



MEETING MINUTES / 16 March 2021

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

ATTENDANCE:

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

Excused: McMullen, Phillips

Guests: Major General Michael Berry (Delaware National Guard), Dave Skocik (Friends of Delaware Veterans), Pat Cerchio (First State Women Warriors)

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS:

Nothing to report

MEETING MINUTES:

Prior minutes motioned to approve by Sarg seconded by Magner.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS:

Nothing to report

Delaware National Guard – Major General Michael Berry, Adjutant General

(Baldwin) Introduces General Mike Berry, Adjutant General, Delaware National Guard (Berry) I will go over a snapshot of the last 12 months. First, without the work Generals Vavala and General Timmons we would not be where we are today. I have about 700 full timers, and I'm responsible for their health, safety, and welfare. I take this very seriously, so we started max teleworking very early on. If my force is sick, they are not available and that is a failed mission. We figured out PPE, SOP's, and technology very quickly. When we were called, we were available. We started on State Active Duty Missions and rolled into Title 32 Missions. Some of those missions included testing, state testing, drive-up testing, logistical work, administering tests, and voluntary Covid-19 Mapping. We were one of the first states to take on that mission. As schools began to close, school children were not getting meals, so we stepped up to that mission and distributed food to children in need. We began working with the Food Bank of Delaware with many other private and public companies. In the Summer months we were prepared to be prepared to assist law enforcement for civil disturbances. Fortunately, we were not needed. Once the development of the vaccine surfaced, we supported the governor with distribution of roughly 2,000 citizens, which is historic. We are now into large scale vaccine mission with the State, and FEMA. Looking at the numbers, it's working. Delaware is in a good place. We have a strong and wonderful medical community and the Guard was a part of that. We stood up and staffed alternative care facilities for hospitals that may go above max capacity. And then the more basic missions, data processing, and system logging, Covid-19 test transportation. We supplemented for the civilian sector as needed. Fast forward to January, a need for a mission to send troops to D.C., we normally prepare for 200. On the 6th the mission changed, and we had well over 400 soldiers deployed to D.C. and they are still there. They stepped up and were willing to assist and have done great things. FEMAS is doing another mission at Dover Downs This Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We still have troops deployed around the world. That mission has not slowed or stopped. To put it in perspective for 1- or 2-days Delaware had the largest stand-up since the total mobilization in the 1960's in Wilmington. I must give kudos to the soldiers

and airman during this time. I am proud of the work they are doing. For many years, the National Guard was Army and Air. During my career, there was a push for a joint mission set. We began training our Commanders as Joint Staff Commanders, or Dual Status Commanders. I have benefited from the growth of our Joint Task Force. Your Delaware Guardsmen are operating at full capacity and it allows me to stay focused on the larger picture. They have been phenomenal, and I am very proud of our agency and their ability to step up. I will now open for questions.

(Baldwin) Thank you General, any questions?

(Sutton) You mentioned about 700 full timers teleworking, are they back to work?

(Berry) I am bringing them back this pay period. This will be minimal telework program. It is best to be conservative during this pandemic. It is imperative we stay safe and we have been successful in not missing a beat during this pandemic.

(Sutton) Thank you General.

(Sarg) What can we, as a Commission, do to best support the National Guard Locally and nationwide?

(Berry) There is a massive demand on the National Guard as a whole. As a Commission when you see a soldier or airman pass along a thank you. Be sure to let them hear it. It's valuable that their dedication is recognized. Continue advocating for our state veterans' benefits.

(Sarg) Thank you

(Camarillo) I wanted to thank you for all you do and for the program you run with our community partners. Your team is very involved in the community and it's wonderful.

(Berry) Thank you for that complement. I will be sure they receive those sentiments.

(Baldwin) The entire Commission could echo Commissioner Camarillo's comments.

(Farley) You stated you were involved in mapping. Are you involved at all in tracking the vaccine distribution? Does the state track vaccine distribution?

