

**PENNSYLVANIA STATE VETERANS' COMMISSION MEETING  
COMMUNITY CLUB, FORT INDIANTOWN GAP  
ANNVILLE, PA 17003-5002  
FRIDAY, February 1, 2013, 1000**

The State Veterans' Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order by Chairman Brenner. The meeting was opened with an invocation and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Remarks by MG Wesley Craig, The Adjutant General:** MG Craig provided the members an update on the Pennsylvania National Guard's involvement in the Presidential inauguration. MG Craig provided the Commission an update on the current and upcoming PA Army and Air National Guard deployments. MG Craig updated the Commission members on his Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIRs) for the Veteran's community. The PIRs are Act 66 funding, Veterans' Trust Fund, Pennsylvania's Veterans' Homes; and Paralyzed Veterans Pension. MG Craig also provided the Commission members a training DVD on flag folding for their Honor Guards.

**Remarks by The Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs, Brigadier General (PA)**

**Michael Gould:** BG Gould provided the Commission members an update on the Pennsylvania Women Veterans Symposium. The symposium will be held March 8-10, 2013, at the Wyndham Gettysburg. BG Gould told the Commission the proposed design for the Veterans designation on the PA driver's license wouldn't just be a "V", but the proposal also includes the United States flag. BG Gould told the members the "Honoring Our Veterans" license plate is now available. He told the Commission the Director, Bureau of Veterans' Homes, Mr. Andrew Ruscavage, will begin work on Monday, February 4, 2013. BG Gould recognized The American Legion for their generous contribution to Fisher House in Pittsburgh.

**Remarks from Mr. Robert Callahan, Director Lebanon VAMC:** Mr. Callahan provided the Commission an update on current and upcoming construction in VISN4. Mr. Callahan provided the members an update on the 2013/2014 budget for VISN4. Mr. Cudworth informed Mr. Callahan Veterans are calling the Wilkes-Barre VAMC and no one answers the telephone and if it is answered, the Veteran is placed on hold for a long period of time. When Mr. Cudworth contacted the hospital regarding the situation they responded it was due to a hiring freeze. Mr Callahan responded there is no hiring freeze and said he would bring it to Mr. Moreland's attention.

**Remarks from Senator Lisa Baker:** Senator Baker thanked the Commission and the Department for their legislative support and for supporting the Honoring Our Veterans license plate. She informed the members that proceeds from the Honoring Our Veterans license plate would go to the Veterans Trust Fund and help support public/private partnership initiatives using state dollars as well as dollars from people around the Commonwealth who want to support Veterans. She said whether individuals check the block when renewing vehicle registration or purchase a license plate that will go a long way in helping to continue to serve and to be innovative in how we serve. Senator Baker provided the Commission members a legislative update.

**Remarks from Pete Stinson, Executive Director, Operation Homefront PA/DE Field**

**Office:** Mr. Stinson provided the Commission members a handout and overview of Operation Homefront.

**Review and Approval of December 7, 2012 Meeting Minutes**

Commandant Corley made a motion, seconded by Commander Iacavazzi, to approve the 7 December 2012 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Office Administration Update by Ms. Debbie Stubljar:** Ms. Stubljar informed the Commission that we've now crossed over \$1000 in the Veterans Trust Fund from the Honoring Our Veterans license plate. Ms. Stubljar said the Governor's budget will be announced on Tuesday, February 5, 2013. The House hearing for DMVA will be held on February 25, 2013 at 10:00 and the Senate hearing will at 1:00 on February 25, 2013. Ms. Stubljar briefed the Commission members on a new website, [www.pennwatch.pa.gov](http://www.pennwatch.pa.gov). She stated Governor Corbett had this website created in an effort to make Pennsylvania government more transparent.

**Chief Counsel Update by Mr. Dennis Guise:** Mr. Guise briefed the Commission on the Disabled Veterans' Real Estate Tax Exemption Program, Rebuttable Presumption and the newly created Veterans Trust Fund. Slides attached. Chairman Brenner asked the Commission if they wanted to take action. No action was taken.

**Homes Update by BG (PA) Michael Gould:**

BG Gould provided the Commission a Homes' update. The overall occupancy average is 90 percent. For Nursing Care beds, the overall average is 92 percent. For Personal Care/Domiciliary beds, the overall average is 87 percent. He also provided the licensure status for all the State Veterans' Homes.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**WAR VETERANS COUNCIL ITEMS (WVC):** Commander Cocco provided the Commission the War Veterans Council four legislative goals:

- Support the modification of the Small Games of Chance legislation
- Increase funding for the DAV transportation system to 350K
- Increase funding for Veterans Service Officer Grant Program, Act 66, to 2.5M
- Support the creation of a Veterans Lottery Ticket

Commander Cocco asked the State Veterans' Commission to accept and support the War Veterans Council's legislative agenda.

Commandant Corley made a motion, seconded by Commander Mescavage, to support the War Veterans legislative agenda. Motion carried.

