



PENNSYLVANIA  
WAR VETERANS COUNCIL, INC.

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March 7, 2024 MINUTES  
10:00 AM

<b>CALL TO ORDER</b>	Nick Taylor MOAA, Proxy President
<b>INVOCATION</b>	Richard Denison, Chaplain
<b>SALUTE TO COLORS</b>	Troy Michaels, Sgt-at-Arms
<b>PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE</b>	Troy Michaels, Sgt-at-Arms
<b>ROLL CALL</b>	James Hogan, Secretary

**THE AMERICAN LEGION**

Steve Lavelle (excused), Woody Hogan, Troy Michaels, William Whitmoyer, Richard Denison, Matt Hollenbeck

**AMVETS**

Bern McDonald (excused), Gerald Hawk, Kim Carson (excused), Paul Forsman (excused)

**BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION**

**CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS**

Michael Rang, Sister Mary Mathias

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETS**

David Gui, Timothy Alexander (excused)

**JEWISH WAR VETERANS**

**KEYSTONE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA**

Constance Snavley

**MARINE CORPS LEAGUE**

Diana Henry (excused), Sarah Cook (excused), Victoria McCoy, James Diamond (excused)

**MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA**

Nicholas Taylor, Keith Beebe, Ernie Holling (excused), Robert Gray

**MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART**

Peter Verbos, Phil Arnold (excused), Nate Thomas (excused), Bob Ardner Jr. (excused)

**PA CO. DIRECTOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Jesiah Schrader (excused), Justin Slep (excused), Alvin Loveless (excused)

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS**

John Getz Jr. (excused), David Gyger (excused), Barbara Loncar (excused), Fred Hechler, Chuck Jackson (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: Nick Taylor (MOAA):** At this time I believe you all had the chance to review the minutes that were sent out prior to the meeting. At this time, I will entertain a motion to approve the meeting minutes as written. I will entertain a motion. Jerry Hawk (AMVETS) moves to approve the minutes as written. Sister Mary Mathias (CWV). Any question on the motion? All in favor? Aye. Opposed? Ayes have it. Our minutes from our last meeting are approved.

**TREASURER'S REPORT** – Report given by John Getz:

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** John Getz is not present but I do believe a report was sent out. I don't know if anybody has any questions probably cannot be answered here but I will entertain any questions for the record when John gets back and he can certainly provide any answers to that. So is there any questions about the recently published Treasurer's report?

## **REPORT**

**Joel Mutschler Director, DMVA, PIRO:** Good Morning everyone. Happy to be here. So General Weigl is as Nick mentioned, is unfortunately not able to be with us today she is at Delaware Valley. At Delaware Veterans home we had a small fire there yesterday. Everybody's okay. No one was hurt sprinkler system worked as it should. We just have 12 residents that were moved to other rooms while the water from the sprinkler system is getting cleaned up. We have one resident who was with family while his room has been cleaned. Not sure on what caused it or anything of that nature at this point. We are continuing to look out for our residents and Travis was there yesterday and was on site to help out there. Rich Adams from Southwest Veterans Center his last day will be the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, he is leaving us and retiring and his position has been announced and that is out on the employment.pa.gov site. Our women's Veterans magazine has received great support, we were jokingly saying it is going to end up being a book more so than a magazine because the amount of content that we got from our women Veterans across the Commonwealth. Very, very happy about that effort and the magazine is going to be published here in the near future. Going back to our homes for a second. So we are sitting around 72% occupancy rate across the system and obviously we are still taking applications for admission. Continuing to get after that. For VETCON our Pennsylvania Veterans conference with General Weigl has mentioned that last meeting, so that will be 4-7 September in Pittsburgh. We will be inviting the SVC and PWVC to join us for that event. It's basically bringing all of our Veterans advocates in. We are going to have our accreditation training for our County Director partners and our VSO partners that partake in our accreditation training, we will be offering some CLE's during that conference as well as hearing from Executive leadership from the Federal VA from all three administrations and doing some work in groups to talk about those issues that are important to us as a community and how we can get things better. Please mark your calendars, save the date, more information to come out once we get the registration set up and get the agenda finalized and so forth, but 4-7 September. We will be meeting in Pittsburgh for VETCON first one ever and certainly we are going to continue that on in the future. Our Advisory Council membership you will hear from Troy on that one, but I think we've got a good handle on those at this point. So from January and February they have been sent off to the Governor's Office as of the 28<sup>th</sup> of February and certainly if we have any questions on that I will take them back after Troy's report. From the PIRO side of the house, you may have heard Chip Gilliland is retiring coming up here next week. He has served in many different roles in DMVA for many years, both in uniform and out. He is in our DMVA Hall of Fame and I've served with Chip in uniform and out of uniform. He was the State Command Sergeant Major when I was in Joint Force Headquarters at one point, it was a little odd when I became his boss, but we are going to miss him. He has been doing a fantastic job for over a little over 10 years now for us. He certainly not going away he will still be involved. I am quite sure with the Veterans community in one shape or form. We are going to do a small farewell for him next week at his request but just keep Chip and his family in your thoughts and prayers

