

NH STATE VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: 7 December 2021

Location: ZOOM and ECTC 722 Riverwood Dr., Pembroke, NH

OFFICERS and VOTING MEMBERS

Paul Lloyd - Chair
Andy Patterson - Vice Chair
Tony Fowler - Secretary
Armand Soucy - Chaplain
Kelly Dobens - Treasurer
David Kenney - Chair Emeritus

Air Force Association

Kevin Grady (prim)
Gavin MacAloon

Air Force Sergeants Association

Bob Heichlinger (prim)
Ray Hayes (alt)

American Legion

Mike Lopez (prim)
Robert Blais (alt)
Bill Roye (alt)

AUSA Col. Cross Chapter

Greg d'Arbonne (prim)
Ed Harrington (alt)

Camp Resilience

Kurt Webber (prim)
Ed Harrington (alt)

Catholic War Veterans

Denise DeBlois (prim)
Robert Guldner (alt)
Armand Soucy (alt)

Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association

Nate Smith (prim)

Larry Ward (alt)

Disabled American Veterans

Andrew Patterson (prim)

Rick Borrazas (alt)

Korean War Veterans

Mike Lopez (prim)

Conrad Perreault (alt)

Marine Corps League

Shawn Carboni (prim)

Mark Lindsley (alt)

Chris Peirce (alt)

Military Officers Association (MOAA)

Peter Burdett (prim)

Joseph DiChiaro (alt)

Warren Coulter (alt)

Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)

Tony Fowler

National Guard Association of NH

Peter Duffy (prim)

Roy Hunter (alt)

Mike Horne (alt)

NH Army Retiree Council

Frank Musmanno (prim)

Mike Rice (alt)

NH National Guard Enlisted Association

Mike Lestage (prim)

Mike Rice (alt)

Jack Howley (alt)

NH Veterans Association

Kelly Dobens (prim)

Mike Young (alt)

Doug Crooker (alt)

Patriot Resilient Leader Institute (Camp Resilience)

Kurt Webber (prim)

Ed Harrington (alt)

Reserve Officers Association of NH

David Kenney (prim)
Mike Horne (alt)
BG John Pappas (alt)

Rolling Thunder

Bruce Garry (prim)
Keith Hurrell (alt)
Diane Domenicus (alt)

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Darwin Beeman (prim)
Russ Norris (alt)
Paul Lloyd (alt)

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA-41)

Ray Goulet (prim)
Alan Grant (alt)

Legislative Members (Voting):

Al Baldasaro
Regina Birdsell
Bob Guida
Patricia Klee

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORS: (non-voting):

Governor's Office - Jane Graham
Senator Maggie Hassan - Justin Troiano
Senator Jeanne Shaheen - Chris Scott
Congressman Chris Pappas - Patrick Carroll
Congresswoman Annie Kuster - Tom Giancola

COMMITTEE ADVISORS/AGENCIES:

Kevin Forrest, Director, VAMC Manchester, NH
Dr. Brett Rusch, Director, VAMC White River Junction, VT
BG David J. Mikolaities - Adjutant General NHNG
Warren Perry, Deputy Adjutant General- NHNG
Shawn Buck, NH State Veterans Cemetery
Margaret LaBrecque, NH Veterans Home
William Gaudreau, Director, Office of Veteran Services
Michael Hartt, American Legion Veterans Service Officer
Amy Cook, DHHS
John Reed, Martin's Point
Dan Marcek, VETFLIX

Barry Conway, Sage Emeritus
Jorge Dreusicke, American Legion
JP Marzullo, Liberty House

GUESTS: NONE

OPEN MEETING/CALL TO ORDER: Paul Lloyd, Chairman, convened meeting at 1700

Pledge of Allegiance: Chairman

Invocation: Armand Soucy

Welcome - Remarks of the Chair:

Secretary's Report: Meeting has a quorum. Attendance on file. With no edits the minutes were placed in the record.

Message from the Secretary: If you are attending the meeting by mobile phone or iPad, please let me know who you are in the chat so I can record your attendance. You can also send me an email: tefowler173@gmail.com

Treasurer's Report: Motion by Bruce Gary to skip report

Comments from Director Emeritus – Dave Kenney

Guest Speaker: None

SUPPORTING AGENCY REPORTS:

Manchester VA Update: Kevin Forrest

Attached

WRJ VA Update: Dr. Brett Rusch

Attached

DMAVS Update: Warren Perry

No update from Amy. Jane Graham had her baby.

