



## MEETING MINUTES / 15 June 2021

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

### **ATTENDANCE:**

Present: Baldwin, Lopez, McMullen, Sarg, Farley, Bradley, Miller, Seppala, Lewis

Excused: Magner, Lardizzone, Sutton, Camarillo, Phillips

Guests: Vince Kane (Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center), Carol Erhart (DVH), Jessica Finan (Home of the Brave), Pat Cerchio (First State Military Women)

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

Nothing to report

### **MEETING MINUTES:**

Prior minutes motioned to approve by McMullen seconded by Lopez.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS:**

Nothing to report

### **Wilmington VAMC – Jacob Dillon, Public Affairs**

(Kane) I would like to commend everyone for a great Memorial Day ceremony. My hope is to have our CLC residents present at the Veterans Day ceremony. Of veterans identified and assigned to Wilmington VAMC through the National Office, we have contacted 73%, and we continue to reach out for vaccination efforts. Our attention has shifted to increased services both, through in-person and virtual medical care. All safeguards are in place for increased foot traffic and predict no issues there. We continue to require masks at all clinics and medical centers. Had a successful call with the Governor regarding the suicide challenge. We have begun pre-planning with support from the Governors Office, the National Guard, and Reserve. Regarding the Dover clinic, we continue to add physicians to ensure we meet the need for veterans in that area. Plans for radiology are in the final phases with nothing official yet but, it looks extremely positive. We created space for VSO's in the Wilmington VAMC and additional space for VSO's in all our CBOC's.

(Farley) I emailed you about the "end of active duty pilot program", would you like to talk more about that?

(Kane) Yes, let's get together. I would also like to bring General Vavala in on those discussions.

(Baldwin) Who is responsible for the CLC?

(Kane) We have medical leadership, as well as, a nurse manager. Tiffany Cross is the point of contact there. Is there anything specific you are looking for?

(Baldwin) I would like to have a walk through of the facility. Who would I contact?

(Kane) That would be best to organize through me. Please call and set something up.

(Baldwin) Is there an update on the radiology in Dover CBOC?

(Kane) We are continuing to advanced stages of planning. We are waiting to secure funding.

(McMullen) Are you doing local contract in the interim?

(Kane) We are using Community Care to authorize local radiology for our veterans in the Dover area.

(Lopez) I would like to send out Kudos to Kent Johnson and Matt Jacobs for their activity in the Crisis Awareness Challenge.

(Kane) They are wonderful and continue to be pivotal in the fight for suicide awareness.

(Baldwin) Thank you for your time.

(Kane) Thank you.

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

(Erhart) We have zero cases of Covid-19 which allows us to reopen for visitation. We are making plans for Father's Day activities for residents and families. All residents but 1 are vaccinated. We are at 63% vaccination of the staff. The Dental Suite plans are being redesigned due to the locker room for the healthcare center. We are having a meet-and-greet with dentists on the state payroll. Lastly the Generator project should start tomorrow.

(Baldwin) When do you anticipate finishing with the current admissions list and moving on to more?

(Erhart) Within the next couple of weeks due to the Covid-19 outbreak which slowed progress. The goal is to be at an average of 70-80 by end of July.

(Baldwin) Do you have any candidates for the Activity's Director position?

(Erhart) Diane, one of the previous Activity Director's assistance is qualified and has stepped up as interim while we go through the recruiting phase.

(Baldwin) Were you able to get Commissioner Sarg on the Committee for the dental suite?

(Erhart) We have not had any additional meetings at this point. Any future meetings involving the dental suite Col. Sarg will be involved.

(Baldwin) I have seen a lot of Judicial rulings mandating vaccinations for employees. Does that affect us at all?

(Erhart) That decision would have to come from the Governors Office and would require a Governor's mandate.

(Baldwin) Your communication is excellent. Keep up the great work.

(Erhart) Thank you, we intend to have a Military Ball when this is over. I can't say enough about the support the state has provided the Veterans Home.

(McMullen) What's your census?

