Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission
Meeting Agenda

10 September 2021 at 1000 AM                                Location: Arrowheads Community Club

1000 Call to Order                                        Chairman Samuel Petrovich

Moment of Silence                                        Vice-Chairman Nicholas Taylor

Pledge of Allegiance                                     Chairman Samuel Petrovich

Introduction of Commission Members                      Chairman Samuel Petrovich

Oath of Office                                           MG Mark Schindler

  • Mr. Michael Murphy-TAL, Mr. Bernard McDonald (AMVETS)
  • Mr. Gerald Hawk (AMVETS), Mr. William Hines (DAV)
  • Mr. David Brady (MCL), Mr. Nathaniel Smith (VFW)

Chairman’s Opening Remarks                               Chairman Samuel Petrovich

TAG’s Opening Remarks and Comments                       MG Mark Schindler

Approval of 04 June Meeting Minutes                      Requires Vote

Reading of Official and Other Communications             Chairman Samuel Petrovich

DAG-VA Opening Remarks and Report                        BG (PA) Maureen Weigl

  • Programs Report                                      Requires Vote
  • Memorial

Act 66 Committee Report                                  Mr. Richard Hudzinski

RETX Committee Report                                     Mr. Justin Slep

Legislative Committee Report                             Mr. Charles Jackson

Pensions/Relief/Grave Markings Committee Report          Ms. Constance Snavely

MAL Committee Report                                     Chairman Samuel Petrovich

Unfinished Business

New Business

  • VISN 4                                              Mr. Timothy Liezart

Good of the Order                                        Chairman Samuel Petrovich

Agenda Items for Next Meeting                            Chairman Samuel Petrovich

Closing Remarks                                          Chairman Samuel Petrovich

Next Meeting

October 8, 2021 at 10AM                                  Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville

Adjournment                                              Chairman Samuel Petrovich

Retiring of the Colors                                   Chairman Samuel Petrovich
STATE VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING

September 10, 2021
DMVA MILITARY UPDATE
# CURRENT AND FUTURE UNIT MOBILIZATIONS

As of 25AUG21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Commonwealth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Unit</th>
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<th>Notes</th>
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<td>JUL</td>
<td>EDI</td>
<td>78 PAX</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUG</td>
<td>CAV</td>
<td>205 PAX</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEP</td>
<td>3 RSG</td>
<td>84 PAX</td>
<td>Offramped, Unit will not mobilize</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCT</td>
<td>CAV</td>
<td>205 PAX</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOV</td>
<td>1069</td>
<td>111 PAX</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
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<td>JUN</td>
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<td>AUG</td>
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<td>SEP</td>
<td>1-109</td>
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<td>OCT</td>
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<td>208 PAX</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOV</td>
<td>192</td>
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**Total PANG Mobilized:**

- ANG Unit Airmen Mob: 113
- ARNG Unit Soldiers in Theater: 282
- ARNG Individual Mob: 15
- Total ANG Mob: 128
- Total ARNG Mob: 284

As of 25AUG21
# CURRENT AND FUTURE UNIT MOBILIZATIONS

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Current ANG Unit Airmen Mob: 130  
Current ANG Individual Mob: 11  
Total: ANG Mob: 141  

As of 1SEP21
## PAARNG Current Deployments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDATE</th>
<th>MSAD</th>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>OPN</th>
<th>PAX</th>
<th>MISSION</th>
<th>Projected Return Date</th>
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<td>18 FEB 21</td>
<td>21 FEB 21</td>
<td>108 ASMC</td>
<td>EDI 20-22</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>T10, 12304B</td>
<td>18 DEC 21</td>
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<td>13 JUN 21</td>
<td>15 JUN 21</td>
<td>1-104 CAV</td>
<td>MFO-21-23</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>T10, 12304B</td>
<td>22 APR 22</td>
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### ARNG Soldiers at MOB/DEMOB Sites
- Various Missions
- Various based on tour

### Various Individual MOB Soldiers
- 2
- Various Missions
- Various based on tour

Total PAARNG Deployed: 284

## PAANG Current Deployments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Opn</th>
<th>Pax</th>
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<tr>
<td>193 SOW</td>
<td>OFS-OIR-OSS, OAR</td>
<td>7/17</td>
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<tr>
<td>111 ATKW</td>
<td>IPR (HS), OFS-OIR-OSS, OAR</td>
<td>36/29/15</td>
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<tr>
<td>171 ARW</td>
<td>Alert Status (HS)</td>
<td>37</td>
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Total PAANG Deployed: 141

As of 04AUG21
# VISN 4 Access – Fiscal Year 2021 Wait Times

**September 2021 Update**

Data updated 8/17/2021 with appointment info as of 8/15/2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinics FY21 thru Aug. 15</th>
<th>Number of Appointments</th>
<th>Wait &lt;30 Days</th>
<th>% Wait &lt;30 Days</th>
<th>Average Wait</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>208,006</td>
<td>202,757</td>
<td>97.8%</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Care</td>
<td>545,642</td>
<td>531,241</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialty Care</td>
<td>671,298</td>
<td>606,587</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
<td>11.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>2,091,848</td>
<td>1,973,420</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
<td>6.9</td>
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> community > commonwealth > country
## VISN 4 Access – Current Average Wait Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISN 4 Facility</th>
<th>Primary Care</th>
<th>Mental Health Care</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Patients</td>
<td>Returning Patients</td>
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<tr>
<td>James E. Van Zandt VAMC</td>
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<td>Abie Abraham HCC</td>
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<td>Coatesville VAMC</td>
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<td>Erie VAMC</td>
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<td>Lebanon VAMC</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System</td>
<td>20 (Hz) 15 (UD)</td>
<td>11 (Hz) 10 (UD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkes-Barre VAMC</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilmington VAMC</td>
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<td>9</td>
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Data updated 8/17/2021 with wait times as of 8/9/21 for last 30 days.
## Care in the Community Consults (Scheduled and Completed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Consults</th>
<th>Non-VA Unique Patients*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 17</td>
<td>74,568</td>
<td>58,699</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 18</td>
<td>87,706</td>
<td>62,427</td>
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<td>FY 19</td>
<td>101,068</td>
<td>70,376</td>
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<td>FY 20</td>
<td>153,509</td>
<td>87,042</td>
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<td>FY 21 (as of 8/15/21)</td>
<td>138,733</td>
<td>81,289</td>
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</table>

*Number of unique enrolled Veterans who receive community care at VA expense

Data updated 8/17/2021 with consult info as of 8/15/21.
Policy, Planning, Legislative Affairs
Legislation of Interest.

- SB 96 (Robinson) PN 75) Amends Title 75 (Vehicles), in registration of vehicles, increasing optional contributions to the Veterans' Trust Fund during driver's license issue and renewal from $3 to $5, vehicle registration, increases VTF contribution from $6 to $10. Comp: HB 556 (O'Mara) Identical, Governor Signed Act 55.

- SB 550 (Robinson) Comp: HB 202 (O'Neal) Identical; HB 233 (Warren) Identical.- Amends Second Class County Code, in special powers and duties of the county, further providing for flags to decorate graves. Final Passage House 6/23/2021. Awaiting First Consideration. Received by House VAEP.

- HB 995 (Kaufer) - Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Department of Military Affairs, establishing the Veterans' Outreach and Support Network Program. Provides for a program that will improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and the families of veterans through community engagement and consistent network communication, and organize participants to cooperate with network partners to provide for proactive solutions to address the problems faced by veterans. Final Passage in House 6/09/2021. Awaiting First Consideration. Received in Senate VAEP; (Seeking an Amendment in the Senate)

- HB 164 (Staats) Act amending Title 51 (Military Affairs), providing that a licensed funeral director, funeral entity or cemetery company shall, within 96 hours of receipt of the remains of a deceased serviceperson, notify the county director of veterans affairs of a deceased serviceperson having legal residence in the county at the time of death and provide the family of the deceased serviceperson with the contact information for the county director of veterans affairs. Final Passage House 6/09/2021. Received by Senate VAEP.

- HB 1421 (Thomas) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Department of Military Affairs, providing that the department may request the Pennsylvania National Guard for assistance in burials and provides that if a contract is executed the department shall pay an amount not exceeding $250. Final Passage House 6/09/2021. Received by Senate VAEP.

- HB 1057 (Hickernell) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in State Veterans' Commission and Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans' Affairs, further providing for State Veterans' Commission. Final Passage House 6/09/2021. Received by Senate VAEP.

- HB 491 (Boback) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs) establishing Chapter 99 regarding Veterans' Benefit Payment Exclusion. One hundred percent of a veterans' benefit payment may not be included as income for any commonwealth program. Final passage in House 3/24/2021. Received in Senate VAEP.
Legislation of Interest.

- SB 455 (Bartolotta) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in veteran-owned small businesses, The legislation provides for eligibility, issuance and administration of the logotypes and the system for verification. Money may be utilized from the Veterans' Trust Fund to establish the logotypes and a system for verification. Violation of this act is a misdemeanor of the third degree if the individual fraudulently holds the logotype. Further provides the full amount of each fine collected for a violation shall be deposited into the Veterans' Trust Fund. **Awaiting 3rd consideration. Rereferred to Senate Approps.**

- SB 272 (Mastriano) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in fishing licenses, providing free resident fishing licenses for first responders who have a disability incurred in the line of duty that prevents substantial employment and meets certain qualifications. **Awaiting 3rd consideration. Rereferred to Senate Approps.**

- SB 150 (Ward) Comp: HB 477 (Pisciottano) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in veterans' pensions and benefits, further providing for blind veteran's pension and for amputee and paralyzed veteran's pension by increasing the compensation from $150 to $180. **Awaiting 2nd consideration. Rereferred to S Approp.**

- SB 578 (Bartolotta) Joint Resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in taxation and finance, further providing for exemptions and special provisions. **Awaiting Second Consideration. Set on Senate Calendar 6/25/2021.**

- HB 1427 (Boback) Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Veterans' Organizations, providing for grants to veterans' service officer programs and for the transfer of $1 million under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to the department for that purpose. **Awaiting 2nd consideration.**

- HB 1389 (Sainato) - Amends Title 51 (Military Affairs), in Veterans Trust Fund and the transfer of $1 million under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to the department for that purpose. **Awaiting 2nd consideration.**

- HB 1055 (Webster) Amends "An act to authorize the recorder of deeds in the several counties of this Commonwealth to record the discharges of all honorably discharged officers and soldiers," providing that a veteran's records of discharge shall be inaccessible to anyone other than the veteran or an immediate family member or authorized agent for 85 years. **Awaiting 2nd consideration.**
H.R.1448 — PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act. This bill implements a program and a policy related to service dog therapy for veterans. Specifically, the bill requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to implement a five-year pilot program to assess the effectiveness of addressing post-deployment mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder through a method where veterans train service dogs for veterans with disabilities. The bill also authorizes the VA to provide service dogs to veterans with mental illnesses, regardless of whether they have a mobility impairment.


Latest Action: Presented to the President – 08/20/2021

S.894 - Hire Veteran Health Heroes Act of 2021
This bill requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to consult with the Department of Defense to identify members of the Armed Forces in health care occupations who are separating from the Armed Forces. The VA must refer interested members to a recruiter for consideration of open positions in the member's specialty and geography of interest.

Sen. Braun, Mike [R-IN] (Introduced 03/23/2021) Cosponsors: (1)

Latest Action: Passed the Senate – 07/21/2021

S.189 - Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2021 This bill provides that whenever there is a cost-of-living increase in benefits for Social Security recipients, the Department of Veterans Affairs shall increase by the same percentage the amounts payable for veterans' disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children.

Sen. Thune, John [R-SD] (Introduced 02/03/2021) Cosponsors: (9)

Latest Action: Passed the Senate – 07/21/2021

S.89 - Ensuring Survivor Benefits during COVID-19 Act of 2021 This bill requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to obtain a medical opinion that determines whether a service-connected disability was the principal or contributory cause of death for a veteran who died from COVID-19.


Latest Action: Passed the Senate – 07/21/2021
**Federal Legislation**

**S.1031** This bill requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study to assess whether there are disparities associated with race and ethnicity with respect to (1) compensation benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), (2) disability ratings determined by the VA, and (3) the rejection of fully developed claims for VA benefits. The GAO must also develop recommendations to facilitate better data collection on such disparities associated with race and ethnicity. Within one year, the GAO must brief Congress on the initial results of the study. The GAO must also submit a final report on the study following the briefing.

Latest Action: **Passed the Senate – 08/06/2021**

**S.1095** - Colonel John M. McHugh Tuition Fairness for Survivors Act of 2021 to provide for the disapproval by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of courses of education offered by public institutions of higher learning that do not charge veterans the in-State tuition rate for purposes of Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program.

Latest Action: **Passed the Senate – 06/24/2021**

**H.R.2494** This bill establishes the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration to administer economic opportunity assistance programs for veterans and their dependents and survivors. Specifically, the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration must administer the following Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs: vocational rehabilitation and employment programs, educational assistance programs, veterans' housing loan and related programs, the Transition Assistance Program, and the database of small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans. Prior to the transfer of administrative responsibilities, the bill requires the VA to certify that (1) the transition of the provision of services will not negatively affect the provision of such services to veterans, and (2) such services are ready to be transferred.