as he moved on to this next chapter. He is very excited to get back on his tractor. Cory Bender our current VSO supervisor is being promoted into the Division Chief Position to replace Chip. Cory has been with us for right around 10 years as well and is well versed with everything within that particular divisions, particularly with supervising the PA Vet Connect team. We are probably going to have some openings based upon some shifting of personnel here. So if anyone is interested in a VSO positions or anything of that nature please make sure you keep an eye on [employment.pa.gov](http://employment.pa.gov) and we will certainly let this body know once those announcements go out. As we shuffle the team of course we are going to get some openings there and on the Vet Connect team, Elizabeth Cooper just joined us as a Veteran Services Specialist. She has been active in the GACVS and the Women Veterans Committee for many years as the Chair and then Co Chair, and is coming to us from another state agency. So we are very excited to have Elizabeth on board and at your next meeting I will be able to announce we had one other turnover with one of our VSS and I'll be able to announce that person at the next meeting. They are so proud of the team. A lot of the comments that we have been getting back yesterday, there was a VSO grant Committee meeting and again, I don't want to steal somebody's thunder back there. So I do apologize if I am. I am very, very happy to hear when Chuck came back about how productive that meeting was with the grant funded VSO's. I have been getting a lot of questions on state benefits, that is awesome and you know those that have been accredited by the DMVA or have cross accreditation or have taken our training on state benefits as we all know, can take those applications VTA and MFAT specifically and we are seeing that happen across the formation. So I greatly appreciate that and one of the other points that came out that was kind of interesting to me is that our Vets are not necessarily enjoying virtual appointments they prefer in person face to face. I think that definitely holds true for our older Veterans, but some of our post 911 certainly are taking advantage of both. I certainly encourage that we always you know we all keep service lines open both virtually and in person dependent upon what the Veterans preference is and that we are able to take care them but just greatly appreciate the teamwork. The one team one fight that we have got going on across our organizations, DMVA County Directors and everybody working together that is exactly what General Schindler, Mr. Ferraro, General Weigl and myself are looking for and it's definitely happening. So just greatly appreciate all of that teamwork and camaraderie that is going on and the continued conversations that we've been having with the PWVC committees, ACT 66 committees and so forth to improve how we are doing service delivery with our grant funded VSO. Had a great meeting here this past week or the week before last week, I think it was with Mr. Ferraro and with all of you and it was just I got to tell you just hearing everybody talk about positive solutions and being able to take care of the community it is just fantastic for me to hear so greatly appreciate it. Finally I can only speak for the DMVA POA I can't speak for anybody else. More than happy to amplify your messaging if you know what is coming into the Commonwealth as far as recoveries are concerned, but our path to a billion dollars. Overall, I got to be able to figure out how to break it out. I'm sure somebody smarter than me can show me how to do it. We are getting darn close to over a billion dollars in recoveries in this state for compensation and pension that is a testament to the work that we are all doing. So I will try and get somebody smarter than me to show me how to get the date out of the VACO reports to show me what the breakdown is. I can share it with you all but if I had to guess I am willing to bet that we've got all the organizations rolling in the right direction. So that means a lot. So with that, I will take any questions that you may have and again greatly appreciate the time to be here with you today and I ask that you keep our residents down in Delaware Valley in your thoughts and prayers as they are contending with that water. Thank goodness it was just a small thing but certainly disrupted their routine.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Good report Joel thank you so very much. Thanks for keeping us informed. All right I don't believe that Nate Silcox or Michael Hillman is with us unless they have joined online. There is a report at your place at the table. Please take that with you. We have a guest speaker with us today Christina Lonigro from the Advocate Health Advisors and at this time Christine would you please come up and give us your report and welcome to the War Veterans Council. Thank you.

