

HOLLIDAYSBURG VETERANS' HOME (HVH) ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2023

10:00 AM

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ildephonse "Duffy" Hines (Council President), Marine Corps League Department of PA

R. Raymond Lenz (Council Secretary), American Legion Department of PA

Henry Gaunt, AMVETS

Joseph Rodkey, Blinded Veterans Association

John "Goose" Marin, Catholic War Vets

Brian Querry, Centre County, Director of VA

Thomas Williams, VFW Department of PA

David Wagner, DAV

Michael "Mick" Hoover, MOPH

Richard "Rudy" Fanti, Resident Representative

VIP'S PRESENT:

State Representative Louis Schmitt Jr.

DMVA PRESENT:

Marc Ferraro, Executive Deputy Secretary

Travis Davis, Executive Director of Long-Term Care

Barb Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans' Homes

Jennifer Hagaman, Veterans' Service Specialist, Central PA Region

HVH PRESENT:

Chrissy Dambeck, Commandant

Crystal Hansel, Interim Deputy Commandant

John Reinhardt, Doctor

Matt Latini, CRNP

Kelly Smith, Director of Nursing

Joe Patterson, Admissions and Marketing

Matt Smearman, Maintenance

Butch Regala, Housekeeping

Julie Sanders, Purchasing

Dawn Hopkins, Storeroom

Sheena Mickel, Social Services

Tia Williams, Assistant to the Commandant and *Recorder*

OTHERS PRESENT:

Anna Marie Rodkey, Spouse of Joseph Rodkey

Constance Stransky, Guest of R. Raymond Lenz

James Lamison, Guest of Henry Gaunt

Joe Tremus, Guest of Dave Wagner

Jay Buchanan, Guest of Duffy Hines

VACANT POSITIONS:

Jewish War Veterans

Military Officers Association of America

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Tim Susengill, Vietnam Veterans Association

Call to Order/Roll Call

Duffy Hines called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM and asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves and to provide their title and/or Service Organization.

Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance

Duffy asked everyone to stand and to take a moment of silence and then asked Henry Gaunt to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Duffy asked every member if they had any question, comment, or concerns regarding the minutes from the previous meeting held on Thursday, July 20, 2023. Duffy suggested being clearer in the minutes, especially with acronyms and terminology since the minutes are now posted for the public. Something we as a group might understand might become confusing for the public if they aren't familiar with particular acronyms or terminology. With no other questions, comments or concerns, Duffy said the minutes for July are accepted as posted. R. Raymond Lenz, Council Secretary, then signed the minutes to make them official.

Employee Recognition

Sheena Mickel received Leadership of Excellence award, presented by Marc Ferraro, Executive Deputy Secretary.

Butch Regala received recognition for himself and on behalf of select housekeeping staff who traveled to Southwestern Veterans Center to assist with staffing.

Dawn Hopkins received recognition for her role in the storeroom for all six state veterans' homes.

Swearing In New Members

N/A

Dr. John Reinhardt, HVH Medical Director

Dr. Reinhardt introduced Matt Latini, CRNP, who rounds at HVH. Dr. Reinhardt spoke on his own history with nursing homes over the years and how things such as life expectancy has changed. He explained how Matt Latini was a nurse at Mount Nittany hospital in State College and how he had to "re-learn" a lot of things transitioning from a hospital to being a long-term care provider. He was a student for nearly two years with the Reinhardt practice before he officially joined their team. Matt has been rounding daily at HVH now. Matt stated "it's been a pleasure to be here. I've grown to know the staff and residents quite well".

Questions, Comments, Concerns

N/A

Marc Ferraro, Executive Deputy Secretary

Marc stated things have been busy in the last quarter and they continue to get busier. TAG and DAG have been out promoting what the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs (DMVA) has been doing and there has been success in their efforts. He explained they are constantly on the road talking about mental health, homelessness, education, etc.

Coming up in November is the quarterly Governor's Advisory Council. This will be Governor Shapiro's first one since in office.

Indiantown Gap Cemetery Memorial which is the largest state memorial at any federal cemetery finished a 3.5-million-dollar renovation project opening at the end of October. TAG/DAG attending Senator's Breakfast this morning and will be out on that trail. Wreaths Across America event coming up in December.

The National Guard is at its lowest deployment overseas with about 150 airmen soldiers deployed overseas. Some smaller deployments after the holidays will be happening.

Continuing to work on legislative issues and there are some bills being circulated that supports Veterans.

Marc thanked everyone for all the do to support HVH and for their service.

