



PENNSYLVANIA
WAR VETERANS COUNCIL, INC.



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September 5, 2024 MINUTES
1:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER	Spike Gyger, President
INVOCATION	Sister Mary Mathias, Chaplain
SALUTE TO COLORS	Troy Michaels, Sgt-at-Arms
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	Troy Michaels, Sgt-at-Arms
ROLL CALL	Troy Michaels, Secretary

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Woody Hogan (excused), Troy Michaels, William Whitmoyer (excused), Robert Black (excused), John Fritz

AMVETS

Paul Forsman (excused)

BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

William Albert, Wanda Grover

CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS

Michael Rang, Sister Mary Mathias

DISABLED AMERICAN VETS

David Gui (excused), William Hines, David Wagner

JEWISH WAR VETERANS

KEYSTONE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

Chris Fidler, Constance Snavelly, Joseph Dunn

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

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

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Nicholas Taylor, Keith Beebe, Robert Gray, Ernie Holling

MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

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

PA CO. DIRECTOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Jesiah Schrader, Justin Slep, Alvin Loveless

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

John Getz Jr. (excused), David Gyger, Barbara Loncar (excused), William Roland (excused), Jessica King (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:

Spike Gyger (President): At this time everybody has received the meeting minutes I will entertain a motion.

Nicholas Taylor (MOAA): Mr. President, before we move on to that. Just for the record, for the roll call, I am Nick Taylor I am the Council President of MOAA. My name wasn't called I am here and present also for the American Legion Mr. Fritz, his name was not called. He is present. So I requested that the record show that at least two of us are present and our names were not called.

Troy Michaels (TAL): I will double check on yours Nick. The reason I did not call Commander Fritz's name is because he has not been officially appointed to this Committee. The Committee has to do an election.

Spike Gyger (President): Thank you. Going back to the meeting minutes, I will entertain a motion to accept Taylor (MOAA). Is there a second? Any questions on a motion?

Jesiah Schrader PA County Director of Veterans Affairs: My name is spelled wrong, incorrectly again, and then on the last page, it's also spelled incorrectly again.

Spike Gyger (President): We will make a note of that. Any other questions? Hearing none, all in favor? Aye. Opposed? Then carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Report given by John Getz:

Spike Gyger (President): We don't have it, since he is not here. So I believe everybody was emailed it. Is there any questions on the Treasurer's report that was emailed to you? Seeing none. All in favor to accept it. Opposed? Ayes have it.

REPORT

Brig. Gen. (PA) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General, VA: Hello again everybody. I really don't have anything significant to report. You are here at the conference. We have a lot to report out hopefully next month on everything we've accomplished in the work groups today. Hope you are all enjoying this conference and getting something out of it. We've had some really heavy duty speakers, really appreciative about the collaboration and relationships we have with the Federal and State and Local level. So I mean, that is just a kudos to how long we've worked with all these different departments, and that they've all come like everyone we asked. One email from me, they all showed up. So that is really cool thing. I hope this is something that we continue to do long term. For those not on the phone, I know that you couldn't be there. I apologize, but the speakers yesterday and today with a big kick off by the Governor was absolutely fabulous. We will see what we do next year. Maybe we will bring it where more people can come. The home side of the house are doing well. We've had Covid in Gino Merli, but it is going around right now. The TAG has Covid, that is why he is not here. Life happens but other than that, I have nothing else to report. Any questions?