**Christine Lonigro Advocate Health Advisors:** Thank you for having me here today to talk to all of you about an important topic about Veterans benefits, and whether they be Military benefits and Medicare and how they can work seamlessly. So I am going to be going over that. First of all, I want to thank each of you in the room, not just for the service that you did while you were serving our country, but your ongoing service to Veterans. I'm the daughter of a Vietnam Veteran and that is important to me as well. The company that I work for is Veteran owned and operated. The individuals on the screen this one is Dr. Darwin Hill, he is the CEO and founder. He is a retired US Army Colonel and Colin Wright is our Director of our Veterans Initiative Program and he is also a retired Colonel. He had been in for over 34 years as well. So between the two of them they have got about 70 years of experience. So I just wanted to let you know the very first thing we want to say is that we understand how important it is to make sure that Veterans get the right information. They have someone that they can trust and that has taken the time to understand Military benefits, whether that means they have VA health care or they have Tricare for life or they have Champ VA for our spouses. It is important that we understand each of those and how they can work together with Medicare. They have earned those benefits. We want to make sure they understand what they are entitled to receive. Medicare is really just a copy written piece that we have adopted and it's really Veterans and Medicare together. Why is this important? We want to make sure that Veterans are receiving trusted information that they can reach out to someone and get the answers that they need, because making sure that Veterans have this information and that included our younger Veterans. Someone could be 39 years old, for example and have Medicare. So they are 100% service connected. They have social security disability they are Medicare eligible. They get Medicare if they are told to drop it, as soon as they get 100%, what has happened to this gentleman, he dropped it. Well not only did it drop him from his Tricare for life but it dropped his young children. So the impact it can be family wide, as well whether its spouses or their families, for younger Veterans and for older Veterans, if they go out to get that second opinion they don't have that option. So it's very important that they know this. Some of the challenges that are facing our Veterans are having someone that they can trust, making sure that this information is getting out there to those that make those decisions, whether it be the VA, social security or Center for Medicare and Medicaid we want to make sure that they are getting that into their hands. We know that here in the state of Pennsylvania, that we are number 4 out of the entire country. So that means we have a high population of Veterans that are in this area, and that we can serve and of that there are 2.8 million who are also eligible for Medicare. So in addition to have a high population of individuals who are Veterans, we have a high population of seniors as well. Some of the things that can be solved and when I was talking to the VA yesterday, I was talking to them about, first of all things that they can already be receiving at the VA, through their compensation can be for a medical condition, that can also give them a healthy food card, they can get that benefit. So food insecurity, could basically go away for a low income Veterans they can have Medicare, Medicaid and VA health care and they would be covered. Because they can get up to \$300 in a healthy food card every month, or that they can use for other things in their home like mortgages, utilities they can also use it on pet supplies, taking their pet to the veterinarian for example can all be covered for them. They can also receive transportation we know that transportation is the number one reason that a lot of Veterans miss their appointments. So there are some other resources that could be available to them. We also know that Veterans who are 100% received dental care, but those who are less than 100% do not. Where do they get their dental care, because dental care is vital? So they have the VA health care, we want to make sure they can also get dental care. Some of the plans can offer up to \$3,000 immediately, that means that they can go right to the dentist and have \$3,000 worth of coverage and they don't have a 50/50 cost share. All of this care can be coordinated. So now they got oversight. They got someone who can provide to them. You know hey the VA is looking out after you. You have everything under the VA but now you got another layer who is also looking out for you. So this is important to Veterans as well as keeping them healthy. Longer is part of the whole health initiative and that is one of the things that we look to do as well. Some of the consideration for Veterans including that whole health initiative is going to be their Membership at the gym. While with some of the plans that have been put in place they are going to be able to get a card that they can use at the gym. They can have things delivered to their home and with one plan right now they can get up to \$300 and some dollars' worth of items that would be for fitness. So again, just keeping our Veterans healthier

longer. Some of those complementary areas of focus would be they do have a caseworker, they got someone who is working directly from the carrier who stays in touch with them. One of their challenges might be, even though we know the VA provides exceptional care and they are the ones who understand Military benefits better than most and they are also the one that has state of the art equipment when it comes to durable medical equipment or if they require prescriptions, they don't have a doughnut hole, all of these things are going to be important to them. In addition to that now Veterans can also access a second opinion. So if they go the VA and they still feel that there is something else going on here, something needs to be looked at, they can reach out to another location and be able to get that covered to another health care provider. They can also access based on distance. So if they don't have time for them to enroll in community care, all of that can amount to months, while you know when you need to have a specialist, it's going to be something that you want to be done quicker. Now they can have access to that as well while they are waiting for that approval. As I had said before some of the Veterans who are low income, could be eligible for extra benefits and when I talked to the VA yesterday, one of the biggest challenges for Veterans is, besides their food insecurities is for them to be able to access some of these other things, including over the counter benefits. I always want to give a story and the other story I have is a Veteran who was a Vietnam Veteran and he had been in the service and he had worked with the CIA, he did reconnaissance work and when he got out of the service he went to the VA and the VA at the time turned him away. He self-medicated took care of himself. He was at work and unfortunately thought he was back in Vietnam and he started a fire. He was thrown in jail for arson for 20 years. He was gluing his teeth together for 10 years. He had dentures he was gluing them together. He was when he got out of jail. This guy called me on Christmas and said Merry Christmas. How are you? How are things going? He is now living. He is smiling and it is all because he got connected with the right person who would listen. That is all I am asking each of you is that if you encounter a Veteran who could benefit from the services that you have a resource if you want us to come and talk to your group, your Organization, we are happy to do that. My goal is to make sure that Veterans get this information. We've taken a deep dive as I said before and understanding Tricare for life, Champ VA are both of them are on like speed dial on my phone. I called them probably at least once a week and ask a question. Because the one thing that I have found out is Veterans are gray and what I mean by that is they are not all the same in what their needs are and what their service was like, and what their ailments might be, and how they work together with the VA benefits that they have the Military benefits that they might have through Tricare and then what they have available to them through Medicare. So if you encounter someone please reach out to me I've provided some information to each of you. Feel free to contact me. I am a Regional manager as well as the Veterans Initiative Specialist and I pretty much cover the country. So if you have someone who is in another state that you think we can help, please let me know. Again, I want to thank Adjutant Woody Hogan for having me here today to present this information to all of you. It was through his invitation and as well as the acceptance of the Pennsylvania War Veterans Council to have me here. Thank you again and thank you for your service.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Thank you Christina I appreciate that in case any of our members have any questions? Will you be around after the meeting for a little bit? Thank you so much.