Questions, Comments, Concerns

Tom Williams asked what the actual date for Wreaths Across America event is? – Saturday, December 16, 2023, at noon.

Travis Davis, Executive Director

Travis announced that the minutes for Advisory Council meetings are now posted on the DMVA website; they are available for all six homes and open to the public.

Travis talked about how staffing minimums are getting a bit confusing between what we're doing and what is being proposed by the federal government. Pennsylvania has new regulations for increasing staff minimums and the Bureau of Veterans' Homes has met that and are ahead of requirements. There are concerns from the state as year one was funded, the long-term care community is concerned about year two and lack of funding. In September 2023, the feds came out with the first proposal of staffing minimums, increasing numbers of RN's and CNA's, but have left LPN's out of the proposal. They are asking for feedback. There would be no funding behind this federal proposal. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid predict it would be a cost of \$1 billion dollars if the proposal goes through with no funding. Next quarter, Travis will give an update on the federal proposal.

Staffing across the six state veterans' homes is good, we have waiting lists for residents. Recruitment and retention is the biggest issue across the homes. Still doing walk-in Wednesdays and career fairs at various homes. Admissions at the highest level in 3 years. We just broke 70% occupancy across all six homes and are aiming for 75% by the end of the year. Waitlist across the state is 273, and 200 of those are veterans, the rest are non-vet spouses.

Department of Health annual surveys have been completed in all homes.

5-Star ratings – Delaware Valley, Gino Merli and Southwestern Veterans Center, 4-Star ratings – HVH, Southeastern Veterans Center, 3-star ratings – Pennsylvania Soldiers and Sailors.

Construction is moving along nicely.

Currently interviewing for Delaware Valley Veterans Center Commandant. Recruiting a part-time physician in Philadelphia.

Questions, Comments, Concerns

Brian Query asked if all skilled nursing homes, even in the private sector, subject to this federal staffing proposal? – Yes. State Veterans' Homes are better off than the private sector, but we are competing for the same workforce. We remain competitive with salaries, but bonuses and incentives are what we can't compete with.

Barb Raymond, Director

COVID numbers at HVH are okay, throughout the commonwealth, COVID is on the rise and hospitals are getting full. Significant outbreaks at some homes. Everyone is currently stable. There have been four deaths since the beginning of the year with COVID listed as a contributing factor, but not the primary cause. Out of the six homes, 58 residents are positive with primarily cold-like symptoms or completely asymptomatic. The current requirements/recommendations from the Department of Health is to test everyone who has been exposed, which is why we are seeing these numbers. No influenza positive residents at this time across all homes. Offering both Flu and COVID shots to staff members. Focusing on flu shot right now. Both can be given at the same time. The CDC is recommending a 3-4 month waiting period for the COVID shot after being COVID positive. The current shot is targeting the XBB strain with a 40-50% efficacy rate. RSV vaccine available in homes but it is up to the medical provider. It is mostly for high-risk individuals.

Doing well with admissions across the board.

5 out of the 6 state veterans' homes, including HVH, were listed as America's best in Newsweek. These look at staffing, services provided and surveys.

Gearing up for Veterans Day as well as holiday visits by TAG.

Revenue looking at PACT act monies for veterans and getting additional funding, utilizing VA to pay for specific medications as opposed to Medicare Part D.

Compliance-wise, some things are being looked at such as contracts and a potential data breach with one of our vendors. Still investigating to see exactly what was breached and how many; Compliance is monitoring this piece. One of our vendors had a billing issue at another nursing home (not one of our State Veterans Homes), so we are reviewing our information to ensure we didn't have any issues with this vendor. We found that Justifacts can do background checks from exclusionary process.

Questions, Comments, Concerns

N/A

Chrissy Dambeck, Commandant

The last quarter has been very busy. There have been a few Department of Health (DOH) Surveys – on August 8th was a complaint survey. Any time a resident, family or anonymous complaint is filed, DOH must come in to investigate. This complaint was unfounded. DOH was again in on August 24th for our annual inspection survey. We received 12 deficiencies; none were due to actual harm. We received notification yesterday from DOH that they will do a desk audit for our plan of correction.

We had our first annual HVH Softball Marathon. We planned to compete with VZMC, but they didn't have enough for a team. HVH played each other and a good time was had by all. Employee Association started here at HVH. This is where employees elect officials and are able to hold fundraisers for various causes. There have been several successful fundraisers already.

