



MEETING MINUTES / 21 September 2021

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

ATTENDANCE:

Present: Baldwin, Lopez, Magner, Harwood, Sarg, Lardizzone, Schroeder, Lewis, Sutton, Phillips

Excused: Bradley, McMullen, Miller, Farley

Guests: Vince Kane (Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center), Carol Erhart (DVH), Pat Cerchio (First State Military Women), Dave Skocik (Friends of Delaware Veterans), Eric Buckson (4th Levy Court District Commissioner), Barry Newstadt (Former Commissioner), Sam Cannan (Veterans Watchmaker Initiative)

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS:

Nothing to report

MEETING MINUTES:

Previous minutes approved by Lardizzone seconded by Magner.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS:

Nothing to report

Delaware Veterans Home (DVH) – Carole Erhart, Director

(Erhart) Census is at 54 and continue to take admissions. We are in outbreak mode and have been for the past 28 days. We intend to be in outbreak mode for the next 14 days. 13% of our staff, whether vaccinated or not, are positive for Covid-19. Outside visitation continues with family.

(Baldwin) Didn't the Governor sign a bill mandating healthcare workers to be vaccinated?

(Erhart) The President has signed a bill, the Governor has not. There is no regulation. It is in policy format at the federal level. Once regulated, the state must make it a condition of employment.

(Baldwin) What about admissions?

(Erhart) We have approximately 20 applicants in various stages. Only 5 are prepared to be reviewed at this time.

(Baldwin) Do you have staffing for that?

(Erhart) We have staffing for about 60 residents currently. Our challenge is CNA's. We are in the process of producing a CNA certified school.

(Baldwin) What about medical staff?

(Erhart) We have a doctor on staff. We are putting out a new RFP this week for an additional physician.

(Sarg) Have you investigated vocational schools for certified CNA's?

(Erhart) Yes, we recruited 2 from vocational schools.

(Baldwin) Could you explain the program DVH is implementing?

(Erhart) That will be discussed by the Governor in a few days. That will be a statewide program.

(Sarg) Do you have any feedback on the most recent survey.

(Erhart) Our survey went well. Low level deficiencies were found. No substandard quality of care.

(Sarg) Any fall issues?

(Erhart) Since I have been here, we have only had one fall. That is not a recurring issue.

(Baldwin) Where are we at with the quality assurance review?

(Erhart) We have monthly meetings and continued quality assurance reviews.

(Baldwin) Are the Commissioners involved?

(Erhart) No, we can discuss offline if needed.

(Baldwin) When is the next admissions meeting?

(Erhart) Next week at the latest.

(Buckson) My name is Eric Buckson. I was invited to attend a public meeting with some concerned citizens regarding the DVH. I am here to express the citizens concerns. I am here to provide today speak about the citizens concerns that the Commission is not responsive, and the Secretary of State has other concerns.

(Baldwin) Secretary of State's office assured me they are responding to concerns presented to them regarding the DVH. We understand there were initial issues and Ms. Erhart is acutely aware.

(Buckson) The group that was at the meeting was consistent in their concerns?

(Baldwin) Are these individuals connected to the DVH in any way?

(Buckson) These are concerned members of the community.

(Baldwin) Have these members brought their concerns to the DVH Director?

(Buckson) She is familiar with them.

(Erhart) I believe this needs to go the Deputy Secretary of State and Secretary of State. I am familiar with this group. Our priority is our veterans.

(Baldwin) Thank you.

Wilmington VAMC – Vince Kane, Director

(Kane) We moved forward with vaccinating the high-risk population. We are waiting for guidance on booster shots and intend to provide them along with flu shots. The VA will not benefit with the Governors actions. The VA healthcare field is struggling to attract and retain staff. Covid-19 numbers are up, and the emergency department has been full multiple times. Nursing homes do not have the staff to take on veterans as they recover driving demand for VA staff and space. A letter was sent out to the community about our initiatives to end the suicide awareness. We continue to expand our plans for surgical programs by adding an additional general surgeon. No updates in Dover or Georgetown. We are actively recruiting providers across Delaware. VBA building is on track to be completed early January. Construction is delayed on the Clinical support building.

(Baldwin) Introduces former Commissioner Newstadt.

(Newstadt) What is the status for transportation from the new garage to the main building for handicap?

(Kane) Are you referring to the new garage?

(Newstadt) Yes.

(Kane) There are no steps in the garage. We do have shuttle services that can assist. There is a flat covered walkway from the garage to the building.

(Sarg) Will the booster shots be available with the flu shots?

(Kane) There are plans in place for both the booster's and the flu shots.

(Baldwin) Is there a timeline for the shots?

(Kane) There is a timeline in place.

(Schroeder) Can you get the flu vaccine and the booster at the same time?

(Kane) According to our infectious disease doctor, yes.

(Baldwin) Thank you.

Home of the Brave, Director Jessica Finan:

Matticks read report for Finan

(Matticks) Male house has 13 residents, 2 incoming this week bringing the building to capacity. Female house has 3 residents and 1 child with 1 incoming this week leaving 3 beds open. Funding is still down which is expected due to Covid-19.

(Baldwin) Thank you.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

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

(Skocik) Eagle Dust Off Dinner is tomorrow night at 6:00pm. This Saturday at 10:00am at the Kent County Veterans Memorial Park will be an event for this group. November 13th at 6:00pm will be our Annual Trust Fund Dinner at the Modern Maturity Center. Stand Down was cancelled last week. September 9th, we held our second meeting regarding the incarcerated veteran's initiative.

