

# State Veterans Commission

## Meeting Minutes

December 1, 2017  
 10:00 AM to 11:56 PM  
 Arrowheads Community Club, FTIG  
 Annville, PA 17003

<b>Call to Order</b>	<b>Chairman John Brenner</b>
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The Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order at 10:00AM by Chairman Edgar Burris.

<b>Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance</b>
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The meeting was opened with an invocation by Chairman Burris and recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice Chairman Sam Petrovich.

<b>Commission Introductions</b>
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Col Michael Regan	Deputy Adjutant General for Air
Chairman Edgar Burris	State Veterans' Commission
Maj Gen (Ret) Eric Weller	Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs
Mr. John Pliska	Executive Director, AMVETS
Mr. Paul Foresman	Commander, AMVETS
Mr. Dwight Fuhrman	Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. John Getz	Adjutant, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. Edward Hanke	Commander, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Samuel Petrovich	Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Neil Appleby	President, Blinded Veterans Association
Mr. William Wright	Commander, Catholic War Veterans
Mr. Henry Desrosiers	President, County Directors for Veterans Affairs Association
Mr. Robert Cudworth	President, Military Officers Association of America
Mr. Thomas Haberkorn	Commander, Vietnam Veterans of America
Mr. Chris Fidler	Representative, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America
Mr. James Powell	Designee, Marine Corps League
Mr. Sanford Silver	Commander, Jewish War Veterans
Mr. William Kelley	Representative, Korean War Veterans
Mr. Mike Benham	Designee for the Adjutant, The American Legion
Mr. Bruce Foster	Designee for the Commander, The American Legion
Ms. Constance Snavely	Member at Large
Mr. John Cyprian	Member at Large
Mr. John Brenner	Member at Large

<b>Others Present</b>
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Dr. Michael Adelman	VISN 4
Paul DeVincenzo	American Legion
Colleen Washinger	Dauphin County Veterans Affairs
Tony Difrancesco	Dauphin County Veterans Affairs
Brenda Zechman	Schuylkill County Veterans Affairs
Keith Beebe	Military Order of the Purple Heart
Lisa Kaye	Monroe County Veterans Affairs

George Heiges	Lycoming County Veterans Affairs
Frank Passaniti	Lycoming County Veterans Affairs
Brian Querry	Center County Veterans Affairs
Viola C Hertzog	Lehigh County
Jennifer Hogaman	Clinton County Veterans Affairs
William Beadel	Clinton County Veterans Affairs
Gary Stopyra	Disabled American Veterans
Rich Hudzinski	Vietnam Veterans of America
Thomas Brown	Veterans of Foreign Wars
Nicholas Taylor	Catholic War Veterans
Jeffrey White	Vietnam Veterans of America
Matt Zamosky	PACDVA
Gerald Nikolaus	Catholic War Veterans
Justin Slep	Franklin County Veterans Affairs
Dave Cummiskey	DOL-VETS
Nancy Burris	
Jodi Zucco	Office of Attorney General
Tom Minchin	Marine Corps League
Eugene Bell	Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
David Wood	Director of Joint Staff - PANG
Harry Buchanan	Command Sargent Major
Col Mark Schindler	Deputy Adjutant General - Army
Joan Nissley	DMVA-Public Affairs
Dr. Darryl Jackson	DMVA-BVH
Rick Hamp	DMVA-OVA
Andrew Ruscavage	DMVA-BVH
Joel Mutschler	DMVA-PPL
Brian Natali	DMVA-OVA
Chip Gilliland	DMVA-OVA
Michael Barrett	DMVA-CCO
Janette Krolczyk	DMVA-OVA
Bill Weist	DMVA-OVA
<b>Oath of Office</b>	<b>Mr. William Wright</b>
Maj Gen Weller administered the Oath of Office to the following newly appointed Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission members: -Mr. William Wright, Catholic War Vets	
<b>Approval of the October 13, 2017 Meeting Minutes</b>	
<b>Motion:</b> Mr. Jim Powell made a motion to approve the minutes as distributed.	
<b>Second:</b> Mr. Ed Hanke seconded the motion.	
The body agreed, motion carried.	
<b>Military Update</b>	<b>Major General Eric Weller</b>
-Major General Eric Weller mentioned there are deployments going out every day of the week, every month of the year. For this month we have 200-600 people out on the road. We are approaching budget season for 2018-2019, submissions have to be level, which means that we cannot ask for anything more than last year.	
<b>Questions/Comments:</b>	
<b>VISN 4</b>	<b>Dr. Michael Adelman</b>

