



# PENNSYLVANIA WAR VETERANS COUNCIL, INC.



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## MINUTES February 3, 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, William Whitmoyer, Troy Michaels, Richard Denison

### AMVETS

Bern McDonald, Gerald Hawk, Kim Carson

### BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

### CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS

Nicholas Taylor, William Wright

### DISABLED AMERICAN VETS

Samuel Petrovich

### JEWISH WAR VETERANS

### KEYSTONE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

Chris Fidler, Constance Snavelly

### 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 (excused)

### VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

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

### 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 January 6, 2022. Motion made by Nicholas Taylor (CWV). Is there a question on the motion? 2<sup>ND</sup> by Bruce Foster (TAL)

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

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

War Council – January \$26,561.18, no deposits, total withdrawals \$50.00, ending balance \$26,511.18.

Honor Guard – January \$40,200.00, no deposits, total withdrawals \$7,500.00, ending balance \$32,700.00.

Savings – January \$10,347.17, total deposits \$0.18, total withdrawals \$0.04, ending balance \$10,347.31.

Any questions on my Report?

**Nathaniel Smith, President:** Motion to accept the treasurer's report? Motion made by Woody Hogan (TAL) 2<sup>nd</sup> by Bern McDonald (AMVETS). Any questions? All those in favor?

Audience: Aye. None Opposed and Motion Carried

**REPORT**

Joel Mutschler, Director, PIRO at DMVA

So greatly appreciate to being with you again, for another War Veterans Council Meeting. So we're going to give you a quick update on what we got going on the PIRO side of the house. And I'll get transferred over to Travis Davis, our Executive Director of Long Term Care to update you on the homes. So yesterday, we had our Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services meeting. We do thank Woody Hogan for being there with us and interacting with us during the GAC-VS. And we'll be sure to share all of the slides and the minutes with you when those become available. Great presentation from the Department of Insurance on mental health wellness insurance that we had yesterday, in addition to the great Committee Report. We're continuing gage across the Commonwealth, as you know, through PA VETConnect and building our network. And I'm happy to tell you that a lot of great collaboration going on between DMVA or GAC-VS Committee chairs, and the veteran service organizations want to give a big thanks to Bruce Foster for his efforts, especially the past couple months or so, as we've been working through on some federal reporting, for our federal portfolio with Veterans Benefit Administration, and helping to gain consensus with the Act 66 Committee. This will, moving towards this reporting system using the VBA reports is going to eliminate and streamline some of the reporting requirements that we've had in the past.

Now onto the DMVA. But from the service, we'll have some more to come on that as we as we roll that out. But very excited about what those reports are showing gives us a better picture of the impact that we're having across the Commonwealth and the great work that you folks are doing. With PA VET Connect, we've had 16,000 connections across the Commonwealth since we launched it. And we're now up to 1800 resources within the system. Also happy to report to you that all the Veterans Service Officers that are working with the orgs are actively engaged with our regional program outreach coordinators and veteran support specialists that we have out in the field. A lot of great collaboration going on there as to the build bridges between all of the organizations, County Directors, DMVA as well as you all.

Veterans Trust Fund, we just closed that out the Notice of Funding just closed down. So we've got 90 applications that came in that we're in the process of reviewing and vetting. More to come on that as we get that pushed out.

We do have an outreach event coming up we're going to kick off our first virtual town hall on the 16th of March in Region Four, that's up in the Scranton area, focused on suicide prevention and mental wellness. It will be for the Veterans within that Region but anybody can dial into it. So we'll be getting save the date information out here very shortly. Certainly encourage you all to join in on that virtual town hall. It will be offered through WebEx, you have the ability to dial in virtually, or you can call in if somebody wants to dial in that way.

Other collaborations that we've been working on, there'll be a mailing going out from PennDOT to every Pennsylvanian that has the Veterans designation and driver's license or Military license plate with a letter from General Schindler and a letter from Mr. Leizert, the Director of VISN 4. 550,000 Veterans across the Commonwealth are going to receive an outreach on behalf of VHA and DMVA. Thanks for our partnership there with PennDOT. We don't see any of that information for any of those addresses or names that are on that list. PennDOT is just going to push that information out for us. We're very excited that'll be going out in the spring. What happened sooner we got a supply chain issue.

