

HOLLIDAYSBURG VETERANS' HOME (HVH) ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, April 20, 2023
10:00 A.M.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Duffy Hines (Council Present), Marine Corps League Department of PA
Raymond Lenz, American Legion Department of PA
Henry Gaunt, AMVETS
Joe Rodkey, Blinded Veterans Association
Goose Marin, Catholic War Vets
Brian Querry, Centre County, Director of VA
Ron Dawson, MacArthur Hall, Resident Representative
Thomas Williams, VFW Department of PA
Tim Susengill, Vietnam Veterans Association
David Wagner, DAV

VIPs PRESENT:

Senator Judy Ward
State Representative Louis Schmitt Jr.

DMVA PRESENT

Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General – Veterans Affairs
Travis Davis, Executive Director of Long-Term Care
Barb Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes
Craig Swineford, Veterans' Service Specialist, Central PA Region
Samantha Cossman, Regional Program Outreach Coordinator, Central PA Region
Jennifer Hagaman, Veteran Services Specialist, Central PA Region
Samuel Estrada, Executive Policy Specialist
Josh Spigner, Regional Compliance Officer

HVH PRESENT

Barry Lowen, Interim Commandant
Chrissy Dambeck, Deputy Commandant
John Reinhardt, Doctor
Kelly Smith, Director of Nursing
Joe Patterson, Admissions & Marketing
Sheena Mickel, Social Services
Krista Hooper, Revenue
Rita DeCarlo, Revenue
Jim McConnell, Chief Pharmacist
Tia Williams, Assistant to the Commandant and *Recorder*

OTHERS PRESENT:

Michael "Mick" Hoover, MOPH Guest
Mrs. Anna Marie Rodkey, Spouse of Joe Rodkey

Constance Stransky, Guest of Council Member Ray Lenz
Amanda Walker, District Director – Office of Senator Judy Ward
Rich Schnar, Guest of Council Member

VACANT POSITIONS:

Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
Jewish War Veterans, Vacant

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Robert “Hank” Sembower, Military Officers Association of America

Called to Order/ Roll Call

Duffy Hines called the meeting to order at 1000hrs 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 for everyone to stand and join-in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

REVIEW OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Duffy asked every member if they had any question, comments, or concerns regarding the Minutes from the previous meeting held on Thursday, January 19, 2023, ~ no comments were received. Duffy said the Minutes for January are accepted as posted.

Swearing-In New Members

None

Duffy asked about Mick Hoover, Barb stated things have slowed down with the change of admin, but will keep us notified of when things make progress.

Dr. John Reinhardt

Dr. Reinhardt stated we’ve made a lot of progress with Barry and Chrissy over the past few months, especially with grievances. He thanked them for letting people know when grievances are, or are not, substantiated. He spoke about how grievances will change how doctors practice. He spoke about how it is his mission to reduce polypharmacy, and how he is concerned about some people using grievances as “weapons”. He then went on to talk about how great the new building will be once it is completed.

Questions, Comments or Concerns (QCC) for Dr. John Reinhardt

Tim Susengill stated he is familiar with the grievance process from Department of Corrections and that it can be abused but having a well-run, thorough review process is vital. Grievances can be helpful. Dr. Reinhardt replied with saying how important it is to “close the loop” and inform individuals if grievances are founded or unfounded. He stated multiple grievance can affect how one practices and affect good care.

Final QCC for Dr. John Reinhardt

None received.

Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General-Veterans Affairs

General Weigl thanked everyone in attendance for their support from the large turnout. She said we were close to not receiving money for the new building. Governor Shapiro was in Philadelphia with President Biden; we were one of two states to receive waiver to be able to build only one day before the expiration. Groundbreaking Ceremony will be held here on May 2, 2023 from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM. Governor Shapiro planning to attend along with Secretary of DGS and TAG. Announced HVH is now up to a 4-star from previously being a 3-star rating. Spoke of Town Hall Meetings and about PACT Act changes presumptives for Vietnam Veterans and Post Gulf Veterans. She encouraged Veterans to have VSO look at claims. State AG – National Association AG’s looking for poaching, such as lawyers wanting money for helping Veterans get money. Female Veteran’s Day looking to get approved for a day in June – Women’s Military Day. General Weigl recognized Memorial Day since we have no meeting in May. She updated that Mac Hall renovation monies were approved.

