



## MEETING MINUTES / 16 February 2021

**\*\*MEETING WAS CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM DUE TO COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS\*\***

### **ATTENDANCE:**

Present: Baldwin, Lopez, Bradley, Camarillo, Farley, Lewis, Sepalla, Miller, Lardizzone, Magner, Sarg, Sutton

Excused: McMullen, Phillips

Guests: Vince Kane (Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center), Jacob Dillon (Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center), Carol Erhart (DVH)

### **CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS:**

Nothing to report

### **MEETING MINUTES:**

Prior minutes motioned to approve by Lardizzone seconded by Magner.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS:**

Nothing to report

### **Delaware Veterans Home (DVH) – Carole Erhart, Interim Director**

(Erhart) 98.2% of our residents have been vaccinated with both shots for Covid-19. 60% of staff have been vaccinated and we are continuing to work with staff to get vaccinated. Beginning March, we will begin accepting new residents. We have a meeting set next week with the Admissions Committee for 10 potential residents to be admitted early March. Presently, we can not have any in person or window visits. We continue to have virtual visits with residents' families. We continue to follow state guidelines and will open to families once the state approves. The new call light system will be installed March 16<sup>th</sup>.

(Baldwin) Thank you, have you spoke with the Friends of Delaware Veterans Home about this?

(Erhart) Yes

(Sarg) How long will the installation take?

(Erhart) 1 Day, 8 hours

(Baldwin) Could you have Mr. Green get in touch with Commissioner Sarg regarding the Quality Assurance Review Board?

(Erhart) He is out of town, but I will inform him once he is back.

(Sarg) Will the call system be appropriate for dementia patients.

(Erhart) No, the pendent and watch are not appropriate for dementia patients. They have the normal call light system with wander guards that alert us if they leave the building.

(Baldwin) Thank you for taking time out of your day and take care.

### **Wilmington VAMC – Vince Kane, Director**

(Kane) The Covid-19 vaccine rollout is front and center today with Wilmington leading the way not only in Delaware, but in our entire network. To date, we have administered 11,270 vaccines. 8,283 are first doses and just shy of 3,000 are second doses across the state of Delaware. We expanded our criteria to 65+ years. Veterans that received their first dose from the state are now coming to us for their second dose. That produced some challenges. If a veteran does get care with us, we make every

effort to administer the second dose. We are asking veterans that do not get their dose with us to stay with the state and have them provide the second dose. VBA building is moving slow with a completion date of late Spring. The parking garage is on schedule to be completed early Spring. The Dover CBOC is scheduled to be completed and a full transition in mid-April.

(Bradley) 3 or 4 of our members went to Wilmington for their shots and had positive reviews. Why should they have to travel from Sussex to Wilmington?

(Kane) I can not explain why they were not scheduled in Sussex County. We have the capability there. We do not want people traveling, especially in this weather.

(Camarillo) Some have been offered for the next appointment in Georgetown but chose to go to Wilmington for an earlier vaccination.

(Sarg) How close are we to having imaging in Dover?

(Kane) We put a bid in to have radiology and imaging in Dover and are awaiting a response. We have the space and want veterans to keep their care within the VA.

(Sarg) When does your Fiscal Year begin?

(Kane) October, we are awaiting a funding award notice.

(Sarg) The VA is asking Gulf War veterans for probable conditions and symptoms, are you all setting that up?

(Kane) We are working toward assisting those veterans and will inform veterans at upcoming townhalls.

### **Home of the Brave, Director Jessica Finan:**

(Finan) The VA has prioritized and offered the vaccination to all our veterans. Being it is not mandatory, not all veterans decided to receive the vaccination. We are still following all CDC recommendations. We are currently at 14 individuals with one open bed at our male facility, and 3 females and 1 toddler with 4 open beds at our female location. It has been a challenge fully assisting veterans due to the pandemic. Many of the resources are currently unavailable.

(Baldwin) Is there anything we can do to help?

(Finan) Not currently, the one thing need since last March is antibacterial wipes for sanitation around the facility.

(Camarillo) Does the grants you write for specific Houses?

(Finan) Grants can be for both houses and specific houses dependent upon what the grants are written for.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

(Baldwin) introduces Murt Foos, Peripheral Artery Disease Program.

(Foos) I want to start at the grass roots to heighten awareness about peripheral artery disease, specifically in feet. The VA has some assessment as a part of their routine exams, but early detection is very important. The VA innovation center is asking for a beta test sight and Delaware has many options for this. I just wanted people to start thinking about their toes and feet to hopefully prevent amputation.

(Lopez) Could you place your email in the chat box?

(Foos) Yes

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

#### **Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Magner:**

Interments – 79 (-4)

#### **Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Bradley:**

Interments – 29 (-3)

**Health and Human Services, Commissioner Sarg:**

(Sarg) The VA has a new Secretary. There is an emphasis on suicide prevention and support for female veterans. Also, increased illegibility for dental care. Tricare dental is not going into the Federal system.

**Legislative Affairs, Commissioner McMullen:**

(Baldwin) Josh is following up on HB12. We will need to put some heat on them. Thursday morning, I am meeting with Senator Mantzavinos regarding military retiree pay state tax exemption. We are looking forward to someone to sponsor this bill. Veterans are for the first time representing less than 1% of the population. Veterans are now in high demand and Delaware does not have much to offer veterans to migrate here. Josh shared with me the population in 2013 was 78,000, it's now 69,000. Veterans are not coming to Delaware. We need people in the trades and attract individuals to fill those positions.