Farm Show. There were 40% less attendance across the board. However, we had over 300 Veterans have stopped by our outreach van during the week of Farm Show. Did 41 referrals to Veteran Service Officers and 11 to resources that we have within VET Connect so we're very excited about that engagement. Also had our Veterans Appreciation luncheon with Robert Irvine Foundation. So those of you that know Robert Irvine from the show, Restaurant Impossible, has been a big supporter of us and of our Veterans community here in Pennsylvania, and he was there with Mission BBQ. They brought in about 350 Veterans and their families up there at the farm show for a nice lunch catered by Mission BBQ, hoping to do more engagements with that as we continue to expand our partnership with Robert Irvine Foundation.

I'd also note that coming up here in Harrisburg area on the 26th of February, we got the 16th annual Harrisburg Homeless Stand Down. It's being sponsored by the YWCA of greater Harrisburg. Once again, working with Bill Reed there to get that kicked off. It'll be at the Farm Show complex again. More information can be found on the YWCA of Harrisburg website. With that, I'll turn it over to Travis for an update on homes.

**Travis Davis, DMVA Executive Director of Long Term Care:** We're doing pretty well in homes right now with COVID. Go through some numbers quickly and some updates and then I'll open the floor for some questions when finished. Right now, we have a total of nine positive residents across six homes; all are stable. We have seen an increase in positivity as the communities have as well. What we've noticed though, is these cases of COVID are relatively mild, we'll be able to treat them in house. Thankfully, they're not leading to anything severe. We have 53 staff members out currently with COVID are not in the crisis-staffing situation at any home or we are in contingency staffing. And what I mean by that is way below where we want to be, but we have adequate staffing in all six homes to care for the amount of residents we have. With that being said, we are still taking admissions at all six homes, but they're slowly coming in. I would encourage everyone on the call if you have any friends, family members who may be thinking about long-term care placement, get on one of our waiting lists reach out to our admissions team, we're happy to assist with that. You're not committing to anything, when your name comes up on the list, you have the option to take the admission or to remain on the list. I do encourage everyone because our wait lists are long to get on them if you have a friend or family member looking for that type of placement.

Our vaccine rates again, I'm very happy to report we're almost 100% with our residents, 98% and 85% fully vaccinated staff members and members great. We're fully in compliance with the CMS which is the metric Medicare Medicaid mandate. We're above state and National averages for both those numbers. Out of the 700 nursing homes in Pennsylvania, only about half of them are above 80% for their staff. So I think that that's a really strong number. We've done a good job, even before the mandate came out, we did a good job of pushing that internally.

We have Federal VA surveys going on right now in two of our facilities, one in Eire, one in South Eastern Veterans Center. Both of those will be exiting this week. So far. They sound like they're doing pretty well. A lot of infection control questions which is not surprising.

Leadership. So the SE Veterans Center Commandant has been doing very well. Brian Gula has finally started to settle into his new role. He's building a great team around him. There's been some changes with infection control, their nursing department, he's got two great assistant directors in nursing working with him So we're getting a lot of good positive pull back from that building. Brian's out there, he's very visible, he knows our bets very well, most of staff very well. So I'm happy with the direction of that building right now. We'll also be naming a new Commandant on Erie. In the coming weeks. It's an internal candidate that has built the system for a very long time. So that news will be coming out shortly.

Last week, Governor Wolf came out and announced the American Rescue Plan is about \$300 million plan that was geared towards hospital systems, and told me those \$200 million all centered around recruitment and retention, about \$15 million of that was going towards student loan forgiveness programs for nursing, we were a little disappointed to say the least that long term care was not considered in this. However, yesterday, we had some good news, the governor came out for all those who may have not seen this, the Governor came out with a \$1.7 billion proposal of another round of funding in long term care was included in this, as well as small business Conservation Recreation, some stimulus checks. Now, however, this proposal, it does require Legislative approval. We don't know if the General Assembly is going to see eye to eye with the Governor's office on this. Maybe they do on a few things and we certainly think long-term care is in will be supported in some way. Next week, also will be the Governor's budget call, we are anticipating long-term care to be included in that for the first time of this administration. I believe it's going to be somewhere in the Medicaid reimbursement. I'm looking for a substantial investment in Medicaid. And I think it needs to be done in line with the Governor in the Department of Health's proposal to get up to the proposed 4.1 PPD for our staffing requirements. That concludes my Report. I'll have the opportunity to talk with you again tomorrow. But I'd like to open it for now for any questions.

