



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

MEETING MINUTES
NOV 1, 2023, 1:10-2:37 PM
Governor's Residence, Harrisburg

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES IN ATTENDANCE

BG (PA) Maureen H. Weigl, Chairwoman, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs	Mark J. Schindler, DMVA
Steve D'Ettorre, Governor's Policy Office	Cindy Dun, Dept. of Conservation/Nat Resources
Laurel Harry, Dept. of Corrections	Wendy Spicher, Dept. of Banking & Securities
Col (R) Ward Adams, Member at Large	Toshua Jarrett, Member at Large
Danielle Pierre, Dept. of Health	Kory Auch, Office of Administration
Denise Verchimak, Dept. of Education	Terrell Martin, DCED
Kevin Atkinson, Dept. of Aging	Kara Templeton, PennDOT
Dan Kuba, Dept. of L&I	Cheryl Cook, Dept. of Agriculture
Donna Tilley Hess, Dept. of Human Services	Jeff Geibel, Dept. of Drug & Alcohol Programs
Jeffrey Wallace, State Civil Service Commission	James "Woody" Hogan, PWVC
Tom Edwards, Fish & Boat Commission	Nick Taylor, State Veterans Commission

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Karl Blischke/Jamie Dunlap, PA Council on the Arts	Micah Snead, Member at Large
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OTHERS PRESENT

Governor Josh Shapiro	Michael Pipe, Governor's Office
George Malley, CMS	Conor Nealon, Governor's Office
Katie Weachock, Governor's Residence	Tom Cherry, DMVA
Janette Krolczyk, DMVA	John Noll, DMVA
Tiffany Cleary, DMVA	Rick Hamp, DMVA
Jen Snyder, DMVA	Taylor Dippery, DMVA
Patricia Clark, PDA	Marc Ferraro, DMVA
Seth Benge, DMVA	Angela Watson, DMVA
Michael Carrington, DOC	Margo Coleman, DMVA
Brendan Auman, DCED	Erica Nocho, DDAP
Crystal Houser, L&I	Elizabeth Cooper, L&I
Danielle Rudy, PA Housing Finance Agency	Jessica Penn Shires, DOC
Tammy Ferguson, DOC	Ed Cherry, DMVA
Billy Lanham, DOL VETS	Michelle Brandt, Archive Captioning
Joe Batt, DMVA	Ralph Roach, L&I
John Schwartz, Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse	Kristi Brawley, PSU
Tim Arthun, Banking & Securities	Tina Kotsalos, Banking & Securities
Leora Appleby, DCED	James Rowland, DHS
Melissa Baxter, DOH	James Fearn, DHS
Joan Nissley, Banking & Securities	Nicholas Haller, VISN 4

Ally Murr, American Legion	Dan Lynch, PA Chiefs of Police Association
Rachel Sheaffer, L&I	Susan Shelley, L&I
Kelsey Runk, L&I	Ryan Dysinger, DCNR
Bill Reed, YWCA of Greater Harrisburg	Tom Applebach, CDVA – Lehigh County
Maria Tagliaferri, DMVA	Lisa Kaye, CDVA- Monroe County
Angela Keen, VISN 4	Lisa Grayson, PA Bar Association
Sierra Bilous, DHS	Jennifer Spitler, DMVA
Jessica Penn Shires, DOC	Samantha Cossman, DMVA
Craig Swineford, DMVA	Chris Clark, DMVA
Lana Evans, DMVA	Jennifer Hagaman, DMVA
Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta, Moravian University	Joel Mutschler, DMVA
	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 1:10 p.m.</p> <p>Ms. Janette Krolczyk welcomed everyone joining the hybrid meeting and asked that everyone 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>Major General Schindler thanked everyone for attending the meeting and Governor Shapiro for allowing the year-end meeting to be held at the Residence. MG Schindler explained that PA is home to over 700,000 veterans, many of whom have complex needs, which is why DMVA appreciates the support from the administration and all the sister agencies.</p> <p>Governor Josh Shapiro addressed the group and shared the importance of welcoming diverse groups to the Residence. In that way, ideas can be discussed, problems solved, minds educated, and perspectives changed. As the son of a Navy father, Governor Shapiro understands the importance of serving commonwealth veterans. He believes three areas to focus on regarding veteran issues would be mental health, homelessness/housing, and criminal justice programs like problem-solving courts. With his "no wrong door" view, silos should be removed so that individuals needing assistance can get help quickly and the commonwealth can do right by its veterans.</p>
<p>APPROVAL OF AUG 2, 2023, 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>ADVOCATE OF THE QUARTER</p>	<p>Ms. Jamie Dunlap, from the PA Council on the Arts, was recognized as the quarter's veteran advocate for her passion for art and her dedication to assisting veterans through arts programs at the veteran homes, among other projects.</p>
<p>VETERANS IN PUBLIC SERVICE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Kory Auch explained that since developing the mechanism for identifying veteran employees within the commonwealth, the recognition

