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**Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home**

**Advisory Council Meeting**

**Erie, Pennsylvania**

**March 9, 2022**

**9:00a.m.**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr. Gary Fry, President, AMVETS

Mr. Raymond J. Chambers, Vice President, Marine Corps League

Mr. Richard DiGiacomo, Secretary, Military Officers Assoc. of America

Mr. David Price, Military Order of the Purple Heart

Mr. William Rose, PSSH Resident Council President

Mr. Richard Supak, Catholic War Veterans

Mr. Joe Benacci, Director of Veterans Affairs

The Honorable Daniel Laughlin, PA Senator

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT**

Mr. Harry Stewart, American Legion

Mr. Walter Simpson, Disabled American Veterans

The Honorable Curt Sonney, PA House of Representatives

Mr. Robert C. Eiler, Veterans of Foreign Wars

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**OTHERS PRESENT**

Ms. Maureen Weigl, BG (PA Retired), Deputy Adjutant General-VA, VIA Phone

Mrs. Barbara Raymond, RN, NHA, Director of Veterans' Homes

Ms. Cheri Spacht, RN, NHA, PSSH Commandant

Ms. Deborah Cubero, PSSH DON

Mrs. Elizabeth Seibert, PSSH Deputy Commandant

Ms. Alyssa Cooley, PSSH Commandant Assistant

Ms. Kimberly Knapp, PSSH PCU Administrator

Mr. Ken Vybiral, PSSH Volunteer Coordinator

Ms. Pauline Wood

Mr. Gregory Smith

Mr. John LaPlaca

Mr. Daryl Berlin

Mr. Randy Moore

Mr. Victor Sauerwein

Ms. Doris Svitek

Mr. Gerry Svitek

Mr. Mike Bailey

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Ms. Cathy Crawford

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### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Gary Fry called the meeting to order at 9:00a.m.

### **MOMENT OF SILENT AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Gary Fry led a moment of silence, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **ROLL CALL**

Ms. Alyssa Cooley took roll call for all present.

### **SWEARING IN OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**

No Council Members were sworn in.

### **APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

A motion was made by Gary Fry and seconded by Richard Supak to approve the minutes of the Advisory Council Meeting held on December 8, 2022. Motion carried, and minutes were approved as written.

### **MEDICAL DIRECTOR UPDATE**

No update was provided.

### **ADMISSIONS AND MARKETING UPDATE**

Ms. Cheri Spacht provided update on behalf of the Admission Department:

The unit D and unit E flooring project, that was going on our last meeting, has been completed. All of our units are up and running and we are actively taking admissions weekly. We currently have 32 open beds on our Dementia Memory Care area. 18 of those beds are filled. We have an active waiting list of 3 veterans and 3 non-veterans. We are working very diligently on getting admissions in.

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On our Nursing Care side, we have 75 authorized beds and 63 of those beds are filled now. We have 13 veterans on the waiting list and 7 non-veterans.

Personal Care authorized beds is 100. Currently we have 52 filled, but we are still in the renovation process on Personal Care with our restrooms and bathing areas. We are in the last phase of that. We have 3 veterans on the waiting list and 1 non-veteran.

We have a total of 133 beds filled of our 207 occupancies.

Any questions?

### **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL**

General Weigl provided update:

General Weigl apologized for being unable to make the scheduled TAG visit due to a public hearing being held on March 16<sup>th</sup> regarding veteran suicide.

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General Weigl stated that the Governor was going to be meeting President Biden today in Philadelphia to discuss some of our Homes construction projects. The projects are currently on hold, but we are ready to break ground.

General Weigl stated that she will be coming out to visit PSSH in mid-April and that she is going to try and make it to the next Advisory Board meeting.

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF VETERANS' HOMES**

Director Raymond provided update:

We are doing good across the Homes from a covid perspective. Currently there is a total of 11 residents that are positive across the six Homes. Two of our facilities have zero residents, including our Erie facility. Our other facility without covid is our Southeast facility.

We have 11 staff members that are currently positive across the six Homes which is a tremendous decrease. We've seen some ebbs and flows over the last several months in that flu season in the winter type months, but currently we are doing okay. Everybody is stable and nobody has had any major illnesses recently.