Chairman Brenner briefed the Commission members on the future of Soldier's Grove. He provided the members a diagram of the proposed design for the Medal of Honor Memorial Garden.

The Commission discussed the various Veteran/Military/Service Organization license plates.

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF REPORTS AND GRANTS:**

The report for the Veterans' Emergency Assistance Program was reviewed. Commandant Corley made a motion, seconded by Adjutant DeSanti, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried.

The reports for the Blind and Paralyzed Veterans' Pension Programs were reviewed. Blind Pension Program: President Grover made a motion, seconded by Mr. Dye, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried. Paralyzed Pension Program: Mr. Fidler made a motion, seconded by President Grover, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried.

The report for the Educational Gratuity Program was reviewed. Commander Iacavazzi made a motion, seconded by Commandant Corley, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried.

The report for the Disabled Veterans' Real Estate Tax Exemption Program was reviewed. Commander Hahn made a motion, seconded by Mr. Dye, to accept the report as presented not including four waiver requests. Motion carried.

Mr. Natali reported four requests for waiver to the five acre rule. Mr. Natali stated the Commission has a standing motion not to approve any acreage waivers, therefore the applications for waiver were denied.

Mr. Natali presented a reconsideration request for previous denial of the five acre rule. Commandant Corley made a motion, seconded by Commander Hahn, to approve the reconsideration. Motion carried.

The report for the Persian Gulf Veterans' Benefit Program was reviewed. Commander Iacavazzi made a motion, seconded by President Grover, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried.

Mr. Natali provided the Commission an update on Act 66.

### **GOOD OF THE ORDER**

President Grover informed the Commission she was hired as the Veterans Service Officer for the Blinded Veterans Association, Philadelphia Regional Office.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Brenner adjourned the meeting at 1207 and announced the next meeting will take place on Friday, 5 April 2013, 1000, at the Community Club, Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

### **The following members of the Commission were present:**

MG Wesley Craig, The Adjutant General

BG (PA) Michael G. Gould, The Deputy Adjutant General-Veterans Affairs

Lisa Baker, State Senator  
 Jeannine Botta-Guth, Member-at-Large  
 Samuel Blow, Designee for Commander, Disabled American Veterans, DOP  
 John Brenner, Chairman, Member-at-Large  
 Robert Callahan, Director, Lebanon VAMC  
 Joseph Cocco, Commander, The American Legion, DOP  
 Neil Corley, Commandant, Marine Corps League, DOP  
 Robert Cudworth, Designee for President, Military Officers Association of America  
 Carmen DeSanti, Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans, DOP  
 Tom Dye, Designee for President, State Assoc. of Cnty Directors of Veterans' Affairs, Inc.  
 Chris Fidler, Designee for Commander, Paralyzed Veterans of America, DOP  
 Wanda Grover, President, Blinded Veterans Association  
 Tom Haberkorn, President, Vietnam Veterans of America, PSC  
 John Hahn, Commander Catholic War Veterans, DOP  
 Gerald Hawk, Vice Chairman, American Veterans, DOP  
 Larry Holman, Designee for Commander, Jewish War Veterans, DOP  
 Michael Iacavazzi, Commander, Italian-American War Veterans, DOP  
 Michael Mescavage, Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart, DOP  
 Dan Stefanowich, Designee for Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars, DOP  
 Kit Watson, Adjutant, American Legion, DOP  
 Edward Wojnaroski, Member-at-Large

**The following members of the Commission were absent:**

Harold Gennaria, Emeritus  
 Steve Ryersbach, Commander, American Veterans, DOP  
 Fred Tregaskes, Commander, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America, DOP

**Others present:**

Belinda Albright	Northumberland County Veterans Affairs
Neil Appleby	Blinded Veterans Association
Bruce Boice	Vietnam Veterans of America, DOP
David Cummiskey	US DOL - Vets
Anthony DiFrancesco	Dauphin County Veterans Affairs
Gilbert Durand	Legislative Liaison Office, DMVA
Doug Etter	Lebanon VAMC
Hank Fiola	Marine Corps League, DOP
Ray Greene	Disabled American Veterans, DOP
Dennis Guise	Chief Counsel, DMVA
Rich Hudzinski	Lehigh Valley Military Council
Dave Johnston	Vietnam Veterans of America, DOP
Diane McNaughton	Exec. Dir., Senate VA Emergency Preparedness Committee
Tom Minchin	Marine Corps League, DOP
Brian Natali	Chief, Veterans Services & Programs, ODAGVA
Joan Nissley	Press Secretary, DMVA
Don Painter	The American Legion, DOP
Joe Palaia	Catholic War Veterans, DOP
Roger Snook	Snyder County Veterans Affairs
Pete Stinson	Operation Home Front (PA/DE)

Debbie Stubljar  
Jim White  
Brenda Zechman

Deputy for Administration, DMVA  
Disabled American Veterans, DOP  
Schuylkill County Veterans Affairs

Michael G. Gould  
Brigadier General (PA)  
Deputy Adjutant General  
for Veterans' Affairs