(Berry) That is the number 1 topic for the Governor and his staff. If we have vaccine on the shelf that is a mission failure. The Guard has a tremendous role in tracking that simply for data jamming. Example: roughly 4000 citizens attended the Dover Downs vaccine clinic. The guard did as much as possible, all the way down to filling out vaccine cards and crowd control, to ensuring vaccines were administered to those in need. We are providing what agencies can't due to manpower.

(Farley) Thank you General.

(Baldwin) One of the things we can do as a Commission is that we ensure the work that is being done by the Guard by bringing it to our Organizations attention. Any other questions from the Commission?

(Berry) I am here as needed.

(Baldwin) Thank you for your time. Your passion and leadership are certainly appreciated. Thank you for spending time with us this morning. Please take care and stay safe.

(Berry) Thank you all.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

(Baldwin) Introduces Dave Skocik, President, Friends of Delaware Veterans.

(Skocik) I wanted to echo the Commissions sentiments to General Berry. Thank you for operating such a wonderful group of people under such strenuous times. Thank you and God bless.

(Baldwin) Introduces Pat Cerchio, First State Women Warriors.

(Cerchio) I have 2 comments. I mentioned around a year ago to the Commission, The National Head of Military Childcare had poor news regarding childcare centers. But, wanted to mention a shining example for Delaware National Guard that has a home childcare program for drill. Amongst all the bad news he picked out our Guard and encouraged it to other states. We now have a World War II Army veteran turning 100 next week. There is a flyer being sent out to the masses for a drive-by salute to her. She is a very active lady and does quite a bit to this day. We really want to celebrate her birthday so if your available please drive by and wave.

(Baldwin) Thank you Pat, we will drive by and wave. The Veteran's Home and VA were asked not to attend today due to the vaccine distribution. We are going to try and get as many Commissioners that

are vaccinated in the office for the April meeting, and will try to have the Veteran's Home and the VA to present in person. The parking garage at the VA has gone up, but I am not aware if it is open or not. The Veteran's Home is opening to admissions and changes that are being made are mostly temporary, but your job as Commissioner's is to ask probing questions so thank you and continue to do so.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Magner:

Interments – 93 (+14)

Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Bradley:

Interments – 34 (+5)

Health and Human Services, Commissioner Sarg:

(Sarg) 2 items, I have the privilege to serve on is the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, or MIC3. 4 years ago, there was indication no system was available to identify military children in public schools. A program has since been created and Delaware has approximately 6000 military children. A new program called the Purple Star School program, which is to expand programs and resources available for military children and families. 2nd item, 8 years ago I assisted in establishing a community program called the Delaware Joining Forces. This initiative has been recognized at the national level, so kudos to Kristine Kubic, DOVS, and the DCVA.

Legislative Affairs, Commissioner McMullen:

(Baldwin) I am speaking on behalf of McMullen. The first meeting of the Veterans Affairs Committee and one of the bills brought up was a proposal for spouses of veterans to work in the DOVS. This item was tabled due to VFW opposition, there are a lot of things to be discussed regarding this. We did not recommend this bill and we want to have a unified voice. HB12 has been released from Committee. The vote is pending a request by Representative Briggs regarding whether it was constitutional. There are some concerns throughout the meeting that should be discussed. Questions were raised regarding means testing for 100% service-connected veteran which I find offensive, and I was quite upset with Representative Briggs and her concerns with HB12 being constitutional. 49 other states have a form of this bill. Simply, the bill has been in the system for nearly 2 years and this question is raised the day it is slated to leave the committee.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

DVTF Previous Month: Applications 3; Granted 2 (66%); Awarded \$2,737.73; Balance - \$63,257.39 (Matticks) I would like to comment on the legislative affairs, I agree with Chuck and I'm willing step in and assist wherever needed.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:

Commissioner McMullen (Air Force Sergeants Association - AFSA)

Not present

Commissioner Miller (American Legion - AL)

Did a drive by for a 100 year old World War II veteran.