In 2023, we have had one death that was attributed to covid. That was at our Hollidaysburg facility. None of our individuals in 2022 had covid listed as their primary cause of death, it's listed as a contributing factor.

We have 1 staff member at our Southeast facility with influenza. We have no residents with influenza at any of the Homes, nor any other type of GI illness or outbreak either.

We are currently prepping for new state regulations across the six Homes, getting ready for those new items coming through, including new staffing numbers. Thankfully our Homes do run a very high hour per patient per day. So, we aren't very concerned as far as those regulatory changes for staffing perspective.

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The TAG is visiting out in Erie tentatively on March 16<sup>th</sup>. He is planning to visit out at our Hollidaysburg facility next week so, we are getting ready for that and very excited for those visits. The residents really do enjoy all the fun and festivities.

The Public Health Emergency is scheduled to end on May 11<sup>th</sup>. From a funding perspective we are funded for our testing for covid through June. Where we think there may be some changes, are changes to the masking and some changes to the requirements for testing. New York State as well as Washington State have already dropped the masking requirements for Nursing Homes. We have not gotten that guidance yet from Pennsylvania so we will wait until we hear something from Pennsylvania before we change anything with the masks

Another thing with the Public Health Emergency changing that will affect Nursing Homes across the entire country is the 90% occupancy rule. What that means is, we have to have 90% occupancy in a nursing home to be paid for any individual that goes out to the hospital for what is called a "bed hold". If someone goes out to the hospital, we have to hold the bed for, depending on which regulation you look at, up to 15 days. We cannot fill it with anyone else on our waiting list and we will not get paid for that bed hold. The 90% occupancy was waived during the Public Health Emergency and that is scheduled to

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change. If you look at nursing homes across the country, very few are anywhere near that 90% occupancy. Most facilities are in the 60-70% census category.

*Mr. DiGiacomo questioned if there was a grace period?*

*Director Raymond responded; we are in the grace period.*

*Mr. DiGiacomo responded, who makes the call on that?*

*Director Raymond responded, the Public Health Emergency was declared ended by the President, so CMS, CDC, everybody is ending all of the waivers.*

Our six facilities do a very good job with staffing, some struggle a little more than others. Our facilities in the larger cities, Philadelphia, Spring City and Pittsburgh struggle quite a bit more than our Erie facility, Hollidaysburg and Scranton facilities. However, where we're struggling to bring in additional residents is because we don't have the staff. That is where our challenge is. Our waiting lists are decent. Most of our facilities are up to a pre-pandemic waiting list level. A few of our facilities aren't quite up to where they use to be, but we do have several facilities that could fill the buildings based off of the waiting list, but we can't because of staffing.

A few things we are doing for staffing to get people in our what we call "Walk-in Wednesday's, and that interview process is going quite well. We bring people in, we interview them, barring any unforeseen circumstances, we offer them the job on the spot. They do have to go through the background checks that are required. It is a much more fluid and quicker process than our traditional hiring process.

A few things we did to improve our hiring process, we use to be around 90 days from the time the person applies to the time they start. We dropped to about 65 days and then some changes happened down at the Office of Administration in Harrisburg, and we popped back up to about 75 days. We are working on some things to be able to get back the support that we have had to get us back down to the 60-65 days.

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We are scheduling job fairs at our Homes in April except for Hollidaysburg because staffing is quite well there. We are also doing continuous postings.

For someone to start in the Commonwealth you have to have the position. If we don't have that actual position posted in our system, even if we know we have the opening, we can't have anyone come in. what we did was reach out to the Office of Administration and they are allowing us to have continuous postings. If Joe Smith comes in off the streets on a Tuesday, and we know we have the position, but we didn't get all the paperwork processed yet, now that it is a continuous posting, Joe Smith can apply to that position. That has helped speed things up, but it's more of the bodies, they aren't coming to work.