POW-MIA ceremonies were held in September, one in Eisenhower Hall and one in Arnold Hall. The Blair County Honor Guard and the Legion Riders attended and participated. Oktoberfest was also held in September and for the first time ever, residents were able to enjoy alcoholic beverages at the function. Some upcoming events are the annual Thanksgiving and Christmas family meals which will be scaled down, limiting number of guests due to construction and parking issues.

Our first DMVA employee recognition ceremony was held here in September here for 20 HVH employees who were nominated. These will be held quarterly across the state.

Hollidaysburg Veterans Home was nominated as #14 nursing home in the state by Newsweek.

Chrissy thanked Crystal Hansel for her time helping as Interim Deputy Commandant here at HVH and announced that Crystal will move to Interim Director of Nursing (DON) here and Kelly Smith is the new Deputy Commandant, effective October 28th. Crystal will fill in as DON until a permanent replacement is selected. We've had several employees retire such as Assistant Director of Nursing (ADON) Sherry Falbow. ADON Jen Claar will be retiring in November. Desiree Kearney was hired as new ADON and will start November 13th. We've recently filled the Accountant 3 position, promoting Jackie Treon.

Questions, Comments, Concerns

N/A

Matt Smearman, Maintenance

Matt announced that he works for Greg Lehman who oversees projects and Luke Hughes who oversees the day-to-day aspects of the work.

Two capital projects on campus right now; MacArthur Hall project – started outside parts, as well as elevator work and dining room work/updates. Will run gas line and will eventually change over from steam. The gas line will also support the new building.

New building project – A lot of excavation is going on right now. All underground infrastructure is complete minus the gas line, started pouring footers, concrete walls, elevator shaft is blocked out and plan to start steel in early November. Project is running on schedule with no delays thus far.

Questions, Comments, Concerns

Dave Wagner asked if there have been any changes or are we holding to the budget? Matt stated this is a DGS project, verbiage was put out to eliminate change orders, but unforeseen things could always happen – nothing to date, though.

Joe Patterson, Admissions and Marketing

Admissions - Joe asked everyone to please reference the handout provided in the packet. Included previous quarter but looking at July thru September. Joe explained that if someone expires at the hospital, it shows up as a discharge and a death, so it seems as though it is double in those instances, but it really isn't. Joe provided number of residents by county for entire campus on the handout as requested by the council.

Marketing – Attended Senior Expo and had a table, received a lot of Q&A here. Visited the DESA group in Martinsburg and there were a lot of questions about the new building and if we serve certain counties only. All were reassured that we serve all counties, not just select ones. Joe was invited to a veteran community initiative in Johnstown and will set up a table. Veteran Community Initiative asked to have event here but it was explained that we would not have the proper parking space due to construction. Goose Marin graciously worked with the Catholic War Vets in Altoona to host event there. Joe was invited to Veterans Appreciation Breakfast for networking and a dessert social held by the Senator's office.

Joe received lost medals for an HVH. Joe is able to work with Altoona Area School District to award honorary diplomas to any Veteran that would have graduated from Altoona but deployed and wasn't able to.

Questions, Comments, Concerns

Brian Query asked about changing the verbiage in report from "non-veterans" to "National Guard", etc. – Joe/leadership will look into this. Brian also asked about holiday donations and if there was anything specific HVH is looking for? – it was noted that Chrissy will ensure Emily McDowell sent a letter out.

Brian Query asked if someone is discharged from HVH, is there normally a quick return to the facility if they wish? Joe explained that if they leave against medical advice (AMA), there sometimes can be a wait but if they discharge *not* AMA, can look at original application with clinical review.

Duffy Hines – Report of Status

One member should have been reappointed. We are working to get through this. Duffy suggests looking at this process and standardize it and it might make a difference.

Jay Buchanan is the candidate submitted to replace Robert Sembower and is awaiting approval.

Old Business

N/A

New Business

Duffy would like to focus on a standardization of renewal process. Will give report at the next meeting.

Announcements/Good of the Council

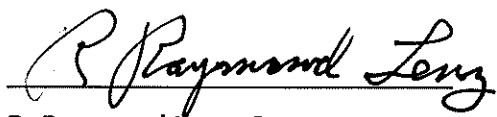
Ray Lenz noted that a resident from Luzerne County is missing on Joe's report – Joe will look into this issue.

Adjournment

Duffy reminded everyone that the next Advisory Council meeting is set to be held on Thursday, January 18, 2024, at 1000hrs.

A motion was made by Ray Lenz to adjourn and seconded by Mick Hoover.

Meeting was adjourned at 1145hrs.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. Raymond Lenz". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

R. Raymond Lenz, Secretary