<b>Dr. Adelman available for questions or concerns</b>	
<p><b>Leadership:</b> Latrice Prince Wheeler is currently serving as the interim Deputy Network Director.</p> <p><b>VISN 4 Access:</b> More than 97% of appointments are completed within 30 days. In September, more than 208,000 outpatient appointments were conducted.</p> <p><b>Trust:</b> The goal is to have 90% of Veterans completing a VA survey that they agree or strongly agree with questions related to effectiveness, ease, emotion and trust. About 84% of inpatients trust VA to fulfill our country's commitment to veterans. Around 4 years ago the percentage was in the 50's. On October 16<sup>th</sup> VA presented the Care Act, designed to improve veterans experience with access to health care.</p> <p><b>Five Priorities:</b> Five priorities include modernization, providing more resources to the field, reduce beurocracy focusing on veterans &amp; updating facilities &amp; equipment. VA is working diligently to build system that is proactive in responding to needs of veterans. Flu shots, most organizations require employees are vaccinated, if not they must wear a mask. For first time they must provide documentation that they received flu shot, this runs December 1 through at least March 31<sup>st</sup>.</p>	
<b>Questions/Comments:</b>	
<p>-John Cyprian asked if it was VISN or Butler issue because they have been turned over to collections because billing hasn't been done properly.</p> <p>-Dr. Adelman stated this is an issue for many facilities that have Health Net. Phone number for these problems is 1-877-881-7618</p> <p>-Chris Fidler asked about the status of hiring a neurologist at the Lebanon VA.</p> <p>-Dr. Adelman said he signed off on 1 pay for 1 neurologist &amp; are actively recruiting others.</p>	
<b>OLD BUSINESS</b>	
<b>DMVA Policy, Planning &amp; Legislation Affairs</b>	<b>Mr. Joel Mutschler</b>
<p>-PA House will come back into session for December.</p> <p>-House Bill 165 is now Act 56 Veteran Service Award</p>	
<b>DMVA Public Affairs</b>	<b>Ms. Joan Nissley</b>
<p>-Ms. Joan Nissley briefed on the Vietnam Veterans Wall of Faces project. Only 52 more photos are needed in 11 counties. Entire lists are on website.</p> <p>-January 11 is Veterans, Military &amp; Family day.</p>	
<b>DMVA Bureau of State Veterans Homes</b>	<b>Mr. Andrew Ruscavage</b>
<p>-Mr. Andrew Ruscavage briefed on few projects all homes are within regulatory compliance with department of health, veterans administration &amp; department of human services.</p> <p>-Gino Merli Veterans Center will be completed in about 2 more weeks.</p> <p>-Delaware valley project coming in 2018.</p>	
<b>DMVA PIRO</b>	<b>Mr. Rick Hamp</b>
<p>-Mr. Rick Hamp update was in packet &amp; read ahead.</p>	
<b>Questions/Comments:</b>	
<b>Approval of Programs Reports</b>	
<b>Motion:</b> Mr. James Powell made a motion to approve the programs reports as presented in the read ahead.	
<b>Second:</b> Mr. Robert Cudworth seconded the motion.	
The body agreed, motion carried.	
<b>DMVA Services &amp; Programs</b>	<b>Mr. Brian Natali</b>
<p>-Mr. Brian Natali update was in packet &amp; read ahead.</p>	
<b>Questions/Comments:</b>	