*Mr. DiGiacomo questioned what is the financial impact of the 90% rule?*

*Director Raymond responded that she didn't have those exact numbers, but she could get them because it could be significant. We at any given time have about 25-30 resident across the Homes out at the hospitals.*

*Mr. DiGiacomo responded, so the fix is a federal fix?*

*Director Raymond responded, yes.*

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*Mr. DiGiacomo asked if we want to lobby our Federal Officials, what is the message that we want to deliver on that topic.*

*Director Raymond responded, to extend the 90% occupancy waiver.*

*Mr. DiGiacomo asked what is a reasonable timeframe for an extension?*

*Director Raymond responded; we're looking at probably at least another 6 months.*

*Mr. DiGiacomo asked if someone is eligible to be hired on the spot, why does it take 75 days to bring someone in?*

*Director Raymond responded, to get everything approved by the Office of Administration.*

We've had a busy quarter from a survey perspective. In February we had our Southeast, Erie and Gino Merli facilities visited by the Federal VA. Everybody did quite well. We are very proud of them. The Pennsylvania Department of Health visited our Delaware Valley facility for their annual survey. The Department of Human Services visited our Erie facility for their annual survey. So, it was very busy quarter for everyone. Next quarter we are gearing up for a Federal VA survey for our Hollidaysburg facility and Pennsylvania Department of Health for our Erie facility.

We are doing really well with our star ratings. We have three of our facilities that are 5-stars from the nursing home compare website which are our Delaware Valley, Gino Merli and Erie facility. Two of the facilities are 4-stars, Southeast and Southwest and our Hollidaysburg facility is considered 3-stars. Hollidaysburg is a little bit lower because of the Department of Health survey from last year. That will, barring any unforeseen circumstances, drop off provided we have a great survey in the August timeframe which is about when they are due.

Census across the six Homes is 967. All six of our facilities are admitting, a little bit slower though due to staffing. We do like to maintain a little bit higher of a staffing ratio because of the census of individuals that we do take care of tend to be a little more challenging than the private sector.

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Any questions?

### **REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT**

Our total authorized employee number is 272 and 246 of those positions are currently filled. Our vacancies currently are only 26. Of those vacancies we have one Assistant Director of Nursing, and the position is currently posted. Our Quality Assurance Coordinator is also posted. Our Admission Coordinator position is open, but we just interviewed and did make an offer which was accepted. He is currently going through the hiring process. We have one HR Assistant opening, four LPN openings, four RN openings, 12 CNA openings and two Custodial Supervisor openings. We are doing the Walk-in Wednesdays as Barb talked about and every other week general orientation for new employees. Our job fair is scheduled for April 20<sup>th</sup> and we do very well with our job fairs, we get a lot of good turnouts for that.

We have four employees that are out with covid. They are due to return to work between 2-5 days. Community level for Erie County went from low to medium this morning. That doesn't usually very much so there is some sort of uptick in the community for covid. Our transmission rate is 13.7%.

In February we had our Federal VA survey. We are waiting for the formal report of what concerns they have, but it went very well. It was in person. Our last 2 surveys for the VA were virtual so, it was nice to have them back inside the Home. for them to discuss things with the residents, staff and the families.

The third week in February we had Department of Human Services come in for our Personal Care survey. They have not been in since 2018 for an annual survey due to covid. We just got their final report with five areas of concern, but that overall survey also went very well, and it was held in person, not virtual.

We are waiting on our Department of Health survey, hopefully they will come in soon and tour and see how things are going as well.

We do something here at the Homes through our Leadership at the GAP which are called "Mock Surveys". They come in and review things to assist us in seeing if there is anything we can improve on. They were here last week, and their final report will also be coming to us soon.

The Erie Water Authority continue to work the perimeter of our campus here replacing water lines. It has been going on for quite some time.

Our unit D and E flooring project that was in process our last meeting, is completed. It looks wonderful down there.

Our PCU restroom shower renovations continue. We are in the last phase that started a few weeks ago. That is going very well.

We have a parking storm drain project that is going on out front in the visitors parking area. We just have the asphalt that needs to be delivered and placed. That will happen in April.

There were several trees noted around campus that were questionable from a safety perspective, needing trimmed back or removed. We immediately called a vendor to have them come out and take a look and there were several trees that were trimmed and a few that were removed. It was necessary, they were very large and definitely a risk.

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Any questions?

