

ARROWHEADS COMMUNITY CLUB
FORT INDIANTOWN GAP
ANNVILLE, PA 17003

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order at 10:00AM by Chairman John Brenner.
2. **INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The meeting was opened with an invocation and recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Gordy Sheriff, Marine Corps League. Brig Gen Carrelli took this opportunity to introduce Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs, Maj Gen (Ret) Eric Weller.
3. **COMMISSION INTRODUCTION:** Commission members introduced themselves and their guests in attendance.
 - a. **Members Present:**
 - Mr. John Brenner, Chairman, State Veterans Commission
 - Brig Gen Anthony J. Carrelli, The Adjutant General
 - Maj Gen (Ret) Eric G. Weller, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs
 - Mr. Paul Foresman, Designee, AMVETS
 - Mr. Tom Brown, Commander, Veterans of Foreign War
 - Mr. John Getz, Adjutant, Veterans of Foreign War
 - Mr. Neil Appleby, President, Blinded Veterans Association
 - Mr. Henry Desrosiers, President, County Directors of Veterans Affairs
 - Mr. Robert Cudworth, President, Military Officers Association of America
 - Mr. Nick Taylor, Commander, Catholic War Veterans
 - Mr. Tom Haberkorn, President, Vietnam Veterans of America
 - Mr. Ken Walters, Designee, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America
 - Mr. Michael Iacavazzi, Commander, Disabled American Veterans
 - Mr. Samuel Petrovich, Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans
 - Mr. Gordon Sheriff, Designee, Marine Corps League
 - Mr. Jerry Frank, Commander, Jewish War Veterans
 - Mr. Bill Kelley, Representative, Korean War Veterans Asso
 - Mr. Michael Mescavage, Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart
 - Mr. Dale Miller, Designee, State Veterans Commission
 - Mr. Bruce Foster, Designee, The American Legion
 - Ms. Jeannine Botta-Guth, Member at Large
 - b. **Others Present:**
 - Mr. Nate Silcox, PA Senate
 - Ms. Jodi Zucco, Office of the Attorney General
 - Mr. Rick Hamp, Designee for DAG-VA, Director, P.I.R.O.
 - Mr. Matt Zamosky,
 - Ms. Belinda Albright, Northumberland County Veterans Affairs

Mr. Tim Cleveland,
Mr. Tony DiFrancesco, Dauphin county Veterans Affairs
Mr. Keith Bebee, MOAA/
Mr. Robert Gray
Mr. Rich Fine,
Mr. Raymond Green, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Frank Homme, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Chuck Jackson, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Mr. Bruce Foster, The American Legion
Mr. Paul DeVincenzo, The American Legion
Dr. Michael Adelman, Representative, VISN 4
Mr. Brian Natali, DMVA
Mr. Rich Hudzinski, LVMAC
Mr. Ed Beck, DMVA
Ms. Constance Snavelly, KPVA
Mr. Tom Minchin, MCL
Mr. Dave Cumiskey, USDOL-VETS
Mr. Michael Barrett, DMVA
Mr. Thomas Davis, DMVA
Ms. Joan Nissley, DMVA
Ms. Katie Johnson, TAA
Ms. Joyce Gibson, Executive Secretary, DMVA-OVA

Brig Gen Carrelli took this opportunity to introduce Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs, Maj Gen (Ret) Eric Weller.

Maj Gen (Ret) Weller gave a little background information on himself and thanked the Commission for a warm welcome.

4. **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 14, 2016 MEETING MINUTES:** The minutes from the October 14, 2016 Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission meeting was presented for approval. Mr. Michael Mescavage, MOPH, made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Nicholas Taylor, CWV, seconded the motion. The motion carried.
5. **MILITARY UPDATE:** Brig Gen Anthony Carrelli, The Adjutant General, provided the Commission with an update on current and future National Guard deployments and returns. Last month, Ft. Indiantown Gap hosted about 4,000 soldiers for the War Fighter Exercise. This was the first time this installation has hosted this exercise and it was a huge success. The Grand Opening of the USO was held during the War Fighter Exercise and had about 8,000 troops come through. Next week is the 75th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor. Please remember WWII Veterans and keep them in your thoughts and prayers. Brig Gen Carrelli had discussion with chief counsel about the Member at Large requirements. The statute is specific on the requirements for Member at Large and he cannot levy additional restrictions. There is an expected budget shortage, while visiting legislator's make your voice heard on this issue.

6. **VISN 4 UPDATE:** Dr. Michael Adelman presented the following brief:

Leadership: Russell Lloyd began serving as the Wilkes-Barre VAMC director on October 2. Carla Sivek began serving as the Coatesville VAMC on November 30. Robert Callahan, Lebanon VAMC director is serving as the interim director at the Wilmington VAMC. Margaret Wilson, Lebanon VAMC associate director of patient care services is serving as the Lebanon VAMC Acting Director. Dr. Judy Hayman is ending her service as the acting director of the Altoona VAMC, Charles Becker, Associate Director, will take back over as acting director.