**Richard Hudzinski:** Can I ask a question now? Since I am not physically present? Your services does the Veteran have to pay you and how are you funded?

**Christine Lonigro Advocate Health Advisors:** No there is no cost to the Veteran and if a Veteran for example when they sit down with us and everybody has to be licensed, they have to be Medicare certified so that means that they have to go through Medicare certification test. Above that advocate health advisors, makes every agent who is working with Veterans also go through a training and 100% certification test before they are allowed to work with Veterans. So under each of those umbrellas, there is no cost involved at all. How we are funded is through Medicare. So Medicare provides to us an organization, what we call an administrative fee and through that administrative fee is the existence of the field marketing organization or advocate health advisors. The other portion is paid to the agent. So they get a commission set by Medicare. A

Veteran gets choice they don't have to be pigeon toed into one specific carrier or another. They get choice they get anything that is offered here in Pennsylvania, we can offer to you. Again, most of the plans are zero premium, which means it doesn't cost anything monthly to enroll on the plan. Most of them will give someone their money back in their social security benefit as well.

**Richard Hudzinski:** Okay. I take it this is a cooperative agreement between Medicare and the VA since you mention the VA. One last question. You don't have to have any accredited Veteran Service Officers?

**Christine Lonigro Advocate Health Advisors:** We do not and what we do is we guide our agents. When we are sitting down and we are talking with them, we will say to them your best friend is going to be the Veteran Service Officer and the reason why is they got that expertise covered and making sure that the Veterans get their benefit and then we've got it covered in combining everything and bringing it together.

**Richard Hudzinski:** I understand we have a similar operation out here in the Lehigh Valley. That is a nonprofit. So you are a full profit? That is the last question.

**Christine Lonigro Advocate Health Advisors:** So Advocate Health Advisors is a for profit company. We have been vetted by the VA in Washington DC office of geriatrics, as well as the Veterans community partnership programs. We've been vetted by the Vet Centers out of Washington DC as well. As an organization we've also been vetted by a number of VSO organizations, they've looked at us and made sure that we were doing things the right way. In order for us to set up for example what their conventions or their midwinters or come and give talks. We gone to County Veterans Service Organizations on a state level when presented there as well.

**Richard Hudzinski:** Thank you, and you are going to leave your contact information?

**Christine Lonigro Advocate Health Advisors:** Absolutely and in fact but I was just at a Vietnam Veterans in Reading PA. There were 71 in attendance. There were 27 people who said they needed to talk to someone. They didn't have the right information. Thank you. Any other questions? I wanted to be supportive of your time and so I was putting everything together quickly. So I'm glad that he asked those questions.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Thank you. Christina. I appreciate that. Moving right along. Let's go into the reports of the Committee's first up is Constitution and Bylaws