**Rich Hudzinski (VVA):** When you talked about the American Rescue Plan, and long-term care, what would it be useful if you got the money? What has the government been talking about using for?

**Travis Davis, DMVA Executive Director of Long Term Care:** So for the hospital systems, he was very specific with recruitment and retention. We believe that's going to be the same for Long Term Care Health. However, the Governor did not get specifics of who would be eligible to be receiving those payments, whether it be nursing, would it be social work? None of those details have been released yet. We have been told by Pennsylvania Health Care Association that more details should be released from the Governor's office during his budget call next week.

**Rich Hudzinski (VVA):** Okay, so I'm hearing that this is about more towards the pay?

**Travis Davis, DMVA Executive Director of Long Term Care:** I believe in his in his budget call, there's going to be a reimbursement investment on the Medicaid side. That's what we're pretty sure that we got here at that. But this, this American Rescue Plan funding is most likely going to go towards recruitment and retention of staff.

## REPORT

Nathan Silcox, Exec. Dir., Senate VAEP Committee

Senate VAEP Committee - Monday

SB 1028 Purple Star Schools - Next week, the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee will have a meeting. Senate Bill 1028 by Senator Stefano would establish the Purple Star

Schools program and that's for Military families as they're transferring to and enrolling in schools across the Commonwealth.

Senate Calendar

SB 861 EMS Compact - just passed Senate SB 455 Veterans Business Logos HB 995 Vet Connect

Senate Bill 455 would establish the Veterans Business logo and House Bill 995 would establish the VET Connect program. Last time we were in session we passed Senate Bill 861, which would have Pennsylvania joined the EMS compact, and that EMS contact would help expedite Military members who have are in the EMS realm.

Next Week

Governor's Budget Proposal

In the Works...

SB 578 - Constitutional Amendment - Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption

Senate Bill 578 is the disabled Veterans property tax exemption, it's a constitutional amendment that needs to be would need to be passed in two consecutive sessions. We're hopeful that we can get the interest in from all of our members that to focus on. It's a much needed legislation here for spouses of soldiers killed in action, as well as the elimination of the war time clause.

988 implementation-Suicide Prevention Hotline

It's the suicide prevention hotline. It goes live in July. Pennsylvania Department of Human Services has been working on and Senator Stefano is the Chair of the Veterans Committee has been involved with that as well.

**Dave Brady (MCL):** To clarify that suicide hotline, suicide prevention hotline, is that the 9-8-8 implementation?

**Nate Silcox (VAEP):** Yeah. That is correct, 9-8-8 is the number. If you dial it now, it should it should work, but it goes live nationwide the middle of July.

## **REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN:**

**Constitution and Bylaws: Samuel Petrovich (DAV) – No Report**

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

**Membership: Robert Gray (MOAA) – No Report**

**Legislative: Keith Beebe for Robert Gray (MOAA) – Legislative Committee Report.** We held our meeting yesterday via zoom. So we didn't hold one in the in this room here this morning. The letters to the chairs of the Pennsylvania Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee concerning the PAWVC position on specific legislation. Those were approved at the PAWVC meeting last month in January. Now distribution of these letters was delayed of that, unfortunately, by some illness here in the department's office, they should be sent out soon, but those were approved, those were updated and good to go. The key Legislative issues of the PAWVC for 2022 are also approved at the council's January meeting. A cover letter and the goals to be accomplished will be sent to specific committees in the Pennsylvania legislature such as the Veterans Affairs Committee and specific departments in the state government. Members of the PAWVC Legislative Committee will be setting up personal meetings with Pennsylvania's legislators to get actions going on issues of concern, best to focus on one or two topics at a time as we go to these. Clarifying the role of the State Veterans Commission is going to be one of those key topics that we're going to be looking at. And lastly, the PAWVC Committee is in a wait and see mode, if you will concerning Act 66 and the Veterans Service Officer Program and its funding, quite frankly, we're waiting to see what happens with the upcoming state budget and then we'll take some actions from that particular point. That's my Report for the Legislative Committee.