*Mr. Supak questioned the status of the old Commandant building. Is it historical or going to be turned into a parking lot?*

*Director Raymond responded; with the previous Adjutant General we completed an information paper on that. He actually wanted to raise it and essentially yes, turning it into a parking lot and then covid hit. Since then, it hasn't come up on anyone's radars. Currently it's really just there. It is not listed on the historical registry at all. Do I think we are going to get concerns if and when it comes time to demolish it? Yes, I 100% think we will, but it is currently not on the Adjutant Generals radar at the moment.*

*Mr. Chambers questioned if residents are tested for covid when they go to a local hospital before they come back?*

*Ms. Spacht responded, yes. We have a testing protocol that we follow here when they return from the hospital as well. They are tested there, but we do additional testing when they return.*

*Senator Laughlin asked if the jobs were listed on Indeed as well?*

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*Director Raymond responded, yes some of them are if we boost them, then yes.*

*Mr. Rose questioned concerning the staffing levels and wanting to remind everyone that we haven't been anywhere near full occupancy here for quite a number of years. 5 years ago, part of the NCU side was shut down for 2 years and then covid hit. The past 3 years the 700 hall on PCU has been unoccupied except to quarantine. So, from a resident's perspective when they hear about being short staffed and you look at the employees then look at the occupancy level, are we really hurting that bad?*

*Ms. Spacht responded, from a standpoint of the renovations that have been going on, because of the phases for the restrooms we have so many beds that we can only fill according to the regulatory guidelines, to make sure there is availability for the residents that are here when we do have to close a restroom down. That number is 60. So, we have to make sure we don't go over 60 until these renovations are over. We're at 52 right now. We are getting admissions on this side frequently. As soon as phase 5 is done, 700 hall will go back to being open for admissions. As soon as the renovations are done, we are going back to try to get up too close to what our occupancy is.*

*Mr. Rose responded when you count bathrooms, the individual rooms that have commodes, are those counted towards the total?*

*Ms. Knapp responded; no individual bathrooms are not counted.*

*Mr. Rose commented on his concerns regarding the trees. He stated that the residents love the trees here on the property and also the critters that live in them. He stated he read the previous minutes which talked more about pruning the trees and possibly removing them, so the residents were very surprised when the lumberjacks came in and mowed down a lot of the trees. They completed removed the trees on the western side of the building. The trees provided a break from the wind, rain and sun. He stated that this will come back to haunt us with the old windows on that side of the building. The facility will be looking into replacement trees in the very near future. The trees removed were a safety concern, as stated when the vendor came to assess the status of the trees it was not to remove but to prune the trees, unfortunately the trees were required to be removed for safety reasons.*

*Mr. Rose also stated that the park in the back has undergone quite a bit of whacking as well over the past year or two unrelated to the bridge construction and in addition to the bridge construction. He would like for people to go see what has happened in the back themselves. He stated it was a pleasant green space that was secluded with the trees, and it hosted lots of wildlife and it was nice to go back there in the summertime and almost forget you were in the middle of the city and the residents are not happy about that.*

*Ms. Knapp responded, she couldn't speak to the trees in the back but the ones in front, when the vendor came in with the intention of pruning, they found that the trees were rotted on the inside and that is why they were removed.*

*Mr. Rose responded, that was okay, but it should have been announced to the residents to ease the bitter pill instead of seeing people come here and start whacking trees and everyone is scratching their head wondering what is going on. The residents/families/councils/regulatory agencies will continue to be updated on facility changes and updates via resident council meetings, emails, and letters.*



*Mr. Rose also commented on the issue of tearing down the old Commandant House. He stated that none of the residents were enthused by this. The idea was floated about setting up an outdoor pool table like it would make everything okay, but it would not, and people must not understand the type of weather we have here. He mentioned that there are a lot of new residents here now from over the past few years who aren't married to the Commandant's House like the older residents, but at the time it was being talked about, there was no enthusiasm amongst the residents about tearing it down. He stated the Commandants House could have been put to good use in a number of different ways like covid testing, a nice welcome center, there are many bric-a-bracs around the Home that could be presented very tastefully there as a visitor center, all it would require is the addition of a handicap ramp. It could also make a good area for the volunteers to come in and meet with our Volunteer Coordinator, there is also some office space that could probably be used in there the way the offices seem to be expanding.*