Final QCC for General Weigl

Tim Susengill stated VSO – since PACT Act, activity level has gone up almost 100% - come July 1st budgeted to support VSO to increase. Thanked legislators for supporting what they do. – General Weigl Stated last year, there was funding for 6 additional VSO, next year there will be more.

Travis Davis, Executive Director

Travis thanked Advisory Council for their support and said it is a testimony to our community. We are off to a busy start in the first quarter with 12 inspections, 3 internal audits. He said grievances are in the spotlight and are one of the first things that surveyors look at. He agreed that “closing the loop” on them is very important.

0 COVID residents in hospital. SVH has highest admission since the pandemic at 1,009 total residents – started at 950. Total beds is 1500+ - not enough staff to have all beds full. 23% wait list across all 6 State Veterans’ Homes (SVH) and continues to decrease.

Staffing ratios strong across all 6 SVH – relying on some OT and agency. Recruitment and retention is the biggest challenge now – we need to be better at letting people at other facilities know about us and our job openings.

April is Volunteer Month. Our volunteer numbers were high before the pandemic. The pandemic forced us to limit interactions and now we are struggling to get our volunteer numbers back up. DMVA to push on social media to recruit volunteers.

May 2 – groundbreaking, May 6-12 – nurses week, May 24 – SWVC Anniversary, June 11-17 – State Veterans’ Homes week

Star Ratings

5-Star – DVVC, GMVC, PSSH

4-Star – HVH

3-Star – SEVC

Questions, Comments or Concerns (QCC) for Travis Davis

Senator Judy Ward asked about the open Commandant position. Barb Raymond replied that a notification went out to the board via email. Senator Ward stated she received no notification. Duffy Hines added he received an email stating that Sam Dunkle was on leave, and Travis said it is our process to notify of change in leadership. Senator Ward asked how the process works and when will there be a new Commandant? Travis said first it has to be decided how it will be posted and it isn't up to DMVA. Barb said an update came in as we speak and the position will be posted April 24th thru May 5th, internally and externally. After the posting comes down, we should have a list within a week, then will conduct interviews. If the chosen candidate is internal, it will move quicker. If external, the individual will have to provide a 30-day notice to their current employer. A new Commandant will be in by early June at the absolute earliest. Senator Ward commented this is our 3rd Commandant in three years and that is a heavy turnover. Barb said this decision was not taken lightly. Travis added that CMS is looking at turnover as part of the 5-star as a new initiative. Senator Ward asked what support is given to those in critical roles? Barb replied that they are looking at a training program for new individuals in those roles. Internal would need less internal process training than someone coming from the private sector who would need heavy training on internal processes. Any candidate for the Commandant position needs NHA with up to six years of experience. Can't give a timeframe for when this new training would begin.

Ray Lenz commented on how Sam Dunkle brought up morale and did a good job. Travis replied that they asked Sam to work on morale and that he was here on weekends and days off. He also stated that personnel issues are one of the most difficult things to deal with but their priority is to protect residents.

Duffy Hines stated he feels as though there is so much support due to when Sam became Commandant, a lot of tension was gone. He stated the current administration has done well at keeping everyone informed.

Ray Lenz asked why Sam had to leave?

Representative Louis Schmitt said no matter what happened, Sam Dunkle was devoted to HVH and Veterans. With him leaving, we risk losing morale and historical knowledge. He is concerned this decision made on Sam is not right.

Goose Marin stated he worked at HVH for 17 years and when he went to Labor Management meetings with the former Commandant before Sam, it was always an argument. When Sam came, there was a big change. Staff was happier and residents could pick up on that.

Senator Ward explained that with the former Commandant, she had numerous complaints to her office constantly from families, residents and employees, but when Sam came there was not one complaint – this speaks to his character.

