

**PENNSYLVANIA STATE VETERANS' COMMISSION MEETING  
KEYSTONE CONFERENCE CENTER, FORT INDIANTOWN GAP  
ANNVILLE, PA 17003-5002  
FRIDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2012, 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 the following new Commission members:

- Ms. Jeannine Botta-Guth, Member-at-Large
- Mr. Joseph Cocco, Commander, The American Legion
- Mr. Allan Abramson, Commander, Jewish War Veterans
- Mr. Tom Dye, Designee for President, State Assoc. of Cnty 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 stated that by the end of 2012 the Pennsylvania National Guard will have 1704 service members deployed and 3539 service members will be deployed by the end of 2014.

**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) which included organization donations received and grants awarded to organizations/individuals.

On behalf of the PVF, BG Gould presented a check in the amount of \$1,500 to Mr. Eric Fussenegger, Marine Corps League of Pennsylvania Foundation, Inc.

BG Gould also thanked The American Legion for their generous \$10,000 donation to the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation.

BG Gould told the Commission that the Department of Health is very impressed with the changes at Southeastern Veterans' Center. He also informed the Commission the VA certification of the beds has not yet been rescheduled, but will be done sometime after the 18<sup>th</sup> of October. It's just a matter of scheduling at this point.

BG Gould provided the Commission information on an upcoming Women's Veteran Symposium scheduled for 8-10 March 2013 at the Wyndham in Gettysburg, PA.

**Remarks from Mr. Gary Devansky, Director Coatesville VAMC:** Mr. Devansky provided the Commission several hand-outs containing information on current and upcoming construction in VISN4.

**Review and Approval of 7 September 2012 Meeting Minutes**

Commandant Corley made a motion, seconded by Commander Iacavazzi, to approve the 7 September 2012 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Office Administration Update by Ms. Debbie Stubljär:** Ms. Stubljär 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 informed the Commission that DMVA, working with the Scotland School for Veterans' Children (SSVC) Alumni Association is preparing an application to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for approval of a state historical marker on Scotland Road near the site of the campus. He asked the Commission to vote to endorse the erection of an historical marker near SSVC. President Harris made a motion, seconded by Mr. Wojnaroski, to send a letter of support to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Motion carried.

**Legislative Update by LTC Lauren Muglia:** LTC Muglia provided the Commission the DMVA Legislation of Interest 2011-2012 Legislative Session.

There was a long discussion regarding Representative Readshaw's amendment to SB 1531. The Commission members and Service Organizations were encouraged to contact their Senator or State Representative to ask them to vote nay to Representative Readshaw's amendment to SB 1531 and urge to them to support SB 1531 UNAMENDED.

President Harris informed the Commission HB 2191, the Payday Lending Bill did not get out of Committee.

**Homes Update by BG (PA) Michael Gould:**

BG Gould provided the Commission a Homes' update. The overall occupancy average is 94 percent. For Nursing Care beds, the overall average is 96 percent. For Personal Care/Domiciliary beds, the overall average is 89 percent. He also provided the licensure status for all the State Veterans' Homes. BG Gould informed the Commission of Mr. Paul Cain's resignation effective 7 September 2012.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**WAR VETERANS COUNCIL ITEMS (WVC):** Commandant Cocco had nothing to report.

**Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

Mr. Guise conducted elections of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2012-2013 year. Commander Cocco nominated Mr. John Brenner for Commission Chairman. John Brenner was unanimously reelected as Commission Chairman. Commander Ryersbach nominated Mr. Gerald Hawk for Commission Vice-Chairman. By unanimous vote Mr. Gerald Hawk was reelected as Commission Vice-Chairman.

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF REPORTS AND GRANTS**

The report for the Veterans' Emergency Assistance Program was reviewed. Vice-Chairman Hawk 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: Commander Ryersbach made a motion, seconded by Mr. DeSanti, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried. Paralyzed Pension Program: Commandant Corley made a motion, seconded by Mr. Getz, to accept the report as presented. Motion carried.

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

The report for the Disabled Veterans' Real Estate Tax Exemption Program was reviewed. Mr. Dye made a motion, seconded by Commander Mescavage, to accept the report as presented not including one waiver request. Motion carried.

Mr. Natali reported one request for waiver to the five acre rule. Chairman Brenner stated the Commission has a standing motion not to approve any acreage waivers, therefore the application for waiver was denied.

The report for the Persian Gulf Veterans' Benefit Program was reviewed. Ms. Botta-Guth made a motion, seconded by Commander Ryersbach, to accept the report as presented. Motion Carried.

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**

Commander Cocco informed the Commission The American Legion has its own Homeless Corporation. He announced that recently they had a home donated to them in Harrisburg. He said it's a four apartment building. They received permission from the city of Harrisburg to make that a homeless veterans' home. He said the paperwork is being processed and they hope to have it up and running within the next month or so.

Vice-Chairman Hawk thanked the Commission for reelecting him as Vice-Chairman.

Chairman Brenner thanked Mr. Frank Lashinsky for his service to this country and to the State Veterans' Commission. He explained to the Commission that due to dwindling membership, the American Ex-Prisoners of War disbanded.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chairman Brenner reiterated the importance of voting and encouraged everyone to get out and vote in this November's election.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Brenner adjourned the meeting at 1150 and announced the next meeting will take place on Friday, 7 December 2012, 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  
John Brenner, Chairman, Member-at-Large  
Allan Abramson, Commander, Jewish War Veterans, DOP  
Gary Devansky, Director, Coatesville VAMC  
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.  
Joe Cocco, 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  
Gerald Hawk, Vice Chairman, American Veterans, DOP  
Bill Harris, President, Military Officers Association of America  
Michael Iacavazzi, Commander, Italian-American War Veterans, DOP  
Michael Mescavage, Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart, DOP  
Larry Reece, Designee for Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars, DOP  
Steve Ryersbach, Commander, American Veterans, DOP  
Kit Watson, Adjutant, American Legion, DOP  
Edward Wojnaroski, Member-at-Large

### **The following members of the Commission were absent:**

Harold Gennaria, Emeritus  
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
Robert Cudworth	Disabled American Veterans, DOP
Dale Derr	Berks County Veterans Affairs
Anthony DiFrancesco	Dauphin County Veterans Affairs
Hank Fiola	Marine Corps League, DOP
Eric Fussenegger	Marine Corps League of PA Foundation, Inc.
Dennis Guise	Chief Counsel, DMVA
Paul Hastings	Marine Corps League, DOP
Cecil Hengeveld	Former DAG-VA
BG Tim Hilty	Director, Joint Staff, DMVA
Larry Holman	Vietnam Veterans of America, PSC
Rich Hudzinski	Lehigh Valley Military Council

Tim Irving	Chief Information Officer, DMVA
Chuck Jackson	Military Order of the Purple Heart
Katie Johnson	Transition Assistance Advisor
Dave Johnston	Vietnam Veterans of America, PSC
Mandy Kroh	Director of Office Services, DMVA
Jim Laufenberg	The American Legion, DOP
Diane McNaughton	Exec. Dir., Senate VA Emergency Preparedness Committee
Brian Natali	Chief, Veterans Services & Programs, ODAGVA
Joan Nissley	Press Secretary, DMVA
Debbie Stublar	Deputy for Administration, DMVA
Colleen Washinger	Dauphin County Veterans Affairs
Amy Wert	Director of Budget, DMVA
Brenda Zechman	Schuylkill County Veterans Affairs

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