*Director Raymond responded, part of the information paper that we had to provide to the Adjutant General at the time was based on cost because unfortunately, it's not just a handicap ramp. It is not approved for Commonwealth use. The wiring all needs repaired. Radon testing needs to be completed in the basement, there is asbestos and abatement that needs to be completed. It is not ADA accessible in any way shape or form. The areas inside are too tight for any type of ADA access. Prior to BABA we looked at the renovation costs and it was about a half million dollars. Post BABA it's probably upwards of over one million dollars. So, the Adjutant General at the time did not want to keep it. Again, it is not on his radar at all at this point in time. Right now, it is just there and vacant, however, it is not approved for Commonwealth use, and those are great ideas that we did float around at the time, and it was just not approved.*

## **COMPLIANCE REPORT**

Ms. Seibert provided report on behalf of Beth Werner:

We are moving into ongoing compliance due to the new CMS regulations with regards to compliance committees. We are in compliance with the Department of Health new regulations. We had our first quarterly compliance committee meeting and training on February 23<sup>rd</sup> of this year. Moving forward the quarterly compliance committee meeting will be held the same day as the Advisory Council meetings and that will meet the quarterly requirement.

There are no open investigations with compliance at PSSH at this time.

The compliance officers are reviewing two contracts across the six facilities. One is with the therapy company Benchmark and the other a company Vista Medical. The one open investigation that they're reviewing has to do with the requirement that all nursing homes conduct exclusionary checks for all staff providing and overseeing direct services. This practice has been in place at PSSH and another one of our facilities. It is a cumbersome process, so they are reviewing and monitoring how to implement a service called "Justifacts" and that process should be in place and will allow the six BVH to meet the exclusionary checks for compliance.

*Director Raymond commented, what those exclusionary checks are, anybody who is funded or partially funded through the Federal Government has to go through these exclusionary checks through various websites, through the office of Inspector General. It started in 2013 and we have been doing it here in Erie. Since then, I moved to another facility so that facility is doing it now too. You physically have to go*

*into all of these websites and check every single employee, there is then no mechanism to prove we did it, so a screenshot is taken to prove that this is being done on a monthly basis. We are trying to get a software company to complete those checks for us. We are on the final stages of getting everything approved and corrected utilizing the service called Justifacts. We currently use Justifacts for our criminal background checks, so we are in the process of adding that piece to the existing contract that the Commonwealth already has.*

### **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY COMMANDANT**

We completed our facility assessment which allows us to meet the CMS obligation. It is a 27 page report that looks at all of the residents on the nursing home side, all of their clinical needs and support, as well as the ability we have to support them in case of a natural disaster type occurrence. We also reference the Erie County Disaster Plan to make sure that the Natural Occurring Events and the Risk Assessment that the Erie County Emergency Management team came up with, that we incorporate those findings into our Emergency Disaster Plan. If anyone would like to review the report, let me know. Annually we do this for the Advisory Council report off but also as needed if there is any Administration changes throughout the year and any significant change that we feel needs to be incorporated into our Emergency Disaster Plan.

Any questions?

*Mr. Rose asked if we had a follow up on the misappropriation of resident's funds at PSSH?*

*Director Raymond responded, the compliance team finished up their investigation for me and then I'm working with the Human Resource Department to determine anything further. The residents have been made whole.*

*Senator Laughlin commented that he enjoys being on the Advisory Council and being able to attend in person when he can so that he can hear what is going on. He stated that the Adjutant General would be here on March 16<sup>th</sup>, and he will reach out to his staff to see if they can take a tour of the Commandants House to gain a fresh perspective on it. He made notes about the 90% rule to see if he can reach out to Federal Legislators about that. It's important to show up and he is glad to be here. the Veterans' Homes are at the top of his list to make sure they are taken care of. It's troubling to hear about the waiting list due to staffing issues and will do what he can to help out on that too.*

### **REPORT OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Mr. Chambers:

The Commandants House I believe was last occupied in the early 80s when John Driscoll was Commandant. He and his family lived there with five kids. Like Barb said, it does not pass a lot of the codes and that's why there has not been money put into it except to just to keep it structurally standing and safe.