**Website Committee: Keith Beebe for Bob Gray (MOAA) -** This will be the website report. Now it was realized in mid-January, that the PAWVC website was not coming up with a search for on the web. Bob Gray, who's the person who handles our website here was notified and he contacted Bill Harris, who has our contact with a web host Thrive Media in Allentown. Well, folks, here's what happened. Bill found out that Thrive Media, his entire web hosting platform had completely crashed and they were rebuilding all of their websites from backup files. In other words, that's what happened literally are our website company that handles it, all their stuff crashed. The PAWVC website has returned to the internet. But unfortunately, when they when they backed up all this stuff, and did it, they did it with backup files. So if you look as I checked it out last night, if you look at it right now, it's sitting there with 2019-2020 organizations on it, that type of thing. We're aware of that and we're working on it. Bob Gray is sending the latest updates to Bill Harris that can be posted on the various pages, such as the PAWVC member organizations and Officers and Bill has permissions to make those changes. Now, Bob Gray will send the webmaster all of the current documents that need to get posted to the website, the first page to be updated as the Organization page that shows the latest people that are in there. Last night, I took a look at my email stuff, he sent me a copy. Those have been sent out as of last night. So in other words, the Organization pages first and then the members pages is there. Ironically, folks, the PAWVC website update had been fully completed, they did the whole thing that is all up to date, two weeks before the crash. So now they had to start all over again, but just wanted to inform you that we are working on it. We're aware of it, we'll get the job done. President that's more important.

**Bruce Foster (TAL):** Question. When will a bonus for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans become a priority with our Organization?

**Bob Gray (MOAA):** The only thing we've heard so far is the legislature isn't really talking about it. Only certain people we brought it up to in the past. It of course involves money, but there really hasn't been any movement even on a bill to be introduced in reference to creating that.

**Bruce Foster (TAL):** I would like to make a Motion to the committee to the War Council that I think that should be a Legislative goal of this Organization. Somebody's got to get it started. It's normally just like real estate tax exemption and has been approved and to budget years and all that but if we ever get started on it, we never talked about it. I mean, the last bonus we paid for it Gulf War one from 1991 and people that have served since that period multiple times. We need to get into the discussion. How we're going to work different campaigns. You know, I mean, if we if we don't get pushing on it, I don't know who we expect is going to.

Motion by Bruce Foster (TAL). Second Motion, Mike Murphy (TAL).

**John Getz (VFW):** A few years ago, I would want my priorities and like my quota before the Legislative today, it had been on the one Legislative Committee as well. I think Bob was going through your right earlier while I really in September or October as a whole we want to take a look at it been working on that before. We had to work on a bill a couple years ago. And I know that we need for the bill and I understand that there so I forgot how to how to pay different Veterans. We understand is going to be a very expensive bill, but it's to get done. And I agree with Bruce that we need to get more accurate.

**Woody Hogan (TAL):** John, Did the VFW actually put a resolution through their through the Department?

**John Getz (VFW):** We can do that.

**Bob Gray (MOAA):** We're going to be scheduling meetings with the executive directors of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs and even possibly appropriations and to go over goals but we can also add that so we'll be talking directly to least executive directors to find out what the interest is and who may be interested in in sponsoring that.

Are there any other discussions on the Motion? If not all favor signify by saying Aye. Opposed, none. Ayes have it, motion carried.

**Nathaniel Smith, President:** Motion to accept report by David Brady (MCL), 2<sup>nd</sup> by Bern McDonald. All those in favor?

Audience: Aye. None Opposed and Motion Carried

**Honor Guard: Constance Snavely (KPVA) – No Report**

**Advisory Council Appointments: Troy Michaels (TAL) –**

#### **PA SOLDIERS AND SAILORS HOME**

- William Hines, Commander DAV, requests the appointment of Karen Foust to replace Walter Simpson whose term expired July 27, 2020.