## **REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

**Constitution and Bylaws: Gerald Hawk (AMVETS) – No report at this time.**

**Veterans Affairs & Policy: Chris Fidler (KPA) – No report**

**Membership: Chuck Jackson (MOAA) – Not in attendance**

**Legislative: Robert Gray (MOAA),** – Good morning. If possible it is going to be short. The Legislature has been having Committee meetings as far as the house and starting budget hearings. They finally reconvening to move Legislation on the 18<sup>th</sup> and they have quite a list of Bills for first, second and third consideration for final passage, but none of the ones that we are watching. So that is something we hope to have some influence on a couple of days later on March 20 with the Veterans breakfast that we are having at the Capitol in the East and the East Section of the rotunda from 8 until 10 on the 20<sup>th</sup>. All organizations and their members are invited to come and meet with the Legislators and their staff that come in to the breakfast that morning. At 10:00 the Senate of the sponsoring Veterans Affairs are sponsoring ceremony and everyone is invited to that

and that will be outside across from fountain in the Veterans Grove. As part of the breakfast we are going to take out goals we've voted on and have it broken down into two slides for what our primary issue is. You know why do we want this and then the second page is what is needed from the Legislature, on our goals and give us an opportunity to speak with them and get them to ask questions and get them involved. This will be something we can get to everybody when they come in or their staff and then after that we can start meeting with some Senators in the committees that would need to get some background, provide them some background and trying to get some idea as far as if they support the Legislation and try to get it moved. So that will be something we are looking forward to on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Also as far as having the slides and also giving them a full copy of our goals and rationale. There is a little more in detail and there was some discussion this morning as far as whether or not we would necessarily need to have the brochure and the slides we would not have the slides we would need to add the Officers in the Legislative Committee to provide the same information. Does anyone have any questions?

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** I have something to add. This Legislative brunch we put it out for a vote it was unanimous all but two said no. So we went ahead and we scheduled to cater. We hadn't done this Legislative breakfast since 2017 and believe it or not breakfast is twice as much money. As it was in 2017 it was shocking to me that we just don't think for \$800 in 2017 and now it is \$1700 in 2024, so that is okay, we have the money and we are going to do it, I think it is a good thing to get started again, I've been dealing with Michael Hillman at the house, that room that we are in, use to be a Senate room now it is a house room. So now we have to go through the house to get the room reserved, which Hillman is greatly helped us out. So it's reserved as members use, he is going to change it to a house use. So they can bump us out of there. If someone wants to have a Committee meeting, members get it depends how it is reserved we could get bumped. He is going to change it but in order to change it he has to have a meeting there. So at 9:30 he is going to have the actual House Committee meeting in that room to discuss the Legislation for the Vietnam Veterans Day on March 29<sup>th</sup> to get that approved through that Committee and I thought that was a great idea. Since we haven't invited the Medal of Honor winner Walter Marm to our breakfast also. So he would be in the room when they are talking about commemorating the Vietnam War. So we would win all the way around. It is all set. Ready to go. Other thing I need to tell you is I won't be there. I will be with our National Commander touring the Department of Pennsylvania. Troy will be my fill in for that day. Thank you.

**Robert Gray (MOAA):** I will have to talk with Michael and see if we get our slides in.

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** Kristen can help.

**Robert Gray (MOAA):** Legislative and the ACT 66 Committee were out at the Gap this past week and it was a perfect productive meeting. I will let the ACT 66 Committee make any other comments in reference to it in the website, the President is working on that.

**Website: Robert Gray (MOAA):** Since they have had problems in the past with their site getting hacked, they want to a different server provider for the business and he thought maybe he might be able to get access to make changes, but because of security now we have to send everything. But he was going to call the company CEO to find out directly to find out how we need who we need to send it to actually get it posted. Because that is a problem we've had I know what the Military Officers Association, we've send newsletters and we were told to send it to this certain person and then later to find out that they only worked part time and they were behind. So we are trying to get that resolved as far as getting the information in and once it's there to get it posted. So that is a work in progress.

**Larry Googins:** I just wanted to ask Bob how many members from the War Veterans Council plan to go to the Legislative breakfast?

**Robert Gray (MOAA):** I believe there is an account as far as how many people are showing up at this point.

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** We reserved 80 breakfasts.

**Larry Googins:** That is just for the War Veterans Council and the Legislators and their staff.

**Robert Gray (MOAA):** It is kind of a game changer since they are actually having a Committee meeting in there at 9:30. So we will definitely have them there at least shove it in their pocket if nothing else.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Any additional questions for Bob? Okay, nothing heard. All right moving right along. Honor Guard Constance Snavelly.

**Honor Guard: Constance Snavelly (KPV)** – I only have one thing yesterday was the contractor meeting, the contractor is Belier out of Pittsburgh to look at beginning the next phase out of Indiantown Gap National Cemetery. The contract for this expansion is supposed to last until March of 2017. It will include a new bigger Honor Guard building and with that that is the end of my report, because the next funeral is coming down for honors.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Any questions for Constance on the Honor Guard? All right, nothing heard.