Latest Action: **Passed the House – 05/18/2021**
Each DMVA Pennsylvania Veterans’ Home is currently licensed by the PA Department of Health, PA Department of Human Services and certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. HVH, PSSH and SEVC have a Personal Care program.

_Last updated: 08-13-21_
### Resident COVID-19 Update

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<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Data Date</th>
<th># of Residents with S/S of COVID-19</th>
<th># of Residents Currently Positive in Facility</th>
<th># of Residents Waiting Test Results</th>
<th># of Residents in Hospital for COVID-19 Reasons</th>
<th># of Total Residents Tested</th>
<th>General Resident Population Testing, Enter round # and S-Started C-Complete</th>
<th># of Residents Positive for COVID-19 Cumulative</th>
<th># of Residents Recovered</th>
<th># of Residents That Expired with a Positive COVID-19 Status</th>
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<td><strong>558</strong></td>
<td><strong>399</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**As of 25 Aug 21**
## Staff COVID-19 Update

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Data Date</th>
<th>01</th>
<th>02</th>
<th>03</th>
<th>04</th>
<th>06</th>
<th>07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td></td>
<td># of Staff Currently Out for COVID-19 Reasons</td>
<td># of Staff Currently Positive</td>
<td># of Staff Waiting Test Results</td>
<td># of Total Staff Tested</td>
<td># of Staff Tested Positive for COVID-19 Cumulative</td>
<td># of Staff Returned to Work Cumulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVVH</td>
<td>8/25/2021</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>8430</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMVC</td>
<td>8/25/2021</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14425</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HVH</td>
<td>8/25/2021</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25045</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>1197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSSH</td>
<td>8/25/2021</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9521</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>283</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEVC</td>
<td>8/25/2021</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14730</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWVC</td>
<td>8/25/2021</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>15823</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>87974</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>2486</td>
</tr>
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As of 25 Aug 21
## Vaccinations - Residents/Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Fully Vaccinated</th>
<th>% Fully Vaccinated</th>
<th>Partially Vaccinated</th>
<th>Not Vaccinated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DVVH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GMVC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HVH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSSH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SEVC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SWVC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pennsylvania Veterans Homes COVID-19 Update

Reopening plans for the Personal Care Homes are posted on the DMVA web site and are updated weekly as conditions and plans change due to the current COVID-19 status in each Veterans Home.

Go to: https://www.dmva.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx
• Click on Veterans Homes top right
• Click on Veterans Homes COVID-19 Updates tab
• The following items are located on this page
  • FAQ’s
  • Status report link for DOH statistics
  • Admissions information
  • Contact information
  • Reopening plans BVH /PVH’s
Pennsylvania Veterans Homes COVID-19 Update

COVID-19 links for information related to the Veterans Homes and skilled nursing facilities.

- [https://www.dmva.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.dmva.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx)
- [https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/LTCF-Data.aspx](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/LTCF-Data.aspx)
- [https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx)
- [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19MpLoPxayE1MDwQJJYCZxISN64V4FJSJPGzfVBb5Mw/edit#gid=1511961664](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19MpLoPxayE1MDwQJJYCZxISN64V4FJSJPGzfVBb5Mw/edit#gid=1511961664)
• **BVH/PIRO Collaboration** - Our accredited Veteran Services Officers with the Office of Veterans Affairs (BVH & PIRO) worked together to find increases in benefits. This is a routine process in providing ongoing case management for our Veterans and families within the Pennsylvania Veterans Homes.

• **Title 43 Regulatory Update Project** – We are conducting a regulatory review of the application and adjudication procedures for our state veterans’ benefits programs codified in 43 Pa. Code. The review follows a detailed process governed by the Regulatory Review Act and overseen by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission. We have included stakeholders from across the PA military and veterans’ community in our working group, including representatives of the State Veterans Commission and several veterans service organizations, the PA State Association of County Directors of Veterans Affairs, the PA National Guard, and cross-programmatic support from the DMVA staff, as well as DHS legal staff. The review is expected to continue through 2022, and a regular five-year review process will be established.

• **Veterans Centric Fairweather Lodges** - The Fairweather Lodge Program helps people reintegrate themselves into the community. The goal is to provide emotional support, a place to live, and employment for its’ members. The program was developed by Dr. George Fairweather in California in 1963 as a result of extensive experimental research. DMVA provides referrals and support, as well as system linkages and knowledge of the veteran culture. There currently two veteran-centric lodges in Pennsylvania (Venango & Lawrence Counties). There are a total of 43 Lodges operating in 21 Counties.

• **Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign** - Cross-system cooperative effort to raise awareness among mainstream human service and healthcare providers about the issue of veteran pension poaching and the importance of referring Veterans and their families to an accredited VSO. 31 state agencies and non-profit organizations amplified our messaging (English/Spanish) during the campaign.

• **Stakeholder Engagement** - We realize that there is no way we can successfully serve veterans without the cooperation of our government partners and community partners, especially those who are on the ground level and work every day to improve the lives of veterans. We are taking a positive and collaborative approach in all we do. As veteran advocates we are holistically connecting Pennsylvania’s service members, veterans, and their families to local, state, and federal benefits, programs, and recognition they have earned.
• Presentation of PA VETConnect as a Best Practice at the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs Conference (September 2021)

• Through PA VET Connect DMVA partnered with the Department of Aging (PDA) on successful webinars geared toward educating veteran advocates on how to identify and properly report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of older veterans.

• Monthly regional collaboration calls with County Veterans Affairs.

• The Regional Program Outreach Coordinators (RPOCs) have completed the following the past SFY 2020-21, as of 6/30/2021:
  • Develop and maintain relationships with federal, state, and county government partners; on average of 272 connections a month.
  • Continue to facilitate collaborative engagements with non-profit organizations and community leaders on an average of 86 connections a month.
  • Through collaboration with veterans’ advocates, PA VETConnect reached over 270,000 veterans and their family members. We build relationships that amplify service to the veteran community.
  • Our current focus is serving veterans advocates who are directly engaging with veterans to meet the immediate need. Through these efforts we have served 1,145 of veterans and/or families by providing direct services and following up with advocates as required.

• The RPOC in Central PA was contacted by the VFW Post 477 Commander seeking resources to help veterans who need assistance to cope with the recent events in Afghanistan following the U.S. military withdrawal. The RPOC provided several resources that day including the Harrisburg Vet Center. The Post Commander connected with the Vet Center and will be continuing conversations with them (as well as a nearby VFW Post Commander) to develop a longer-term strategy/plan for engaging with the VFW and community veterans, especially those impacted by these recent developments. VFW Post 477 Commander Olson looks forward to continuing to effectively work with PA VETConnect to “better the lives of our Pennsylvania Veterans.”

• The RPOC in Northwestern PA was contacted by the Clearfield County Veteran Affairs Director and asked if knew of any non-profit or an organization that could help a small local VFW find funding for a new flagpole. On a call with the RPOC from Region 5, she mentioned a conversation she was having with a statewide organization that does small funding to local organizations in need. I told her of the situation at the VFW in Clearfield, and asked for the contact, which she provided. Making that connection indeed paid off. The organization was able to fund the flagpole along with a new American Flag and Prisoner of War flag for the VFW. The VFW members were thankful to have advocates on their side to find such resources for their situation. A dedication ceremony is planned for a date in September.

• The RPOC in Southwestern PA is currently collaborating with the VA in establishing a TWV (Together with Veterans) Program in both Greene and Cambria County. These two counties will be the second and third counties in the Commonwealth with TWV Programs funded by the VA Office of Rural Health to reduce and ultimately end rural veteran suicide. TWV partnerships develop a unique suicide prevention action plan based on specific community strengths and addressing community needs. The Region 2 RPOC has become an integral part of the TWV Steering Committee in both counties. In addition, she is assisting Washington County in establishing a Suicide Prevention Task Force.
DMVA continues to collaborate to ensure that veteran suicide remains a high priority within the commonwealth.

- Pennsylvania is engaged at the national level with VA/SAMHSA and the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide among service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF) led by Mr. Rick Hamp, Special Assistant to the Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs.

- Working with the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) we were able to capture $2M in State Opioid Response (SOR) Grant funds. These funds are being distributed in the form of sub-grants to community partners who to address the co-occurring conditions that complicate and often lead to suicide. These SOR funds will benefit SMVF in all 67 counties.

- We are collaborating with the UPMC Program, Evaluation and Research Unit (PERU) to implement the Northwest Suicide Prevention Program. The region consists of 15 counties in Region 1 ($3.7M grant over a 5-year performance period).

- Together with Veterans Northeastern Pennsylvania (TWV NEPA) - In region 4, DMVA is working alongside local and regional behavioral health professionals, veteran advocates, local government as well as VA staff on developing a grass-roots rural public health initiative to address veteran suicide prevention in communities in Carbon County and the NE PA region, which faces some of the highest rates for veterans’ suicide within the Commonwealth.
  - The TWV initiative was developed through the U.S. Department Veteran Affairs, VHA Office of Rural Health. This initiative brings three years of seed funding through the VA to develop a robust veteran-focused suicide prevention outreach program. Each of these initiatives will provide us with valuable information and best practices that we will be able to export throughout the commonwealth and share nationally.
## FY 20 - 21
### Claims, Compensation and Pension Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year to Date Claims Submitted</th>
<th>Year to Date Value of Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12,593</td>
<td>$265,877,290.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year to Date Claims Submitted</th>
<th>Year to Date Value of Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous Year 19 - 20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21,315</td>
<td>$260,064,407.00</td>
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</table>

## FY 19 - 20
### Claims, Compensation and Pension Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year to Date Claims Submitted</th>
<th>Year to Date Value of Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21,315</td>
<td>$260,064,407.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year to Date Claims Submitted</th>
<th>Year to Date Value of Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous Year 18 - 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,494</td>
<td>$344,517,683.00</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: Organization specific reporting under the VSO Grant Program website page found on the DMVA website or by clicking here.
## VSO Grant Program —13 Year ROI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Number of Processed Claims</th>
<th>DMVA Grant Expenditures</th>
<th>Federal Award Totals</th>
<th>ROI (for $1: ROI) Or Express as %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 08-09</td>
<td>9,782</td>
<td>$1,612,698</td>
<td>$207,152,605</td>
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</tr>
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<td>FY 09-10</td>
<td>22,133</td>
<td>$1,600,156</td>
<td>$351,575,352</td>
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<td>FY 10-11</td>
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<td>FY 11-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>$28,909,753</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**ROI is $1/$85 over the life of the program**

- FY 07-08 was a partial year of data and is not included in this return-on-investment projection.
- The 5 organizations involved in this program employ an average of 55 employees.
# Outreach Monthly Overview

## Outreach Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1st Qtr</th>
<th>2nd Qtr</th>
<th>3rd Qtr</th>
<th>4th Qtr</th>
<th>Year to Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outreach Events Supported</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Mobile Outreach Van Events</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veteran Interactions</td>
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<td>134</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claim referrals to County Directors and Service Organizations</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Claim referrals to other state, county and local organizations assisting Veterans</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Health Care Enrollment Referrals</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Veterans Registry Cards distributed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Veterans Registered</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Veterans paper form</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Veterans who opted out of the Veterans Registry</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As of 31 July 2021
# VETERANS’ TRUST FUND

## VTF Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Month to Date</th>
<th>Fiscal Year Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th># HOV Sold</th>
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<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$1,700,000.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOV License Plate</td>
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<td>$165.00</td>
<td>$165.00</td>
<td>11 $51,645.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Monuments LP</td>
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<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>0 $0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOV Motorcycle License Plate</td>
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<td>-$15.00</td>
<td>-1 $3,255.00</td>
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<td>HOV Women's License Plate</td>
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<td>$0.00</td>
<td>0 $1,035.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Checkoff &amp; Donations</td>
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<td>$89,528.00</td>
<td>$89,528.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterans Trust Fund Online Donations</td>
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<td>SECA Donations</td>
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<td>$0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
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<td>$97.48</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSO</td>
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<td>$97.48</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PENNDOT Costs (SFY 16-17)</td>
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<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$194,000.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PENNDOT Costs (SFY 15-16)</td>
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<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$194,000.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PENNDOT Costs (SFY 14-15)</td>
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<td>$0.00</td>
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<td>$194,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>PENNDOT Costs (SFY 13-14)</td>
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<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$194,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 20-21)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VTF Grant NOFA (SFY 19-20)</td>
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As of 28 July 2021

> community > commonwealth > country
As of 05 Aug 2021

**AMPUTEE & PARALYZED VETERANS’ PENSION**

$3,878,000

- Expended $304,800
- Projected $3,573,200
- Lapsed $0

At 1/12 through SFY21, 7.85% of this budget was expended.

2,077 Veterans currently on pension
As of 05 Aug 2021

BLIND VETERANS’ PENSION

$222,000

- Expended $15,000
- Projected $207,000
- Lapsed $0

At 1/12 through SFY21, 6.75% of this budget was expended.

100 Veterans currently on pension
As of 05 Aug 2021

$135,000

- Expended $500
- Projected $134,500
- Lapsed $0

At 1/12 through SFY21, .037% of this budget was expended.