(Sarg) I appreciate your efforts in our goal of military retirement pay tax exemption. Delaware is in competition with the other states and we are behind the 8-ball. Attracting veterans to come to Delaware needs to be a part of the states business plan and it simply is not at this time.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:**

DVTF Previous Month: Applications 3; Granted 3 (100%); Awarded \$6,224.25; Balance - \$65,995.12 (Matticks) I spoke with Representative Chukwuocha and the bill is currently with the Counties. I will reach back out to Representative's Chukwuocha and Carson for further information.

(Sarg) This should have been completed last year when the bill stopped with the counties.

(Matticks) DOC is coming back out to assist our cemeteries, to include male and female populations as soon as possible. This is a big win for us.

**ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:**

Commissioner McMullen (Air Force Sergeants Association - AFSA)

Not present

Commissioner Miller (American Legion - AL)

Publicly thanked Sable for the assistance getting his blazer.

Commissioner Bradley (American Veterans - AMVETS)

Post 2 has donated to 2 JROTC programs at \$5,000 apiece.

Free meals to the community during the pandemic totaling \$11,050.

AMVETS donated \$750 to Wreaths Across America.

Food Donations to HOB totaled \$2100 over the past year.

(Baldwin) I still have you at the top of my list for a storage compartment.

(Bradley) Thank you for the effort, but we have one now.

Commissioner Lardizzone (Disabled American Veterans - DAV)

Completed 72 claims since last meeting.

Completed 15 DIC claims.

Our next meeting will be the first Wednesday in March for our Department.

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday next month will be our Chapter meeting.

Only 2 requests for financial assistance last month.

Commissioner Farley (Marine Corps League - MCL)

We plan to have our meeting electing new officers soon.

Our Mid-Eastern Division conference will be hosted in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> April.

Commissioner Sarg (Military Officers Association of America - MOAA)

Dover Chapter has been able to maintain liaison and expect to grant \$7500 to charity in March.

MOAA does a storming of the hill each April. This year will be virtual. It is now called Advocacy In Action.

Commissioner Magner (Military Order of the Purple Heart - MOPH)

February 26<sup>th</sup> presenting a plaque to the Mayor of Newark in recognition of the city as a Purple Heart City.

Will be working with Dover as soon as we complete this one here. This is to connect the Purple Heart Trail across the United States.

Sent out 11 letters to JROTC schools and received 2 responses.

Delaware Military Academy will hold their ceremony on April 29<sup>th</sup>

First State Military Academy is still working to provide a date for their ceremony.

Still hosting Virtual Vets center meetings every Friday.

Commissioner Phillips (Veterans of Foreign Wars - VFW)

Not present

Commissioner Baldwin (Vietnam Veterans of America – VVA)

DMA and FSA combined have 9 nominations to the Military Academy. 3 to Naval Academy, 3 to West Point, 2 to the Merchant Marine Academy, and 1 to the Air Force Academy.

Commissioner Seppala (At Large, affiliated with Military Order of World Wars - MOWW)

MOWW intends to return to meetings in March.

A recent initiative is youth leadership. We have created slide presentations that can be used in place of in person. These presentations are available for use free. If you decide to use it your feedback would be greatly appreciated.

Commissioner Lopez (At Large, affiliated with Delaware Veterans)

DelVets is still able to provide to needy families and scholarships.

DelVets will be placing new Officers after our March meeting.

Crisis Awareness is still in full swing and the information is getting out to the community.

All information is sent to the commissioners for informational purposes.

Crisis Awareness meeting is March 3<sup>rd</sup> @ 1p.m.

Stand Down's first meeting was held January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Information for the Stand Down is in the Newsletter. Currently planning as if the pandemic is in full swing.

Next Stand Down meeting is March 25<sup>th</sup> @ 1p.m., in person and in Zoom.

(Foos) Women's Veteran's Tea for March has been cancelled due to Covid-19.

Commissioner Sutton (At Large)

I received my first Covid19 vaccination shot and will receive my final shot February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Received Blazer and building access card.

In honor of Black History Month, I would like to recognize 2 black Americans who were Buffalo Soldiers. The first African American to graduate West Point was a former slave by the name of Henry Flipper, and Charles Young, the First Black Colonel in the U.S Army.

Now a lifetime member with NABVETS.

Currently working on a FAQ list on questions received since becoming a commissioner to present at the next meeting.

Commissioner Camarillo (At Large)

General Berry will be on the meeting on March 16<sup>th</sup> @ 10a.m.

Our Commander and Chief is currently using the guard base and is solidifying our position in the state.

VA is still hosting virtual resource fairs with Military One Source at a more local level.

(Baldwin) Is General Berry holding a State of the Guard on Friday?

(Camarillo) I will confirm and send an email.

(Baldwin) I volunteer with a hospice group and they are wanting to do more with veterans. Can I send them your way for more VA information?

(Camarillo) Yes, I can point them in the right direction.

Commissioner Lewis (At Large)

NABVETS held first virtual meeting in January.

NABVETS is working on a Dunleith banner project, installing 460 banners over the next 4-5 years.

**TERM COMPLETION:**

Nothing to report

**EVENTS:**

(Bradley) Is the VVA hosting a ceremony on Veterans Day in Sussex County?

(Baldwin) I will check and get back with you.

(Farley) Same question for Kent County?

(Baldwin) I will check and get back with everyone regarding all counties.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

(Lopez) I will send out a signed copy of the bylaws to all commissioners to have for digital purposes.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Nothing to report

**ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION:**

Nothing to report

**SPECIAL SESSION:**

Nothing to report

**EXECUTIVE MEETING:**

**Thursday, 11 March 2021 at 1000  
Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**

**NEXT MEETING:**

**Tuesday, 16 March 2021 at 1000**

**LOCATION:**

**Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**