

**PENNSYLVANIA STATE VETERANS' COMMISSION MEETING
KEYSTONE CONFERENCE CENTER
FORT INDIANTOWN GAP
ANNVILLE, PA 17003-5002
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2013 – 10:00 am**

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

Oath of Office:

Mr. Dennis Guise administered the Oath of Office to the following individuals:

- Mr. Russell Canevari – State Commander – Veterans of Foreign War
- Mr. Stanley Rolnik – Commander – PA Jewish War Veterans

Remarks by The Adjutant General - MG Wesley E. Craig:

MG Craig briefed the Commission members on the following topics:

- Impact of the Government Shutdown and Technician furloughs
- Pennsylvania National Guard current unit mobilizations and total deployments
- Future Unit Mobilizations
- Overview report on the PA Veterans' Trust Fund Monthly Revenue and Expenditures
- Act 66 Claims / Values Report
- Future Outreach Engagements

VISN 4 Report - Mr. Gary Devansky, Director, Coatesville VMAC:

Mr. Devansky provided the following information:

Telehealth

- CVT to Home – Seven VISN 4 facilities launched CVT to Home services in FY13.
- Tele-Derm Regional Reading Center (TDRRC) – V4 implemented a regional reading center for derm images in FY13.
- Tomorrow's Hope (TH) – TH is a residential treatment and transitional housing facility located in Coalport, PA. Coalport is located in a very remote area creating significant access issues to over 35 veterans residing there. V4 established virtual connectivity with TH, allowing staff to meet with their veteran patients via a CVT connection.

Mental Health Hiring and Access

- VISN 4 exceeded their goal by hiring 350.5 mental health professionals as part of this unprecedented mental health staffing initiative.
- During FY13, 97.08% of established patients are seen within 14 days of their desired date, and 63.06% of new patients are seen within 14 days of their appointment creation date.
- 87.05% of Veterans discharged from inpatient mental health programs receive outpatient treatment within 7 days of their discharge (Target = 75%). VISN 4 leads the nation in timeliness of post-discharge follow-up care.

Homeless

- VISN 4 was allocated 2,085 HUD-VASH vouchers. As of September 25th, 1,682 (80.6%) Veterans are housed with a HUD-VASH voucher.
- VISN 4 served 25% (1,458) more homeless patients in FY13 than in FY12.
- There are 22 Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) programs within the VISN 4 catchment area. Fourteen of the programs were approved in FY 2013. Program award amounts total \$19 million.

FY13/14 Budget & NRM Construction

- The FY13 budget for VISN 4 was \$2.46B through September 2013.
- Capital improvements invested \$141M in NRM projects and an additional \$82M in equipment across the network.
- The FY14 budget for VISN 4 is \$2.47B. VISN 4 has also been allotted \$37M for NRM and \$62M for equipment.

Legionella

- VA Pittsburgh has found the problem, has worked aggressively to correct it. The situation is under control and closely monitored.

Leadership Changes

- Philadelphia – Mr. Daniel Hendee has been selected as the new Director.
- Wilmington – Active recruitment for a new director is under way.

Review and Approval of September 2013 Meeting Minutes:

The committee members reviewed the September Meeting Minutes. Member at Large, Ms. Jeannine Botta Guth, made a motion, seconded by Commander Colt Coleman, to approve the September 6, 2013 minutes; the motion carried.

Review and Approval of the 2014 Proposed Meeting Schedule:

Commander Michael Iacavazzi motioned for approval of the proposed meeting schedule. The motion was seconded by President Tim Cleveland. The motion carried and the schedule was approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

Chief Counsel Update by Mr. Dennis Guise: Nothing to report at this time.

Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs Update by Mr. Dusty Durand:

Mr. Durand briefed the Commission on current and proposed legislative priorities as follows:

Current Legislative Priorities:

- Paralyzed Veteran Pension
- Educational Assistance Program (EAP)
- Military Physician Incentive Program
- Military Family Relief Assistance - Needs further analysis to clarify some language

Proposed Legislative Priorities

- Motorcycle License Plate
- Global War on Terrorism Bonus Program
- Volunteer Behavioral Health
- Keystone Community Covenant/Joining Community Forces
- Sell/Convey - Hunt/Pine Grove Armories
- Youth Challenge Program

Current Legislation of Interest

- Education/PA Residency to Military/Veterans
- Veterans Lottery Game
- Priority Registration for Current Military Service Personnel and Veterans Providing for Transfer & Articulation Oversight Committee
- Developing Opportunities in Veterans' Education – DOVE Program
- Local Earned Income Tax for Active Duty Pay

Mr. Durand also conveyed excitement over the Youth Challenge Program. The purpose of the youth challenge program is to improve the life skills and employment potential of at-risk youths between 16 and 18 years of age by providing structured, military-based training and supervised work experience. Statistics from similar programs in other states have shown that 42% of the participating youth enter a secondary education program, and 9% enter the military.

Homes Update by Mr. Ed Beck:

Mr. Beck provided the following update.

- The total State Veterans' Homes Occupancy is 88 %.
- The rate for Nursing Care / Dementia Occupancy is 93%.
- Occupancy Rates for Personal Care/Domiciliary beds is 76 %.
- The licensure status in each of the homes was current and in compliance with all legal standards.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF REPORTS AND GRANTS:

Mr. Natali presented the following reports to the Commission:

The report for the **Veterans' Emergency Assistance Program** was reviewed. Commander Michael Iacavzzi made a motion, seconded by President Tim Cleveland, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried.

The report for the **Blind Pension Program** was presented. President Neil Appleby made a motion, seconded by Commandant Gordon Sheriff, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried.

The report for the **Paralyzed Pension Program** was reviewed. President Neil Appleby made a motion, seconded by Commandant Gordon Sheriff, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried.

The report for the **Educational Gratuity Program** was reviewed. Commander Michael Iacavzzi made a motion, seconded by President Tim Cleveland, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried.

The report for the **Disabled Veterans' Real Estate Tax Exemption Program** was reviewed, and the Requests for Waiver to the five acre rule presented. Chairman John Brenner declared the standing motion for the five acre rule. President Tim Cleveland made a motion, seconded by State Commander Russell Canevari to accept the report as presented. The motion carried.

The report for the **Persian Gulf Veterans' Benefit Program** was reviewed. Commander William Cleveland made a motion, seconded by Commander Colt Coleman to accept the report as presented. The motion carried.

The report for the **Military Family Relief Assistance Program** was reviewed. Commandant Gordon Sheriff motioned for approval, the motion was seconded President Tim Cleveland. The motion carried.

The report for **ACT 66 County Offices Report** was reviewed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Pennsylvania War Veterans Council Items (PWVC):

Mr. Paul Hastings provided a report of the PA War Veterans Council meeting. He reported that the PWVC has voted on seven legislative priorities. They are as follows:

- Increase funding for the Service Officer Program (Act 66) to enhance and expand outreach.
- Support Small Games of Chance modifications for non-profit veterans' organizations only.
- Increase funding to maintain services of the DAV Transportation Network.
- Support Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans Pension Amendments.
- Support Veterans Lottery Ticket. HB1205.
- Support Mental Health Programs for Returning Veterans. A Priority.
- Support Training and Employment Programs for Returning Veterans. A Priority.

Commander Russell Canevari made a motion that the State Veteran's Commission endorse and support the legislative goals voted on by the PA War Veterans' Council. The motion was seconded by President Neil Appleby.

Adjutant John Getz stated that they still need help with the Small Games of Chance Bill to keep Tavern Owners out of the legislation. If we fail to do so we will lose our smaller posts. Mr. Brenner stated that it will be expressed as a major concern when they meet with the Governor's Staff later that month.

Mr Paul Hastings also reported that the PWVC supports the legislation modifying the MFRAP Program, and will strongly opposes any legislation that supports any kind of pay day loan program.

Hall of Fame Recommendations:

Hall of Fame packets presented by Southwest Veterans Center for Mr. Leslie H. Sabo, Jr., and Mr. Archibald Mathies were automatically approved by the Commission. Both nominees qualified automatically as Medal of Honor recipients.

Election of Officers:

Mr. Dennis Guise, Chief Counsel for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs presided over the Election of Officers process.