<p>-Last month there was a question about the trees at the memorial.  -Memorial was opened in October 2001. In 2002, 2 trees developed Dutch elm disease. In 2004, 6 more developed Dutch elm disease. In 2006 trees were replaced with Bradford pear trees at a cost of about \$5000 which was donated by DMVA. They were replaced this fall with Japanese lilac trees which they expect to last 10-12 years.</p>	
<b>DMVA Outreach &amp; Reintegration</b>	<b>Mr. Chip Gilliland</b>
<p>-Mr. Chip Gilliland update was in packet &amp; read ahead.  -Prior years SVC members have helped grade the veteran trust fund, seeking help from 2 volunteers once again this year.  -Chris Fidler &amp; Nick Taylor volunteered.</p>	
<b>Questions/Comments:</b>	
<p>-Bruce Foster asked when will veterans trust fund will open?  -Chip Gilliland stated hoping to get notification of funding within next week. It will be out before end of the year.</p>	
<b>SVC By-Law Committee</b>	<b>Mr. Sam Petrovich</b>
<p>-Nothing to report at this time.</p>	
<b>SVC Act 66 Committee</b>	<b>Mr. Edward Hanke</b>
<p>-Nothing to report at this time.</p>	
<b>-SVC RETX Committee</b>	<b>Mr. Henry Desrosiers</b>
<p>-Motions have been made &amp; seconded to change 2 constitutional changes. Benefit to the surviving spouse of those KIA &amp; to eliminate the wartime service requirement.  -Recommend for some statutory changes to repeal the act of 161 of 2006 &amp; mandate 8903 to recognize that the date stamp on the claim as the date the exemption begins.</p>	
<b>SVC Legislative Committee</b>	<b>Mr. Bruce Foster</b>
<p>-Nothing to report at this time.</p>	
<b>SVC Pensions &amp; Relief/Grave Marking/State Military Cemetery Committee</b>	<b>Mr. John Brenner</b>
<p>-Bill for blind veterans could affect committee, increasing the pension from \$150 to \$200 per month.</p>	
<b>BVH Educational Information Update</b>	<b>Mr. Andrew Ruscavage</b>
<p>-Description of level of care, provides personal care, skilled nursing, &amp; dementia care.  -Gino Merli Veterans Center, 40 beds in home, Grand reopening January 7<sup>th</sup>.</p>	
<b>New Business</b>	
<b>Recognition/Award</b>	<b>Mr. Ed Burris/Maj Gen Weller</b>
<p>-Dominic Difranceso, Nick Taylor &amp; Mike Mescavage are awarded Pennsylvania accommodation medal for distinguished service by the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission.  -John Brenner earned appreciation of the DMVA for faithful service as chairman of SVC.</p>	
<b>Veterans' Preference Initiative</b>	
<p>-Kory Auch, joined commonwealth after 28 years in Air Force, Secretary Minnich appointed him.  -Senator Vulokavich looks at practical solutions.  -White house veteran conference, 49 states represented, lots of discussion about how to work hard for veterans.  -We want highly qualified individuals for the jobs, especially nurses.  -Veterans are in large demand, leadership comes along with our veterans.  -Action plans are being developed, their office are good listeners &amp; they remain open minded to ensure these processes will help our vets &amp; make the system easier.</p>	
PA Military Museum	

- PA Military Museum, Educate the public about the military service of Pennsylvanians to Colony, Commonwealth & Country from 1747 to the present.
- Friends is the official partner & mission support organization for the Pa Military Museum.
- Tyler Gum is museums site administrator.
- John Cyprian stated “commission membership” would not be able to accept the discounted offer, but the discounts are ok for the general public.
- Tyler Gum stated that offering a deal to veterans is not an official benefit.
- Ed Burris discussed if there was any interest in holding a meeting at the museum in Boalsburg.

**Good of the Order/Announcement**

- Dwight Fuhrman stated no-smoking bills are on the table & they want the state to get on board to support.
- Michael Barrett stated he is retiring at the end of the month, Taylor Walsh will be left in his place until a successor has been named. He thanked the commission.
- Nate Silcox stated state budget fiscal code & tax reform code were passed.
- General Weller has presented 43 briefings on budget issues.
- TAG has been talking with Governors budget office.
- Feedback has been that DMVA has not done enough to help, we need everyone’s support.
- TAG has been at every event & every meeting & has been more involved in veterans affairs than anyone can imagine.
- John Brenner stated that perceptions were discussed as well as other issues. Meetings were very informative & helpful.
- Ed Burris stated he wanted a presentation ready for next meeting, with the topic being potential suicide.

Friday, February 2, 2018  
 Arrowheads Community Club  
 Fort Indiantown Gap  
 Annville, PA 17003

**Adjournment**

Chairman Burris adjourned the meeting at 11:56 PM.

The minutes of this meeting are respectfully submitted by:

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