001 Claims approved FYTD

As of 05 Aug 2021 > community > commonwealth > country
As of 05 Aug 2021

VETERANS TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE

$900,000

Expended $39,523
Projected $860,477
Lapsed $0

At 1/12 through SFY21, 4.40% of this budget was expended.

27 Claims approved FYTD
OVERALL MFRAP CONTRIBUTIONS AND PAYMENTS: FY 2005 – FY 2021

Total Private Contributions: $130,822.69
Total Department of Revenue, PIT Contributions: $1,810,882.63
Total All Contributions, Private and PIT: $1,950,705.32
Total Approved Grant Payments: $904,921.86

Approved Grant Payments FYTD 2021: $3,000.00

Account Balance: $1,045,783.46

As of 05 Aug 2021
DISABLED VETERANS’ REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION

1,826 Total Adjudications
May 14 and August 24, 2021

- 1322 Approved (72.4%)
- 132 Denied: Financial Need
- 91 Denied: Ineligible*
- 84 No Response (COVID Waiver)
- 197 Removed (Eligibility Change)

* 91 Applications Ineligible by Reason:
   - 12 – Veteran not rated total and permanent 100% during lifetime
   - 12 – Property not owned solely by Veteran or as an estate by the entirety with spouse
   - 32 – Veteran did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict
   - 4 – Veteran not declared to have a total or 100% permanent disability
   - 27 – Veteran did not have a 100% permanent disability due to a future exam.
   - 1 – Veteran not a resident of Commonwealth
   - 7 – No response for requested information
   - 1 – Disability not service connected

(461 claimants currently on emergency waiver of 5-year review)

As of 24 Aug 2021

> community > commonwealth > country
As of 24 Aug 2021

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<th>Year</th>
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> community > commonwealth > country
Friday October 8, 2021
at 10:00AM
Arrowheads Community Club
Fort Indiantown Gap
Annville, PA

*Visit www.svc.pa.gov for all SVC info.*
State Veterans Commission
Meeting Minutes

June 4, 2021
10:00 AM to 11:35 AM
WebEx Video Teleconference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call to Order</th>
<th>Chairman Samuel Petrovich</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM by Chairman Samuel Petrovich.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vice Chairman Taylor opened the meeting with a moment of reflection, silence, and respect in honor of all Veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of a grateful Nation. Chairman Petrovich led a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission Introductions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MG Mark Schindler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Maureen Weigl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Samuel Petrovich</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Nicholas Taylor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Robert Forbes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. John Pliska</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. John Getz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Leonard Johnson</td>
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<td>Mr. William Albert</td>
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<td>Mr. Justin Slep</td>
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<td>Mr. Keith Beebe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Larry Googins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Christopher Fidler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Philip Arnold</td>
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<td>Mr. James Hogan</td>
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<td>Mr. Robert John</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Constance Snavely</td>
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<td>Mr. John Cyprian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Charles Jackson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Michael Brooker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Tim Liezert</td>
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<th>Others Present</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Marc Ferraro</td>
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<td>State Senator Pat Stefano</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Nate Silcox</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Richard Hamp</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Joel Mutschler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Brian Natali</td>
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Approval of the April 2, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Mr. John, TAL, made a motion to approve the minutes.

Second: Mr. Taylor, Vice Chairman, seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried.

Oath of Office  MG Schindler

General Schindler administered the oath of office to Mr. James Hogan, Adjutant, American Legion, as a new member of the State Veterans Commission.

Military Update  MG Schindler

Good morning, it is great to see everyone who was able to make the meeting virtually.

I wanted to give an overview of recent PA National Guard activity. The top of the slide shows Army mobilizations from last April through this September. We are still quite busy with federal mobilizations. There is a recap at the bottom of the slide, as of May 2021, showing the total Army and Air Guard mobilizations at 1,162, and that is approximate. Some of these folks are actually in the process of coming off mobilization and being deployed in theater.

At the top of this slide you will see the current deployments for the Army, and the one change since this slide was made is with the 28th ECAB (Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade). The 28th ECAB is now back from their federal deployment. Some of the senior leadership was able to get down to Fort Hood and welcome those Soldiers back in person. That was a good thing because when they left, COVID was at its height and they did a lot of pre-mobilization training having to deal with COVID and senior leadership was basically waving goodbye to them on the bus. That was about the most we could do at the time, so it was great to get down to
Fort Hood, where they demobilized from, to have senior leadership there to welcome them back. Otherwise, the rest of the slide is correct.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a recap of Air National Guard mobilizations from May through August of next year. Let me pause here and say that aside from the federal mobilizations we have going on, as I briefed at our last meeting, we are still supporting the state on federal orders for COVID as we have been from the beginning. The National Guard COVID support activities continue, although our activities are dropping. We are down to approximately 270 Soldiers and Airmen on orders. We are still covering some long-term care facility support, vaccination support, and some contact tracing support missions as assigned by PEMA. That number will drop from 270 to about 60 Soldiers and Airmen on orders by June 30.

That is the National Guard update for federal missions and a little about what we are doing with COVID support missions for the federal government. Over the weekend, it was our pleasure to send senior leadership out where we could to various Memorial Day activities, so it is good to be back involved, starting to come out of COVID where we can, and attend to things in person. That is all I have, pending any questions.

Questions/Discussion

None.

VISN 4

Good morning, everyone! This is Tim Liezert, VISN 4 network director.

You have received our slides with updated access, wait time, and care in the community data as a read ahead. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Leadership Updates

Barb Forsha, deputy director of VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System continues to serve as the acting director of the Clarksburg VA. VA Pittsburgh’s associate director for patient care services and chief nurse executive, Dr. Brenda Shaffer, is also serving as Clarksburg VA’s acting associate director for patient care services and chief nurse executive.

We are currently recruiting for a new chief of staff for the Wilmington and Butler VA medical centers. We also began recruitment for an associate director for patient care services at the Coatesville VA.

Homeless Veterans – Program Update

Since the start of the pandemic, VA’s homeless Veterans program received strong national support. President Biden’s American Rescue Plan, passed in March 2021, provides $5 billion to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to help people experiencing homelessness, including Veterans. Of that, an estimated $835 million will go towards HUD-VASH appropriations.

The national homeless program office just released its five-year strategic plan, highlighting six key objectives:

1. Outreach
2. Health care treatment
3. Housing solutions and supportive services
4. Community employment
5. Community partnerships
6. Administrative operations

Underlying all objectives are data analytics and research.

Direct link to the plan was included with your read ahead material: https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/VHA-Strategic-Plan-External-Final-508-v2.pdf
As of fiscal year 2021 (FY21), VISN 4 now has 32 “Grant & per Diem” grants utilizing 809 beds, an increase of 71 from last year.

Every VISN received CARES Act funding for hotel/motel placement and to increase per diem rates due to COVID-19 costs. Additionally, VISN homeless programs received robust assistance to provide smart phones with data for Veterans.

As of FY21, VISN 4 now has 3,250 HUD-VASH Vouchers, an increase of 108 from last year.

The National Defense Authorization Act for 2021 will expand HUD-VASH eligibility to include Veterans who are otherwise ineligible for VA health care services. This will be identical to the eligibility requirements of the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and Grant and Per Diem (GPD) programs, which state that a Veteran must have served at least one day of active duty and not have an other-than-honorable discharge or court martial.

In FY20, VISN 4 permanently housed 1,668 Veterans using one or more VA homeless programs.

**Women Veterans Health – Program Update**

Women Veterans Health is currently receiving a lot of congressional interest, including VA’s Office of Women’s Health Services receiving funding for staffing and equipment. VISNs can submit applications for funding to continue enhancing care for women Veterans. Meanwhile, virtual educational programs for healthcare providers will continue. VA Central Office is also seeking opinions and perspectives from women Veterans. Each facility will host a local focus group for women Veterans before the end of the current fiscal year. Program managers will work with their local public affairs officers to facilitate the focus groups.

In VISN 4, three facilities are currently recruiting new women Veteran program managers; Altoona has selected one who started on May 10 and both Butler and Wilkes-Barre are interviewing candidates.

**New Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS)**

Veterans claiming Beneficiary Travel Mileage benefits will experience faster payment (10 days) if they use the online Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS) versus filing a paper claim (45 days).

The Veterans Transportation Program has issued a six-part YouTube video series that walks Veterans step-by-step through the BTSSS. Please share these links that were included in your read ahead material widely to help us spread the word of this change.

Playlist “Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System”:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3AQ_JVoBEyJt68Eq_mPBdyZfkvq0Wu

Veterans must receive their Beneficiary Travel Mileage benefits from either an Electronic Funds Transfer or Direct Express (no-fee debit card). Veterans are being encouraged to contact their local Beneficiary Travel office for more information.

**COVID-19 Vaccine – Update**

VA resumed offering the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) COVID-19 vaccine to individuals 18 years and older on April 26, in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidance following a 10-day pause recommended by the CDC and FDA after a very small number of people who received the vaccine experienced rare but serious blood clots. After careful review and evaluation, the FDA and CDC have confidence that this vaccine is safe for use and effective in preventing COVID-19. The available data show that the vaccine’s benefits outweigh its risks and the chance of blood clots occurring following its administration is very low. Anyone who is offered the Janssen vaccine from VA will receive information about the potential risks and benefits of the vaccine, including the rare risk of blood clots and will be made aware of alternative vaccine options. The primary goal of COVID-19 vaccination is to protect
those we serve from COVID-19, and VA’s priority remains the safety of all those receiving vaccine from VA, including Veterans, their spouses, caregivers, employees, and federal partners.

**Caregiver Support Update**

VISN 4 continues to do well at processing applications in a thorough and timely manner. The Program of General Caregiver Services is being offered robustly at each facility. We are approaching the time for the Annual Caregiver and Family Resources Fair for families and caregivers and the Caregiver Summit for VA and community partners. There will be a mix of virtual and in-person events based on the guidelines set by each facility.

**Customer Service Update**

Nationally, VA’s trust score over the last 90 days was 90.6. In VISN 4, our trust score over the last 90 days was 92.8, which is the third highest VISN score in the nation. The top 5 compliment themes over the last 90 days were interactions with staff, quality of care, satisfaction with specialty care, ear clinic services, and allergy and immunology services.

**VA Copay Forgiveness**

VA copayments received between April 6, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2021, will be waived, refunded and forgiven under the American Recovery Plan. What this means for Veterans receiving care through VA:

- If you received a patient statement in January 2021 that included copayments for services received on or after April 6, 2020, those charges will be canceled. You should not pay them.
- If you already paid your copayments for services received on or after April 6, 2020, you will receive a refund.
- If you have unpaid copayments for services received prior to April 6, 2020, your payment is not required or expected to be paid until October 2021. VA will not pursue collection action on charges during this time. Any Veterans who prefer to continue making payments on their balances for services prior to April 6, 2020 may do so.

**Connected Care Update**

*Telehealth is more than a ‘chat’*

Using a computer or mobile device, patients can meet with their VA doctor virtually or send important health data from the comfort of their home. It’s much more than a social “chat” and with some preparation, patients can make it a productive appointment. To make sure patients are using everything Telehealth can offer, here is a list of questions for patients to ask the next time they speak with or send a secure message to their VA provider or health care team:

- Start by asking: ‘Can I use Telehealth?’
- Explain your situation and ask which option fits your needs. Based on your location and condition, VA can offer three types of Telehealth.
- To help with long travel or wait times, ask about **Store-and-Forward Telehealth or VA Video Connect**. With Store-and-Forward, you may be able to have sounds, images, and video health data collected at a clinic nearby and then sent to your VA provider. VA Video Connect offers you the flexibility to have appointments from a location of your choice.
- Make sure you understand what technology you’ll need to get started. If you don’t have a device, VA can loan you a device with a data plan.
- Finally, ask what specialties are available by Telehealth at your facility.

A link was included in your read ahead material for to learn more: [https://telehealth.va.gov/type/clinic](https://telehealth.va.gov/type/clinic).
In closing, I’d like to thank you for your continued support of VISN 4. Please let me know if you have any questions for me.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Cyprian, MAL: Of the 3,250 vouchers administered to the VISN 4, is there a breakdown for how many each facility has received?

Mr. Liezert: I am sure there is. We’ll have to provide that to you.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: Has there been any discussion in VA circles about collecting better data in this era of data collection—you have one of the biggest databases in the country—on homeless veterans? The reason I ask is with Point in Time counts. I think we are probably undercounting the problem and where the issues are. Has there been any discussion of better methods of data collection so we can better understand where we are and where we need to go?

Mr. Liezert: It is a continuing dialog and I do not have any specifics. I am sure you are aware of the challenges... that this is a very transient population, on the move a lot, and hard to get ahold of because they do not have phones in many cases. So, there are many measures being taken to solve that problem. The best strategy we have found is working with local communities to share data and enter into data use agreements so we can share data with them and them with us. It continues to be a work in progress.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: As a follow-up, your HOMES database, has it progressed towards automatic input into HMIS rather than the manual systems you had been using up to a couple years ago? I have not kept up.

Mr. Liezert: I do not have an update recently either. Back when I was working closely with this, it was very variable across the geographic regions and reliant upon data exchange agreement between VA and the locality. I can get an update on that.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: Ok, I would appreciate that. That is an excellent database that you have developed.