#### **SOUTHWESTERN VETERANS' CENTER**

- Nicholas Taylor, Commander CWV, requests the appointment of Robert Chuey to replace Robert Abbott (deceased) and whose term expired June 1, 2020.

**Nathaniel Smith, President:** I need a motion to accept the appointments. Motion made by Troy Michaels (TAL) 2<sup>nd</sup> by Woody Hogan (TAL). Any questions?

Audience: Aye. None Opposed and Motion Carried

**Sam Petrovich (DAV):** We get these lists and I think what do we get these from the sources list? DMVA? Okay. But I was just curious on the current one. There's two places. Do you know Gino Merli and soldiers and sailors? When I look at the Senate representation, I see a 2/6/17 date and another one that says expires 12/31/18. Now, does somebody remind the Senate that they need to update their areas also?

**Joel Mutschler, Director DMVA:** Sam great questions. So yes, we're working to tighten up this process associated with these Advisory Councils and will be talking with Woody Monday afternoon. So, when we all meet this next month, you'll see an updated report and an updated process associated with generating that report.

**Sam Petrovich (DAV):** The Governor's office, are they going to do anything to expedite these approvals, are we still going to hang in there for six months or more? Under Rendell it was a year plus to get these done. Is there a way we can get around that?

**Joel Mutschler, Director DMVA:** So, great questions. We're going to have the talk with the Governor's office, Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs and our Policy Legislative Affairs folks. That's part of this whole streamlining process piece that we're going to be doing. So, next time we have a meeting will provide you an update of what we're adding. But it is obviously a concern for us, and concern for the administration to make sure that we're processing deployments of time.

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

Audience: Aye. None Opposed and Motion Carried

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS: Woody Hogan (TAL):** Mr. President, as we discussed at the last meeting, we had a discussion about the Navy club USA, rejoining the Pennsylvania War Veterans Council. I sent an email out to Mr. Horowitz who is the contact that had for the Navy Club and informed him of our discussion told him that we needed a letter to start the ball rolling to get them reinstated. I have received that letter, and I will read it to you.

Dear Mr. Hogan,

This letter has been written on behalf of the Navy Club USA Pennsylvania Squadrons, we are requesting to be reinstated into the Pennsylvania War Council. I can't speak for my predecessors as to why we were misrepresented and asked to be removed due to the lack of wanting to be part of the council. Please advise us of the procedure or what the council may need to make this happen.

Respectfully yours and comradeship,  
Donald Logeman,  
Commander, Navy Club USA, Pennsylvania Squadron.

I informed Mr. Logeman that there is no avenue to be reinstated until the bylaws are changed. That our bylaws Committee will be reviewing our bylaws and those updates have to be approved by War Council before that they the Navy Club can be reinstated, but they did comply. And we do have a letter stating that they wish to be reinstated and both Sam and John Getz will be working on bylaws. That's all I have.

**NEW BUSINESS:** None

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None



**REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORGANIZATION: Richard Denison (TAL):** Since it's Four Chaplains day I would like to just share a story about Rabbi Good, our comrade who entered eternal life in the sinking of the USGS Dorchester that sank on February 3 1942, I believe. He was a Rabbi at a congregation in York, Pennsylvania. And the book I read about this said that there was a woman in his congregation who owned the large Department store in York. I'm thinking at that time it was probably the Bonton. Now she did not like him. She tried to have him fired from his congregation. When he became a war hero, she felt so guilty. She spent a lot of her fortune afterwards, setting up memorials to him. So there's a moral to the story. Always love your pastor! One day may end up being a hero and you will regret it. I think most of us are familiar with the Ministry of the Four Chaplains in Philadelphia. But what you may not know, one of my memories from childhood, at Tuckahoe Boy Scout Camp, which is outside of Dillsburg there is a Chapel there and that Chapel is dedicated to the Four Chaplains and there's a window for each Chaplain in there. And it's just been amazing to me how you can go across this country and see our Chaplains being remembered in that way. So I just wanted to share that little story. And again, remember your Chaplain might be or your Pastor might be a hero one day so you know always support them. Thank you!

**BENEDICTION:** Richard Denison (TAL)

**RETIREMENT OF COLORS:** Troy Michaels (TAL)

**ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully submitted,  
James "Woody" Hogan  
Secretary