The other thing I picked up on was the discussion of the census and renovations. Years ago, they did renovations here and instead of cutting down on the population, they transferred the residents to other state facilities and as you get older you don't accept changes, I'll admit to that. You look at these residents and most of them are in their 70s and 80s and they had to go to Pittsburgh, Hollidaysburg,

some went out ~~East and it was traumatic to them. I think what they did this time, just cutting down the~~ number of residents until the renovations were complete was a good idea.

Mr. Supak:

I just want to thank everyone for everything that they do and are we going to plant any trees?

Ms. Spacht responded it was very distressing with the trees, I don't disagree. It was something that was unavoidable. We were hoping for more pruning. We are going to go out and walk around and see what we can do to replace some of the things if possible.

Mr. Benacci:

The Commandants House, I know half a million dollars sounds like a lot of money, but can we get some private investments or donations?

Director Raymond responded; the Commonwealth can't do it that way. Because it's construction it has to go through DGS.

There has been a change to the real-estate tax exemption program, I just want to bring it to the floor. I was able to work with the Administration of the Council to remove one of the requirements of having to serve during a war time period. Which a lot of people confuse. You didn't actually have to have boots on the ground, but you had to serve during a war time period. Which is basically WWII, Korean, Vietnam and the recent one was the Gulf War which ended on December 31<sup>st</sup> of last year because DOD stopped handing out the National Defense Service ribbon. So that pretty much ends the war time period. So, any eligible veteran that was not eligible because of service period, Council removed that requirement for the County. That is Erie County only. Since the County is the taxing authority, we were able to remove that stipulation. If you have any questions, you can call us at the office or talk to me after this.

Mr. DiGiacomo:

~~On 90% occupancy rule, I'm going to push that up to the Feds, it just doesn't make sense. I can imagine~~ there's also a lot of private sectors pushing. Six months seems reasonable, you gave that number, that's what I will throw out.

Ken Vybiral:

Outreach opportunities are pretty limited this time of the year because of the winter hibernation. We were able to attend consortium on Tuesday, we are looking for some good things to come out of that. One of the areas that were highlighted was the Brody Garden Project. We will be the proud recipients of one of these indoor growing towers. We are anticipating delivery here within the next couple of weeks. We've seen the popularity and the excitement of our outdoor garden. We are looking forward to complimenting that and being able to offer an opportunity 365 days a year.

We are looking to do a recognition for our volunteers next month in April which is volunteer recognition month. April 18<sup>th</sup> is our scheduled date. Also, if you are affiliated with any organizations that are looking to do some volunteer help, please make sure you reach out to me to get those opportunities started.

We've been able to welcome the community into the Home a lot more here in 2023. One that wrapped up our 2022, our successful Wreaths Across America program. It's been great to see how that program has grown and the community support that has come out for that.

We also hosted our Four Chaplains Ceremony last month in February. It was nice to bring that back out into the community as well. We had a nice turn out for that event.

Looking ahead, we will be doing our Vietnam Veterans recognition at the end of this month, scheduled for March 29<sup>th</sup>.

I do want to give recognition to Mr. David Price and his organization the Military Order of the Purple Heart. If you look at the wall by the stairwell, you will see a new stain glass portrait that was generously donated by the Military Order of the Purple Heart here in Erie. Thank you, Dave.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

No old business to discuss.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

A motion by Mr. Fry was made to change the date of the June meeting from June 8<sup>th</sup> to June 14<sup>th</sup> to accommodate a Cold War medal ceremony. The motion was carried, and date was changed to June 14<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Stan Baker NCU Resident Council President thanked everyone for being here and congratulated Senior Leadership at the home for doing such a wonderful job.

Mr. Rose mentioned that it is difficult for the PCU resident to speak to the NCU residents' concerns due to being two different environments. Mr. Rose was glad that Stan Baker and other members of the NCU Council attended.