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) – No report

Legislative: Robert Gray (MOAA), – We are here. They sent a Legislative report out yesterday, late afternoon, early evening, that everyone should have received just an update on some of the efforts we've been making in reference to our goals, as far as increase in the amount of Blinded and Amputee pension that wasn't in our original goal for last year, but it was brought up at the Legislative breakfast in March and Legislators had said that they had received information from DMVA that they would agree to a \$50 increase, making it \$200 but there was no current Legislation with the amount of \$200 and that they would have to do a new Bill. Also, they stated that wasn't put into the funding for DMVA as far as if there was an increase voted since then exclusion of disabled benefits and the Blind and Amputee pension from Senate Bill 933 have been excluded from any Commonwealth programs, and that has hardly been 30 days as far as finding out whether or not the people that are in the Blind and Amputee pension category qualify for additional benefits from what they had before. That is something more. There hasn't been enough time in reference to that for them to track it. DMVA either. Probably the second is the request for Global War on Terrorism bonus back at the Legislative breakfast in March, Senator Mastriano said that his office work on that and Nate Silcox was going to take on that job to do a draft and wasn't able to get to it. So we will be back with him to see if this fall and he will be able to start work on that Bill. The other Legislation, Senate Bill 1145 was protecting against claim sharks, which we know that VFW had been contacted in reference to doing testifying but nothing ever came of it and the Bill still lays in the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. We did send a letter in support of the Legislation, and also Richard Hudzinski had done some research and there are four other states were looking to do a State Bill. Two of them actually passed a Bill and those two Bills related it as a crime under Consumer Protection Law. The current Bill in the Senate would put the violation under Military Affairs title 51. Veterans Justice Project is a slow wheel to turn but one of the things we think is going to happen, and we encourage passing Senate Resolution 196 which was passed by the Senate on August 16th and it is supposed to look at the effects of PTSD and TBI on Veterans in the criminal justice system, and that report is due to the Senate in 15 months, around September 2025, so there is still efforts also conversations as far as under the judicial side, if they can do it. Administrative adjustment to try to handle things differently, but that is still in talking points with the Supreme Court Justices. Senate Bill 126 Disabled Veteran benefit payment exclusion that I talked about earlier did pass both House and became Act 27 on June 27 of 24 and it took effect on August 26 and the new law exempts any VA disability payment as a result of Veteran Service and the payment for many Commonwealth benefit provided to a Veteran by an agency or authorized under the laws of the Commonwealth from being counted as income for any Pennsylvania program, which also includes money from the paralyzed in that Blind and Amputee pension as well as the VA income would not be counted for any PA programs, and including pace and pace net for drug discounts, property rent rebates and applicants for the Disabled Real Estate Tax Exception Program Senate Bill 933 establishment of Veterans Home Advisory Board, passed the Senate October 18 and was referred to the House Veterans Affairs Committee. October 19 of 23 they finally picked up to work on it in the House Veterans Affairs Committee. They had their meeting last month, I think it was up in State College in Boalsburg and that was an information meeting where they discussed about our request for an amendment to keep the Pennsylvania War Veteran Council in the selection process and Mike Hillman sent me a draft of an amendment. They are meeting now out there in the hotel, at 1:00 their Committee meeting started, and I believe 933 is on the agenda and I think that is probably to approve the amendment that was drafted before. Hopefully that is what that is for. So that is in the works. Senate Bill 1139 notice of VA burial benefits and that put a requirement in State law under Title 51 for the County Directors of Veterans Affairs identifies the deceased family of their VA benefits of the Veteran, so that you are entitled to burial benefits and other items from the VA that passed the Senate May 6 and was referred to the House on May 7 and they will be acting on that probably in this next session. Senate Bill 1160, Vietnam War Veterans Day that Bill passed the Senate July 10, and was referred to the House VAP Committee July 11 and that will probably be worked on beginning of this session and that Bill would add Vietnam War Veterans Day to Title 38 holidays and observances on March 29 of every year. So would not be a Bill passed every year. There would be an announcement of proclamation by the Governor, but it would be in law, it would be the same day every year. House Resolution 404, Representative Pielli urging Congress to

support the Major Richard Star Act, which I know a lot of organizations are pushing to get that through, that was referred to the House VIP Committee May 6 2024 and it hasn't had any action taken. Well, they passed it out of Committee, but then it was laid on the table June 27 and hasn't been brought up again since that so that is something that we contact them about to pay if they are going to do that, and also request that it can be a joint resolution to see if we might try to get that pushed through. That is all I have.

Spike Gyger (President): Thank you. Anybody have any questions?

Wanda Grover BVA: I am just interested if a justification statement from the Blinded Veterans would help push that Bill along?

Robert Gray (MOAA): Which one?