Election of Chairman: Commander Russell Canevari presented the nomination to retain Mr. John Brenner as Chairman of the State Veterans' Commission. Commander William Cleveland turned the nomination into a motion. The motion was seconded by Commander Michael Iacavazzi. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

Vice-Chairman: Commander Colt Coleman presented a nomination to retain Mr. Gerald Hawk as Vice-Chairman of the State Veterans' Commission. Member at Large Jeannine Botta Guth turned the nomination into a motion. The motion was seconded by President Thomas Haberkorn. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / GOOD OF THE ORDER:

President Haberkorn announced an Agent Orange Townhall Meeting sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans of America to be held on October 27, 2013.

President Appleby announced that October 15 is White Cane Day – White Cane Day is to remind people to stop their vehicle when they see a person with a white cane at a crosswalk.

Commandant Sheriff announced that it is time for the Toys for Tots Drive, and asked Commission members to help by putting a drop off box at their respective locations. He stated that last year the drive was difficult and that the Marine Corps League would appreciate their support.

Chairman Brenner reminded members about the meeting with the Governor to be held for members of the State Veterans' Commission on October 17, 2013 at 9:00 am.

TIME AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING:

Friday, December, 6, 2013, at 10:00 am
Arrowheads / Community Club
Building 9-65, Fort Indiantown Gap
Annville, PA 17003

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Brenner adjourned the meeting at 11:52 hours.

The following members of the Commission were present:

MG Wesley E. Craig, The Adjutant General
Rick Hamp, Designee for Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs
John Brenner, Chairman, State Veterans Commission
Gerald Hawk, Vice-Chairman, State Veterans Commission
Dominic DiFrancesco, Member at Large
Jeannine Botta Guth, Member at Large
John B. Getz, Jr., Designee for Commander, Veterans of Foreign War
Neil Appleby, President, Blinded Veterans Association
Gordon Sheriff, Commandant, Marine Corps League
Colt Coleman, Commander, AMVETS
Samuel Blow, Jr. Commander, Disabled American Veterans
Jim White, Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans
William Harris, Military Officers Association of America
Michael Iacavazzi, Commander, Italian American War Veterans
Tim Cleveland, President, State Association of County Directors of Veterans Affairs, Inc.
Harold A. Gennaria, Commissioner, Emeritus
William A. Cleveland, Commander, American Legion
Kit D. Watson, Adjutant, American Legion
Kenneth Walters, Designee for Director, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America
Thomas W. Haberkorn, President, Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
Stanley Rolnik, Commander, Jewish War Veterans
Russell R. Canevari, State Commander, Veterans of Foreign War
Michael J. Mescavage, Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Charles Jackson, Adjutant, Military Order of the Purple Heart

The following members of the Commission were absent:

Donald McMaster, Commander, Catholic War Veterans
Harold Gennaria, Commissioner, EMERITUS

Others present:

MG Randall Marchi, Deputy Adjutant General-Army
BG Anthony Carrelli, Deputy Adjutant General – Air
Tricia Harris, Governor’s Office
Diane McNaughton, Sen Lisa Baker’s Office
Roger L. Snook, Snyder County VA Director
Belinda Albright, Northumberland County VSO
Rich Hudzinski, VVA, LVMAC

Hank Fiola, MCL
Paul Hastings, MCL
Tom Dye, Lehigh County, Veterans Affairs
Gary Devansky, Coatesville VAMC
Brenda Zechman, Schuylkill County VSO
Scott Rainey, State Civil Service Commission
Colleen Washinger, Dauphin County VA
Constance Snavely, KPVA
Carmen DeSanti, DAV
Robert Cudworth, DAV
Dave Johnsten, VVA PASC
Tom Minchin, MCL
Joan Nissley, PAO
Tom Cherry, PAO
Dennis Guise, CC
Dusty Durand, LLO
Brian Natali, VA
Edward Beck, VA
Amy Wert, DMVA
Darren McNoldy, DMVA
Bryan Bender, DMVA
Sue Kenney, VA

The minutes of this meeting are respectfully submitted by the undersigned.

Jerry G. Beck, Jr.
BG, USA, Retired
Deputy Adjutant General
for Veterans' Affairs