(Erhart) 55

(Bradley) My Chaplain would like to come visit the Veterans Home. How can that be set up?

(Erhart) Have them reach out to Julia, 302-424-6000. We will look into the possibilities. We prefer them to be vaccinated.

(Lopez) We would like to have our new Commissioners taken on a tour of the home, is that possible?

(Erhart) We can give a tour but, not on a wing with residents.

(Baldwin) thank you.

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

(Finan) Thank you, Anna for the packet of Crisis Awareness information. We have 14 veterans at our male facility leaving 1 bed available. We have 2 female veterans and a 2-year-old child leaving 5 beds available there. We are hiring for a position. If anyone is interested, please direct them to Indeed.com. It is a floating position.

(Bradley) Our Chaplains would like to visit. Is this possible?

(Finan) They are welcome but, masks are mandated.

(Baldwin) Thank you

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

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

(Cerchio) Sad news, we buried one of our WWII veterans last week. I was in Washington at the Women's Memorial on Saturday for the unveiling of the new pins for the Women of Valor.

(Lopez) Do you have the information to order the pins?

(Cerchio) It's on [www.giftshop.womensmemorial.org](http://www.giftshop.womensmemorial.org). I will send that to you by email.

(Sarg) I think we should incorporate Women's Veterans Day into a ceremony much like the Bridge Ceremony.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

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

Interments – 86 (-2)

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

Interments – 36 (0)

(Bradley) Expansion Project is now complete with 1600 new niches.

(Miller) The Flag Day ceremony was well attended and went very well.

(Lopez) I thought it turned out very well, and the speaker was very impactful. We have DCVA coins that the Commission can present to individuals who go above and beyond. Let us know if you would like to present a coin to that individual Commissioner Miller.

(Miller) Yes, thank you. She deserves a coin.

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

(Sarg) The Dental Clinic fund raising is a \$2 million project and we are short \$37 thousand. Any organizations that are willing to donate please let me know.

(Lopez) Who would the donation be made out to?

(Sarg) I will have to get back to you.

(Farley) Who was the donations for?

(Sarg) Veterans Home Dental Clinic.

**Legislative Affairs, Commissioner McMullen:**

(McMullen) HB12 is out of committee and on the floor to be voted on. However, HB214 was produced and could be cause for concern as it offers state reimbursement for lost school taxes. That was placed in the budget committee and has not been brought to the floor.

(Baldwin) It's been 2 years since property tax exemption was brought up. I'm having a hard time understanding Delaware being the last state in the United States to address it. It is getting to a point where the bill may not get approved. Representative Carson is fighting hard to assist veterans. We do have a Senator and a few Representatives that have signed on for Military Retirement Tax Exemption. Something that needs to be addressed to the General Assembly, there are bills being produced for veterans that the Commission is not aware of. We don't need to approve it; we just need to be aware.

(Sarg) With reference to HB12, the property assessments have been dormant since 1986. State ruling came down that they had to reassess property values in all 3 counties. That will be a 2 to 3-year process. It's my understanding that the Joint Finance Committee met in May and everything looked good.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:**

DVTF Previous Month: Applications 4; Granted 2 (50%); Awarded \$2,411.08; Balance - \$46,219.64

(Matticks) I would like to speak about the Memorial Day events. The Bear Cemetery event went very well, thank you for stepping up as speaker Commissioner Baldwin. The Bridge Ceremony went as well as it could have within the Organizations abilities and I commend the Commission and Staff for their tireless efforts throughout that process. The Flag Day event was wonderful, and the speaker was astounding. Staff meetings will start every Second Wednesday of the month.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:**

Commissioner McMullen (Air Force Sergeants Association - AFSA)

June 1, I participated as a member of the CMSGT of the Air Force Scholarship program. 11 Scholarships were awarded totaling \$17,500.

June 4, Chapter 201 at Dover AFB general membership meeting was held. The President, Vice President, and Treasurer all announced they were leaving.

June 10, I participated in a Division 1 Zoom conference. Plans were being made to host the Orlando Event.