(Harwood) Can I refer a veteran that just got out of prison to you?

(Skocik) Department of Labor is the best option currently.

(Baldwin) Are all protocols being followed for the Eagle Dust Off Dinner?

(Skocik) Yes.

(Baldwin) Introduces Sam Cannan, Veterans Watchmaker Initiative (VWI).

(Cannan) There is a need for watchmakers in the United States, 40,000 available jobs. VWI is graduating 90% of its students. VWI has expanded to a new training building and historic home for students to live in. I am here today to gather more assistance finding local Delaware students. We have had no issues with Covid-19.

(Schroeder) I suggest you visit KWVA Chapter 1 for possible donations.

(Cannan) Please provide the information and I will set something up.

(Baldwin) Are you involved with the Bond Bill?

(Cannan) No. We are supported with equipment from watch brands.

(Baldwin) Who's your representative?

(Cannan) Representative Hensley.

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

(Cerchio) We have a new slate of officers. Ms. Jensen is coordinating with us and the Girl Scouts to assist with Wreaths Across America at the Bear Veterans Cemetery.

(Baldwin) Introduces Barry Newstadt, former Commissioner.

(Newstadt) I appreciate what this Commission is doing. Is it clear who is in cohort with the DVH?

(Baldwin) Yes, it has been made clear as to the Commission's stance and the description of oversight.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Magner:

Interments – 76 (-12)

(Magner) Bear Cemetery Administrator Barbara Cooke is retiring September 30, 2021.

Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Bradley:

Interments – 33 (-4)

Health and Human Services, Commissioner Sarg:

(Sarg) I recommend Commissioner Hardwood take over speaking on Health and Human Services.

(Harwood) I am happy to take over this portion of the meeting.

Legislative Affairs, Commissioner McMullen:

(Baldwin) General Vavala and I spoke with the Governor regarding Senate Bill 188. There is a lack of active military retired pay information in the State Government. Delaware is not going to bring the younger military retirees into the state if we continue to tax their military pension. The veteran population is decreasing due to the lack of state veteran benefits. The impact statement will not be provided until we can review it.

(Harwood) Does the impact statement include projected veterans coming to Delaware?

(Sarg) No, it cannot allow for speculation.

(Baldwin) Is Sarg and McMullen our only individuals watching legislative affairs?

(Sarg) Yes.

(Lopez) I believe Commissioner Lewis would like to be a part of it.

(Lewis) I would, thank you.

(Baldwin) Commissioner Lewis please get in touch with Commissioner Sarg.

(Lewis) Thank you.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

DVTF Previous Month: Applications 4; Granted 3 (75%); Awarded \$10,101.49; Balance - \$109,477.36
(Matticks) I have the OVS staff looking into 3 501(c)3's that work with veterans and families which are not operating in the state of Delaware. My objective is to bring them to Delaware as additional sources of assistance. Global War on Terrorism Foundation, Canine Companions, and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation's Hidden Heroes are all being vetted, and meetings scheduled to further this new initiative.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:

Commissioner McMullen (Air Force Sergeants Association - AFSA)

Nothing to report

Commissioner Miller (American Legion - AL)

Nothing to report

Commissioner Bradley (American Veterans - AMVETS)

Nothing to report

Commissioner Farley (Marine Corps League - MCL)

Nothing to report

Commissioner Lardizzone (Disabled American Veterans - DAV)

74 clients for veterans claims and 4 DIC claims.

Commissioner Sarg (Military Officers Association of America - MOAA)

National is currently working on 40 to 50 bills.

Dover Chapter resumed meeting this month with 30 in attendance.

Local Chapter celebrated its 50-year anniversary.

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

Region 1 meeting held September 13, 2021.

Department Executive Committee meeting will be held tonight.

Local Chapter meeting will be held this Thursday.

Commissioner Phillips (Veterans of Foreign Wars - VFW)

Nothing to report/communications error

Commissioner Baldwin (Vietnam Veterans of America - VVA)

I will be month to month in this position as I will be stepping down to spend more time with family.

Commissioner Schroeder (Korean War Veterans Association - KWVA)

Last local meeting KWVA provided 2,000 masks to distribute to those in need.

Chapter 1 Sussex County is struggling to stay open which may cause problems with National Charter.

Commissioner Lewis (At Large, affiliated with NABVETS)

Between both bookbag drives NABVETS provided over 500 full bags to children in need.
Quarterly event was held August 29.
We will have a table at Vet Fest to assist veterans with claims.
10 clients for veterans claims.

Commissioner Sutton (At Large)

Referred 2 veterans to NABVETS for claims.
Assisted 2 veterans with claims.

Commissioner Harwood (At Large, affiliated with National Guard)

Met with DNG members for transition information September 14.
Briefed at Dover AFB TAPS September 15.
Attended Yellow Ribbon event this past Saturday.

Commissioner Lopez (At Large, affiliated with Delaware Veterans)

Crisis Awareness meetings continue monthly.
Amazon signed on to our last Crisis Awareness meeting and is committed to working with us.
I will be at Vet Fest representing multiple organizations.
Stand Down meetings are postponed until further notice. Intent to hold 3 separate events.
DelVets Post 2 has been renovated.
DelVets membership is very active and doing well.

TERM COMPLETION:

Nothing to report

EVENTS:

Vet Fest

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Nothing to report

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, 14 October 2021 at 1000
Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, 19 October 2021 at 1000

LOCATION:

Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs