You might just have to wear masks in and out of the buildings.

Rich Hudzinski (VVA): You mentioned Comcast just having an employment event down in Philly. When is that?

Brig. Gen. (PA) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General, VA:

It's going to be in September but I don't have a date yet. The Military Spouse Network to work with Comcast. I've been working with General Eggert and we're going to also invite the Chambers of Commerce to get involved.

REPORT

Nathan Silcox, Exec. Dir., Senate VAEP Committee

FY 2022-23 BUDGET

*The Governor presented his proposed Budget on February 8th. Listed below are several of the veterans-related line-items:

	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23
Veterans Homes	\$110,260,000	\$146,865,000
Amputee & Paralyzed Veterans Pensions	\$3,878,000	\$3,951,000
Veterans Service Officers	\$3,279,000	\$3,756,000
Disabled American Veterans Transportation	\$336,000	\$336,000
Blind Veterans Pensions	\$222,000	\$222,000
Education of Veterans Children	\$135,000	\$135,000
Burial Detail Honor Guard	\$99,000	\$99,000
American Battle Monuments	\$50,000	\$50,000

*The Senate held its Budget Hearing for the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs on March 16th.

MILITARY PROMOTIONS

The Governor has nominated the following PA National Guard officers for promotion:

Army

Colonel Leland Blanchard to Brigadier General
Brigadier General James McCormack to Major General
Brigadier General Carl Reese to Major General
Brigadier General Michael Wegscheider to Major General

Air

Colonel Richard McMullen to Brigadier General
Brigadier General Terrence Koudelka to Major General
Colonel Raymond Hyland to Brigadier General

The Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee plans to take up their nominations after the officers have completed their visits to members.

Purple Star Schools

Last week, the Senate passed SB 1028 (Stefano), which would recognize schools as Purple Star Schools for going the extra mile for military children/families. The House passed HB 1867.

State Working Animal Day

On May 24th, we'll be organizing State Working Animal Day at the Capitol – highlighting the role that K9's, therapy dogs and horses play in our lives.

Veterans Homelessness

In August, we're looking to hold a hearing at Veterans Place in Pittsburgh on Veterans Homelessness. If anyone is interested in participating, please let me know

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN:

Constitution and Bylaws: Samuel Petrovich (DAV) –

CURRENT:

ARTICLE IV

Representation

Section 1 – Member organizations shall pay the sum of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) per year per delegate dues. Dues shall be paid by the September meeting of each year. Dues not paid by December 31 of any year will cause the suspension of that organization. The organization suspended shall have no voice or

vote in any meetings until reinstated by the Council with evidence that said dues have been paid for the current year.

CHANGE:

ARTICLE IV

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CURRENT:

ARTICLE XI

Dissolution

Section 1 – Upon the dissolution of the organization, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the organization is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

CHANGE:

ARTICLE XI

ATTENDANCE

Section 1 – Each member organization of the Pennsylvania War Veterans Council must maintain a Fifty (50) per cent attendance record over a six (6) month period. Should this not occur, the organization shall be placed in a suspended status until proper attendance is achieved. The suspended organization shall not have voting privileges during this period.

ARTICLE XII

Reinstatement

Section 1 - The organization requesting reinstatement must first produce documentation from a higher authority within the organization stating that they are currently active and are truly viable.

Section 2 – The organization requesting reinstatement must repay all financial arrearages owed to the Pennsylvania War Veterans Council.

Section 3 – The organization requesting reinstatement must then adhere to their financial obligations outlined in **Article IV Representation Section 1** and attendance criteria in **Article XI Attendance**.

ARTICLE XIII

Conduct Unbecoming

Section 1 – Should any member organization, delegate or alternate delegate of the Pennsylvania War Veterans Council be deemed to have demonstrated conduct unbecoming of Pennsylvania War Veterans Council; they shall be permanently removed by a majority vote of voting members present.

ARTICLE XIV

Dissolution

Section 1 – Upon the dissolution of the organization, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the organization is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

Justin Slep (PACDVA): For the conduct unbecoming. Are you referencing that that individual member of that Organization would be permanently removed or is it under the impression that the actual member Organization will be permanently in either way?

Sam Petrovich (DAV): Either way. So it could be all or one.

Nathaniel Smith, President:

ARTICLE IX

Amendments

Section 1 – Pennsylvania War Veterans Council may amend these Bylaws by two-thirds (2/3) vote of authorized delegates or voting alternate present at a stated meeting, provided such amendments have been presented to each authorized delegate who has been notified at least fourteen (14) days in advance by first class mail or electronic means of the proposed amendments to be presented for consideration for adoption.

Veterans Affairs & Policy: Chris Fidler (KPVA) – No Report

Membership: Charles Jackson (MOAA) – No Report

Legislative: Robert Gray (MOAA) – Discussed copy of letter, DMVA Veterans Transportation Network. Copies of letter provided as well as listing of vans from all locations with mileage.

Grammatical issue pointed out and fixed.

