

**PENNSYLVANIA STATE VETERANS' COMMISSION MEETING
COMMUNITY CLUB, FORT INDIANTOWN GAP
ANNVILLE, PA 17003-5002
FRIDAY, April 5, 2013, 1000**

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

Oath of Office: BG (PA) Michael G. Gould, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs, administered the Oath of Office to Tim Cleveland, President, State Association of County Directors of Veterans' Affairs, Inc.

Remarks by MG Wesley Craig, The Adjutant General: MG Craig provided the Commission an update on the current and upcoming PA Army and Air National Guard deployments. MG Craig also briefed the Commission on the impact of the potential sequestration.

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

Michael Gould: BG Gould provided the Commission members an update on the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation. He informed the members that the Vietnam Veterans of America donated \$1,000 to the PVF. Michael Mescavage, Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart, presented BG Gould a check for \$75,000 for the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation. BG Gould also briefed the Commission on the success of the Women Veterans Symposium, held March 8-10, 2013, in Gettysburg, PA.

Remarks from Mr. Robert Callahan, Director Lebanon VAMC: Mr. Callahan provided the Commission an update on current and upcoming construction in VISN4. Mr. Callahan also provided the members a copy of the VISN 4 Annual Report for 2012.

Remarks from Mr. Ken Rapp, Deputy Secretary, Department of General Services: Mr. Rapp briefed the Commission on the Program for Veteran-Owned and Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business.

Review and Approval of February 1, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Wojnarowski made a motion, seconded by Commandant Corley, to approve the February 1, 2013 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs Update by Mr. Dusty Durand: Mr. Durand provided the Commission a legislative handout. He also briefed the members on the following:

- Armory/Real Estate Legislation
- Military Family Relief Assistance Program
- Civil Service
- Educational Assistance program
- Physicians Incentive

Office Administration Update by Ms. Debbie Stubljar: Ms. Stubljar provided the Commission a handout containing FY 13/14 budget information.

Chief Counsel Update by Mr. Dennis Guise: Mr. Guise briefed the Commission on the Disabled Veterans' Real Estate Tax Exemption Program, Rebuttable Presumption. Chairman Brenner asked the Commission if they wanted to take action. Mr. Foster made a motion, seconded by Mr. Wojnarowski to accept the language on rebuttable presumption effective July 1, 2013. Motion carried.

Homes Update by Mr. Andrew Ruscavage: Mr. Ruscavage provided the Commission a Homes' update. The overall occupancy average is 89 percent. For Nursing Care beds, the overall average is 92 percent. For Personal Care/Domiciliary beds, the overall average is 86 percent. He also provided the licensure status for all the State Veterans' Homes.

NEW BUSINESS

WAR VETERANS COUNCIL ITEMS (WVC): Mr. Foster informed the Commission the following items were discussed at the War Veterans Council meeting:

- The Legislative Council reviewed the guidelines for the Paralyzed Veterans Pension
- Blinded Veterans Association Beneficiary Travel Bill
- House Bill 676
- Former Senate Bill 819
- Small Games of Chance
- Reviewed the draft language for Senate Bill 302
- Entertained a statement from the Keystone Paralyzed Veterans stating they will withdraw from the War Veterans Council until such time as the WVC is in compliance with the ADA laws. The Commander appointed a committee to study the compliance and possible recommendations.

Mr. Appleby asked the Commission to support H.R. 1284 and S. 633 to provide Veterans Travel Program reimbursement for travel associated with a stay at specialized rehabilitation centers.

Mr. Appleby made a motion, seconded by Mr. Foster to support H.R. 1284 and S. 633. Motion Carried.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF REPORTS AND GRANTS:

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

The reports for the Blind and Paralyzed Veterans' Pension Programs were reviewed. Blind Pension Program: Commandant Corley made a motion, seconded by Mr. Appleby, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried. Paralyzed Pension Program: Mr. Fidler made a motion, seconded by Ms. Botta Guth, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried.

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

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

Mr. Natali reported five requests for waiver to the five acre rule. Mr. Blow made a motion, seconded by Commander Ryersbach to table the motion. Motion tabled.

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

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

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Ms. Botta Guth asked for the Commission's guidance on the "V" designator on the driver's license. There is some concern that certain medical diagnosis', such as PTSD, could be grounds for the government taking away a person's driver's license and their weapons. Mr. Foster said that is not correct, if the person is found to be incompetent to handle their own resources, under the Brady Law, you are unable to own fire arms, but that is the only time. Mr. Foster stated that is just a nasty rumor.

Mr. Cleveland said while he was deployed he did a lot of VA briefings. He said the feedback he received was that the VA is doing a good job, but not good enough.