Wanda Grover BVA: Blind and paralyzed Veteran increase?

Robert Gray (MOAA): Well, you could send a letter yes, because we are still trying to see if they are going to do a Bill and like I said, I am not sure how the exemption of income, because everybody's in a program were denied for income of program, they would probably have to reapply. I am not sure that is the other thing I wanted to find from the DMVA is the Blind and Amputee pensions of application that they received that were denied, as well as the Disabled Veteran Real Estate Tax Exemption, if everyone will have to reapply, or if they are going to look at those again. So that is something I haven't found an answer on yet, but that letter would help as far as try to move them along. We all realize that there needs to be an increase. There hasn't been one for many years. Thank you, but it still doesn't rectify the problem of income.

Richard Hudzinski VVA: Bob also put out a request for Legislative items that you are interested with and we sent out our current Legislative goals, but we are looking for other subject areas of interest to your organization that we can pursue primarily at State level. This is where we have our influence and in certain instances like that Richard Star Act trying to get the State to influence Federal Government through a joint Resolution. So he asked if you have any things that are of concern to your organizations that you submitted to them, so we can discuss it at our next PWVC Legislative Committee next month, towards the end of the month. All right, excuse me, this month towards the end of the month, and that we can present to you at the next PWVC for your concurrence. We are trying to get ahead of the power curve for the next Legislative session. It takes a long time to get this stuff through and we want to up gun essentially.

Robert Gray (MOAA): Especially the disabled, the blind and amputee pension, they were talking and had three Bills introduced last year, so we didn't put it on our goals and then that slipped big time. So that is something we may want to address again and put their feet to the fire and find out if they are going to do something in reference to writing a Bill. So that, if we can provide us a letter, then that will give us some other fire, then we can add that in or at least if it is not added to the goals we can add it to the fire and talk to them about it.

Honor Guard: Constance Snavely (KPV) – Thank you for the Honor Guard. The latest expansion out at Indian Town Gap National Cemetery is moving right along, the priority is taking care of more burial slots before we take care of our living Veterans who help out there. So as soon as more plots are prepared, then they will start looking at working on an expanded Honor Guard building. At that time, we will go back to doing them at shelter two and being in our cars in between. So I probably should have said first, we are still looking for other Honor Guard, some VSOs to come up with the Honor Guard to jump in the rotation and help. Always could use more volunteers and the last thing I have is last month, General Weigl came out and presented awards to all the members of the Honor Guard for some 28 years of doing this, basically since the Indian Town Gap National Cemetery opened. So 28 years of doing this mission in all weathers, approximately

over 15,000 Military Funeral Honors, at least one of our members who turned 92 last month. We are always looking for more people, even if you don't have a VSO group that could form we will take onesies and twosies. We are always looking to have more help. That is my report. Any questions? Thank you.

Troy Michaels (TAL):

HOLLIDAYSBURG VETERANS HOME

- David Gyger, Commander VFW, requests the reappointment of Thomas G. Williams whose term expired May 16, 2024.
- Philip Arnold, Commander MOPH, requests the reappointment of Michael Hoover whose term expired May 16, 2024.

GINO J. MERLI VETERANS HOME

- David Gyger, Commander VFW, requests the reappointment of Russell Canevari whose term expired April 5, 2024.

SOUTHWESTERN VETERANS CENTER

- Mark Rosensteel, President KPV, requests the reappointment of Timothy Sager whose term expired June 1, 2024.
- Gerald Hawk, Executive Director AMVETS, requests the re-appointment of James Lamison, whose term expired June 1, 2024.
- Phil Arnold, Commander MOPH, requests the reappointment of William Aronson, whose term expired June 1, 2021.

I make the motion that these appointments be approved.

Spike Gyger (President): I will accept a motion. To accept these we need a second. Any questions on the motion, any questions on motion, all in favor say Aye. Aye. Opposed? Ayes have it. Thank you.