**Troy Michaels (TAL):** Good morning. As Joel mentioned it has been a while in the making but I think we are finally making some decent progress and I think some more progress is going to be made after this meeting because they have got several appointments to read off. So let me go ahead and get the appointments read off now and then we can go into what is still needed. The following are the nominations that were submitted. Timothy Alexander Commander of the DAV request the reappointment of Edward Hank whose term expired June 1, 2022 and that was for the Southwestern Veterans Home. Second one is for the Soldiers and Sailors Home Timothy Alexander Commander of the DAV request the reappointment of Karen Faust whose term expired July 27, 2023. Gino J Merli Timothy Alexander Commander of the DAV request the reappointment of Joseph Sylvester whose term expired January 9, 2023. Hollidaysburg Veterans Home Timothy Alexander Commander of the DAV request the reappointment of David Wagner whose term expired on May 16, 2022. Southeastern Veterans Home, Timothy Alexander Commander of the DAV request the reappointment of Douglas Forsythe whose term expired April 5, 2023 and the last one for Delaware Valley Timothy Alexander Commander of the DAV requests the appointment of Leonard Johnson to replace Bruce Boyce whose term expired November 1, 2022. Are there any questions on the nominations and reappointments that I just read off? Mr. President, I need a motion to have these accepted and approved. Thank you. As the Chairman for the Committee I make the motion to have these appointments approved as read. Gerry Hawk AMVETS seconds the motion.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Gerry Hawk seconds the motion. Questions or additional discussion on the motion? Nothing heard. All those in favor please signify by saying Aye. Opposed? All abstain motion carries nominations are approved.

**Troy Michaels (TAL):** Okay, as mentioned before, you know we have had some issues with getting someone from the Jewish War Veterans to respond. Some of their appointments are still open. If anybody knows any other individuals that we know or are attending meetings or are interested in taking one of these positions please make the recommendation to have them appointed. Title 51 makes no mention that it has to be one individual from one of the service organizations. So as far as I'm concerned, if we've got multiple then so be it. We are doing the justice that we need to do for our Veterans in our homes, to making sure these slots are being filled. So that said the following appointments need to be taken care of. Delaware Valley Allen Abramson Jewish War Veterans term expired 11/1/2023. Samuel Huhn from the Blinded Veterans



Association term expired 11/1/23 and the last one that I need taken care of for this one is Larry Holman from the Jewish War Veterans his term expired 11/1/22. Any questions on Delaware Valley? Gino J Merli there is one vacancy completely from the Blinded Veterans Association and the term expired 4/5/23. Next one for the VFW I know is not here if somebody could relay the message I would appreciate it. Russell Canevari from the VFW his term is expiring on April 5, 2024 and Lisa Kay from the Pennsylvania County Director of Veterans Affairs Association her term is expiring 4/5/24 and just a side note on that when I've been in touch with Josiah Schrader he assures me that we will have her appointment letter by our next meeting. Question on Gino Merli? Moving on Hollidaysburg Veterans Home the only one that needs to be taken care of there is Timothy Susengill from Vietnam Veterans Association his term expired 5/16/22. The notice though we do have four or five appointments there that are coming up in May of 2024. Questions on Hollidaysburg? Pennsylvania Soldiers and Sailors home again, there is one that is vacant from the Blinded Veterans Association and there are three that are coming up in July 2024. I am bringing the ones that are coming up for 2024 for April and July because keep in mind, I believe we don't meet in June, July and August. So if we don't take care of them now they are going to fall behind. Southeastern Veterans Center the only one that is needed there is Barry Amole from the Vietnam Veterans Association. Any questions on Southeastern? Last one Southwestern Veterans Center, Rommel Dacanay his term ended 6/1/2020 and the last one Military Order of the Purple Heart we are still waiting for a bio for William Aronson and that one can be taken care of. Any questions on the appointment? Hearing none, thank you Mr. President.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Thank you Troy. Next on the agenda ACT 66.