Bringing referrals to our VSO for VA claims.

Commissioner Bradley (American Veterans - AMVETS)

Donated \$1000 to the Trust Fund.

Commissioner Lardizzone (Disabled American Veterans - DAV)

71 clients for claims and 9 DIC claims last month

Just attended the New York DAV convention that was 3 days long

Commissioner Farley (Marine Corps League - MCL)

As of the end of March, 1,122 homeless veterans have been housed, 71 veterans are homeless, but sheltered, and 7 that is currently denying assistance due to aid from other programs.

Commissioner Sarg (Military Officers Association of America - MOAA)

Relying on Zoom for executive meetings.

At the end of the month we are selecting 4 or 5 candidates for our scholarship program this year. MOAA National will not storm the hill due to Covid-19 but will storm the hill virtually this summer. 7 applicants were approved for admissions to the Veteran's Home. Outside visitation may be used on the pavilion due to it being covered when the weather warms up.

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

City of Newark proclamation was held March 5th with 12 in attendance. Local media did cover the event.

Tonight at 7pm we have our executive committee meeting.

Our State convention will be held May 6th at 7pm

(Baldwin) Are going to do Dover as well?

(Magner) We are working our way down the state to make major cities purple heart cities.

Commissioner Phillips (Veterans of Foreign Wars - VFW)

Not present

Commissioner Baldwin (Vietnam Veterans of America – VVA)

Information has gone out for a ceremony being held at the Vietnam Park on March 27, 2020.

A decision on Memorial Day will be made closer to May based on the state's guidelines.

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

MOWW held first Zoom Chapter meeting Sunday.

Delaware Military Museum has announced their 2021 Lecture Series. The museum holds lecture's the 2nd Saturday of every month at 1 pm. Next lecture on April 10th.

Commissioner Lopez (At Large, affiliated with Delaware Veterans)

Crisis Awareness meetings continue 1st Wednesday of each month at 1pm. Each Commissioner should receive a packet in the mail regarding the initiative.

There are very few tent cards for the homeless initiative. I am considering the National Homeless Hotline on the Crisis Awareness brochure.

The Stand Down Committee will be held on March 25 around 1pm for clarification on how to conduct the Stand Down this year.

Commissioner Sutton (At Large)

Nothing to report

Commissioner Camarillo (At Large, Affiliated with Delaware National Guard)

Crisis Awareness brochures were passed along to the Delaware National Guard.

March 24th a Veterans Webinar focusing on drug and opioid use.

April 8th a Women's Health Summit will be held virtually.

The VA is now giving vaccinations to veterans of any age.

I will be taking over the Veterans Community Partnership Program.

(Farley) Are going to address men's sexual trauma in the military?

(Camarillo) It is a concern. It is something on the SAPR side and we can look at addressing that topic for men and women.

Commissioner Lewis (At Large, Affiliated with National Association of Black Veterans)

The office space at the Wilmington VAMC will be available sometime this week.

NABVETS serviced 15 clients since last meeting

Working with NJHC at Greater Oaks Charter School for care packages to be sent to CLC and the Pearl Center.

March 26th is Medal of Honor Day, we will be at Townsend, DE VFW and Brandywine Park for African American Medal of Honor statue is located if restrictions allow.

TERM COMPLETION:

Nothing to report

EVENTS:

(Matticks) We are going to move forward with a in person Memorial Day Bridge Ceremony.

(Baldwin) Thank you

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Nothing to report

NEW BUSINESS:

Nothing to report

ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION:

(Baldwin) We are going to attempt an in-person Commission meeting for April. No guarantees, but there will be an attempt.

SPECIAL SESSION:

Nothing to report

EXECUTIVE MEETING:

**Thursday, 15 April 2021 at 1000
Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, 20 April 2021 at 1000

LOCATION:

Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs