

**HOLLIDAYSBURG VETERANS' HOME (HVH) ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**THURSDAY, July 20, 2023**  
**10:00 A.M.**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Ildephonse "Duffy" Hines (Council President), Marine Corps League Department of PA  
R. Raymond Lenz, American Legion Department of PA  
Henry Gaunt, AMVETS  
Joe Rodkey, Blinded Veterans Association  
Goose Marin, Catholic War Vets  
Brian Querry, Centre County, Director of VA  
Thomas Williams, VFW Department of PA  
Tim Susengill, Vietnam Veterans Association  
David Wagner, DAV  
Michael "Mick" Hoover, MOPH

**VIPs PRESENT:**

State Representative Louis Schmitt Jr.

**DMVA PRESENT**

Brigadier General (Ret.) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans' Affairs – via telephone  
Travis Davis, Executive Director of Long-Term Care  
Barb Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes  
Craig Swineford, Veterans' Service Specialist, Central PA Region

**HVH PRESENT**

Chrissy Dambeck, Commandant  
John Reinhardt, Doctor  
Kelly Smith, Director of Nursing  
Joe Patterson, Admissions & Marketing  
Tyler Daugherty, Maintenance  
Melissa Meade, Assistant to the Deputy Commandant  
Tia Williams, Assistant to the Commandant and *Recorder*

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Mrs. Anna Marie Rodkey, Spouse of Joe Rodkey  
Constance Stransky, Guest of Council Member Ray Lenz  
Rick Orłowski, MacArthur Hall Resident  
Nancy Hoover, Spouse of Mick Hoover

**VACANT POSITIONS:**

Jewish War Veterans, Vacant

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Robert “Hank” Sembower, Military Officers Association of America  
HVH Resident Representative

**Called to Order/ Roll Call**

Duffy Hines called the meeting to order at 1000hrs and asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves and to provide their title and or Service Organization.

**Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance**

Duffy asked everyone to stand and to take a Moment of Silence and then asked for everyone to stand and join-in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America. Duffy asked Henry Gaunt to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**REVIEW OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

Duffy asked every member if they had any question, comments, or concerns regarding the Minutes from the previous meeting held on Thursday, April 20, 2023, ~ Brian Querry asked for verification of percentage of non-Vets as printed on page 7 in the packet handout – Barb Raymond stated it is correct as typed. She explained we keep the percentage lower due to fluctuation of admissions/discharges . With no other questions, comments or concerns, Duffy said the minutes for April are accepted as posted.

**Swearing-In New Members**

General Weigl swore in the following members via telephone –

Duffy Hines (Council Present), Marine Corps League Department of PA  
Raymond Lenz, American Legion Department of PA  
Henry Gaunt, AMVETS  
Joe Rodkey, Blinded Veterans Association  
Brian Querry, Centre County, Director of VA  
Tim Susengill, Vietnam Veterans Association  
David Wagner, DAV  
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**Dr. John Reinhardt**

Dr. Reinhardt commented on new residents and how he enjoys seeing them, especially when they recognize him. Last Monday, received a message about the power outage and DOH being in. Came in on Tuesday and it was wonderful. The staff were smiling, happy, the first resident he saw had a lantern and was in good spirits. Could not have been more happy to be somewhere that “rolled with the punches”. Temporary resident moves during the outage to VZMC went smoothly; VA staff very cooperative and helpful. HVH staff was absolutely wonderful.

**Questions, Comments or Concerns for Dr. John Reinhardt**

Lou Schmitt - COVID seems to have receded, is there any consensus in the medical community/cdc about vaccines? – Dr. Reinhardt stated, unfortunately boosters have not worked thus far hopeful this will change with an annual booster – compared to flu vax that has now moved to two per year – problem with covid was get new variant, create new vax and booster and by then variant was likely gone. Virulent has dropped – essentially a cold. Colds can be significant if frail/elderly. Looking at what can make booster/annual vax more effective. CDC on hold – probably get some type of guidance in August. In works and testing boosters now.

Tim Susengill – variant strain is producing less of a problem? – Dr. Reinhardt stated the biggest problem with booster is its late – by the time produced and put out, strain is mostly gone. Even within a season, viruses can change. COVID – people have not been getting as sick which is great to hear.

**Travis Davis, Executive Director**

Announced General Weigl is speaking at event in North Carolina now, will present certificates at next meeting. Welcomed group and congratulated new Commandant, Chrissy Dambeck. Chrissy has 27 years experience in long-term care and started in the private sector. Came to DMVA as a nursing administrator, then came to HVH as Deputy and now Commandant. Wanted to echo some of the statements from Dr. Reinhardt - Contractors hit main power source for Arnold Hall and Eisenhower Hall. Power went to backup generators, but they only support general life safety measures. Haven't updated generators due to new building being built. Temperatures in Arnold Hall building were entering an unsafe range. No residents were complaining because of the heat, but still an unsafe temperature was being reached in some rooms. Staff used emergency preparedness plan. Looked at VZMC and sister Veterans' homes throughout the state. Ultimately, we only had to move 19 residents to VZMC along with staff, meds, etc. In order to get power back up to the buildings, it took working around the clock, nobody was injured and all residents were safe. It tested us to see how we would respond. Lessons learned to pass on to all other veterans homes. Team did an excellent job.

New procedure in packets for how we handle Advisory Council meetings and minutes. Outlines how we let public know about the meetings and DMVA uses social media to get the word out as well. For minutes, we want to increase transparency to public so we will post on website. Will get a draft posted until approved, then once signed, will move to official.

State budget still not passed, moving on with business as usual. Waiting to see if there is there going to be an increase to Medicaid. Last year we saw 17% increase, one of the largest which is used for staffing ratio increase. Unsure what is going to happen to support the year two staffing increase; hearing 1%. If this is true, there are concerns about how this staffing increase regulation will be funded for industry as a whole. Will be hard for nursing homes to hit these numbers without support from Medicaid.

**Questions, Comments or Concerns for Travis Davis**

Duffy said to the council to think about who wants to be secretary for council to sign minutes, per the handout in the packet. Duffy asked if anyone would volunteer. Raymond Lenz volunteered. Joe Rodkey gave a motion to appoint Raymond Lenz as Secretary of the Advisory Council and Goose Marin seconded. Raymond Lenz elected Secretary for Advisory Council.

**Barbara Raymond, Director**

It's been a busy last three months. We were still in the public health emergency when we last met in April and were still in masks. Currently, no residents with COVID across all six homes. Out of masks except SWVC, one staff positive last week. The staff has no symptoms and little exposure, so only a few people are in masks. Last several weeks have been okay from a COVID perspective. As far as vaccine, monitoring closely to get further guidance. Moderna and Pfizer to go commercial – no longer emergency use. This will likely be when we get guidance, anticipating September. Amount of illness we see is very low. There is a variant that has been getting news recently – in the United States – variant of Omicron. This variant has been in the states since fall of last year and is not the most common variant. Not sure why it is getting press, but we are keeping a close eye on it. This variant is taking herd immunity and vaccinated and pushing through those. Not seeing a lot of changes but nursing teams keeping a close eye on. Public health emergency ended on May 11<sup>th</sup>.

New DOH regulations went into effect July 1<sup>st</sup>. Very similar to CMS regulations, however, this is the state matching those regs. All six homes are well aware of regulations, had to update policies and procedures and no major changes from that perspective other than staffing.

HVH fairly good with staffing. Across six homes, social workers and nurses is what we are struggling with. Doing various things from the state end for retention.

Nurses week/nursing asst week. Had celebrations across homes. Leadership paid for a lot out of pocket. State veterans homes week in June. A lot of fun activities, Barb was at HVH. Some events scaled back here because of construction but staff and residents had a great time.

From survey perspective – HVH and SEVC are in window for Department of Health annual inspection. We go through various surveys a year. DHS in three buildings, DOH in all buildings, VA comes in, in addition to internal facility assessments.

### **Star ratings**

Two homes increased; SEVC, SWVC bumped to five star.

HVH working to bump up star rating. Staffing numbers great, quality measures great, health inspections are issue.

### **Questions, Comments or Concerns for Barb Raymond**

N/A

### **Chrissy Dambeck, Commandant**

Duffy stated this is Chrissy's first report as Commandant – Chrissy thanked everyone for their support. Stated she is daughter of a Veteran, aunt of a Veteran, has a God daughter serving in Africa, member of American Legion Auxiliary and Legion Riders. Here to improve lives of those who served our country. Resident advocate. Believes

in leading by example. Its been a rocky start – was congratulated on first day and then DOH walked in for annual survey. Then power was out. Everything went as well as it could with the power outage. With DOH, because they had no wifi connection, they left. We are anticipating they will be back any day. Life Safety came in this week and exited already. HVH received 6 tags, but other than that it was a good inspection. Groundbreaking ceremony for new CLC was held on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Pictures can be seen in packet handout. We still have multiple residents talk about the ceremony on a regular basis. Pictures from the ceremony are scrolling on the screens in residential buildings for all to see. Annual VA survey was conducted beginning June 6<sup>th</sup>; received several deficiencies. Working on corrective action plan and staff education. Submitting plan for approval within the next few days. June 15<sup>th</sup>, DOH came in on complaint of care and services. Multiple concerns voiced by individual. Complaints were unsubstantiated and no deficiencies were received from this visit. Carnival was held on June 15<sup>th</sup>. We had to scale back because of construction but it was still a good time for all. Oktoberfest will be happening September 21<sup>st</sup>, but also will be scaled back. June 21<sup>st</sup> meeting with VZMC, tour of facility and discussed admissions. Working very closely with them and maintaining positive relationship. Patriotic contest was held with various prizes given. Continuing to do contest on quarterly basis. Morale committee meetings happening on monthly basis. Having first annual softball marathon competing with VZMC, tentatively planned for August. Open to all staff, families and friends. Will let everyone know when date and time is officially decided.

Vacancies – 3 open social worker positions, Accountant 3 and Dietician openings as well. Having difficulty recruiting Dieticians.

### **Questions, Comments or Concerns for Chrissy Dambeck**

Brian query – on the census, it says “total non-Vet”. Could we provide a breakdown with spouses and national guard? National Guard does not like to be called “non-Vet”. - Barb asked if we could add line for National Guard - Are there people on standby if there are open beds? – Joe will go into detail on this in his Admissions report.

### **Joe Patterson, Admissions & Marketing**

**Admissions report** - quick at a glance, April thru June admissions, discharge and deceased. For April 4 new admissions, 4 deceased, 2 discharged (1 to public, 1 hospitalized then passed). For May 9 new admissions, 2 discharge (1 within SVH, 1 to public). For June 7 new admissions, 2 discharge (1 in SVH, 1 hospital), 2 deceased. Admissions by county provided in handout.

**Marketing** – two senior expos coming up, every Tuesday Veteran coffee social, Rotary Club went well this week – a lot of networking in Huntingdon, Blair, Mifflin, many counties. Little things – phone calls, special forces chapter 67 wants to present beret to one of veterans here, interacting with community.

### **Questions, Comments or Concerns for Joe Patterson**

Brian Query- asked for population by county. When he talks to people, would like to tell them amount of Veterans in HVH from certain counties – makes more personable. Joe said this could be done. Barb likes this idea. – Brian asked if anyone is on standby? – Joe asked for him to explain – Brian stated anyone with full package in but because of non-Vet standing, waiting? Joe said there is only waiting list on secure unit. Processing list – turn in all revenue paperwork to revenue, they talk directly to POA – total of 9. Of this 9 some are non-vet, service members and spouses, some not ready to come in. Brian asked him to verify number of Veterans on wait list because no bed available because they are non-Vet – Joe stated there are two – Brian asked what is hold up on these two? – service members – Barb said need to look at percentage; we will figure out how many discharges we would need to put us close to 25%. We check risk before admit in. Brian asked when first came to Advisory Council, Joe gave a handout showing where people were in process, it hasn't been included the last two times. Joe said he thought that handout might be confusing to some. Brian stated he didn't think was confusing. It provided a lot of questions and thinks it should be put back in. When people come to him, it is an issue, don't know where they can go, don't have money, can't wait 30-40 days. Feels that his responsibility is to push group - how can admission process be sped up? Barb will work with team on this. Brian said Joe works well with him, but finds that when looks at process, surprised at why we don't ask for medical records at the beginning. Joe stated we need authorization first. Brian said what if Veteran would provide? Joe explained the admissions process -pre-committee review – next week 3 veterans, awaiting medical doc once received sent to FIG to see if DD-214 is good/background check, when we get back, getting last 90 days of clinical, vaccine records, whole picture then take to committee, post-committee awaiting cost of care, the more information we are provided by the Veteran, the quicker we can go, if they want to be full cost of care we can bring in sooner, cost of care given and accepted, revisits (if committee needs more documentation or if site visit needed). Brian said some have been done quickly. Barb will work with Chrissy on how process can be done quicker.

Chrissy- did recently have two admissions turned over rather quickly. Asked Joe to talk about when met with VZMC HUD-VASH.

Joe – did go talk to leadership and social services at VZMC. Every situation is different. If there is a situation out of Joes hands, Commandant and Barb decide if emergency. In month of April, turned an admission in three days. One was a Veteran from a personal care home that decided to close, another was when house was being sold.

Barb – some are from literally on the streets. Joe said some come straight from being incarcerated to temporarily with VZMC, denied because not evicted, came to us and took appropriate action.

Brian – thought someone couldn't be accepted if they are a convicted felon? Barb said different legal opinion on good behavior for 5 years. Some say even though if in prison, some want not incarcerated in 5 years. Most recent legal guidance say it is okay if the Veteran had no problems/issues in legal system. Not sure what current chief counsels interpretation of what "good behavior" will be. Most recent scenario, individual timed out and would have been on the streets.

**Duffy Hines – Report of Status:**

Mick Hoover officially a member, Goose Marin waiting for reappointment

Jewish War Vets position still open – Duffy started working on Jewish War Vet opening years ago. Called Pittsburgh and was told this person wasn't in charge of it anymore. Got to Commandant for Jewish War Vets in PA – lives in New Jersey. Jewish War Council from Blair county back in 1950's died out, did not have enough people to keep going. Commandant had no Solutions, but was going back to headquarters to ask if member not associated with particular unit might live in the area and willing to serve. As of two weeks ago thought he had someone who would be willing to serve here, waiting for call back on who this person is. If this doesn't work out, only one alternative. If cant find someone from Jewish War Vets, need to come up with another military group to supply member; unsure who that would be. We have a good representation now of who is available and operating in the area. Hoping this works out with Jewish War Vets – be thinking what organization we can go to if we need to.

Tim Susengill - Does it have to be nationally chartered organization? Through VA sponsored meetings for women veterans – a few groups getting bigger but not formal service organization. Would be nice to have woman vet on committee. Barb looking into.

Duffy – War council has to make recommendation to Governor – not sure how it would go if not. Barb looked up Title 51 Establishment of Advisory Council – 12 members shall be appointed by Governor from list of nominations. Duffy knows some organizations are getting started – one in particular a take on Vietnam Veterans. Believes there are people who would be viable candidates – has to present to war council. Tim – IAVA nationally chartered but no local chapter – local members. Not part of council yet. Younger group. Duffy said one issue is we don't have local representation we get back in to a situation where people have to travel far. Some younger members of organizations don't want to serve, have to work, so they don't have the time.

Travis – reached out to war council last week, issue with Scranton filling their Jewish War Vet position as well. Barb looked up PA War Council – theirs is specific. Are they thinking our Advisory Council has to be as specific?

Brian Querry – Barb brings up good point – even if we work out with Jewish War Vets, could we add a womens Veteran representative? Feels as if we are missing this as a group. Barb said it seems as though we could. Duffy said we could submit info and see where it goes.

Ray Lenz – a few years ago we had a woman on this committee. In honor guard, have about six active women helping with military funerals. Feels as though one would be happy to do it. Duffy said we need a volunteer, male or female. Should try to satisfy Jewish War Veteran vacancy then go from there.

Tom Williams - Does Jewish War council have member? Duffy called local Synagogue and left message to ask for assistance.

**Old Business:**

N/A

**New Business:**

Chrissy – apologizes as far as employee recognition, invited Tyler as Maintenance representative. Tyler worked straight through and didn't leave until Tuesday. Joe Patterson really stepped up and took charge. Kelly Smith, Melissa Meade, Tia Williams, Adrienne Bilek and everyone really pulled together. Teamwork at its best.

Lou Schmitt brief on budget – involved extensively over the years – reassured the group that PA will get a budget, have to pass, but when and what cant say at this point. State budget is passed like any other law. Senate can amend and this year was amended bill and sent back to house. Was hopeful when was sent home that budget would be worked on – yesterday Allegheny county resigned. Left us with 101 Democrats and 101 Republicans. In order to implement budget, have to pass code bills, say where money is spent, etc. Probably nothing until September. Ray – If budget hasn't passed within in a certain period of time, does state allocate funds? Lou – There will be a point where state agencies run out of money. Have been funded on emergency basis in past. First people to make noise is usually human services, then law enforcement then state employees. Doesn't anticipate dragging into next year. Reminded the group that everyone in this budget process is new to positions. A little learning curve/negotiation.

Wagner – finance chairman for DAV – two grants – grants come from DMVA – unsure what can be given until budgets passed. Lou said school districts don't know what theyre getting either. Everybody is in limbo waiting for state budget to happen.

**Announcements/ Good or the Council:**

N/A

**Adjournment**

Duffy reminded everyone the next Advisory Council Meeting will be on Thursday, October 19, 2023, at 1000hrs.

A motion to adjourn was made by Tim Susengill and seconded by Mick Hoover

Meeting was adjourned at 1200hrs.

  
R. Raymond Lenz, Secretary