July meeting will be another election as nominations are now open.

July 24-29, AFSA Professional Airman's Conference is scheduled live in Orlando, FL.

I was reappointed as the Senior Enlisted Advisor.

Commissioner Miller (American Legion - AL)

Nothing to report

Commissioner Bradley (American Veterans - AMVETS)

June 14, Attended Millsboro Cemetery Flag Day Ceremony.

June 14, Post 2 held Flag Day Ceremony to retire flags and burn mass

AMVETS awarded 4 Scholarships, \$1250 each to Cape Henlopen JROTC this past month

June 19, Post 2 will host the Annual Convention

Post 2 completed the smoking room, making the rest of the post non-smoking

Commissioner Lardizzone (Disabled American Veterans - DAV)

Not present

Commissioner Farley (Marine Corps League - MCL)

Attended MCL Department of Delaware Convention where all new Officer's were elected. I will provide a list with the new Officer's contact information.

Commissioner Sarg (Military Officers Association of America - MOAA)

MOAA National annual "Storming the Hill" was slipped from April into May and returned to "Advocacy in Action". It was done virtually. I was able to make direct contact with all 3 members of federal delegation. I spoke directly with Senator Coons and Representative Rochester on the 3 main items: toxic exposure reform, healthcare, and financial supplements to junior enlisted due to Covid-19.

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

Not present

Commissioner Phillips (Veterans of Foreign Wars - VFW)

Not present

Commissioner Baldwin (Vietnam Veterans of America - VVA)

We are hoping for max participation in the Freedom 5k coming up.

VVA has asked to see about a Gold Star Flag to flown at the Bear Cemetery.

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

May 29, attended Bear Cemetery Memorial Day Ceremony

May 30, attended Bridge Memorial Day Ceremony

May 31, attended POW/MIA Flag Dedication in Lancaster.

Commissioner Lopez (At Large, affiliated with Delaware Veterans)

Great communication between Post 1 and Post 2. Working towards more cooking and finding ways to generate funds.

We awarded 2 Scholarships

Crisis Awareness has been able to pass out multiple brochures at the Wilmington VA, BVA, and Flag Day Ceremony.

Thanks to Commissioner Sarg for Sponsoring the Crisis Awareness for the Freedom 5k.

I have extra brochures and pins at the Headquarters if anyone is in need.

Vet Fest is being coordinated by Rosely Robinson, A Heroes Welcome and Steve Kellum, DelVets Post 2. There will not be a parade. There will be a large area set up and a separate tent for Vietnam Veterans.

Commissioner Lewis (At Large, affiliated with NABVETS)

8 clients serviced at the VA.

May 28, Memorial Day event was held at Brandywine Park.

May 29, attended Bear Cemetery Memorial Day Ceremony

May 30, attended Bridge Memorial Day Ceremony

May 30, attended White Clay Presbyterian Church Memorial Day Ceremony

Commissioner Sutton (At Large)

Not present

Commissioner Camarillo (At Large, affiliated with National Guard)

Not present

#### **TERM COMPLETION:**

Magner – 04/20/2021

Sarg – 08/14/2021

Seppala – 08/14/2021

Farley – 08/14/2021

Lopez – 08/21/2021

#### **EVENTS:**

June 26, Freedom 5k to be held at Buffalo Wild Wings in Dover

September 17, Veterans Stand Down to be held at Schutte Park in Dover

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

(Lewis) I volunteer for Legislative Affairs.

(Baldwin) Commissioner Camarillo would like to get involved with the Health and Human Services Committee. We will have her reach out to Commissioner Sarg.

(Sarg) Thank you.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

(Baldwin) Nominations will be open in July for the Vice Chair position. Votes will be administered in August.

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

(Baldwin) New Commissioner's that may need polo's or business cards please reach out to Sable.

**SPECIAL SESSION:**

Executive Session to follow immediately after Commission meeting

**EXECUTIVE MEETING:**

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

**NEXT MEETING:**

**Tuesday, 20 July 2021 at 1000**

**LOCATION:**

**Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**