	<p>campaign has grown, and employers now know who their veteran employees are and appreciate the skills they bring to the table.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During the past few years of analyzing the agency data, Mr. Auch explained the breakdown by branch and the top five agencies with the highest percentage and overall veteran numbers. ▪ The first Space Force veteran has joined commonwealth employment recently so that new branch will begin showing up on reports as more join.
<p style="text-align: center;">AGING COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Margo Coleman updated the council on the progress of the Arts in Residency programs at the veteran homes and the fantastic boost in partners sharing the annual veteran pension poaching toolkit in 2023. ▪ Ms. Coleman explained the relationship with the Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse and West Chester University students working to educate DMVA on ways to safeguard our veterans from the viewpoint of young professionals entering the workforce. ▪ Home care services will be a focus moving forward to share community information when veterans wish to remain at home. The committee will also monitor the PA Master Plan for Older Adults as it takes shape in early 2024. ▪ The need for veteran-centric training is still present for social workers making first contact with veterans in the community. DMVA is working to generate such activities with collaborative partners for 2024.
<p style="text-align: center;">HOMELESS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Brendan Auman shared updates on the Federal VA's housing initiative for the second year. The goal for PA in 2023 was to house 1,545 veterans, engage with 964 unsheltered veterans, and ensure that no more than 5% of veterans who return to homelessness are identified and re-housed. VISN 4 in PA exceeded all goals for the year as of September 2023. ▪ Mr. Auman explained the importance of sharing information on what housing programs and initiatives exist and then leveraging those connections to develop new housing and preserve the existing projects. ▪ Mr. Auman stated the importance of having the right people at the table to discuss issues and disseminate information for awareness and best practices, as housing initiatives utilize many players to create the pipeline. ▪ Future committee meetings will incorporate more data to assist professionals with identifying trends and decision-making.
<p style="text-align: center;">HEALTH PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Erica Nocho briefed on the current goals of the committee, which are increasing knowledge and awareness for healthcare workers with a high turnover rate. Simple infographics are created with a mix of state and federal resources for service members, veterans, advocates, and caregivers that many disciplines can use and share. ▪ Moving forward, the committee wishes to spotlight programs working well in certain areas or counties that the group can discuss and share for awareness and growth.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Nocho encouraged everyone to approach her with suggestions of items to include in the quarterly infographics that the committee will be creating and sharing.
<p>EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Crystal Houser announced that the partners from Banking & Securities had a new conference occurring on November 8th called \$camJam. This conference is intended to educate veterans and families on how to avoid investment fraud and exploitation. ▪ Since its inception, the Business Hub Application served over 200 veteran-owned businesses, 1,927 self-identified service-disabled veterans, and 5,595 individual veterans using the program. ▪ The Small Business Administration's grantee (St. Joseph's University) held a week-long entrepreneurial boot camp for disabled veterans and graduated 35 veterans who left with business education, mentorship, and viable business plans. ▪ The Homegrown by Heroes program through the Department of Agriculture has 57 veteran members in 34 counties. ▪ There are now eight agriculture-related apprenticeships with the addition of the new Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Donna Tilley-Hess asked a question regarding the Troops to Teachers program. Ms. Houser explained that the program was part of last quarter's report, and the slides are available online. Also, additional informational slides for the current quarter would be posted online including general program updates.
<p>WOMEN VETERANS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Elizabeth Cooper shared updates on the SCI Muncy Veteran Service Unit. This unit raised more than \$4,000 for veterans by selling food and hygiene products, and their Victory Garden donated more than 2,500 pounds of fresh produce to the Central PA Foodbank via the Military Share Program. ▪ The Women Veterans Alliance needs PA women veteran photos, articles, and veteran resources to populate the magazine edition underway before it launches in June 2024. ▪ Digital literacy workshop collaboration will be a focus next year to reach older women veterans.
<p>JUDICIARY COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Michael Carrington shared that a few hundred employees from various agencies, along with their families, attended the veteran employee symposium held at SCI Dallas in May. A centralized symposium serving the Harrisburg area may be scheduled for 2024. ▪ Stockpiled items from correctional industries were used to generate over 1,000 supply bags. With the help of DMVA, these bags were distributed to veterans in need throughout the commonwealth. ▪ Mr. Carrington explained the need for veteran court mentors to assist veterans who have become justice-involved and are working to remain on a good path. The Dept. of Corrections has thousands of veteran employees who may be interested/able to serve in this capacity as they understand the justice system and how military experience can provide