**ACT 66: Matthew Hollenbeck** – Morning everybody. As Joel and Bob alluded to that ACT 66 has had a couple of meetings as recently on February 29<sup>th</sup>. The ACT 66 Committee along with the Legislative Committee met with Mark Ferreira to go over the possibility of solutions to covering issues with the ACT 66 programs. That problem is when our grant period ends on June 30<sup>th</sup> how we cover our programs financially until we get the first distribution funds from the new grant. A lot of our programs have to take out loans to cover their finances. Some of us do some of us don't. However, we shouldn't have that problem. So at the meeting, a couple of options were gone over one was going to a multi-year contract. However, that is not an option we believe would be in our best interest as far as the ACT 66 Committee believes, because that would require the Legislation to be opened up for the ACT 66 and unfortunately we believe that we would lose a program if that were to be the case. The other option that we considered was just basically rewriting the grant, changing the wording of the grant to allow for the service organizations to cover that gap where we do not have grant money to cover us financially. I believe Mr. Ferraro also suggested that there is the possibility of changing the grant period instead, this is something that we are very interested in doing because it would really solve all our problems. So right now currently, the programs work off the state fund, fiscal calendar year. So that is from July to June. That is where the problem arises, obviously between appropriations and distribution however his suggestion is possibly is to change the grant period from say January to December that way the entire period the appropriation and distribution was within that year and we won't have that gap problem. Right now, the legal teams at DMVA are looking into that to see what can be done, what can't be done, what the ins and outs of that is. When that information comes to me, I will distribute it to this body and the SVC. The other meeting we have just yesterday, that was just the ACT 66 met with PIRO, Corey Bender and obviously the members there the purpose was to go over the meeting that we had on the 29<sup>th</sup> to see if there was any ideas or problems with what we were thinking there was not any, we are all in agreeance to what we want to do moving forward and that is to stay away from the multi-year contract and just change the grant writing itself. Other than that again it was going over the camaraderie that we have built. It used to be difficult a lot more difficult in the older days to get unanimous thinking. So we were very happy to be able to say that we're working very well together not only as a service organization but also with the DMVA, we actually have that one mentality of one team one fight we are actually here for Veterans not for our organizations alone. Obviously we'd like to support where we can. Other than that, we went over the budget 4.802 or 804, I can't remember the number that was given for the ACT 66 program this year. So that is an

actual \$450,000 increase from last year to move forward with our programs to help Veterans obviously will distribute it out based on their scoring and stuff like that, which they are going to work on this week. I am guess hopefully within the next week or two Chip is going to try to get to it before he leaves, but we'll see what happens with that. As things progressed with that obviously I'll keep everybody informed and with that is there any questions?

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** That is in the mandated pay increase?

**Matthew Hollenbeck:** Yes. So of that \$450,000 extra it is a requirement that \$150,000 of it goes to bringing the Service Officers of all service organizations under the ACT 66 program a 3.2% increase to pay which will be obviously gratefully acknowledged or accepted. I'm sure and the rest will be the other portion of that \$450,000 will be for additional Service Officers to be brought on to help cover Pennsylvania. So to get more Service Officers out into the community to help our Veterans and get them their benefits. I think one thing we did kind of identify as still an issue that we're trying to solve is the problem of Veterans not knowing that we exist. It assumptions range and continues to be a problem. Even though we do try to get our names out there, we still get Veterans coming in saying hey, I didn't really knew you guys existed, that your abilities, your capabilities were there for me. So that is something we are going to continue to work on the ACT 66 Committee along with the DMVA to figure out a better approach is to get out there. Because obviously I spoke of this before about these other more predatory companies that are out there. They are really good at advertising and how they got that edge on us. We don't know when we're trying to figure that out. We need to get at their level so that we can help decrease that problem.

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** Would it be possible for them or would it be possible for the ACT 66 Committee to discuss with DMVA the possibility of a marketing program?

**Matthew Hollenbeck:** Absolutely

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** I think how we are going to get the word out is tell people.

**Matthew Hollenbeck:** I know DMVA does commit some stuff to that. Obviously it depends on our budgets. You know that, that is the hardest part of it all. Because it is not cheap to buy, obviously to put out marketing. So we are going to continue to work on that problem as we move forward.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** You mentioned Matt that \$150,000 of that of that was earmarked to 3.2% raise for the VSO's. Correct. Is that going to be enough?

**Matthew Hollenbeck:** I believe so

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Really what I am getting at is the number of VSO's is that going to cover all the VSO's to be able to give them that 3.2%?

**Matthew Hollenbeck:** I would have to do the math. I am not sure what that is right off the top of my head. I will check the math and get back to you on that answer.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** We seem to have a lot of VA Service Officers you know that and you know again whatever the criteria is I would just be interested to see is it going to be enough to give everybody that 3.2%.

**Matthew Hollenbeck:** I believe actually if I remember right now just talking about Chip one of the members of the DMVA actually did go through because they have what we pay every Service Officer between each of

our programs, and I believe they did go through and actually do that. I don't know if Joel can speak to that real quick. They did. Okay I just remembered. This will be able to cover everybody.

**Richard Hudzinski VVA:** I agree with what you were saying about administrative solution versus trying to go to Legislation that is what was agreed to at the meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Mark Ferraro also talked about multiyear at the meeting that you had yesterday. Did something change?

**Matthew Hollenbeck:** The ACT 66 members were basically just the agreements that we were more interested in the idea of changing the period of time.

**Richard Hudzinski VVA:** I get that, but we're also talking in the meeting, we talked about planning looking to the future stability and that was why one of the reason Mark Ferraro was interested in multi-year grants also saving labor, you know repetitive labor.