Mr. Fidler, KPVA: Sir, did I hear you say the Director at VAMC Altoona passed away?

Mr. Liezert: No, it was the Chief of Staff, Dr. Sam McGee.

Governor’s Advisory Committee–Veterans Services, Homeless Committee  Ms. Samantha Cossman

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Samantha Cossman and I am the Chair for the Governor’s Advisory Committee–Veterans Services, Homeless Committee.

The vision and mission for the Homeless Committee is to be the premier forum for seamless communication and collaboration in effectively understanding and responding to Veteran homelessness within Pennsylvania. And, to build collaborative intergovernmental and community-based relationships to identify and promote awareness of the resources that could help veterans experiencing or at risk for housing instability.

Some of the things this committee has been doing over the past several years is working very diligently to develop strong working relationships across all stakeholder systems that are at the table, playing a role in addressing veteran homelessness here in the Commonwealth. So, that is the VISN 4 Homeless Lead; our various homeless care teams serving Pennsylvania families; 12 Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) grantees covering every county; 16 Continuum of Care representatives (14 operate in just one county, the other 53 counties are then split between the balance of the state); various state agencies around the homeless and housing spectrum; and veterans advocates like VSOs (several CDVAs now participate with us). New committee participants are always welcome. We have been working across stakeholder systems to more routinely obtain data that can better paint the picture for veteran homelessness and housing insecurity within PA. Working with Mr. Cress to figure out what reports from HOMES we can get access to; working with the SSVF providers; and, trying to work on more routinely, in a more timely manner, being able to obtain PIT counts from the Continuums of Care versus having to wait until they are uploaded on the HUD exchange.
In terms of the SSVF program, this is an amazing program funded by the VA and operated by non-profits across the Commonwealth. There are 12 grantees currently and in their program year, 01 Oct 2019 to 30 Sep 2020, they served nearly 2,500 veteran households. 58% of those households were enrolled in what is called “Rapid Rehousing.” These are veteran households that were literally homeless. They were spending the night in a place not meant for human habitation or in a shelter. They might have been exiting an institution after 90 days or less and were homeless prior to entering, for example incarceration. Or, they were fleeing or trying to flee domestic violence. 1,430 veteran households were served in that one-year timeframe by SSVF providers. The other 42%, or a little over 1,000 households, were not literally homeless, but were imminently at risk for becoming homeless if not for the intervention of those SSVF programs. They stepped in to provide the needed assistance to retain the permanent housing they already had or to help find better suited housing for their situation. While that number is 2,460 veteran households, that may include more people like spouses and children.

We have two slides of PIT count data for Pennsylvania over the last decade now. Last year in 2020, there was increase in the number of homeless veterans identified during that “Point in Time” or PIT count. Keep in mind, the PIT count is a 24-hour period in January where the Continuums of Care staff and volunteers go out and try to find homeless individuals in emergency shelters, transient housing, or unsheltered status. While identifying those people, they are then identifying veterans. In 2020, we had 977 homeless veterans across the Commonwealth according to the PIT count. 70 were female and the remainder male. [Next slide] This slide goes over sheltered versus unsheltered veterans. 57 unsheltered veterans during the most recent PIT count in 2020. During the 2021 PIT count, there was an interruption because of the COVID situation – some Continuums of Care were not able to do their PIT count as robustly as they would have liked to, and that data is still being put together. It is not entirely available on the HUD exchange yet.

Some other things the committee has been working on: Providing education to stakeholders that participate in our meetings on various programs that can benefit veteran households facing homelessness or housing insecurity. This is pretty much what we have been doing over the last year. We have meetings every month, but every month we do not actually have a spotlight on a particular program. Some highlights would be

- The eviction process and legal assistance
- Case management programs through Single County Authorities and Mental Health Offices
- Education on The Clearinghouse
- DCED’s Neighborhood Assistance Program
- VHA’s Homeless Program Office 5-year strategic plan overview, and
- Upcoming, the USDA Single Family Housing Programs

Additionally, we have worked diligently on trying to write and keep up to date three information papers pertaining to veteran homelessness in PA. [Next slide] We have been working with other GAC-VS committees to discuss how homelessness affects and can be addressed for specific subgroups of veterans. We have a work group set up between the Homelessness and Judiciary Committees looking at how to help veterans who are incarcerated avoid homelessness or housing insecurity upon reentry. We have a work group of members from Homelessness, Women Veterans, and Health Promotions Committees looking at trauma for women veterans and how it can affect housing stability. And we are having discussions with the Aging Committee around ways to help older veterans avoid homelessness and housing insecurity.

The last two slides are about VA’s Project CHALENG. This is an effort that the Homelessness Committee is taking up as one of our main priorities and something we are going to champion from here out. CHALENG is an acronym for “Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups,” and it unites homeless service providers, advocates, veterans and concerned citizens toward the goal of meeting the evolving needs of veterans who are homeless. This process has two components: there is an annual survey, and there are local meetings facilitated by each VAMC. The 2021 survey is currently open online through at least September 30. Who should complete the survey? Basically, anybody who has insight into the needs of homeless veterans. So, this could be veterans who are or who have experienced homelessness, federal, state and
local government entities, or non-profit housing and homelessness stakeholders. Anybody that has a hand in trying to address the needs of homeless veterans. One of the first questions in the survey is what VA catchment area are you responding for? So, if you are operating across different catchment areas, you will want to do a survey for each one so you can help those VAs better understand the unmet needs of the veterans they are serving. These surveys are very important. The VA has used the results to respond to unmet needs, create new partnerships and create or expand programs. For instance, the Homeless Vets Dental Program was created based on results from CHALENG surveys. The expansion of the HUD-VASH and the SSVF and the Veterans Justice Outreach Program all came from feedback. The Homelessness Committee will promote participation in both facets of CHALENG moving forward. We are going to champion it, pushing for robust completion of the survey, and helping the local VAMCs expand and grow their meetings. Some meetings have been held virtually, some in person, but we are going to support them.

Why are we championing this project and pushing completion of the survey? I hope this slide explains, and this is just a snippet. The 2020 Project CHALENG fact sheet was released in April. Keep in mind this provides national insights. When we went back and took the data from the VAMCs operating in PA, and broke down how many veterans responded to the survey, and compared that to the number of veterans in this fact sheet, it came out to ten percent. Ten percent of the veterans who responded to the 2020 survey were within VISN 4. So, it really provides good insight for PA. The two tables below show the top ten unmet needs of male veterans and top ten unmet needs of female veterans. Amazingly, 9 of the top 10 needs are the exact same. Maybe not in the same order, but the same needs. The differences are that males had an unmet need of discharge upgrades and female veterans had an unmet need of credit counseling. Interestingly, 50% of the unmet needs on these charts, 5 of 10, were for some form of legal assistance. So, homeless veterans are lacking legal assistance around a plethora of issues like court fines/fees, debt collection, family law, child support.... This is just a snippet of information we found in the 2020 survey and I am excited to see what we can continue to find in years to come if we can promote more robust participation because we can then glean the insights for PA. We can use that to help figure out what resources we need to uncover, and what groups we need to bring to the table to start collaborating on the unmet needs of homeless veterans.

That is all the information I have for you today, pending any questions.

Questions/Discussion

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: What are your top three action items for the coming year? I gather that improving the CHALENG surveys is one of them?

Ms. Cossman: Right. I am not going to give these in any order: Improving CHALENG participation; obtaining more routine data across stakeholders is something we are always working on; and, finally, trying to make sure all stakeholders understand what each other does and how to properly refer to one another so that no matter what door a veteran walks through, they are ultimately being connected to resources in a seamless fashion.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: Has there been any discussion on affordable housing? That is a big topic in eastern PA.

Ms. Cossman: All of our stakeholders, regardless where they are operating or what system they represent, bring to light that the lack of affordable, safe, and accessible housing across PA is a huge issue. There are programs like HUD-VASH and SSVF and a lot of great non-profits that are able to bring money to the table to house veterans, but when there is nowhere to put a veteran and their family, it simply does not matter how much money or vouchers you have.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: Could you get your committee to delve into that subject of affordable housing? It is related to employment, and you have kind of indicated that with the CHALENG survey. What are the things we can do in a concrete manner and how could we as veterans help in that area? Last question, with regard to the CHALENG surveys themselves, you talk about breaking it down by the VISNs. Have you thought about breaking it down by the PA VETConnect regions?
Ms. Cossman: I have not thought about that, but I can take a look at it. The PA VETConnect regions have significant overlap with the VAMC catchment areas. I am the RPOC for Region 3, and I cover four different VAMCs, technically five. It becomes complicated to say we have these needs for this catchment area.... While the VAMCs can break it down by their catchment areas, they are not breaking it down by the counties in their area. The survey does not go that deep.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: It’s that when you’re trying to coordinate actions, people look at their village essentially.

Mr. Cyprian, MAL: To answer Mr. Hudzinski, if departments would put out a memo for 60% of small games of chance to support some of the non-profits in their local areas, that would be an immense help. There are a lot of good non-profits out there that provide a lot of support to our veterans that the VA cannot provide.

Mr. Petrovich, Chairman: Thank you, Samantha. We look forward to seeing you in the future.

| OLD BUSINESS |
| None. |

| NEW BUSINESS |
Chairman Petrovich explained the new format of briefing by exception. The presenters will not go over all charts. We are looking at revamping the way the Commission is run and what is brought forward. At the September meeting we will have a new agenda and the Commission can vote on keeping or making changes to.

**DMVA Policy, Planning & Legislative Affairs**

Mr. Gilbert Durand

You should have the read-ahead we presented, six slides. There have been some changes since the slides in your read-ahead material, so the slides today are updated.

[Referring to slides] SB 578, which is a constitutional amendment, was added to the first slide. That is the Bartolotta bill. We were tracking that earlier and it is looking like it will move out of Committee. We have reached out to the SVC Legislative and RETX Committees to take a look at that bill and provide us feedback.

There are two bills that have been introduced to increase the Blind and Amputee & Paralyzed Veterans Pension benefits. That is also being discussed as an amendment to increase it even further to $300 and to add in a CPI. We are still waiting to see what those are going to look like.

Some federal legislation that we are tracking.... HR 1276 is now the Expanded Act of 2021. That is the bill that expands some of the COVID-19 services for veterans.

Any questions at all that I can answer regarding policy or legislative affairs. As you know, we are getting ready to move into the budget season, so there are a lot of bills. Last week, Chairwoman Boback released a package of veterans’ bills that we’re working through. If you have any updates for us, we can certainly use those as we start looking at those bills.

Pending any questions, that is all I have.

**Questions/Discussion**

Mr. Cyprian, MAL: In years past, General Carelli and General Weller were working on it, this Commission has talked about issuing some type of declaration or note showing that National Guardsmen who are working from home supporting operations overseas, not on Title 10 or active duty orders, should be eligible for VA benefits. Are we still working on that or have we dropped it?

Mr. Durand: We are working on a legislative amendment to our awards bill that would expand some of the awards that require boots on the ground for our operators. We have cybersecurity folks and pilots at the 111th that are affecting the war fight right here from home. Most of the folks working in that capacity are going to be on Title 10 orders so the benefits piece should not be a big issue, but I’ll look into that a little more as well.
Good morning, this is Ed Beck, Chief Operations Officer in Homes, filling in for Mr. Davis today.

You will see our dates of inspection and licensure status. All the homes are at full licensure. Our COVID-19 update. I will say that we only have one resident with a positive in all six facilities, which means that we are not doing outbreak testing in five of the six facilities. So, our testing numbers are going to start to level off. You can see that we have done 36,000 tests since about April of last year. Same data for staff. You can see that we currently have 19 staff out for COVID-related reasons; 11 are currently positive. [Next slide] And, our vaccination status. What we do not have on there, our residents are at 94.5% vaccinated, staff at 57%. We are running clinics at each of the homes. We have done Gino Merli already. The other five: Hollidaysburg on June 10, Soldiers and Sailors on June 15, on Southwestern on June 17, Southeastern on June 21, and Delaware Valley on June 23. These clinics are for residents, staff and family members, and we are hoping to open it up to the general public too in each location. We are working with the Department of Health and having them provide support through a vaccine contractor at each site. We are hoping that we will be able to both increase our staff vaccination rates and get the general population in those areas vaccinated at the same time. If anyone is interested in seeing our updated COVID-19 status in each home, you can go to our website. And, the last slide has links to other information related to COVID on our sites and the Department of Health.

That concludes my briefing, pending any questions.

Questions/Discussions

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: Is the pop-up in Geno Merli, up to 98% of employees, a result of the clinic you ran?

Mr. Beck, BVH: That is certainly a factor. Some of those providers have gone to other providers to get the vaccine. What we have seen, and we are in the process of surveying staff right now to gauge vaccine attitudes, we have a lot of people who’ve been waiting to see what happened with people who did get vaccinated. Since they see there hasn’t been any complications for residents or staff, I think that convinced them to go out and get vaccinated.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: I was going to ask the question, but I think you have anticipated it. With very high rates for the residents, why wouldn’t the employees want to go out and get the vaccines? You have two homes that have particularly high employee rates for COVID infection, compared to the others. Are you also prioritizing which homes you go to get the vaccination rate up? Because I know two homes may have problems, and I can point them out to you.