Mr. Fidler informed the Commission members that Mr. Tregaskes had a heart attack last week and came home yesterday. He said he had a card for the members to sign.

Ms. Johnson, Transition Assistance Advisors, told the Commission members her job is tracking, monitoring and assisting our wounded service members. She said they are more than happy to go out to units, groups, etc. to explain what benefits are available. She told the members her company has 67 employees nationwide to perform these services.

Mr. Cudworth encouraged everyone to go out to their organizations and put in a pitch for the PA Wounded Warriors, Inc. He stated this organization help Veterans in Pennsylvania.

Ms. Botta Guth asked if there was any way the Commission could publish a list of legitimate, recognized charitable organizations for Veterans? Chairman Brenner said the Commission will take it under consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Fiola told the members that on May 26, 2013 the Indiantown Gap National Cemetery Memorial Council will be celebrating their 23rd annual Memorial Day Program. He stated this year's co-host is the Catholic War Veterans. Mr. Fiola encouraged everyone to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Brenner adjourned the meeting at 1218 and announced the next meeting will take place on Friday, June 7, 2013, 1000, at the Community Club, Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

The following members of the Commission were present:

MG Wesley Craig, The Adjutant General
BG (PA) Michael G. Gould, The Deputy Adjutant General-Veterans Affairs
Allan Abramson, Commander, Jewish War Veterans, DOP
Neil Appleby, Designee for President, Blinded Veterans Association
Jeannine Botta Guth, Member-at-Large
Samuel Blow, Designee for Commander, Disabled American Veterans, DOP
John Brenner, Chairman, Member-at-Large
Robert Callahan, Director, Lebanon VAMC
Tim Cleveland, President, State Assoc. of Cnty Directors of Veterans' Affairs, Inc.
Neil Corley, Commandant, Marine Corps League, DOP
Ruth Fairchild, Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars, DOP
Chris Fidler, Designee for Commander, Paralyzed Veterans of America, DOP
Bruce Foster, Designee for Commander, The American Legion, DOP
Harold Gennaria, Emeritus
John Getz, Adjutant, Veterans of Foreign Wars, DOP
Tom Haberkorn, President, Vietnam Veterans of America, PSC
John Hahn, Commander Catholic War Veterans, DOP
Bill Harris, President, Military Officers Association of America
Larry Holman, Designee for Commander, Jewish War Veterans, DOP
Michael Iacavazzi, Commander, Italian-American War Veterans, DOP
Michael Mescavage, Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart, DOP
Edward Wojnaroski, Member-at-Large

The following members of the Commission were absent:

Joseph Cocco, Commander, The American Legion, DOP
Mr. Dominic DiFrancesco, Member-at-Large
Carmen DeSanti, Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans, DOP
Gerald Hawk, Vice Chairman, American Veterans, DOP
Steve Ryersbach, Commander, American Veterans, DOP
Fred Tregaskes, Commander, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America, DOP
Kit Watson, Adjutant, American Legion, DOP

Others present:

Louis Abramson	Jewish War Veterans, DOP
Belinda Albright	Northumberland County Veterans Affairs
Bruce Boice	Vietnam Veterans of America, DOP
Ed Burris	Warren County Veterans Affairs
Bob Cudworth	Disabled American Veterans, DOP
Gilbert Durand	Legislative Liaison Office, DMVA
Tom Dye	Lehigh County Veterans Affairs
Doug Etter	Lebanon VAMC
Hank Fiola	Marine Corps League, DOP

Ray Greene	Disabled American Veterans, DOP
Dennis Guise	Chief Counsel, DMVA
Paul Hastings	Marine Corps League, DOP
Larry Holman	Vietnam Veterans of America, DOP
Rich Hudzinski	Lehigh Valley Military Council
Chuck Jackson	Military Order of the Purple Heart, DOP
Katie Johnson	Transition Assistance Advisor
Dave Johnston	Vietnam Veterans of America, DOP
Diane McNaughton	Exec. Dir., Senate VA Emergency Preparedness Committee
Tom Minchin	Marine Corps League, DOP
Brian Natali	Chief, Veterans Services & Programs, ODAGVA
Joe Palaia	Catholic War Veterans, DOP
David Sandman	Veterans of Foreign Wars, DOP
Gordy Sheriff	Marine Corps League, DOP
Constance Snavelly	Lebanon VAC
Roger Snook	Snyder County Veterans Affairs
Debbie Stubljär	Deputy for Administration, DMVA
Colleen Washinger	Dauphin County Veterans Affairs
Jim White	Disabled American Veterans, DOP
Brenda Zechman	Schuylkill County Veterans Affairs

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