Dave Wagner said cambria and Somerset have a lot of interest in the Commandant. He said Joe Patterson did a great job at the VVA meeting and said there were a lot of questions regarding Sam at the meeting and that the Veteran community has their ears and eyes open and they want answers. He said the same for DAV and stated they feel they have to fight for themselves and things don't look great and they want answers.

General Weigl state she appreciates the comments. She explained that Human Resources and Labor Relations has processes they follow for these things and she is available to talk to those who have questions, even if she cannot answer those questions.

Ray Lenz stated he appreciates General Weigl being here to talk about the issues with Sam leaving.

Anna Rodkey stated that she was disappointed at the lack of transparency and said it clouds the issue when you can't say anything. General Weigl replied she wouldn't want to leave a bad impression or tarnish Sam's reputation.

Duffy Hines states we need to have some trust in leadership to do what is right. We need to have some degree of confidence in the leadership that exists.

Barbara Raymond, Director

Hiring/training process discussed previously with no questions. Upcoming events – Senior Leadership Conference in May which will include DON, Commandant and Deputy Commandant's from all 6 Veterans' Homes. Barb explained that our regulations mirror the Federal Government and there are some new stipulations and training requirements, long-term care specific training, financial disclosures out of homes and now to DOH. Nurses week is coming up in May and all 6 homes are having events, although they are limited due to procurement.

Public Health Emergency is ending May 11, 2023. Barb said she is unsure about any mask and testing changes for PA at this time. Some states have already dropped the mask mandate, but PA has not.

COVID report – 7 residents COVID+ between SWVC and SEVC and all are stable. 7 staff across all SVH except DVVH who has 0 staff COVID+ at this time.

Very little influenza across 6 homes – will wait for DOH recommendations for masking with flu season.

GI flu/illness at SWVC – all stable, likely norovirus which generally isn't tested for – Barb reminded everyone about the importance of handwashing/education.

QCC for Barb Raymond, Director

Senator Judy Ward asked about PCU and what is the drug/alcohol policy? Barb answered that from a regulation standpoint, we can have house rules saying that residents can't have it, but regulations say we are not permitted to search rooms without consent. Senator Ward commented that the Federal VA does not permit medicinal use of marijuana and recreational use is still illegal here. Senator Ward asked what our policy is for residents breaking rules? Barb answered that if we can show a resident is breaking rules without searching, we can give them a notice of the violations. Senator Ward asked if a resident is intoxicated and there is fear with staff and others, how do we handle this? Barb replied if it is escalated that much, we contact police or crisis if they are a harm to self or others. They will determine 302. 201 is voluntary. Senator Ward said if a resident is escalated and staff and others are fearful, we call the police, but what do we do if it keeps happening? Barb replied that guidance is we can find a safe discharge and do a 30 day notice if the resident is agreeable. Immediate discharge is a little tougher; we can immediate discharge for a criminal act. Travis Davis added that for a safe discharge of someone who requires care, it can be difficult to transfer especially due to having to send records. Senator Ward asked how do we keep residents and staff safe? Travis replied acknowledging that Veterans with behaviors can be challenging and sometimes 1 on 1 staffing is needed, which in turn can hurt the waitlist due to staffing needs.

General Weigl added that there is an increase in PA residents needing more assistance and regrettably we are having to deny more than ever. An office is being created at the Federal VA to help figure out solutions and what to do with veterans in these situations. Travis stated that if DMVA doesn't take someone then nobody is which could lead to homelessness and is a real issue. General Weigl added that HVH has most open beds, so many times, residents come here then go elsewhere. Barb stated that DHS regulations for PCU are different than DOH for safe discharge. Sometimes safe discharge for PCU is utilizing HUDVASH, homeless for a day then HUDVASH can support. Limited by county.

Brian Querry stated grievances can take a life of their own – what is the exact process? Travis replied the individual has a complaint, we will investigate using camera footage, witnesses, interview random others. Regarding issue – the purpose is to find out what is going on, not to “get someone in trouble”. General Weigl stated that grievances are for all reasons, and there is a fine line on if we would think something is acceptable or not. We have to put ourselves in the Veterans' shoes in a situation. Brian Querry asked does the grievant receive feedback on the outcome? Barb said yes and that every single grievance is looked at no matter what.