Mr. Rose stated that the official DMVA website and Facebook page for the Home needed some love. He stated a lot of things on there were not matching up to the reality of the situation. The Facebook page has us situated on 26 pastoral acres of prime Bayfront property with pictures dating back 15-20 years. The page also says that there is an outdoor patio that the residents can relax on overlooking the bay and enjoy watching the sailing ships come in. He stated that has never been the case since he has been here. It was done away with when the new boiler rooms got put in. Whoever takes care of that should get some input from the Home. The facility social media pages will be reviewed and updated

Mr. Rose stated that he wanted to talk about the volunteers and how important they are to the successful programs that we have at the Home. He stated that they are shy and like to come in and do what they do and go home and do not like the spotlight but asked a few to come today to help put a face to them for the Council. Mr. Rose thanked them for coming in and all that they do.

Mr. Rose spoke of the clothing room located on PCU. It is a resident administered program. They set the hours for it and keep the tidiness of the room. Darryl Berlin has been running the room for the past 7 years and doing a fine job. They also have the support of volunteers from the community like Doris and Gerry Svitek. The clothing room supplies everything from winter coats down to socks for a lot of residents who can't necessarily afford those items. Mr. Rose thanked Doris and Gerry for their efforts with supporting the clothing room.

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Mr. Rose spoke to the library on PCU. He wanted to draw attention to the plaque on the wall in the library for Gerald Dean Mulkey and her 30 years of volunteer service at PSSH. He stated for the past 7 years the library has been disorganized. Ken reached out to Cathy Crawford and Jim Brown to help support the library. They were able to bridge the gap of the former librarian to keep things organized and everything from falling apart. Mr. Rose thanked Cathy for everything she does to help support the library. Jim could not be here today.

Mr. Rose brought up a concern from the previous minutes regarding the internet. He stated he thought people may have been left with the wrong impression and wanted to clarify. The residents have never had Wi-Fi in the PCU building. The staff and Administration have Wi-Fi throughout the building. He stated the residents can get the internet if they subscribe through Spectrum. If they open an account, they can get the internet turned on in their room and the Home will help them with that. Spectrum has a program for low income individuals to get the rate down to around \$30 for the first year. He stated we had old computers here that were never hooked up to the internet that had many card games on them that the residents enjoyed however, the last of those computers died out about 5 years ago. He stated it's been 4 years now since 6 computers were provided to the Home. The person who donated the computers also provided the internet. The computers sat for about a year. It wasn't until a conversation with the previous Director of Veterans' Home was had before the installation of the computers was granted. One was placed in the library, two in the canteen lounge and one across from the nursing station in the small resident lounge. The donator again stepped forward with providing the internet and cabling. He stated the ongoing problem with the computers and internet is always pornography and the machines were shut down again. They were eventually brought back up but offline for residents to enjoy simple card games and things of that nature. He stated in October or November of last year an Army veteran with cyber security experience volunteered to help setup the computers. With Cheri's permission, an inline that filters internet signals coming into the Home was installed. It is a control in addition to the parental controls as well and the computers were once again able to be used before Christmas. It has been working and everything looks good so far. Currently there is no WIFI on the PCU wing of the campus. Internet used on the PCU is hard wired and for facility operations. NCU has WIFI but is used for facility operations. Commercial filtered WIFI is in process for approval across all 6 homes.

*Mr. Stan Baker commented that he has over 40 years' experience as a computer engineer in Silicon Valley for several large corporations, the Navy and Army National Guard in California, if he can assist in anyway, he would like too. He understands the situation with the pornography and the last nursing home he was in had a filter that worked quite well. Mr. Rose said they were looking to recruit a resident who could administer the monthly updates and the anti-virus software that is installed and would love to have Mr. Bakers help.*

Mr. Rose spoke about the garden project and introduced Mike Bailey, a master gardener at Penn State. If your familiar with the soup kitchen over there, they raise a lot of the crops themselves. Mike helped us out about 6 or 7 years ago when the NCU was closed down for construction and the residents wanted to restart the garden. Mike came in and gave direction on what to do with the small space that we had. The garden is now starting to generate excitement amongst the residents. They really enjoy the fresh vegetables that come off the vine. We get quite a bit of comments from visitors, staff and family members. He stated the kitchen has gotten onboard with it, the garden does not produce enough to supply the Home with the food, but it does provide a garden fresh variety of vegetables that the kitchen

is able to be creative with in certain dishes. Mr. Rose thanked Mike for all his efforts in supporting the garden project.