Troy Michaels (TAL): Mr. President real quick I am going to try to move quickly in the essence of time, Delaware Valley Veterans Home the following are ones that are coming up and or need reappointed. I already mentioned Alan, so we are going to skip that one. Daniel J McCollum from The American Legion, his appointment is coming up. Richard Fine and Benjamin A Mastridge, all three of those are coming up and will need to be reappointed. Last one for Delaware Valley is Larry Holman from the Jewish War Veterans that term expired 11/1/25. Gino J Merli there is a vacancy from the Blinded Veterans Association and then one that needs reappointed is Lisa M Kaye from the Pennsylvania County Director of Veterans Affairs Association. Hollidaysburg, Harry Gaunt from AMVETS. Jay Buchanan from the Military Officers Association of American and Timothy Susengill from the Vietnam Veterans Association needs to be reappointed. Pennsylvania Soldiers and Sailors Home David Price from The Military Order of the Purple Heart. Harry Stewart from the American Legion and Raymond Chambers from the Marine Corps League needs to be reappointment. Their terms expired in July. Moving on Southeastern Veterans Center Barry Amole from the Vietnam Veterans Association needs to be reappointed. Last home Southwestern Veterans Center Rommel Dacanay Blinded Veterans Association and that is the last one that needs to be reappointed. I was just informed before walking into the meeting that our Michael Chuey is deceased, so that one also now needs to be appointed. Are there any questions on the appointments that are needed?

Jesiah Schrader PA County Director of Veterans Affairs: Gino Merli Center Lisa M Kaye last meeting and reference the meeting notes we had her down to get reappointed and get a letter from the Governor.

Troy Michaels (TAL): When I get back I will look into Lisa's and let you know what is going on with it. Are there any other questions?

Wanda Grover BVA: At this time, we are having extreme issues getting our Blinded Veterans to these facilities? Is it possible to relinquish these spots with the understanding that in three years, if we can get someone else, when those terms expire that we can reissue those spots?

Troy Michaels (TAL): To answer your question this has been talked about a couple times at the meetings. Title 51 doesn't spell out which organization it has to be from. So as far as I am concerned unless somebody wants to disagree with me, I would wholeheartedly agree. I would rather have somebody from an organization to this council appointed, versus continuing leaving them blank and when that term comes up if a vacancy is available then absolutely we can get somebody else from the Blinded Veterans Association.

Leonard Johnson: Past President for the Pennsylvania War Council for DAV and current Commissioner. I did not hear my name mentioned for the advisory board on Delaware Valley Veterans Home and I thought I was on it. I did receive a letter from the Governor's office saying I was appointed.

Phil Arnold Military Order of The Purple Heart: Could you say which homes would have the openings so that you know, different organizations can look and see if they can find someone

Troy Michaels (TAL): I did not mean to step in but Gino J Merli is one that needs to be reappointed. Soldiers and Sailors was just mentioned. Thank you. Any other questions on the Advisory Council for the Veterans homes? Thank you Mr. President. That concludes my report.

Spike Gyger (President): Let's try to work on these appointments and get them in as soon as possible with Troy. Next on the agenda ACT 66.

ACT 66: Robert Black

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

Troy Michaels (TAL): So I am bringing this up because we need approval to have an individual and again I don't have the email in front of me that was sent in and I apologize for that. Aero International if you have not heard, has come out with electronic pull tabs and electronic gaming devices. I don't want to get into whether or not they are legal here, however they have approached the War Council had asked to present at one of our meetings coming up. Just so you know there are seven other states I believe that have done this already, and here is just a quick snippet from their website. Arrow state of the art, next generation electronic pull tab system is designed to maximize revenue and give players an experience beyond the game. Real quick if you are not familiar they were at the American Legion's Finance Committee either January or at April's DEC and brought some devices with them and they are literally instead of having the actual physical pull tab in your hand, instead of the physical pull tab, they issue you or lend to you, basically while you are playing a tablet or some sort of smart device in order for you to continue to play pull tabs on the electronic device, they are claiming that a lot more money can be generated and also that it can be tracked electronically and reports uploaded. So in order for them to come and talk to us make a motion that we at least invite them in to come and talk to the War Council. Mr. President I need a second.