Mr. Beck: We are actually not prioritizing; we are going to all the homes. We want to get the rates up at all facilities. If we can get the rates up to 95% at those facilities that already have good rates, we want to do that.

Mr. Jackson, MAL: I just read the federal government is changing rules for employers. If you want to work here, you have to get vaccinated. I think that has been done. Does that apply to you in the state homes? If the federal government does say that, can you tell employees you need to vaccinate or leave?

Mr. Beck: Yes, the simple answer is that it would apply, but it’s more complicated because several different unions have a voice in that. It also comes down to whatever the administration decides to do in regard to mandating. What we know right now is that there is no mandate or nothing saying that we can mandate as long as the vaccines are under an emergency use authorization.

BG Weigl, DAG-VA: We did see that guidance come out, Travis brought it up. Because we belong to the Commonwealth, we took that federal policy and asked the Commonwealth for guidance. How are they going to address the fact that the federal government said employers can mandate? We are waiting for that feedback to come back. We have not received that guidance from OA yet.
Mr. Albert, BVA: Does Ed know when they’re going to have the homes open for tours for new applicants for residency? I know somebody who wants to go visit the home.

Mr. Beck: We are open and are admitting new residents. We have not started tours as of yet. I expect we will be reopening shortly for that. We have been able to do some virtual tours but not on-site tours.

Mr. Albert, BVA: How do you do a virtual tour?

Mr. Beck: They can contact the admissions coordinator at the facility to schedule that. The coordinator will use a computer and camera to show different parts of the facility. They can also ask at that time about the timeline for visits.

**DMVA Bureau of PIRO**

Mr. Joel Mutschler

My report stands as presented, there are no additional updates. I will turn it over to the Chairman, pending any questions.

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<th>Approval of Programs Reports</th>
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<td><strong>Motion:</strong> Mr. Taylor, Vice Chairman, made a motion to approve the programs report.</td>
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<td><strong>Second:</strong> Mr. Getz, VFW, seconded the motion.</td>
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<td>The body agreed; motion carried.</td>
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<th>Questions/Discussion</th>
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<td>Mr. Cyprian, MAL: The report that comes out if a person is renewing an application, I have in my hand a current one. Can we get the amount of annual income changed to reflect the current threshold? The current letter has $92,594 and it should be $95,279. I’m not sure if other counties are having problems with that.</td>
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<td>Mr. Mutschler: Yes sir, we definitely will get that fixed. Thank you for bringing that to our attention.</td>
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**SVC Act 66 Committee**

Mr. Rich Hudzinski

The Committee met on 4 May with DMVA to cover a broad swath of topics. This was meeting number four. We covered the timelines for awards, payment schedules, grant guidance, award criteria, invitations for bid, purposes of the program, and started a discussion on the relationship to PA VETConnect. We’ll have a follow-up meeting next week on 9 June. We’re hoping to get some answers and solutions to issues that have been discussed.

I should also announce that the Military Order of Purple Heart (MOPH) is no longer providing claim services in the state. They are in the process of transferring their POAs to other organizations. That is all I have to report.

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<td>Mr. Cyprian, MAL: I still hold MOPH accreditation. So, anybody that needs assistance with those claims, I can still assist.</td>
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**SVC RETX Committee**

Mr. Justin Slep

I did send my report for the read-ahead. Unfortunately, we could not meet in May due to several scheduling conflicts. The one update I received was involving SB 578. It is currently at the Senate VAEP. They’re holding a meeting on that bill next Tuesday, 8 June. They do keep wartime service as a requirement, and it is a prorated bill where 100% would receive 100% relief. The low end of that cap would be a 50% rating. Anything below that, from the memo, would not be eligible. And, they keep VA compensation in there. That is not in...
accordance with some of the recommendations this Committee forwarded to the Legislative Committee, and some of the amendments we were looking for. I have not had a chance to speak to the Committee about this.

Questions/Discussion

None.

SVC Legislative Committee  
Mr. Charles Jackson

Thank you, Justin, for the comment on SB 578. I know the PWVC is working this issue also. We should be working to get the SVC’s comments to the Senate VAEP. We are continuing to work a revision to Title 51, Chapter 17 outlining more clearly the roles and responsibilities of the SVC as compared to TAG. That is still in play. There are actually other bills that would change the role of the OVA to DMVA. We have not looked at that in any detail yet, nor have we been asked to look at that. All in all, I have nothing more to report.

Questions/Discussions

Mr. Petrovich, Chairman: There were meetings with folks from DMVA and we came to a consensus on the drafting of those changes and came to an agreement as to how those changes should look. As you said, there may be some other active legislation that can make a change to that change. So, we have to keep on top of what’s going on in Harrisburg.

SVC Pensions, Relief/Grave Marking/State Military Cemetery Committee  
Ms. Constance Snavely

Several of our members continue to participate on the DMVA’s Working Groups (WG) for Burial Details and Blind-Paralyzed Pensions. One goal is to update or create guidance in regulations for the programs.

The Pension WG is following the status of the current proposed bills increasing the monthly pension. Once approved, our committee intends to recommend a bill be submitted including a cost of living adjustment to the pension. We did not want to slow down the process by including that to the current bills. I found that there is a federal bill, S. 189, the Veterans Disability Compensation Automatic COLA Act of 2021. That bill proposes that whenever there is a cost of living increase in benefits for social security recipients, the VA shall increase by the same percentage, the amounts payable for veterans’ disability compensation. I propose that PA should consider looking at the same type bill to provide a COLA for their pension programs.

The Burial WG is following a bill to increase the daily stipend from $150 to $250. The stipend program was signed into law 20 years ago with no increase in rate since approval. The WG is looking at the contract awarding the grant money to determine if it should better define the uses. Additionally, the WG is discussing if definitions should be added to regulatory guidance.

I will follow the status of the various regulations as they are updated to ensure they include the additional approved flag holders we put into effect several months ago. We also approved having the DMVA post the approved flag holders on their website.

Questions/Discussions

None.

Member-at-Large Committee  
Mr. Sam Petrovich

Hopefully you have all seen the advertisements have gone out. [Greg has that number changed. Greg: We’re up to six now.] What I would like to ask all of you: Look into your organizations. I know there are people out there that have experience and educations in employment, homelessness, drug rehabilitation, suicide prevention.... all the areas that vital to what we do on this commission. Send out the advertisements to your members and guide them to apply for a position on the Commission. Right now, we have six applicants for three positions. Last time we had almost 30. So, let’s get out there and beat the bushes.
Questions/Discussion

Mr. Jackson, MAL: One thing all the organizations should know is that we have a requirement for a female veteran too. We really have to get the word out.

Good of The Order/Announcements

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: Could we get a Veterans’ Preference and hiring report out of the Office of Administration? We’re the 2-3rd largest business in the Commonwealth, state government, and we haven’t seen a report since the reorganization and that was a few years ago.

Mr. Petrovich, Chairman: We were promised a statistical report on that. The Office of Administration promised that report.

Mr. Mutschler, PIRO: I was talking to OA earlier this week. There is a report that will be coming out after the end of the fiscal year. We need to close out the fiscal year, but by the next meeting I think we can meet that intent.

Mr. Hudzinski, VVA: To follow on, are we going to get an employment briefing in September? I think that’s a key area the Commission needs to get involved in.

Mr. Petrovich, Chairman: I’ll work with DMVA and we will line up the GAC-VS committees to make sure who’s available. We’ll shoot for Employment.

Mr. Johnson, DAV: I just wanted to thank everyone. This will be my last meeting and my successor is very qualified. I appreciate everyone. This is a group of hard-working people and I am in awe of all the work you do.

Mr. Slep, PSACDVA: To add more to the MOPH. I did speak yesterday to the National Advocacy Officer Kristen Beck. She informed me that their applications for VSO assistance has closed in the state of PA. They have closed their offices and left the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh ROs. The only thing I couldn’t get an answer on is if any VSOs that hold current accreditation with them will be impacted? She hasn’t gotten back to me.

Mr. Petrovich, Chairman: When you get an answer, can you pass that on to the Act 66 Chair?

Mr. Jackson, MAL: Normally we see representation from the Senate, Nate Silcox. Would you call the Exec Director from the House, Rick O’Leary, and invite him to participate in our meetings?

Mr. Petrovich, Chairman: I will. I know Senator Pat Stefano, the Majority Chair for the Senate VAEP, was on earlier. I think he had to sign off. Nate was also on; I think he had to sign off also. As you stated, we see Nate both here and at the PWVC. We’ll pass that on to the House side.

Next Meeting

September 10, 2021
Forum: Arrowheads Community Center, FIG

Adjournment

Chairman Petrovich gave thanks to all whose terms will be expiring before the next meeting, retired the colors, and adjourned the meeting at 11:35 p.m.

The minutes of this meeting are respectfully submitted by:

BG Maureen Weigl
Deputy Adjutant General
Veterans Affairs
VISN 4 Update

Good morning, everyone! This is Tim Liezert, VISN 4 network director.

You have received our slides with updated access, wait time, and care in the community data as a read ahead. Please let me know if you have any questions.

1. Leadership Update
Don Koenig, VA Pittsburgh Director has been detailed to temporarily serve VHA in the Central Office as a Special Advisor to the USH for Integrated Veterans Care. He was asked to lead the Integrated Veterans Care transformation implementation, clarifying roles and responsibilities for accessing care coordination, and providing enterprise coordination across direct and community care access functions.

Kevin Amick, the Butler Director has been detailed to Pittsburgh to serve as their Medical Center Director. Sharon Coyle, Nurse Executive at Butler is serving as their Director.

Wilmington hired Dr. Pamela LeDeaux as their Chief of Staff. She started on July 19th.

Barb Forsha, deputy director of the VA Pittsburgh continues to serve as the acting director of the Clarksburg VA.

We continue to recruit for a new chief of staff for the Butler and Altoona VA’s.

2. National Veterans Wheelchair Games
With the Paralyzed Veterans of America, VA recently co-hosted the 40th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in New York City, August 7-14. This event is the world’s largest annual wheelchair sports event solely for U.S. military veterans with spinal cord injuries, amputations, multiple sclerosis, or other central neurological conditions who require a wheelchair for athletic competition. The event demonstrates the unstoppable character of veterans and seeks to foster wider respect for all people with disabilities. In an effort to ensure a safe and COVID-19 free environment, athletes, coaches and attendees were COVID-19 tested daily and monitored closely throughout their stay.

3. Patient Experience Innovation Award
Congratulations to the VISN 4 facilities who received awards during the recent VA Patient Experience Symposium:
Erie VAMC won the Patient Experience Innovation Award for their “Care Closer to Home” project! This award was decided by a panel of VA patient experience professionals, as well as by the votes of thousands of VA employees. James E. Van Zandt Altoona VAMC won the award for Best Overall Patient Experience in a level III facility, and Lebanon VAMC won the award for Best Overall Patient Experience in a level II facility. Both of these awards were based off of All Employee Survey and patient satisfaction (i.e. SHEP) scores. These awards are an indication of the Veteran-centric culture at these facilities.

4. COVID-19 Vaccine – Update
The pandemic is not over, and critical months lie ahead

Cases are emerging at their highest rate in six months as the Delta variant continues to tear across the country. Many hospitals in the South are overwhelmed, with more cases identified in Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi than at any previous point of the pandemic. At the same time, reports of new cases have started to level off in Missouri, the first state to endure a major summer surge. In VHA facilities, inpatient admissions are increasing nationally, as is the proportion of beds occupied by COVID-19 Veteran patients. The age distribution of inpatients continues to shift towards younger Veterans. Deaths have so far been increasing more slowly than cases, as more vulnerable Veterans 65 and older have been fully vaccinated.

Veterans deserve a fully vaccinated workforce and employees, who have given so much during this pandemic, deserve a safe workplace. The Secretary’s announcement on August 13th expands the previous vaccine requirements to include psychologists, pharmacists, social workers, nursing assistants, physical therapists, respiratory therapists, peer specialists, medical support assistants, engineers, housekeepers and other VHA clinical and administrative employees, who work in or travel to VHA locations who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials. The expansion also includes volunteers, contractors, and trainees including students, residents, and fellows.

On August 12, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine for people with moderate to severe immunocompromise who received the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines. There is no third dose recommended for those who have received the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine at this time. Other fully vaccinated individuals do not need a third dose right now. The need for and timing of COVID-19 third doses for the rest of the population have not been established.

It’s never been easier for Veterans and their eligible spouses, beneficiaries, and caregivers to get vaccinated.

5. Caregiver Support Update
VISN 4 continues to do well at processing applications in a thorough and timely manner. PGCSS (Program of General Caregiver Services) are being offered robustly at
each facility. All facilities have been planning or have hosted their Annual Caregiver and Family Resources Fair for families and caregiver and the Caregiver Summit for VA and community partners. I encourage you to reach out to their local facility Caregiver Support Program to find out the specific dates if you would like to participate in either or both events. There will be a mix of virtual and in person events based on the guidelines set by the facility. The CSP will welcome your participation! And in the future there is a CSP Events Tab on the Caregiver.va.gov website where you can access the list of events directly.

6. Customer Service Update
Nationally, VA’s trust score over the last 90 days was 90.1. In VISN 4, our trust score over the last 90 days was 92.5, which remains the third highest VISN in the nation. The top 5 compliment themes over the last 90 days were interactions with staff, quality of care, satisfaction with specialty care, interactions with staff, and general care compliments from Vietnam Veterans.

7. Connected Care Update

My VA Images:
My VA Images is a secure web application that allows Veterans to send images and videos to a VA provider while avoiding the time and trouble of traveling to the clinic for a follow up. Once a VA provider authorizes use of the app as part of a Veteran’s care plan, the Veteran will receive an email request to submit photos or videos with a link to the My VA Images app. The app will guide the Veteran through taking the required photos and/or videos and remind them when the images are due. Using a smart mobile device or personal computer, the Veteran can avoid travel and wait times while receiving expert health care for specified needs from the VA provider anywhere, anytime.

Features of My VA Images:
- Receive care from your VA provider in the convenience of your own home or on the go
- Securely upload requested photos and videos for review by your VA provider
- Respond to follow-up requests for images and videos from your VA provider
- Send updated information to your provider about your care and condition
- Review comments and guidance from your VA provider about images and video submitted

NOTE: My VA Images use is initiated by the VA provider. Veterans should contact their VA Provider to determine if My VA Images is the right tool for their care.

Heart Failure Hub:
The VISN 4 Clinical Resource Hub is currently piloting a Heart Failure Hub to supplement the care Veterans receive with the goal of early intervention to reduce hospitalizations. The program, which will be trialed at the Butler and Wilmington VA
Medical Centers, centers on close collaboration with the sites’ Home Telehealth programs. The data collected by Home Telehealth nurses will be monitored by an interdisciplinary team, including registered nurses, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, and physicians. In a traditional model of care, Primary Care Providers (PCPs) would be notified by Home Telehealth if Veterans appeared to be experiencing the onset of an exacerbation of their heart failure. PCPs are put in the position of analyzing the Home Telehealth data and making referrals for these individuals while also juggling their other clinical duties. Plus, if they needed input from a Cardiology team, Veterans may experience scheduling delays, which even if minor, could mean the difference between a hospitalization and getting to remain at home. This new program eliminates these delays and assists PCPs with the management of their heart failure patients by putting Veterans in direct, regular contact with a Cardiology team. It is hoped that following this initial pilot, all VISN 4 facilities will have this program available to them.

Closing
In closing, I’d like to thank you for your continued support of VISN 4. Please let me know if you have any questions for me.
Southwestern Veterans’ Center
Advisory Council Meeting
April 16, 2021

Advisory Council Members Present:
Thomas Tallon, Military Officers Assoc. of America
Edward Hanke, Disabled American Veterans
William Aronson, Military Order of the Purple Hearts
James Lamison, AMVETS

Advisory Council Members Excused
Rommel Dacanay, Blind Veterans Assoc. of PA
Ronald F. Conley, American Legion
William Roland, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Tim Sager, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans
Albert Schraepfer, The American Legion
David White, Marine Corps League
Kenneth Stubbs, Resident Representative
Kim Ward, Senator
Natalie Mihalek, Representative

Advisory Council Members Absent
NONE

Others Present
James Hamp, Asst to Deputy Adjutant General
Travis Davis, Director of State Homes
Rich Adams, Commandant, SWVC
Erin Rakow, Deputy Commandant
Cheri McAfee, Assistant to the Commandant

Visitors

Minutes taken by Cheri McAfee
CALL TO ORDER:
Meeting was called to order by Mr. Tallon at 10:00 AM. The Pledge of Allegiance was said and held a Moment of Silence.

ROLL CALL:
Roll call was taken.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:
None.

REMARKS FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR:
None.

REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL MEMBER STATUS
None.

ADMISSIONS & MARKETING UPDATE:
- Admissions have started
- Following guidelines to keep residents and staff safe
- Potential residents are swabbed before being admitted
- Some vaccinated some getting vaccine after admittance
- 74 available beds (some being held for potential breakout)
- 236 person capacity

REMARKS FROM THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL:
- Introduced the new Director of Homes, Travis Davis
- Spoke of things to be expected of the director in the near future and the fact that he will be visiting the homes again next week with the DAG
- Acknowledged that he was a great addition to the DMVA
- Spoke of the new Deputy Adjunct General and her future endeavors with DMVA
- The new DAG and director intend on being more active within all 6 homes, more visits are planned
- Overall the status of Covid 19 within the 6 homes is good
- High number of residents are vaccinated
- Staff numbers of vaccination could be improved
- All 9 federal VA homes are vaccinating both vets and their spouses
- Admissions in the 6 homes has begun
• Visitations are still controlled but hoping to expand in the coming summer months
• There is hope for returning to some normalcy over the summer months

REMARKS OF THE DIRECTOR OF STATE HOMES:
• The new director introduced himself and gave a told a bit about his background

REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT:
Commandant’s report reviewed

• Spoke of the upcoming admissions and the progress of slowly working way through the waitlist, especially those who are still in their homes
• Have had a few positive cases pop up
• The VA survey went well as well as the Life Safety survey, the DOH is expected soon
• Currently we are working on moving visitation forward especially if both resident and family have been vaccinated
• Deputy Commandant Erin went over the Covid status:
  69 employees and 6 staff (4 break through vaccinated staff tested positive)
  90% resident vaccination
  42% staff vaccination
  Currently 3 employees and 1 resident are positive
• AVH is working with us as well as the VA for testing staff
• Still doing weekly testing to catch asymptomatic
• Mr. Cody Gomberg passed away – all expressed their sympathies

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS:
None.

OLD BUSINESS:
NONE

NEW BUSINESS:
A questions was posed as to the manner in which the meeting are being held; an inquiry was made as to whether or not ZOOM could be utilized or possibly a teleconference.
GOOD OF THE COUNCIL:
Mr. Tallon inquired as to when the Advisory Council meetings could return to in person?

Commandant noted that the next meeting will probably still be remote but there was a possibility that the October meeting could be in person.

Mr. Lamison stated that he felt that attendance at the meetings was horrible and inquired if there was another way of promoting attendance.

Mr. Tallon agreed that it needed to be worked on.

ADJOURNMENT:
Meeting called to close at 10:30 AM

Next meeting will be held July 16, 2021 at 10:00 AM
SOUTHEASTERN VETERANS' CENTER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

July 8, 2021

The Southeastern Veterans’ Center Advisory Council met July 8, 2021 at 10:00AM via conference call. Virtual meeting was scheduled due to facility lock-down during COVID-19 pandemic.

Advisory Council Members Participating:
Barry Amole, Vietnam Veterans of America, President
Thomas Applebach, Lehigh County Office of Veterans’ Affairs
Mary Archey, Marine Corps League
Anthony Arnao, Jr. Catholic War Veterans
Thomas Brown, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Richard Doherty, Military Officers Assoc. of America
Doug Forsythe, Disabled American Veterans
The Hon. Tim Hennessey, PA House of Representatives
Robert G. Richardson, Resident Representative
Kenneth Schweitzer, American Legion

Department of Military and Veterans’ Affairs/Southeastern Veterans’ Center:
Maureen Weigl, BG (PA Retired), DAG-VA – DMVA
Travis J. Davis, Executive Director, Long-Term Care – DMVA
Barbara Raymond, Director of Veterans’ Homes – DMVA
Brian Gula, Commandant - SEVC
Mildred Butler-Coleman, Deputy Commandant – SEVC
Eve Domish, DON - SEVC

Visitors:
Nikki Whitlock, Constituency Relations, Sen. Katie Muth’s Office

Excused Absence:
Jill Alwine, Admissions and Marketing Coordinator – SEVC
Edward Beck, Chief of Operations, Veterans’ Homes - DMVA
Jeffrey Elliot, PA AMVETS
John Getz, Veterans of Foreign Wars
The Hon. Bob Mensch, PA State Senate
Robert Stone, American Legion

Call to Order:
The Advisory Council Meeting was called to order by Barry Amole at 10:00 AM. There was a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
Council member Doug Forsythe stated he contests this meeting opening without a prayer or bible present, and he is protesting meeting.

**Swearing in of Council Members**
Doug Forsythe received re-appointment to council and was sworn in by Maureen Weigl, BG (PA Retired) – DAG-VA.

**Review and Approval of April 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes:**
Motion made and seconded to approve minutes from the April 8 meeting. Minutes approved.

**Report of the Medical Director:**
Director of Veterans’ Homes Barb Raymond reported on behalf of Medical Director Dr. Michele Shrikanthan. We continue to monitor COVID-19, particularly the Delta variant. We have none in the facility. We’re also looking at another respiratory virus – RSV – that’s spreading throughout the country. So far, we have no RSV in the facility.

**Report of the Admissions and Marketing Coordinator:**
With this being the first meeting for new Commandant Brian Gula, Barb Raymond, acting in a support role, provided this report. SEVC has a robust waiting list of 159 individuals. We continue to take admissions, but we’ve had to slow the process due to staffing. Our Admissions and Marketing Coordinator is currently on vacation, but she is working on marketing options to get name out in community.

**Report of the Deputy Adjutant General – DMVA:**
Gen. Weigl reported that she and The Adjutant General, MG Mark Schindler, will be visiting SEVC in September, to meet staff. Gen. Weigl also noted leadership changes – Barb Raymond is now Director of Veterans’ Homes, and Travis Davis is Executive Director of Long-term Care.

**Report of the Executive Director, Long-term Care – Travis Davis – DMVA:**
Travis Davis thanked council members for their participation, and noted that he would like to resume in-person Advisory Council with the next meeting.

He also introduced the new Commandant, Brian Gula, and new DON, Eve Domish. Both individuals hit the ground running, and are here for right reasons - to serve our veterans. Travis also extended congratulations to Barb in her new role as director of homes. She has served as Commandant at our Erie home, but also at SEVC as Commandant and DON, as well as assisting in the onboarding of new leadership. She is still spending time at SEVC, but is transitioning into the director role. The more Barb touches in our homes the more our homes become better places to live.

Also, DMVA held a mobile vaccine clinic at SEVC on June 21. The mobile clinic went to all six homes. We were able to increase vaccinated and residents, and also opened up clinics to families. Our goal is a 100% vaccination rate.

Nikki Whitlock, Constituency Relations representative for Sen. Katie Muth, asked for staff and resident vaccination rates – For all homes it’s 95% of residents and 60% of staff, fully vaccinated. After the federal vaccination initiative, there have not been many other initiatives to provide vaccines. Now, all six homes’ pharmacies have vaccines in house.
Nikki also asked for the proper spellings of Brian’s and Eve’s names.

Doug Forsythe asked for a reason why we have 5% unvaccinated residents. Travis explained that unvaccinated individuals, both residents and staff, chose not to be vaccinated. However, our vaccination numbers are still trending upward; there’s been no plateau.

Rep. Tim Hennessey congratulated Barb for efforts to get SEVC back on track, and on her new assignment. He also welcomed Brian and Eve.

Report of the Director of Veterans’ Homes – Barb Raymond – DMVA:
Barb provided an update on the homes – we’re recruiting for a commandant for the Erie home and the Altoona-area home (Hollidaysburg). Also, all homes are admitting new residents, but slowly, mostly due to staffing (nationwide challenge).

Report of the Commandant – Brian Gula – SEVC:
Brian said he is excited to be here and be a part of team. He thanked everyone for their support. He is moving forward, following the leadership of Barb and Barry Lowen, and looking forward to many great years here.

Report of the Deputy Commandant – Mildred Butler-Coleman – SEVC:
Mildred provided facility updates:
- New roof for our storage barn. Waiting for L&I to approve the work.
- New nurse call bell system – vendor is Symtech – money has been set aside.
- Working on new permanent chiller for Tilghman and Coates Hall.
- New furniture for conference room and several offices in the administrative portion of the facility.

Doug Forsythe asked if Rep. Hennessey could provide any assistance with the L&I approval process. Rep. Hennessey said if the work is an emergency repair, we could get a temporary covering until the permanent fix can occur. Barb will reach out to L&I and contact Rep. Hennessey if we need assistance.

Council Resident Representative Rob Richardson asked for an update on the new boiler for the east side of Coates Hall. Mildred said money is set aside and work has started, noting that the boiler serves the entire building. Deadline is the end of this year. Also, in response to a question from Rep. Hennessey, Mildred explained that we have a back-up boiler system, so there is no need to keep the old system in place once the replacement is installed.

Nikki Whitlock asked for an update on the Adult Day Health Care project. Mildred noted that the area is still under construction, with expected completion in August. No programming until November.

Doug Forsythe asked Nikki to pass along his thanks to Sen. Muth for her Legion of Honor award sponsorship.

Comments from the Council:
Anthony Arnao noted that his organization, the Catholic War Veterans, has been meeting offline, but is planning an in-person meeting in September.
Richard Doherty asked why SEVC’s fill rate is not at 100%. Barb explained that we are at 63% filled, due to staffing. Barb added that she was part of a meeting this week with the HR staff at headquarters, discussing recruitment and retention for all six homes; Nikki noted that she heard an ad for SEVC openings on a Philadelphia radio station.

Mary Archey asked how SEVC compares to other homes when it comes to retention. Barb noted that all homes are experiencing similar employee retention issues, but she would work to get specifics for the next meeting.

Doug Forsythe said that all Veterans’ organizations he works with are getting back to normal.

Rep. Hennessey stated that DMVA did fairly well in the state budget.

Barry Amole asked if resident trips have resumed. Mildred said there was a Personal Care resident trip Walmart, which was our first attempt at putting our new plan for trips into action. We can only take eight people at one time, including the driver and an escort. Both the Activity and Volunteer directors are looking at options for getting more people out at one time. Barry said to let him know if we need funding for any outings.

**Old Business:**
Richard Doherty said that at last meeting the group discussed the possibility of distributing a positive press release to announce how well SEVC is doing now. Barb said nothing has been issued yet, but she will discuss with Travis and Gen. Weigl. Something like this also needs to go through Harrisburg for approval.

**New Business:**
Nothing to report.

**Election of Officers:**
President – unanimous nominations and election of Barry Amole to serve as President.
Vice President – unanimous nominations and election of Mary Archey to serve as Vice President.

**Good of the Council**
Nothing to report.

**Time and Date for the next Meeting:**
With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m. The next regular meeting of the SEVC Advisory Council will be held on October 14, 2021 at 10:00 AM.

Approved:

______________________________
Barry Amole, President

Minutes submitted by: Kathy Knaub
Present:
Advisory Council Members
Allan Abramson, Jewish War Veterans
Bruce Boice, Disabled American Veterans
Douglas Craig, Military Officers Association
Richard Fine, AMVETS
Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans
Samuel Huhn, Blinded Veterans Association
Benjamin Mastridge, Vietnam Veterans
John O’Donnell, American Legion
James Ritchie, Veteran of Foreign Wars

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Delaware Valley Veterans Home
Travis Davis, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes
Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General
Deborah Olivieri, Director of Nursing
Rita Yeung, Business Manager
Violetta Berdichevskaya, Medical Director
Jack Thompson, ADON
Mia Woods, Compliance Officer
Josh Spigner, Regional Compliance Officer
Susan Riever, Adm. Secretary

Absent
Daniel McCollum, American Legion
Daniel Murray, Marine Corps League
Kerry Judge, Senator Robert Tomlinson
Martina White, PA House of Representatives

Residents
No residents due to Covid precautions.

Visitors via Conference Call
- Moment of Silence
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Introduction of Attendees
- Approval of Minutes from February 10, 2021
Report from Violetta Berdichevskaya, Medical Director
- Our facility is presently in the Green Phase with no positive Covid cases. Staff are 56% vaccinated.
  Due to the family’s choice, four residents have not received the Covid vaccine. Flu vaccine and PPD’s are all 100%
- Admissions – In the past month we have had 15 new admissions. Some of these admissions came with wounds, but they are healing nicely.
- Hospice – This is a pain free building and we will not let our veterans suffer. Aurora Hospice is doing a very good job. There are 2 Aurora nurses who are designated specifically to our facility. We presently have 5 residents on hospice. As you all know, this is a pain free building and we are pro-hospice.
- Visitation – we have an outside setting for visitors to meet with their loved ones. If the weather is bad, we have an inside area set up.

Report from Peter Ojeda for Admissions/Marketing
- Our resident census is 84. This week we will have 5 admissions and next week another 5 admissions. One of the residents has not been Covid vaccinated so we will take him to the VA for the injection. We are getting ready for an additional 16 residents for the C-Unit. 16 beds will be kept open in case of a Covid positive resident.

Report from Mia Woods, Compliance Officer
- Prior to the pandemic it was set up that I would report compliance updates to the Advisory Council. The program is still not officially approved, but we are working on this. New updates should begin sometime this month. We have 2 new staff. One of them is Josh Spigner, Regional Compliance office for BVH. Josh stated that he is happy to be learning from Mia.

Report from Travis Davis, Director, Bureau of Veterans
- Introduced himself and Maureen Weigl, DAG. We are both looking forward to meeting all of you. Our homes are in the green zone, so we are moving forward with admissions, visitations and outings. The Philadelphia 76er’s will honor one of our WWII Veterans on Friday, May 14th at the Wells Fargo Center.
- Sam Huhn, Advisory Member asked if we could get a copy of the report regarding the status of all the homes that was submitted to Congress. Travis will investigate this and if it is public knowledge it can be shared.

Report from Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General
- Looking forward to meeting of the Advisory Board members.

Report from Peter Ojeda, Commandant
- Over the past 3 months we had 19 admissions and 5 discharges. Monetary donations for the past 3 months totaled $5300.00
  Activities are still limited due to the Pandemic and are presently held on each unit. Residents are now going outside on nice days. We continue to have bingo on the units and birthday cakes for residents’ birthdays. Thank you to all the veteran’s organizations who have donated food, pizza d other items to our residents and staff.
  The Korean Ambassador was here on April 13th to donate masks and sanitizer to our facility. My team is doing an exceptional job in our facility to always keep our residents safe and healthy.
  Construction in the building continues. The Canteen is almost finished, and all construction should be completed by the end of June. General maintenance on the grounds and building.
Allan Abramson, Advisory Member

- Asked about the Volunteer Coordinator position.
  Peter stated that our new Volunteer Coordinator, Bill McGoldrick will be here on Monday, May 17th. Allan wished everyone a Happy Memorial Day.

Old Business:

New Business: Hopefully we can have an in person Advisory Meeting on August 11, 2021.

Good of the Counsel:

Adjourned: 10:50AM

Next Meeting: August 11, 2021
CALL TO ORDER
Meeting was held vis telephone conference.
James Miller, GMVC Commandant called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

INVOCATION
Secretary Ron Faust led the Council in the invocation.

ROLL CALL
Secretary Ron Faust recorded roll call and attendance was as follows:

MEMBERS
Lisa Solarczyk, Acting President - Marine Corps League
Ronald Faust, Secretary - AMVETS
Robert Cudworth - Military Officers Association of America (Excused)
Robert Smith - Military Order of the Purple Heart (Excused)
Russell Canevari - Veterans of Foreign Wars (Excused)
William Smith - The American Legion
Richard Green - Blinded Veterans Association (Excused)
Joe Sylvester - Disabled American Veterans
Lisa Baker - PA State Senate
Carol Sweeney Karen Boback - PA House of Representatives
Tim Cleveland - PSACDVA
Lisa Kaye - PSACDVA
William Brandenburg - GJMVC Resident Representative

DMVA
Rick Hamp for Major General Mark J. Schindler - The Acting, Adjutant General, Pennsylvania
Colonel Maureen Weigl - Deputy Adjutant General, VA (Excused)
Travis Davis - Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes
James Miller - GJMVC Commandant
Kathleen Ambrose - GJMVC Deputy Commandant

OTHERS PRESENT / INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS
Lynn O’Day, Recorder
Dr. Kazmierski, GMVC Medical Director
Sara Butler, Admissions
Janice McAllister, Volunteers
Andrew Ruscavage, CSM

MOMENT OF SILENCE
- A moment of silence was held in the memory of Samuel Greenberg, President, who passed away on Saturday, May 8, 2021.

- Lisa Solarczyk will become Acting President and the Vice President position will remain open until August. We will then hold general elections for Advisory Council seats.
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF VETERANS’ HOMES
- We have been hosting mobile vaccine clinics. GMVC just held theirs on the 18th. We did a pilot program here and had a great turnout. 15 additional employees, 13 family members and 1 resident.
- Gino Merli is the highest of all the other homes regarding vaccination rates for staff and residents.
- He applauded the staff and management here for their hard work in getting the vaccination information out.

REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT
- Jim announced that he continues the weekly updates on Wednesdays.
- We are now a green facility. 1 South is now empty but will be used as the quarantine unit. Hoping in time to open back to residential housing.
- Visits have started again. We do have protocols in place and set visitation hours.
- We are currently working on a Leave of Absence Policy for vaccinated residents.
- We have begun planning outside trips for the residents. Residents are happy with the “re-opening” of the facility.
- We had our revisit from the Department of Health and Life Safety. We were found to be 100% compliant and have received a full, regular license.
  - Ron Faust asked for clarification on outside trips.
    - Jim stated that we are planning country rides, ice cream, outdoor activities but will be continuing to keep units isolated and on the same bus for tracking.
  - Joe Sylvester asked when her residents will be able to go to restaurants and other offsite activities. He states that his group used to take the residents for breakfast and lunches.
    - Jim stated that we are currently working on these items. He is hoping that sometime in the Summer and being vaccinated, they will be able to do these things.
  - Ron Faust asked if the residents will be able to attend Francis Slocum this year. Every year his organization hosts an outdoor cook-out and event at Francis Slocum for the residents.
    - Jim stated that it is a possibility since it is outside and they will look into it.
  - Joe Sylvester asked if the residents will be participating, outdoors, in the Flag Service on June 14th.
    - Jim stated that the facility is working on the list of residents who will be participating in the service.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR
- Dr. Kazmierski reported that vaccinations have contributed to the improvements in the numbers and openings and increase in mobility.
- The staff here at the facility has done a good job in getting vaccinated and getting the word out of the importance of vaccinations.
- The vaccination rate in our county is the 3rd highest in the state.
- 64 total staff had tested positive. The last positive was March 18. There were 68 total resident infections and 19 total deaths attributed to COVID. We had 7 residents who were re-infected after 90 days which were all believed to be residual infections and shedding of
the virus. Only 2 of those re-infections were symptomatic and they were mild and recovered quickly. The last positive resident we had was April 21st which was a re-infection after 90 days with no symptoms.

- We had 221 total staff vaccinated. 5 staff with only 1 dose. This is a high vaccination rate for staff. We had 127 total residents vaccinated and only 3 were not vaccinated.
- Slowly but surely, we are coming out of this. We are still diligent with mask wearing and proof of vaccinations for visitors. We will be starting to work on other issues such as reducing polypharmacy, antibiotic stewardship, and issues we were working on before COVID.
  - Karen Boback asked if there was a requirement that all staff receive the vaccine.
    - Dr. Kazmierski stated that we strongly encouraged it. Jim stated that we do have guidelines for those who aren’t vaccinated such as respirators and eye protection and we are testing no-vaccinated staff weekly. He stated that we may get to that point in time but no guidelines at this time. Rick Hamp stated that the fact that the vaccines are only approved under emergency use, we cannot mandate or require that the staff receive the vaccine.
  - Karen Boback asked what the percentage of staff that were vaccinated was.
    - Jim stated that the staff percentage was at 75%. The state average for staff is only about 50-60 percent.
    - Rick Hamp stated that a good majority of the push for 75% happened with the vaccine clinic. Jim stated that the mobile clinic pushed us from 73 to 75% and it was very successful.

REPORT OF ADMISSIONS

- Our current census is 130. We do have an admission coming in today. We continue to have 36 beds reserved for quarantine unit which leaves us 29 beds to fill. Since our last meeting we had 24 admissions and we have had 14 deaths or discharges. We currently have 22 veterans on our waiting list, 21 non-veterans and we are processing 15 new applications right now.
- As moving through the waiting list, we are seeing a lot of applications closed due to death or have been placed in other facilities. She asked all the members to spread the word and if there is anyone that they know of who needs placement, to mention Gino Merli and provide them with her contact information.
  - Ron Faust asked for clarification of the 36 beds that are currently quarantine.
    - The beds are being saved incase of infection. One side of the unit is red and the other is yellow.
    - Jim stated that as we move further that COVID is going to be treated as any other infectious disease. We are hoping to open 1S again.
  - Lisa Baker asked if there is an effect on the budget from the red.
    - Travis stated that that COVID costs drained budgets, but we do have our 5-year programs and allocated programs. Repairs and unforeseen expenses are causing the challenge.
  - Lisa Baker asked if there is any additional stimulus available or what exactly are the needs. She stated that both herself and Karen Boback would like to be able to take that information back to the House before the budget vote is brought to the table.
Rick stated that there is some talk of additional funding becoming available to the states from the federal government. From the best of his knowledge those funds are not contingent up the passing of any state budget. These funds are directly related to the costs incurred by long term care facilities because of COVID.

VOLUNTEERS
- Janice McAllister stated that she is currently working on getting the volunteers back into the facility.
- We received a donation this morning from Colbert and Grebas.
- We have a meeting with Harley Davison American Warhorse this Saturday morning to discuss the annual motorcycle ride. It will possibly be here on the premises on August 7th.

CLINICAL SERVICES
- Andrew Ruscavage stated that one of the big things being talked about now is the vaccine. Although we are doing very well with vaccinations, the vaccine does dictate what you can and can't do when it comes to visitation, outing etc. If you’re interested in an outing or visitation, please call here to the facility and we will be able to help with the information.
- We have all green units. All the residents can move about the facility. We do have to take precautions depending on what the situation is.

