



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

MEETING MINUTES
Feb. 1, 2023, 1:00-3:02 PM
NCTC Classroom, Bldg. 8-63

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES IN ATTENDANCE

BG (PA) Maureen H. Weigl, Chairwoman, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs	Marc Ferraro, DMVA
Steve D'Ettorre, Governor's Policy Office	Debbie Smith, Dept. of Health
Tammy Ferguson, Dept. of Corrections	Kory Auch, Office of Administration
Denise Verchimak, Dept. of Education	Terrell Martin, DCED
Kevin Atkinson, Dept. of Aging	Kurt Myers, PennDOT
Micah Snead, Member at Large	Toshua Jarrett, Member at Large
Jeffrey Wallace, State Civil Service Commission	Dan Kuba, Dept. of Labor & Industry
Tom Edwards, Fish & Boat Commission	Cheryl Cook, Dept. of Agriculture
Col (R) Ward Adams, Member at Large	Jeff Geibel, Dept. of Drug & Alcohol Programs
Tim Arthun, Dept. of Banking & Securities	John Hallas, DCNR
James "Woody" Hogan, PWVC	Jamie Dunlap, PA Council on the Arts

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Nick Taylor, State Veterans Commission	Val Arkoosh, Dept. of Human Services
--	--------------------------------------

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael Pipe, Gov's Office, Dep. Chief of Staff	Michael Carrington, DOC
Jon Kaufman, MING	Maryann McEvoy, OAR
EL Sawyer, MING	Janette Krolczyk, DMVA
Joe Batt, DMVA	Jen Snyder, DMVA
Randall Wright, DOL VETS	John Noll, DMVA
Angela Keen, VISN 4	Greg Fry, DMVA
Fred Nardei, VISN 4	Melissa Singer, Transition Assistance
Govan Martin, Suicide Prevention Alliance	Angela Eder, Penn Waver
Ally Murr, YWCA	Sam Estrada, DMVA
Taylor Dippery, DMVA	Erica Nocho, DDAP
Rick Hamp, DMVA	Brendan Auman, DCED
Glenda Ebersole, Dept. of Aging	Hayley Miller, VLP
Robert Cherry, Dept. of Aging	Michael Woody, DMVA
Crystal Houser, L&I	Ralph Roach, L&I
Bill Cress, VISN 4	Keisha Kerr, VISN 4
Margo Coleman, DMVA	Tina Kotsalos, B&S
Kristi Brawley, PSU	Jessica Penn Shires, DOC
James Fearn, DHS	Jillian Rodgers, PSU
Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta, Moravian College	Trent Anderson, L&I
Norm Marden, OAG	Donna Tilley Hess, DHS
Lisa Grayson, PA Bar Assn.	Laura Maggiorini, VMC

Joan Nissley, DMVA	John Schwartz, Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse
Gabriel Wiener, MING	David Mosey, APRE Consulting
Bill Reed, YWCA	Leora Appleby, DCED
Elizabeth Cooper, DVOP, L&I	Brian Natali, DMVA
Kathy Silvia, Military Women's Memorial	Joann Tresco, PAARNG
Jonathan Bowman, DHS, OLTL	Dan Lynch, PA Chiefs of Police Assn.
Lana Evans, DMVA	Jennifer Spitler, DMVA
Joel Mutschler, DMVA	Samantha Cossman, DMVA
Tom Applebach, CDVA – Lehigh County	Chelsea Ellsworth, DMVA
Jennifer Hagaman, DMVA	Craig Swineford, DMVA
Susan Meighen, DMVA	Greg Holler, DMVA
Chip Gilliland, DMVA	Jolene Richardson, PAANG
Sierra Bilous, DHS, OMHSAS	Erica Moore, DMVA

<p>CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, AND OPENING REMARKS</p>	<p>The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services (GAC-VS) was called to order at 1:00 PM.</p> <p>Ms. Janette Krolczyk welcomed everyone for joining the hybrid meeting and asked everyone to sign in or send an email to have their attendance counted. She led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence.</p> <p>Mr. Marc Ferraro welcomed any new members who joined for the first time on behalf of Major General Schindler as new administration members come together to work holistically for veterans.</p> <p>Mr. Ferraro introduced Mr. Michael Pipe, the new Deputy Chief of Staff from the Governor's Office assigned to work with DMVA. Mr. Pipe previously worked as a County Commissioner in Centre County and is familiar with collaboratively approaching veteran services through the County Director of Veterans Affairs office. Mr. Pipe had taken a tour of Fort Indiantown Gap to view programs and projects underway and to become familiar with the needs of caring for a large veteran population.</p>
<p>APPROVAL OF NOV 2, 2022, MINUTES</p>	<p>No questions or corrections were noted on the draft minutes. Mr. Kory Auch motioned to approve the minutes, which Ms. Cheryl Cook seconded, and all unanimously approved.</p>
<p>GUEST SPEAKER: JAMIE DUNLAP, PA COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, AND FILMMAKERS JON KAUFMAN AND EL SAWYER (MEDIA IN NEIGHBORHOODS GROUP – MING)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Jamie Dunlap began by summarizing the work of the PA Council on the Arts and how beneficial arts programs can be for individuals and communities. A small staff of 12 individuals works on strategic partnerships throughout the commonwealth. Programs for the six DMVA veterans' homes began before the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a pause, but will continue to move forward. ▪ Guests Mr. Jon Kaufman and Mr. El Sawyer shared the trailer for the movie "Music Vets," in which, over the past six years, three veterans were followed through their trauma recovery using music and the arts to