Spike Gyger (President): We have a second on this motion. Any questions, any further questions? All in favor say Aye. Aye. Opposed? Ayes have it.

Spike Gyger (President): So the next order of business will go to the nominations and elections of the Officers for this year. I will take nominations for the President of the War Council, any nomination for the President?

Nicholas Taylor (MOAA): I would like to nominate the incoming Commander of The American Legion, John Fritz, to be the next president.

Spike Gyger (President): Do you have any other nominations? First of all, John would you accept?

John Fritz (TAL): Yes I do

Spike Gyger (President): Any other nominations? Welcome and congratulations, John. I will take nominations for the Vice President of War Council. Any nominations? I would like to nominate Nick Taylor. Do you accept?

Nicholas Taylor (MOAA): Yes

Spike Gyger (President): Any other nominations? Congratulations Nick Taylor.

Spike Gyger (President): The next one will be our Treasurer. I'd like to nominate John Getz from the VFW, do we have any other nominations? I will let him know. Congratulations John Getz. I will accept nominations for the Secretary.

Nicholas Taylor (MOAA): I would like to nominate Woody Hogan to continue as the Secretary for the War Veterans Council.

Spike Gyger (President): Any other nominations? Congratulations Woody. I am sure he is here some place. I will entertain nominations for the Chaplain of the War Council.

Mike Rang (CWV): I would like to nominate Sister Mary Mathias for Chaplain.

Spike Gyger (President): Sister do you accept?

Sister Mary Mathias (CWV): Yes

Spike Gyger (President): Any other nominations for Chaplain? Congratulations Sister Mary Mathias. Sergeant at Arms I would like to nominate Troy Michaels. Do we have any other nominations? Congratulations Troy, so that takes care of the election. I forgot one thing. We have three trustees we need to nominate, I'd like to nominate Barb Loncar VFW State Commander as women trustees. Do we have any other nominations? We need two more. I do have a document stating that she will accept the position.

Nicholas Taylor (MOAA): I would like to nominate Keith Beebe from MOAA to be a Trustee. Keith is on the line so I don't know if he will accept or not.

Spike Gyger (President): Keith you accept?

Keith Beebe (MOAA): I accept Trustee.

Spike Gyger (President): We need one more Trustee. Do we have any other nominations for a Trustee? I would like to nominate Bob Gray as a Trustee. Do you accept?

Robert Gray (MOAA): There was a question last year whether or not two from the same organization should be on Trustees. I am willing to serve.

Troy Michaels (TAL): So just to clarify the questions that Bob Gray asked, it can be two individuals from the same organization and in the Constitution and Bylaws, and they have to be from three separate organizations.

Spike Gyger (President): Thank you for the clarification. Any other nominations for Trustee? With that being said, I guess it will stay vacant to our next meeting. Congratulations to all the newly elected officers. Is there any other new business?

Troy Michaels (TAL): Thank you Mr. President. Real quick, I know I passed out a couple packets and I have a couple more to pass out for those organizations that I am getting ready to read off. We need your alternates and your delegates turned into Kristen, Woody or myself as soon as possible. The following organizations need to turn them in and if I did not give you a packet please see me immediately afterwards, we need alternates and delegates from the following organizations, AMVETS, Blinded Veterans Association, Disabled American Veterans Association, Jewish War Veterans, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America, Marine Corps League, Military Officer Association of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Pennsylvania County Director of Veterans Affairs and Vietnam Veterans of America, please see me if I did not give you a packet. Thank you.

Keith Beebe (MOAA): There is a message that we got from Kristen that she has received those from us from MOAA.

Troy Michaels (TAL): I will make note of that and check with Kristen when I get back.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORGANIZATION

Spike Gyger (President): Any remarks for the good of the organization? Anybody? Well, I would like to thank everybody for the help and the assistance they gave me this year. It has been very enlightening in some cases, educational and we just have to move forward. So thank you very much for everything you have done this year.

BENEDICTION: Sister Mary Mathias (CWV)

RETIREMENT OF COLORS: Troy Michaels (TAL)

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully submitted,
James "Woody" Hogan, Secretary