	<p>structure for these individuals who need moral support and accountability through their challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New York University recently contacted the PA Dept. of Corrections regarding a reintegration component for outgoing veterans. This component could take the form of a pilot program that would assist family members in the community to get all parties ready for reunification after incarceration. Various agencies have offered to partner in this effort.
<p>GOOD OF THE ORDER / CLOSING REMARKS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BG (PA) Weigl thanked the Committee Chairs for all their hard work this year and the viewpoint of what agency collaboration can accomplish. ▪ BG (PA) Weigl also thanked the leadership around the table for participating in the quarterly agency-to-agency leadership meetings where DMVA and other agencies discuss current work to learn about what each other is doing and how they can work together. ▪ A Women Veteran Coordinator will be hired to focus on women and minority veteran populations and the service gaps that may exist. ▪ BG (PA) Weigl stated that the biggest issue regarding the veteran community is awareness. Getting information to those in need will remain a heavy lift, and the effort of advocates across the commonwealth. She also shared that all agencies in the commonwealth have veteran employees who may not know various benefits and services exist to help them, so knowledge and communication are essential. ▪ The GAC-VS has been nominated for a Pillar of Excellence Award through the Federal VA, and the results should be communicated next February. ▪ MG Schindler expressed his thanks for the work of the council and committees. He appreciates those who look at the details to determine what needs to be done and information on any adjustments required for our veterans' well-being. ▪ Ms. Krolczyk reminded all participants to check the following resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ DMVA website for the approved meeting materials. (www.dmva.pa.gov) ➢ Veterans Registry, where service members, veterans, family members, and caregivers can sign up for the DMVA Digest. (www.register.dmva.pa.gov). ➢ Veterans Trust Fund, where non-profit organizations and County Directors of Veterans Affairs can apply for grants that assist veterans in their communities. (Veterans Trust Fund Grant Program pa.gov) ▪ Ms. Krolczyk shared that a 10-year report for the GAC-VS will be finalized by the end of the year.
	<p>Next Meeting:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">February 7th, 2024, 1:00–3:00 p.m. NCTC Classroom, Bldg. 8-63, Fort Indiantown Gap</p>
<p>ADJOURNMENT</p>	<p>The meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.</p>

NEW ACTION ITEMS

#	ACTION	STATUS
1	Crystal Houser will share information on Troops to Teachers in the published PPT on the GAC-VS website.	Completed

OLD ACTION ITEMS

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