

**PENNSYLVANIA STATE VETERANS' COMMISSION MEETING
COMMUNITY CLUB, FORT INDIANTOWN GAP
ANNVILLE, PA 17003-5002
FRIDAY, 7 December 2012, 1000**

The State Veterans' Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order by Secretary Gould. 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 the following new Commission members:

- Ms. Ruth Fairchild, Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Mr. Dominic DiFrancesco, Member-at-Large

Remarks by MG Wesley Craig, The Adjutant General: MG Craig informed the Commission that LTC Muglia will be leaving and LTC Durand will be replacing her as the Legislative Liaison Officer. MG Craig provided the members and update on the Pennsylvania National Guard's involvement in assisting with the aftermath of hurricane Sandy. MG Craig provided the Commission an update on the current and upcoming PA Army and Air National Guard deployments. MG Craig updated the Commission members on the Funeral Honors Program. MG Craig told the Commission he would be doing his annual holiday visits of our State Veterans' Homes the week of 10-14 Dec 12. He encouraged the Commission members to visit the Homes as well.

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

Michael Gould: BG Gould provided the Commission an update on the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation (PVF). He told the Commission the Foundation, on average, is writing checks totaling \$18,000 a month. He told the members that Turkey Hill selected the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation as their 2013/2014 non-profit organization to support.

Remarks from Mr. Michael Moreland, Director VISN 4: Mr. Moreland provided the Commission an update on current and upcoming construction in VISN4. Mr. Moreland updated the Commission on the Legionella issue at Pittsburgh VA.

Remarks from Mr. Joshua Lang, Pennsylvania Outreach Coordinator, Student

Veterans of America: Mr. Lang provided the Commission members with an overview of the Student Veterans of America program. He also briefed the Commission on their upcoming conference scheduled for 2-3 March 2013 in Pittsburgh.

Review and Approval of 5 October 2012 Meeting Minutes

Commandant Corley made a motion, seconded by Commander Iacavazzi, to approve the 5 December 2012 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Office Administration Update by Ms. Debbie Stubljar: Ms. Stubljar explained how Senate Bill 819 will enable DMVA to hire health care professionals at the six State Veterans' Homes in a timelier manner. She told the Commission this Bill gives DMVA the ability to do direct recruitment for certain job titles. She stated the process as it stands now takes a minimum of three months to get an employee on board.

Chief Counsel Update by Mr. Dennis Guise: Mr. Guise briefed the Commission on the increase, based on the change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to the rebuttable presumption for the Disabled Veterans' Real Estate Tax Exemption Program. Mr. Guise told the members that based on current CPI data, through October 2012, the income level would change by 4.89% to \$85,320. He told the Commission the CPI report for November 2012 would be available December 15 and was needed to complete the calculation. He stated the CPI may change by a few tenths of one percent based on recent monthly changes. Mr. Guise asked the Commission to approve the new rebuttable presumption income level of \$85,320, plus or minus the percent of change in November 2012, and authorize publication of a notice of the change effective January 1, 2013. President Grover made a motion, seconded by Commander Mescavage, to approve the new rebuttable presumption income level.

Mr. Foster, Designee for Commander, The American Legion, questioned if the Commission had to approve the new rebuttable presumption income level. Mr. Guise informed him that the Commission was required to approve the new rebuttable presumption income level.

The Commission members discussed the issue.

The motion was carried.

Legislative Update by LTC Lauren Muglia: LTC Muglia provided the Commission a legislative update. She also informed the members that it will take the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation approximately 18 months to have the Veterans' identifier available on PA driver's licenses.

Homes Update by BG (PA) Michael Gould:

BG Gould provided the Commission a Homes' update. The overall occupancy average is 92 percent. For Nursing Care beds, the overall average is 93 percent. For Personal Care/Domiciliary beds, the overall average is 87 percent. He also provided the licensure status for all the State Veterans' Homes. BG Gould informed the Commission Mr. Andrew Ruscavage was selected as the Director, Bureau of Veterans' Homes, and will be on board February 1, 2013.

NEW BUSINESS

WAR VETERANS COUNCIL ITEMS (WVC): Nothing reported.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF REPORTS AND GRANTS:

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

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

The report for the Educational Gratuity Program was reviewed. Ms. Botta Guth 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. Commandant Corley made a motion, seconded by Commander Abramson, to accept the report as presented not including seven waiver requests. Motion carried.

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

The report for the Persian Gulf Veterans' Benefit Program was reviewed.

