



PENNSYLVANIA
WAR VETERANS COUNCIL, INC.



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May 1, 2025
MINUTES SUMMARY
10:00 AM

Roll Call

TAL – John Fritz, Woody Hogan, Troy Michaels, Peter Hartman, Dean Noechel

AMVETS – Paul Foresman, Gerald Hawk

BVA – Wanda Grover

CWV – Michael Rang, Sister Mary Matthias

DAV – Robert Hammaker, David Gui

KPVA – Joseph Dunn

MCL – James Diamond

MOAA – Nick Taylor, Keith Beebe, Robert Gray

MOPH –

PCDVA –

VFW – John Getz, William Roland, Jessica King, David Gyger

VVA – Larry Googins

The following were excused – Kim Carson, Bernie MacDonald, Samuel Huhn, William Hines, Chris Fidler, Constance Snavelly, Diana Henry, Sarah Cook, Victoria McCoy, Barbara Loncar, Richard Hudzinski

Outline

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

- John Fritz calls the meeting to order and requests Sister Mary to lead the invocation.
- Sister Mary offers a prayer, asking for strength to fight evil and unity under the banner of love.
- Troy Michaels leads the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by Woody Hogan.
- Woody Hogan conducts the roll call, listing the names of all present and those excused.

Roll Call and Approval of Minutes

- Woody Hogan continues the roll call for various veterans associations and military officers.
- Woody Hogan confirms a quorum to conduct business.
- John Fritz requests a motion to accept the minutes as submitted, which is seconded and approved.
- John Getz presents the Treasurer's Report, detailing the previous balance, deposits, withdrawals, and current balance.

Homes Report Surveys and COVID Update

- Keith Graham discusses the annual surveys conducted by the Department of Health at Southwest Veteran Centers, noting no major issues.
- The VA has stopped conducting surveys since February, affecting facilities in Erie, South Eastern, and Gino Merli.
- As of Monday, there were zero COVID-positive patients across the homes, and five-star facilities include Delaware, Valley, Gino Merli, and Southeast.
- Four-star facilities are Soldiers and Sailors Home in Erie, Hollidaysburg, and Southwest.

Veteran Center Programs and Staffing Challenges

- Keith Graham highlights a successful program at the Soldiers and Sailors Home in Erie for fall reduction, which improved their star rating.
- The homes have 1149 residents, with a census showing 75-80% occupancy for nursing care.
- Staffing remains the biggest challenge, with hospitals and nursing homes closing down in the eastern part of the state.
- Construction updates for Hollidaysburg include a tentative ribbon-cutting for the new CLC on September 12.

Volunteer Recognition and Upcoming Events

- Volunteer recognition events were held across the homes, with almost 1000 volunteers logging over 30,000 hours.
- The tag fishing derby is planned for June 5, and the Advisory Council for Delaware Valley Veterans Home will meet on May 14.
- The Medical Advisory Council meeting and the quarterly compliance and quality meeting with the Adjutant General were held this month.
- Keith Graham transitions to discussing programs and services, mentioning Vet Con from October 22-25 at Valley Forge Casino.

Programs and Services Updates

- The Lebanon Veterans Outreach Center is nearing completion, with a ribbon-cutting scheduled for May 30.
- The outreach center will have a walk-in facility, programs department, outreach hub, and a Vet Center by appointment.
- The facility will also include space for VSOs, health and human services, and career link support.
- Keith Graham discusses the impact of VA changes at the federal level, including the transgender policy changes and the low-income heating program (LIHEAP).

Nate Silcox's VAEP Senate Report

- Nate Silcox reports on the Senate Veterans Affairs Emergency Preparedness Committee, mentioning two meetings and several veterans measures.
- Two bills have moved out of the House Committee, and the House is moving measures over to the Senate.
- Upcoming events include VE Day on May 8, a hearing in Letterkenny on May 21, and Guard Day at the Capitol on June 3.
- The Senate will highlight the Army 250th anniversary on June 9, with a service at the Capitol and a meet-and-greet with Colonel Gerald York.

Committee Reports and Advisory Council Appointments

- Troy Michaels reviews nominations and reappointments for May 2025, including appointments for various veterans' homes and associations.
- Appointments for Delaware Valley include Jewish War Veterans and Marine Corps League, while Gino Murphy includes Blind Veterans and American Legion.
- Pennsylvania Soldiers and Sailors Home includes Military Order of the Purple Heart and American Legion, with pending appointments for other associations.
- Holidays and Berg include appointments for Military Order of the Purple Heart and DAV, with pending appointments for other associations.

Website and Legislative Updates

- Robert Gray provides updates on the website, including changes to committee listings and goals under the legislative tab.
- The State Veterans Home Advisory Council bill has passed, and the Senate is in the House Veterans Affairs Committee.
- House Bill 2012 is about establishing an advisory council for brain injury, with 24 people on the board, including veterans and family members.
- The blind, paralyzed veterans' pension bill is moving, with Senate Bill 534 raising the payment from 150 to 180, and House Bill 1144 increasing it to 200.

VSO Training and Act 66 Updates

- Brian Natali provides updates on VSO training, including a hotline for debt management and training sessions in May and June.
- The VSO hotline is for accredited VSOs only, and training will cover new grants agreements and report requirements.
- Act 66 updates include a meeting on June 18 and a video from Senator Secretary Collins to dispel rumors about VA cuts.
- The VA has processed over 1 million claims since February, with increased productivity and final dispositions of claims.

Unfinished Business and New Business

- Woody Hogan reports on the reinstatement of the Jewish War Veterans Council, noting the need for documentation and repayment of financial arrears.
- The War Council decides to return the checks and pursue reinstatement next year.
- Nick Taylor suggests holding the October War Council meeting at Vet Con, which is approved by the group.
- Wanda seeks guidance on obtaining a copy of the Congressional Medal of Honor for her mother, and Nate Silcox offers to follow up with her Congressman.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment

- John Fritz asks for any correspondence or remarks for the good of the organization.
- There are no remarks or correspondence.
- Sister Mary leads the closing prayer.
- The colors are retired, and the meeting is adjourned.