Access/Trust: Dr. Adelman briefed on current access to VA care and non-VA care. Veteran's feedback indicates Veterans feel the VA is more effectively delivering on care and services, becoming more "user friendly" and increasingly showing empathy and making Veterans feel valued.

Online Experience: In collaboration with the US Digital Service Team, the VA will collapse their 500+ Veteran-facing sites into 1 experience, vets.gov. They have rolled out a new online education app that makes it easier to apply for programs such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill. You will soon see a single login, a much slicker prescription refill function, secure messaging with doctors, and much improved online claims status function. Early next year Veterans will be able to schedule primary care and request mental health appointments through an app.

Same-Day Service: All VISN 4 facilities have now implemented Same-Day Services.

Million Veteran Program: Philadelphia and Pittsburgh VA facilities are recruiting Veterans to join the Million Veteran Program, a research program aimed at improving health care for future Veterans. The Pittsburgh MVP team is going on the road to recruit Veterans, visit Pittsburgh.va.gov for their full schedule.

Call Center: Since October 12, VISN 4 facilities have been utilizing a new, centralized nurse triage call center based at VA Butler Healthcare. Veterans can speak to a registered nurse regarding health care concerns by calling their local VAMC and pressing "3".

Questions/Discussion: What is the current status on the use of advanced practice, registered nurses and nurse practitioners to help relieve the load in the primary care area? Currently, there are proposed regulations in the federal register that will allow all nurse practitioners, except in anesthesia, to function as independent practitioners. Right now, depending on their state of license, in some facilities we allow them to function as independent practitioners depending if their state of license allows that. Instead of creating new programs wouldn't it be easier to add the different sites to the existing program? The intent is from the main portal you will be able to access all the different sites.

7. **OLD BUSINESS**

a. **Policy, Planning and Legislative Affairs Update:** Mr. Joel Mutschler briefed on a tool available called the Network of Care. It is an online resource guide to assist Veterans, Military and their families. Any information you want included on the site should be written and signed by the Commander or Adjutant and forward to Rick Hamp. Remember to note your website address and administrator.

Questions/Discussion: When the information is populated will it also show on the County Network of Care site? Is there a tie-in with 211? The idea behind Network of Care is a holistic approach so they are able to provide, at the county level, a "one-stop shop". General Carrelli added once you click into the county level you will be provided with county information and

state level information. Will the information also be sent to 211 or is there an agreement? Don't have an answer yet, will report back on that information. General Carrelli stated this is our site, if we want to add links we can.

Staff visited the American Legion Post 357 in an effort to assist with a memorial honoring SPC William Evans, who was KIA 19 September 2005.

They are seeking reintroduction of the Memorial Trust Fund Grant to reinforce the need to assist in raising funds to maintain and complete memorials honoring our Veterans.

Mr. Nate Silcox provided a brief recap of the 2015/16 legislative session. Tentatively there is a joint Senate & House hearing scheduled for February 8, 2017. The Joint State Government Commission is going to provide a presentation on SR 255. Next Wednesday is Pearl Harbor Day and the Mechanicsburg Navy Depot is holding a Pearl Harbor Day service at the Capitol, it starts at 12:55PM in the East Wing Rotunda.

Questions/Discussion: Act 84 of 2016 says it exempts the Veteran Service Organizations from reality transfer tax, can you expand on it and exactly what it does? That bill did not come from the VA&EP Committee, it is listed for your information. Please see Act 84 of 2016 for more information.

- b. State Veterans Homes Update:** Mr. Andrew Ruscavage updated the commission on the SWVC licensure status. They currently remain on a Provisional I license, the DMVA has appealed this license and are waiting on further notice from the Department of Health (DoH).

BVH Inspections Activity – GJMVC; DoH complaint survey, SWVC; DoH complaint survey, SEVC; 2 DoH complaint surveys and DoH annual survey, HVH; annual Department of Human Service survey on the Personal Care Unit, DVVH; City of Philadelphia survey, PSSH; DoH annual survey Mr. Ruscavage briefed on the highlights of Holiday Activities at the State Veterans Homes.

Programs, Initiatives, Reintegration & Outreach Update: Mr. Rick Hamp provided an operational highlight to the commission. Over 6,000 Veterans have registered for the Veterans Registry. Continue your efforts to encourage your members to register.

Veterans Day at the Farm Show will be on January 12, 2017. The Department of Agriculture is offering the use of their booth and small stage for the entire day. DMVA is sending the Outreach Van for the entire week.

Does the State Veterans' Commission wish to hold a Veterans Symposium this year? If so, planning needs to begin now. Many female Veterans expressed a desire to have a separate Women Veterans Symposium, in the past we've held break-out sessions specifically for female Veterans. The State Veterans' Commission should provide recommendations. Mr. Hamp and Mr. Gilliland are available to help plan this event.

Last meeting operational action plans were presented to the Commission. What does the SVC wish to be involved in?

SB 1226 was signed by Governor Wolf and enacted as Act 109 of 2016, this amends Chapter 17 and 85 of Title 51 to enhance the VTF and Veterans Emergency Assistance Program.