Mr. Rose spoke about the Wreaths Across America Ceremony. He asked that if you've never heard about the first Wreaths Over America Ceremony, that you ask Ken to tell you about it because it is worth hearing. He stated it was a little bit of a "Christmas Miracle" and for those who have seen what it has become today will really appreciate it. It is heartwarming for me and my fellow residents here who many of us had friends who died out there, it's heartwarming to see them remembered especially around the Holidays and to see the level of support we have out there.

Any questions?

*Ms. Spacht responded, we are still working on the commercial Wi-Fi, which will be for the entire campus for the residents. That will also have a filter, it's been a work a work in progress for quite some time. Wi-Fi in this building, like Will said, for the volunteer that provided that to us was great, this building does not have Wi-Fi, it is hardwired because of the age of the building. Down at the nurse's station where the nurses pass the meds, their computers are hardwired there. We don't have Wi-Fi throughout the building here, but it is something being worked on for the residents.*

*Senator Laughlin responded, William, I've been listening and what I'm gathering here is from the veteran's side of this, the Home is focused on quality of care, keeping the residents safe and healthy, but the enjoyment of living here side of it, maybe there hasn't been as much focus, right?*

*Mr. Rose responded, yes. The concerns of the Administrators of the Home do not necessarily the same concerns of the residents who live here. the Administrators of the Home have to deal with state regulations and follow the laws, but it doesn't jive with what the residents want.*

*Senator Laughlin responded, I was listening to you, and I like to garden and be able to go out there and pick a fresh cherry tomato and eat it right off the plant. It means a lot to me.*

*Mr. Rose responded, the garden for example, cherry tomatoes, there is concern about some of our residents picking the cherry tomatoes and aspirating. This is what I mean about, sometimes the concerns of the Administrators of the Home aren't necessarily what the residents want. The home is responsible for the quality of care, keeping the residents safe and healthy and their quality of life. Our focus must be on the balance of the two, no more efforts with one over the other. Within a community setting such as ours we need to remain mindful of implementing programs that support both the more independent residents and those who need assistance. Administration must allocate the resources to meet the needs and interests of all the residents not just a few. The regulatory agencies have surveyed both the quality of life and care and found the facility in full compliance. They based that determination on interviews with multiple residents and family members. They read the documentation where residents are asked what they like to do and what activities they want to participate in. They observed that group and one on one events and interactions and reviewed the participation records. They noted what was being shared at resident council meetings over multiple months. They reviewed the activity calendars for not just the PCU but also the NCU and noted the far greater number of supported interactions over the requirements from DOH and DHS, on the average there are 3 – 6 activities planned per day including weekends as well as off campus trips and activities that are supported.*

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Every activity request can be reviewed to determine resident participation and staff availability to schedule an activity requested, however if the request is isolated to far few resident benefits or takes necessary manpower away from routine maintenance that can only be sustained otherwise with such commitment the request may not be granted at that time but will be re visited at intervals. Resident interest can falter at times and thus any program implementation must consider how does it remain held if the residents who offered to attend and support the effort change their mind or interest? In order not to disappoint even one resident with cancellations that would be necessary the planning and discussion ahead of time makes the difference. And at times passing on ideas until a later time if possible. If there is a request, we cannot often support a suggestion of an alternative can be offered. For example, if one loves to garden and the extended garden on campus is not enough for them to get their hands in the dirt there are Erie community gardens in walking distance to campus they can support.

As much as we desire to accommodate every resident "ask" we recognize in a community living environment such as PSSH which is highly regulated a tradeoff to living here may require family and friends to support individual interests. In the absence of having such support the recognition that there may be at times the need to pass on some ideas.

*Mr. Benacci thanked Mr. Rose for coming and giving the Council a better perspective from the resident's point of view. It helps the Council to be able to ask questions for you where they can.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned at 10:37AM

The next Advisory Council Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 14, 2023, at 0900.

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Gary Fry  
Resident