	<p>heal. They welcome working with anyone to accomplish the planned movie screenings and educational forums.</p>
<p>AGING COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Margo Coleman explained that the committee wishes to work with the Homeless and Health Promotions Committees, and meetings have been set for mid-February to discuss cross-collaborative efforts. ▪ Ms. Coleman shared progress on connecting with Papa Pals, which stemmed from late 2022. Working through a VISN 4 contact on the committee, Papa Pals is looking at utilizing the Federal VA as a payor source for their programs for veterans. A pilot program exists in another VISN so that this concept may expand. ▪ The master list of partners who share the annual Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign toolkit messaging continues to grow. However, the committee would like more recommendations from those groups working with veterans or those who are providers for veterans.
<p>HOMELESS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Brendan Auman began by sharing his interest in discussing an Interagency Council on Homelessness to assist with state policy development, public education, and data sharing. ▪ Mr. Micah Snead explained that landlords are crucial partners in the current housing challenges. ▪ Mr. Auman described the federal U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and how it brings together 19 federal agencies that meet annually to discuss data trends and recent developments to create their plan to prevent homelessness. The plan includes foundation and solution pillars, outlined by strategies, to reduce homelessness by 25% by 2025. ▪ The federal VA had a goal of housing 38,000 veterans by the end of 2022, and they were able to house 40,401. ▪ Mr. Snead explained that the Homeowner Assistance Program had paused, and information from PHFA would explain application statuses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Brigadier General (PA) and Council Chairwoman Maureen Weigl stated that she had encouraged all counties to apply for HUD-VASH vouchers. Also, a \$125 million grant for low-income veterans to get home repairs is available, and she will share the details with the Homeless Committee. ➤ Also, three Hollywood Casinos collected a total donation of \$40,000 to the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) from their employees. More funds may come in throughout the year as the VTF is now on a drop box option. ➤ A press release will explain how the public can donate to the VTF and other funds during tax season or when registering a vehicle. ➤ Deputy Secretary Cheryl Cook explained that a monthly meeting occurs between the Department of Agriculture and the Casinos associated with racetracks. She will provide DMVA with the information to attend the next meeting to continue fostering relationships.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deputy Secretary Cook also shared that a recent meeting with a few agencies and the Governor's office occurred to discuss the continued impacts of the pandemic, and weekly check-ins will continue. General Weigl confirmed that DMVA had a representative at the meeting, and a few others may join the conversation moving forward.
<p>EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Crystal Houser explained that this quarter’s brief focused on veteran employment and hiring. She briefed on the PA Career Link services and how many veterans were served in 2022. ▪ Outreach efforts may include connecting with correctional institutions, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters in locations surrounding PA CareerLink® locations. ▪ Mr. Kory Auch explained Veterans' Preference and shared that the Commonwealth of PA, as an employer, has done well in hiring veterans. However, the pool of working veterans is declining. ▪ Mr. Auch mentioned a House resolution introduced last year looking at the Junior ROTC programs across PA would need to be reintroduced. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BG (PA) Weigl also shared that working with industries like UPMC, Geisinger, and Comcast, as examples, have been working to hire veterans, resulting in over one hundred veterans returning to work in PA in 2022 that would have otherwise gone elsewhere. The effort continues to work with more companies that could encourage veterans to live and work in PA. ➤ Deputy Secretary Tammy Ferguson explained the challenges of exiting the military and reintegrating into civilian life and believes that PA can do more to help bridge that gap for veterans. ➤ Mr. Auch and BG (PA) Weigl acknowledge the state is exploring transition programs that might work with state government employment, but it is more complicated than private industry. ▪ Mr. Randy Wright spoke about the HIRE Vets Medallion Program, which came about from the Hire Vets Act of 2017 aiming to entice employers to recruit, hire and retain veterans. The application just started at the end of January and will end on April 30th. ▪ Mr. Wright shared details of the 41 employers recognized this past year, a 30% increase from the year before.
<p>HEALTH PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Erica Nocho reviewed the committee goals and shared her excitement regarding future work with the Aging Committee regarding veterans' needs and health equity communications. ▪ Beginning with the Caring Messages sent in the past, verbiage will be tailored for Long-Term Care facilities, licensed social workers, veterans’ homes, and county commissioners to educate these groups on available assistance for veterans. This effort will utilize email communication, social media campaigns, and infographics. ▪ Ms. Nocho is looking to work with other committees and agencies to share these messages widely and have them circulated on a rotating basis.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BG (PA) Weigl commented that Comcast would expand the number of lift zones across the commonwealth. One currently exists in Philadelphia, where students who do not have access to the internet or high-speed internet can use those services to complete schoolwork. Comcast has plans to expand this to rural areas to serve individuals needing Tele-Health services. Veterans in rural areas may be able to obtain transportation to a lift zone for a Tele-Health appointment instead of arranging for transport to a doctor's office.
<p style="text-align: center;">WOMEN VETERANS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Elizabeth Cooper shared upcoming meetings and events throughout the year's first half. ▪ Ms. Kathleen Rice has been added as a second State Ambassador to assist Ms. Kathy Silvia with registering women veterans into the Military Women's Memorial. Ms. Rice will primarily cover the Philadelphia region. ▪ Ms. Cooper hopes to share information on resources for aging veterans as those become available. ▪ Ms. Cooper shared that the VFW Women Veterans Retreat will occur March 24-26 in the greater Pittsburgh area.
<p style="text-align: center;">JUDICIARY COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Michael Carrington shared how beneficial the committee and the GAC-VS are for the agencies involved, specifically the Dept. of Corrections, as veterans' issues remain at the forefront of their work. ▪ Mr. Carrington expressed the need for training for professionals who interact with veterans. Veteran Response Teams (discussed within the last committee meeting) explained that valuable training exists for law enforcement voluntarily in some communities. ▪ The committee understood the value of speaking to veterans with lived experience, so the meeting in mid-November included a veteran who had been part of a Veteran Service Unit (VSU) for his perspective on the programming. He will remain a resource to the committee moving forward. ▪ Greenhouse projects at the VSUs remain a high priority as they bring professionals in to teach the inmates about gardening, provide therapy and job opportunities, and benefit the community with produce grown. Future opportunities would include working with community employers in the greenhouse or nursery industry to assist in making connections for those reentering with those skills. ▪ The American Legion post 110 is open to staff members and inmates. The name will officially change sometime this year to remember a fallen corrections officer killed in Afghanistan in 2010. SCI Dallas may be a second location to open a post. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Ally Murr explained that she is involved with the Dauphin County Vet Court and offered assistance should anyone need her expertise.