The Governor's Advisory Council for Veterans Services held their quarterly meeting on 17 November. Mrs. Crystal Petery-Sherman has been selected as the Administrative Officers.

Mr. Hamp provided a brief update on the Wall of Faces program.

- c. Approval of Veterans' Programs Reports:** All programs reports were presented as a read ahead to the Commission members. Reports requiring a vote are; Veterans Temporary Assistance, Blind Veterans Pension, Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans Pension, Educational Gratuity Program and Disabled Veterans Tax Exemption Program.
- Mr. Michael Mescavage, Military Order of the Purple Heart, made a motion to accept the reports as presented. Mr. Nick Taylor, Catholic War Veterans, seconded the motion. Mr. Neil Appleby, Blinded Veterans of America, abstained from the voting, as he was unable to open the read ahead document. The motion carried.
- Mr. Natali briefed by exception on the updated Real Estate Tax Exemption presumptive amount of \$88,607. Mr. Robert Cudworth, Military Officers Association of America, made a motion to approve the updated presumptive amount of \$88,607. Mr. Nick Taylor, Catholic War Veterans, seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- Mr. Natali presented the updated property tax exemption form for approval. Mr. Gordy Sheriff, Marine Corps League, made a motion to approve the updated form. Mr. Michael Mescavage, Military Order of the Purple Heart, seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- **Pennsylvania Veterans Memorial:** Received a large grant last year and are putting it to use by re-leveling the plaza entryway. Continue to update and repair the Veterans Memorial.
- d. Outreach & Reintegration Update:** Mr. Chip Gilliland presented the current Act 66 summary. Mr. Gilliland noted the outreach engagements and some upcoming legislative events. The outreach team averages about 18 events per month. Mr. Gilliland provided a briefing on the Veterans' Trust Fund and the cumulative totals. November 18, 2016 ended the grant season for applications received with a total of 80 applications for the 501c3 organizations and 14 applications for the County Directors. January/February timeframe for grading applications. Mr. Chris Fidler, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America, has volunteered to be on the grading committee. Chairman Brenner asked members to volunteer as well. Mr. Nick Taylor, Catholic War Veterans, volunteered to serve that committee.
- Questions/Comments: Mr. Bruce Foster asked what the ODAGVA/ACT 66 Summary slide tells us. Mr. Gilliland responded that between ODAGVA and all the members of Act 66 that is the total claims submitted to date and the total amount of recoveries to date. The FY 16 – 17 is current year and FY 15 – 16 is last year for the whole year.
- e. PA War Veterans Council (WVC) Legislative Update:** Mr. Keith Beebe, Military Officers Association of America, briefed on their legislative goals the WVC discussed at their meeting. The legislative goals need to go through a review before being presented to the PA War Veterans Council. One goal is to increase the funding of Act 66.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Award Presentation:** Brigadier General Anthony Carrelli and Major General (Ret) Eric Weller presented Captain Matthew Pochak with a copy of Senate Resolution No. 489, "Veterans Day at the Capitol 2016". Chairman Brenner presented CPT Pochak with a letter from the State Veterans Commission.
- b. SVC Committee Actions:**

Judiciary Committee: Mr. Tom Brown, Veterans of Foreign Wars, provided a brief update on three major areas the committee has identified. Lack of annual reporting required for Veterans Treatment Courts, involvement of the present judges across the state/many Veterans are not being identified and lack of housing available to Veterans pending release.

Act 66 Committee: Mr. Samuel Petrovich, Disabled American Veterans, informed the commission they have been working diligently since September and he should have more specifics in February.

- c. **Vehicle Donations:** Ms. Jodi Zucco informed the commission a family that contacted her office is interested in donating a vehicle to a deserving individual or group. If any organization is interested in taking part please see Ms. Zucco.
- d. **Patriots Place:** Ms. Alice Paxson provided a brief introduction to Patriots Place located in Gettysburg, PA. For more information visit: www.patriotsplace.org.
- e. **Veterans' Day at the PA 2016 Farm Show/Homegrown By Heroes:** Mr. Scott Sheely provided more information about the Military, Veterans' and their Families day at the 101st Farm Show.

9. GOOD OF THE ORDER/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a. Mr. Tom Haberkorn, Vietnam Veterans of America, informed the commission in legislation they are trying to get the Veterans' First Act passed. SB 2921 Sen. Toomey has not signed on yet, Sen. Casey has. This concerns toxic exposure for our past, present and future Veterans. Please call Sen. Toomey at 202.224.3121 and let him know we need to get this legislation signed on.
- b. Chairman Brenner informed the commission they had an inquiry into the application for the State Veterans' Commission. This comes from the United States Submarine Veterans to be a representative on the State Veterans' Commission.
- c. Wreaths Across America will be at the Capitol, you have been asked to have SVC representation there on 12 Dec at 12PM.

10. NEXT MEETING: Friday, **February 3, 2017 at 10:00AM**
Arrowheads Community Club
Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA 17003

11. ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Brenner adjourned the meeting at 11:58AM.

The minutes of this meeting are respectfully submitted by:

Maj Gen (Ret) Eric G. Weller
Deputy Adjutant General
Veterans' Affairs