Josh Spigner, Compliance

Trying to use Justifacts for employees so background checks can be done automatically - currently being done by hand. Two compliance continued reviews – Benchmark Therapies and Vistamed – psych.

QCC for Josh Spigner

N/A

Joe Patterson, Admissions & Marketing

Upon admission, residents and families are made aware that grievances are their right. Encouraged to follow “chain of command” – start with Joe then he will direct it toward the department or the Commandant

Passed out chart – January – 4 gains, 2 losses; February – 8 gains, 2 transfers, 6 losses; March – 9 gains, 1 transfer, 7 losses; total – 21 gain, 3 transfer, 15 losses

53 in the pipeline at this time, reminded that this is from application to admission.

Marketing – visiting DESA group in Martinsburg on May 18th at noon. Group was reminded that if there are any events they would like Joe to attend to let him know.

QCC for Joe Patterson

Brian Querry asked what advocates can do to try to speed up the admission process? Joe replied that having all paperwork and documentation from doctors is vital. Once all needed documentation is received, application goes to the committee.

Tim Susengill stated he will send form 212680 to Joe – Veterans can get form done by team at VA, same as MA 51.

Barry Lowen, Interim Commandant

Barry is a 28 year Air Force Veteran, 10 years working for the Commonwealth, SWVC/SEVC leadership history. Not Taking the transition lightly, will continue to support residents, staff and families. Staff at HVH are excellent, and really care for residents and their families.

Over \$68,000.00 in the holiday fund; giving \$75.00 per resident for Christmas and the remainder will go into the welfare fund.

See pictures from events in Commandant's Report packet

100th birthday party for Russell Stiffler a huge success. It included a surprise visit from his daughter he hadn't seen in years.

Active Shooter Training will be held on April 29th; working with VZMC, police, EMS – will run through the scenario, No residents will be involved. Will take place on South 1 in Eisenhower Hall which is a closed unit. The event will Be closed to the media and viewers but the facility will be open to visitors as normal. Can talk offline with any Questions and we will report on how the event goes at the next meeting.

MacArthur Hall replacing roof, windows, 80% of brick/mortar, new dining room and kitchen area. Once skilled Residents are moved to new building, MacArthur Hall residents will be moved to either Arnold Hall or Eisenhower Hall so complete indoor renovation can take place.

Spring outdoor activities in full swing

QCC for Barry Lowen, Commandant

Brian Query asked if there is a percentage of non-Veteran resident limit – 25% Federal, 12% internal unless DAG Notified. General Weigl stated a non-Vet can be PA National Guard – marked as non-Vet but will still accept at State Veterans' Homes

Duffy Hines – Report of Status:

2 members need recommendations

Barb Raymond will follow up about Duffy Hines, Ray Lenz and Mick Hoover

Old Business:

N/A

New Business:

Ray Lenz – Lightner Hall name for CLC discussed, discussed different floors to be designated for heroes. Ray sent a letter regarding Ralph Fabbri name recommendation also recommended Martin Hamlin, Paul Rokus

Representative Schmitt – Recommended John Gority. He spent most of his life sacrificing and was part of the Advisory Council

General Weigl – Ribbon cutting ceremony for new facility is where naming will happen

Recommendations sitting with TAG for final facility name

Joe Patterson – Took photo of Advisory Council

Barb Raymond - Talked about changing the Advisory Council meeting to a different day because it coincides with another standing meeting – suggested changing to second Wednesday, quarterly. It was noted this would not work for Senator Ward and Representative Schmitt. Duffy Hines suggested 3rd Wednesday. Senator Ward asked to avoid Wednesdays. Members are to check calendars and we will discuss this issue at the next Advisory Council meeting on July 20th.

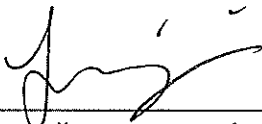
Announcements/ Good or the Council:

N/A

Adjournment

Duffy reminded everyone the next Advisory Council Meeting will be on Thursday, July 20, 2023, at 1000hrs.

Meeting was adjourned at 1157hrs.



Tia Williams, Recorder