Mr. Natali provided the Commission an update on Act 66. President Harris asked Mr. Natali what the effect was on Title 66 Funding. He asked how many additional personnel were hired by our VSOs and what impact these additional positions had on assisting our veterans. Mr. Natali stated he had the information in his office and he would provide it to President Harris.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Mr. Foster said he is proud of The American Legion for donating almost a quarter of a million dollars to help open the Fisher House in Pittsburgh.

Mr. Blow asked for the status on the Women Veteran Symposium. BG Gould said it will be held in Gettysburg March 8-10, 2013 and he is please with the number of women Veterans registered so far. He also stated there is a link to the Symposium on the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation website.

Commandant Corley spoke about the small games of chance and the impact the new legislation is having on Service Organizations and what will happen to the Veteran's assistance when these Clubs close. The Bill that was passed has to be amended or we're not going to be around as groups having our own homes.

President Haberkorn stated he spoke to his Representative and he assured him that in the new session this Bill will be one of the first issues they take up.

Mr. Foster stated the War Veterans Council is the forum that they should be working through on the Small Games of Chance Bill.

Mr. Cudworth, National Executive Committee, Disabled American Veterans, stated he was solicited several times in the past few weeks by an organization called the National Veterans Service Foundation. Mr. Cudworth stressed to the Commission this organization is NOT part of the DAV and they are literally costing the DAV millions of dollars in donations. He stated they are under investigation in six states and that 99% of their funds are used for salaries, etc.

Ms. Botta Guth asked if there was a published list of legitimate organizations. BG Gould stated there unfortunately is not and recommended when they call ask to see their 990 so you can see where the money is going.

Mr. Wojnaroski asked that everyone turn off their cell phones prior to the start of the meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Hasting, on behalf of the War Veterans Council, said they are hosting a legislative breakfast at the Ryan Office Building, on February 5, 2012, from 8:30 a.m. through 10:00 a.m. He said everyone was welcome to attend.

BG Gould encouraged everyone to visit the Veterans' Homes during the holiday season and spend some time with those here.

ADJOURNMENT

Secretary Gould adjourned the meeting at 1140 and announced the next meeting will take place on Friday, 1 February 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
Jeannine Botta-Guth, Member-at-Large
Samuel Blow, Designee for Commander, Disabled American Veterans, DOP
Neil Corley, Commandant, Marine Corps League, DOP
Carmen DeSanti, Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans, DOP
Tom Dye, Designee for President, State Assoc. of Cnty Directors of Veterans' Affairs, Inc.
Ruth Fairchild, Designee for 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
Wanda Grover, President, Blinded Veterans Association
Tom Haberkorn, President, Vietnam Veterans of America, PSC
John Hahn, Commander Catholic War Veterans, DOP
Bill Harris, President, Military Officers Association of America
Paul Hasting, Designee for Adjutant, American Legion, DOP
Michael Iacavazzi, Commander, Italian-American War Veterans, DOP
Michael Mescavage, Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart, DOP
Michael Moreland, Director, VISN4
Edward Wojnaroski, Member-at-Large

The following members of the Commission were absent:

John Brenner, Chairman, Member-at-Large
Harold Gennaria, Emeritus
Gerald Hawk, Vice Chairman, American Veterans, DOP
Steve Ryersbach, Commander, American Veterans, DOP
Fred Tregaskes, Commander, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America, DOP

Others present:

Lou Abramson	Jewish War Veterans, DOP
Belinda Albright	Northumberland County Veterans Affairs
Neil Appleby	Blinded Veterans Association
Ed Burris	Warren County Veterans Affairs
Donna Coulter	Veterans of Foreign Wars, DOP
Robert Cudworth	Disabled American Veterans, DOP
David Cumiskey	US DOL - Vets
Chris DeArment	Mifflin County Veterans Affairs
Dale Derr	Berks County Veterans Affairs
Anthony DiFrancesco	Dauphin County Veterans Affairs
Hank Fiola	Marine Corps League, DOP
Ray Greene	Disabled American Veterans, DOP
Dennis Guise	Chief Counsel, DMVA
Rich Hudzinski	Lehigh Valley Military Council
Diane McNaughton	Exec. Dir., Senate VA Emergency Preparedness Committee
Tom Minchin	Marine Corps League, DOP
Brian Natali	Chief, Veterans Services & Programs, ODAGVA
Joan Nissley	Press Secretary, DMVA
Joe Palaia	Catholic War Veterans, DOP
Roger Snook	Snyder County Veterans Affairs
Debbie Stublar	Deputy for Administration, DMVA
Colleen Washinger	Dauphin County Veterans Affairs
Brenda Zechman	Schuylkill County Veterans Affairs

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