**Matthew Hollenbeck:** Okay. Well definitely I wasn't aware of that. I thought he was under the impression that he wants to stay away because we never know what the grant is going to be. But it always can go up or go down it all depends on what the Governor agrees too.

**Richard Hudzinski VVA:** Correct. But if you forecast Matt you can influence that and I think that is mostly what is in Mark Ferraro's mind.

**Matthew Hollenbeck:** Okay. I will get with him to clarify on that and make sure we are on the same sheet of music here. Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you very much sir.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** I think we covered it with the Legislative breakfast that was unfinished, it is going to be finished this month so we already talked about it.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Roger that Woody. Just a question. Would it be helpful at all to the War Veterans Council if the organizations would indicate the number of members that are planning to attend? Would that help with you numbers? Let me ask the members that are present, either here in the room or virtually, if you have a member or members that are planning to attend to you or Kristen please send that number to Secretary Hogan or Kristen so that they could get a better count per se on what it is. When would you want that?

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** ASAP otherwise we are going to have enough meals for 80. So first come first serve with the eats. You can come and meet the Legislators to you don't have to eat.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Let's say by the 15<sup>th</sup> which will be 8 days from now, the following Friday. Next Friday, if you would please let us know how many people would plan to attend? Thank you. Last call unfinished business. Okay, nothing else heard new business do we have any items of new business to discuss in this forum?

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** I received an email from a State Representative Alec Ryncavage who represents the 119<sup>th</sup> Legislative District in Luzerne County. He would request to come address the Pennsylvania War Veterans Council to discuss several topics. He has determined that currently disabled Veterans have an option

for either severely disabled Veterans plate or disable Veterans plate. Those options leave out significant portions of Veterans who merit recognition for the contributions to the county that have disabilities unrelated to their Military service and require accommodation. So he wants to discuss with us how he can get Legislation written and passed to address that impropriety. I make a motion we allow Alec Ryncavage State Representative from the 119<sup>th</sup> Legislative District to attend the next available War Council meeting.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** We have a proper motion on the floor is there a second? Sister Mary Mathis CWV. Further discussion on the motion?

**(Unknown):** What was the subject?

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** The subject was to allow State Representative Alex Ryncavage to address the War Veterans Council on a number of topics to include identification of license plates and other topics. Further discussion on the motion? All those in favor please signify by saying Aye. All opposed? All abstain? Motion carries. Woody if you would please convey to the Congressman we would love to have him at the next mutual convenient meetings is for him in his schedule. Mr. Albert of I heard you correctly the Blinded Veterans Association you said there is an election and a new President. Did I hear you correctly?

**Mr. Albert:** That is correct so we will send a letter to let them know who is taking over the office.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** It should actually be two letters one to the War Veterans Council to either Kristen Smith or to Woody Hogan and one to the State Veterans Commission Greg Holler. So if you could if you just make a copy and send it to two places that would be great sir.

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** So I've been trying to track down the Jewish War Veterans to see about their attendance to these meetings. Apparently they had elections and their new State President I don't have documented evidence of this but his name is Bruce Kanis. I've discussed with him and sent him all the paperwork, a copy of our Bylaws. He believes Mr. Fine never shared the information to him. So he didn't know that this even existed until I called him. We emailed him after the meeting last month, all the information he needed and we have not heard a single thing from him since so the Jewish War Veterans are still up in the air. They are still members of both the War Council and the Veterans Commission. We are going to keep trying until we get somewhere. Eventually it is going to come to a point where we need to make a decision on their attendance or their participation in this group in the Veterans Council, Veterans Commission but I asked him to give it another month and see if we can work some more things out. Thank you.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Thank you Woody. Any other items? New business? Nothing heard moving on to correspondence. Woody in addition to the email from the Congressman has the War Council received any formal correspondence?

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** No sir.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

## **REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORGANIZATION**

**Richard Hudzinski VVA:** Have you received any correspondence or those notes from Nate Silcox about an event on April 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** I think that is in the handout in the handout here it does talk about let me find it the Vietnam Veterans Day. On Monday April 8<sup>th</sup> Chairman Mastriano is hosting a Vietnam Veterans Day Service at 10:30am on the front steps of the Pennsylvania Capitol. The service will feature Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Tom, US Vietnam War Commemoration, Adjutant Mark Schindler who has been invited and State Treasurer Stacy Garrity more details will be announced services free and open to the public to attend.

**Woody Hogan (Secretary):** We will email it out to all the members of the War Veterans Council.

**Nick Taylor (MOAA):** Any remarks for the good of the organization. Nothing else heard. At this time I will ask you to please stand and we will have the Benediction by our Chaplain Richard Denison.

**BENEDICTION:** Richard Denison (TAL)

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully submitted,  
James “Woody” Hogan, Secretary