<p>GOOD OF THE ORDER / CLOSING REMARKS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Micah Snead reminded everyone that February is Black History Month and provided a link to an article. Black Americans in the U.S. Army The United States Army ▪ BG (PA) Weigl explained that more Town Halls would occur in 2023 in a hybrid format. One focus will be on the PACT Act. ▪ Five new Veteran Service Specialists (VSSs) now work for DMVA in the PA VETConnect program so that each region will have a team of three individuals. ▪ BG (PA) Weigl introduced a few DMVA employees that may be new to the group. Mr. Michael Woody and Mr. Samuel Estrada work for the DMVA Policy Office, and Mr. Joe Batt is new to the DMVA Chief Counsel's Office. ▪ Ms. Krolczyk reminded all participants to check the DMVA website (www.dmva.pa.gov), where the approved meeting minutes and full slide deck will be available. ▪ Ms. Krolczyk also reminded all service members, veterans, family members, and caregivers to sign up for the Veterans Registry (www.register.dmva.pa.gov). Individuals can opt-in to the DMVA digest, the weekly publication with beneficial information.
	<p>Next Meeting: May 3, 2023, 1:00-3:00 PM Dept of Agriculture, 2301 N. Cameron Street, Harrisburg</p>
<p>ADJOURNMENT</p>	<p>The meeting adjourned at 3:02 PM.</p>

NEW ACTION ITEMS

#	ACTION	STATUS
1	Ms. Krolczyk to connect the filmmakers from MING to Ms. Tresco (PAARNG) and Ms. McEvoy (Office of Advocacy and Reform).	Completed
2	Ms. Krolczyk to arrange a meeting for the Aging and Homeless Committee chairs.	Completed
3	Deputy Secretary Cheryl Cook to provide the February meeting invitation to BG (PA) Weigl to talk with the Hollywood Casino Racetracks.	Completed
4	Ms. Krolczyk to arrange a meeting to discuss efforts for a PA Interagency Council on Homelessness.	Completed
5	Ms. Krolczyk to arrange a meeting for the Aging and Health Promotions chairs.	Completed
6	Mr. Wright is to provide a listing of the 41 businesses recognized by the HIRE Vets Medallion Program for 2022.	Completed

OLD ACTION ITEMS

#	ACTION	STATUS
1	Ms. Krolczyk to assist with messaging partners who can suggest veterans with "lived experience" to serve on various committees.	Completed