Other action this month, the House Veterans Affairs Committee is having a voting meeting on April 12. They are televised and there's a number of bills that are involved in Veterans in the National Guard. One is state

lottery as far as a Veterans lottery ticket and amend Title 51 to create an adult daycare programs within the Department Military and Veterans Affairs. They had planned and had some construction for a facility to do that kind of a pilot program. Once this legislation would pass, then it would be an authorization. The Commonwealth legislature was able to put some funding towards but they have a problem with staffing. Once they get things straightened away and they can have a budget line for it then they can do a little bit more planning.

Website Committee: Bob Gray (MOAA) – Bill Harris has been training and is able to work on fine tuning to website now that back up and running. Once we complete the DMVA Transportation letter, it will be on the website as well.

Honor Guard: Constance Snavely (KPVA) – No Report

Advisory Council Appointments: Troy Michaels (TAL) –

HOLLIDAYSBURG VETERANS' HOME (HVH)

- William Wright, President BVA, requests the re-appointment of Joseph Rodkey whose term expires May 16, 2022.

GINO J. MERLI VETERANS' CENTER (GMVC)

- Robert Gray, Past President MOAA, requests the re-appointment of Robert Cudworth whose term expired April 5, 2022.

DELAWARE VALLEY VETERANS' HOME (DVVH)

- Robert Gray, Past President MOAA, requests the appointment of Claudette Campbell to replace Douglas Craig and whose term expired November 1, 2022.

Motion to accept all committee reports. Motion made by Michael Murphy (TAL), 2nd by Bern McDonald (AMVETS). All those in favor?

Audience: Aye. None Opposed and Motion Carried

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: Closing of the VA facilities.

Brig. Gen. (PA) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General, VA:

Coatesville is supposed to be closed and they're going to have a new facility they recommended in Camden and in King of Prussia, both of those will be outpatient inpatient, they were intending on using Lebanon, not a great solution and you know, more devastating there's the Mary Walker house and there are other facilities on that campus that house right now a number of Veterans that are homeless and so and there's a recovery service. It is devastating. There's just a lot of things we have to consider and look at for that. We agree, it's devastating. I did not hear Wilkes Barre. It was Coatesville is the one right now that they have on the other two King of Prussia Camden where the outpatient services.

Unknown speaker: I think I heard that was going to be a replacement in Wilkes Barre.

Sam Petrovich (DAV): VA's are on federal level. We need to concentrate on our on our on Congress and our two Senators in Washington. State legislators can respond but it comes from the federal level sure, that we have to do that. And I'm just sharing with what the General said about Lebanon, maybe taking a bunch of doses outpatient. We have to know how they're going to get there. How they're going to get there? So again, another issue with the transportation network that happens so we know it takes years that and it takes Legislative years to get somewhere. That may be a large impact on the transportation system coming out of loving, which I have to go further and take on a lot more riders. And what you'll probably here tomorrow, or representative whoever that may be, no. DAV has a quarterly meeting with the VA and visit for and their chiefs of voluntary services. Lebanon VA, for some reason, is only operating badly with five drivers and three, two vans. taken the transported two Veterans in March in three months. They're not putting them on the road. Just think of the impact. In fact, the facility that years to come is going to have to pick up transportation Veterans that we're going to Coatesville and go to Lebanon. I mean they're not putting vans on roads, so you can take him at one time but what we have 35 drivers, and right now they have 14 or 15 vans.

Rich Hudzinski (VVA): We started discussing this at the Legislative Committee meeting yesterday. First thing is to know what the real score is. In certain situations, the VA is not eliminating the term VA Medical Center, meaning that in the case of Coatesville, they'd retain the transition shelters mental health outreach and then place an outpatient clinic there, and it is as General Weigel said about putting some emphasis came between Camden, Philadelphia, and King of Prussia, Valley Forge. This is just a VA recommendation. I'd like to hear what the Presidential Commission whom this Report was sent to, will be recommending to the President. And I think that's the point of departure to fight for our Veterans is to know what the recommendation is going to be. There are several steps in the process. The Senate will decide whether this is it's a go or no go process. So I think we need to educate ourselves. There's some misinformation out there. Up in Wilkes Barre, the way I read it, is they want to close the hospital. They say they can farm out the hospital services to the private hospital industry up there. They'll retain an outpatient clinic. They'll retain mental health and a transition shelter or domiciliary care facility at some new location to be determined. So I think we're it's a little early in the process for us but to really fight the good fight, we need to know what Presidential Commission is going to recommend. That's my opinion.

Nathaniel Smith, President: PACT Act – Passed. However, our Senators and Pennsylvania has not sponsored Senate Bill 3003. Which is goes hand in hand with the packet. So it's important that's coming up for a Vote here shortly. It's important that we press our Senators to get that passed, because that is not only toxic exposure for Post 911 Vets. It's for everybody, including Agent Orange, Vietnam.

John Getz (VFW): Yesterday on the actual word went out from VFW to get a hold of our Senators to make sure that they take a look at that and get on the right direction.

Woody Hogan (TAL): I have a meeting with Scott Perry as well to discuss.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORGANIZATION:

Thanks to the Vietnam Veterans. Welcome Home!

BENEDICTION: Richard Denison (TAL)

RETIREMENT OF COLORS: Troy Michaels (TAL)

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully submitted,
James "Woody" Hogan, Secretary