THE GOOD OF THE COUNCIL
- Ron Faust asked about council member status updates. He stated that he will be retiring and that a new member of the AM Vets will be appointed.
- Karen Boback the DMVA has been talking about the virtual VSOs which be coming to the legislative offices. At first, she was hesitant, but the demonstration was great. People will still be coming to the offices, but this will expedite those who are on a waiting list to be assigned a VSO. She also stated that there has been issues of pension poaching for the veterans. No one should have to pay a fee for advice of help from a VSO regarding benefits and pensions. She also reminded everyone that Elder Abuse Awareness Month is June. She stated that she attended the services for Sam Greenberg, and they were beautiful. She stated that the family had nothing but praise for the facility and they he considered the facility family. The family was very pleased and grateful for all the facility has done for him.
- Jim stated that we are planning to carry out the next meeting inside the facility rather than via teleconference.

ADJOURNMENT
The next meeting was announced: August 19, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.
## Bureau of Veterans' Homes
### Available Beds Monthly Status Report
from June 1 to 30, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Care</th>
<th>Available Beds</th>
<th>Beds Assigned</th>
<th>Beds Vacant</th>
<th>Average Beds Vacant</th>
<th>Percentage Filled</th>
<th>Waiting List Veteran / Placing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Care*</td>
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<td>71</td>
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<tr>
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<td>101</td>
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<td>Non-Veteran Census Percent</td>
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Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center, Scranton PA - James Miller - Commandant

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<tr>
<th>Level of Care</th>
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<th>Beds Assigned</th>
<th>Beds Vacant</th>
<th>Average Beds Vacant</th>
<th>Percentage Filled</th>
<th>Waiting List Veteran / Placing</th>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Veteran Census Percent</td>
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Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home, Hollidaysburg PA - Rich Adams - Acting Commandant

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<th>Waiting List Veteran / Placing</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nursing Care</td>
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Pennsylvania Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, Erie PA - Elizabeth Siebert - Interim Commandant

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Southeastern Veterans' Center, Spring City PA - Brian Gula - Commandant

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Southwestern Veterans' Center, Pittsburgh PA - Erin Rakow - Acting Commandant

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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals Less Wait List Placing</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Veteran Census Percent</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recapitulation / Pennsylvania Bureau of Veterans' Homes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Care</th>
<th>Available Beds</th>
<th>Beds Assigned</th>
<th>Beds Vacant</th>
<th>Average Beds Vacant</th>
<th>Percentage Filled</th>
<th>Waiting List Veteran / Placing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Care</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>341</td>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory Care</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placing Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals Less Wait List Placing</td>
<td>1,475</td>
<td>938</td>
<td>537</td>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Non-Veteran Census Percent | 547 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Veteran Census Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DVVH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GJMVC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HVH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSSH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEVC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWVC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Summary of Current Applications (Exempt)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>No Activity</th>
<th>Review Process Started</th>
<th>Review App Received</th>
<th>New Apps Pending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15110</td>
<td>14776</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Summary of Activity from 05/14/2021 to 08/24/2021

**Apps Created : 1035**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Apps Approved : 1322**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New</td>
<td>729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps Denied Fin</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps Denied (Ineligible)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps Removed from Exempt List (No Response)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps Removed from Exempt List (Eligibility Changed)</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Summary of Ineligible Reason

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It has been determined that the information submitted with your application does not substantiate your financial need for the exemption.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran did not have a total and/or 100% permanent disability during their lifetime.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response for Requested Information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The property for which you claim exemption is not owned solely by you, or as an estate by the entirety with your spouse.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your disability was not determined by the U.S. Veterans Affairs to be service connected.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that the veteran did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your disability has not been declared by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to be a total or 100% permanent disability.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs stated that you have a future exam, therefore, your disability has not been rated as total or 100% permanent.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are not a citizen or resident of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Activity from 5/14/2021 to 8/24/2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPS APPROVED</td>
<td>1322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW</td>
<td>729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVIEW</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPS DENIED</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Need</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineligible</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of Eligibility</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HH Over Income</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVIEW</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPS CREATED</td>
<td>1035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ADJUDICATED</td>
<td>1826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pennsylvania Sunshine Act Amendment
• Senate Bill No. 554 of 2021 amends the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, 65 Pa.C.S. §§ 701-716,:  
  – becomes effective on August 29, 2021;  
  – requires agencies to post the agenda of a public meeting at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting;  
  – applies to regular and special meetings  
    • i.e. - meetings during which deliberation and planned official action will take place; and  
  – does not apply to conferences, work sessions, or executive sessions.
• The Agenda must be posted:
  – on the agency’s website(s)
    • including the agency’s social media pages (i.e. – Facebook, Twitter, etc.);
  – at the agency’s offices; and
  – at the meeting site(s).
• Copies of the agenda must be available to all individuals attending the meeting.
• The Agenda may be changed less than 24 hours before the meeting if:
  – the change is *de minimus* in nature;
  – does not involve the expenditure of funds; and
  – does not involve the agency entering into a contract or agreement.
• The Agenda may be changed during the meeting when:
  – a member of the public brings up the matter to be added to the agenda;
  – the matter is *de minimus* in nature; and
  – the matter does not involve the expenditure of funds or entering into a contract or agreement by the agency.
  – In such instances, the alternative is to defer the matter to a future meeting.
• The Agenda may also be changed during the meeting if:
  – upon a majority vote of voting members of the board/commission; and
  – the reason for the change is announced at the meeting prior to the vote to change the agenda.
  – In such instances:
    • the meeting minutes must reflect the change to the agenda; and
    • the amended agenda must be posted no later than the first business day following the meeting.
AN ACT

Amending Title 65 (Public Officers) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in open meetings, further providing for public notice and providing for notification of agency business required and exceptions.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Section 709 of Title 65 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes is amended by adding a subsection to read:

§ 709. Public notice.

* * *

(e.1) Notification of agency business to be considered. In addition to any public notice required under this section, an agency shall provide the following notification of agency business to be considered at a meeting as follows:

(1) If the agency has a publicly accessible Internet website, the agency shall post the agenda, which includes a
listing of each matter of agency business that will be or may be the subject of deliberation or official action at the meeting, on the website no later than 24 hours in advance of the time of the convening of the meeting.

(2) The agency shall post the agenda, which includes a listing of each matter of agency business that will be or may be the subject of deliberation or official action at the meeting, at the location of the meeting and at the principal office of the agency.

(3) The agency shall make available to individuals in attendance at the meeting copies of the agenda, which include a listing of each matter of agency business that will be or may be the subject of deliberation or official action at the meeting.

(C.1) NOTIFICATION OF AGENCY BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED.--

(1) IN ADDITION TO ANY PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIRED UNDER THIS SECTION, AN AGENCY SHALL PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING NOTIFICATION OF AGENCY BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED AT A MEETING AS FOLLOWS:

(I) IF THE AGENCY HAS A PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE INTERNET WEBSITE, THE AGENCY SHALL POST THE AGENDA, WHICH INCLUDES A LISTING OF EACH MATTER OF AGENCY BUSINESS THAT WILL BE OR MAY BE THE SUBJECT OF DELIBERATION OR OFFICIAL ACTION AT THE MEETING, ON THE WEBSITE NO LATER THAN 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THE TIME OF THE CONVENING OF THE MEETING.

(II) THE AGENCY SHALL POST THE AGENDA, WHICH INCLUDES A LISTING OF EACH MATTER OF AGENCY BUSINESS THAT WILL BE OR MAY BE THE SUBJECT OF DELIBERATION OR OFFICIAL ACTION AT THE MEETING, AT THE LOCATION OF THE MEETING AND AT THE PRINCIPAL OFFICE OF THE AGENCY.

(III) THE AGENCY SHALL MAKE AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS
IN ATTENDANCE AT THE MEETING COPIES OF THE AGENDA, WHICH
INCLUDE A LISTING OF EACH MATTER OF AGENCY BUSINESS THAT
WILL BE OR MAY BE THE SUBJECT OF DELIBERATION OR OFFICIAL
ACTION AT THE MEETING.

(2) THIS SUBSECTION SHALL NOT APPLY TO A CONFERENCE OR A
WORKING SESSION UNDER SECTION 707 (RELATING TO EXCEPTIONS TO
OPEN MEETINGS) OR AN EXECUTIVE SESSION UNDER SECTION 708
(RELATING TO EXECUTIVE SESSIONS).

(D) MEETINGS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN CAPITOL COMPLEX.--
NOTWITHSTANDING ANY PROVISION OF THIS SECTION TO THE CONTRARY,
IN CASE OF SESSIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ALL MEETINGS OF
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES HELD WITHIN THE CAPITOL COMPLEX WHERE
BILLS ARE CONSIDERED, INCLUDING CONFERENCE COMMITTEES, ALL
LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS HELD WITHIN THE CAPITOL COMPLEX WHERE
TESTIMONY IS TAKEN AND ALL MEETINGS OF LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONS
HELD WITHIN THE CAPITOL COMPLEX, THE REQUIREMENT FOR PUBLIC
NOTICE THEREOF SHALL BE COMPLIED WITH IF, NOT LATER THAN THE
PRECEDING DAY:

(1) THE SUPERVISOR OF THE NEWSROOM OF THE STATE CAPITOL
BUILDING IN HARRISBURG IS SUPPLIED FOR DISTRIBUTION TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATIVE CORRESPONDENTS
ASSOCIATION WITH A MINIMUM OF 30 COPIES OF THE NOTICE OF THE
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF EACH SESSION, MEETING OR HEARING[.]
OR THE NOTICE IS PROVIDED VIA ELECTRONIC MEANS TO AN EMAIL
ADDRESS DESIGNATED BY THE PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATIVE
CORRESPONDENTS ASSOCIATION.

(2) THERE IS A POSTING OF THE COPY OF THE NOTICE AT
PUBLIC PLACES WITHIN THE MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING DESIGNATED BY
THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE AND THE CHIEF CLERK OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES OR THE NOTICE IS POSTED ON THE PUBLICLY
ACCESSIBLE INTERNET WEBSITE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

* * *

Section 2. Title 65 is amended by adding a section to read:

§ 712.1. Notification of agency business required and exceptions.

(a) Official action.--Except as provided in subsection (b), (c), (d) or (e), an agency may not take official action on a matter of agency business at a meeting if the matter was not included in the notification required under section 709(c.1) (relating to public notice).

(b) Emergency business.--An agency may take official action at a regularly scheduled meeting or an emergency meeting on a matter of agency business relating to a real or potential emergency involving a clear and present danger to life or property regardless of whether public notice was given for the meeting.

(c) Business arising within 24 hours before meeting.--An agency may take official action on a matter of agency business that is not listed on a meeting agenda if:

(1) the matter arises or is brought to the attention of the agency within the 24-hour period prior to the meeting;

and

(2) the matter is de minimis in nature and does not involve the expenditure of funds or entering into a contract or agreement by the agency.

(d) Business arising during meeting.--If, during the conduct of a meeting, a resident or taxpayer brings a matter of agency business that is not listed on the meeting agenda to the attention of the agency, the agency may take official action to refer the matter to staff, if applicable, for the purpose of
researching the matter for inclusion on the agenda of a future
meeting, or, if the matter is de minimis in nature and does not
involve the expenditure of funds or entering into a contract or
agreement, the agency may take official action on the matter.

(e) Changes to agenda. Upon majority vote of the—

individuals present and voting during the conduct of a meeting,
an agency may add a matter of agency business to the agenda. The
reasons for the changes to the agenda shall be announced at the
meeting before any vote is conducted to make the changes to the
agenda. The agency may subsequently take official action on the
matter added to the agenda. The agency shall post the amended
agenda on the agency's publicly accessible Internet website, if
available, and at the agency's principal office location no
later than the first business day following the meeting at which
the agenda was changed.

(E) CHANGES TO AGENDA.—

(1) UPON MAJORITY VOTE OF THE INDIVIDUALS PRESENT AND
VOTING DURING THE CONDUCT OF A MEETING, AN AGENCY MAY ADD A
MATTER OF AGENCY BUSINESS TO THE AGENDA. THE REASONS FOR THE
CHANGES TO THE AGENDA SHALL BE ANNOUNCED AT THE MEETING
BEFORE ANY VOTE IS CONDUCTED TO MAKE THE CHANGES TO THE
AGENDA. THE AGENCY MAY SUBSEQUENTLY TAKE OFFICIAL ACTION ON
THE MATTER ADDED TO THE AGENDA. THE AGENCY SHALL POST THE
AMENDED AGENDA ON THE AGENCY'S PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE INTERNET
WEBSITE, IF AVAILABLE, AND AT THE AGENCY'S PRINCIPAL OFFICE
LOCATION NO LATER THAN THE FIRST BUSINESS DAY FOLLOWING THE
MEETING AT WHICH THE AGENDA WAS CHANGED.

(2) THIS SUBSECTION SHALL NOT APPLY TO A CONFERENCE OR A
WORKING SESSION UNDER SECTION 707 (RELATING TO EXCEPTIONS TO
OPEN MEETINGS) OR AN EXECUTIVE SESSION UNDER SECTION 708

20210SB0554PN0875
(RELATING TO EXECUTIVE SESSIONS).

(f) Minutes.--If action is taken upon a matter of agency business added to the agenda under this section, the minutes of the meeting shall reflect the substance of the matter added, the vote on the addition and the announced reasons for the addition.

Section 3. This act shall take effect in 60 days.