VSO in training - hired new VSOs. Portsmouth position still open. Manchester is starting to see veterans.

State Veterans Cemetery:

4700 wreaths were laid at the cemetery on December 4th. Wreaths will be picked up on January 8.

9/24/2022 will be the 25th anniversary of the NHSVC.

There were 30% more burials in November for a total of 103.

Stated was a need to look at Veterans Day celebrations in 2021, Warren Perry has received a great deal of hate mail. VSOs need to get information out to the veteran community.

NHVH Update: Margaret LaBrcque, NH Veterans Home Director

There are currently 115 residents, Six female and 109 Male residents, ranging in age from 62 to 99 years old. There was a recognized WWII ceremony as there are 25 WWII veterans at NHVH. NHVH is ready for Christmas. All veterans offered COVID boosters and flu shots. Taking all precautions to prevent spread of COVID and flu, there is staff training on infection control. Undertaking supervision of all un-vaccinated staff. Thank you to VSOs across the state for giving to NHVH.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

NH Council on Housing Stability: 14 unsheltered, 115 homeless veterans not in shelters. Many veterans have difficulty maintaining housing.

Easter Seals: Working on Farnum Center in Franklin, repurposing building, to have 70 units ready in five years. Boulder Point in Plymouth has 55 units.

Bruce Garry: Starting to identify USS Oklahoma sailors, with 369 identified and 33 not identifiable. Ceremony today at the Punch Bowl.

Peter Burdett: The Veterans council has purchased six iBot chairs. These chairs bring the person to normal eye level. Cost is 35 to 40 thousand each.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFINGS: Kevin Grady - Legislative Chair

Change Veterans Day to Remembrance Day.

HB1050 - SVAC vote to Not Support

HB 1056 - Follow

HB1092 - SVAC Vote Not Support

BG 1106 - drop "certain" from bill wording to Support

HB1256 - Support

HB1314 - Not Support

HB1353 - Follow

HB1362 - Not Support

HB1375 - Support

HB1449 - Support

HB1505 - Tabled discussion

LSRs - No language yet

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORS:

Jane Graham (Governor's Office): Not present

Chris Scott (Senator Shaheen): Senator involved with discussions regarding future of Arlington Cemetery

Justin Troiano (Senator Hassan): Oral briefing.

Tom Giancola (Rep. Annie Kuster): Not present

Brett Levasseur (Rep. Chris Pappas): Oral briefing.

Good of the Order:

Calendar of Events:

Next meeting date: Tuesday, January 4, 2022

Adjourn Meeting: 1835

Respectfully Submitted,

Tony E. Fowler
Secretary

Update from October 2021 meeting

Question was raised concerning available space at Arlington National Cemetery. Staff met with the Office of Army Cemeteries and Army National Military Cemeteries on November 30.

- In 2016, Congress required the Army to report on the capacity at ANC and what might be done to preserve the cemetery.
- In 2018, ANC started a national dialogue, encouraging public input on the future of ANC. Two surveys yielded feedback from 250,000 respondents.
- The surveys showed strong support (96%) for keeping ANC open for our future war dead and MoH recipients and strong support (76%) for revising eligibility to ensure the cemetery remain active for future generations.
- In the 2019NDAA, Congress directed the SECARMY to revise eligibility to preserve ANC as an active burial ground “well into the future” (150 years)

Millennium Expansion (Completed in 2018):

- Added 27,782 burial spaces over 27 acres and extends capacity to 2040s (under current eligibility requirements).

Southern Expansion (currently under design)

- Will add approximately 80,000 burial spaces over 38 acres and extend capacity to the mid-2060s (under current eligibility requirements)
- Air Force Memorial is the centerpiece of Southern Expansion.
- This project includes a \$60M road realignment component (already appropriated through MILCON).
- The expansion project has a total program cost of \$360M. \$219M has been previously appropriated and \$141 is requested for FY22.
- The project is projected to be completed in 2027.

At this time, the agency is reviewing the public comments and in combination with the recommendations of an advisory committee as well as the recommendations of the Secretary of the Army, drafting the final rule. It will then need agency approval before it is reviewed and approved by OMB. Following that, it will be published in the Federal Register for implementation 30 days later.

NDAA Update

Senate & House Armed Services leaders have announced the final defense bill for fiscal year 2022.

Among other items, Senator Shaheen fought for provisions that would impact NH, including:

- \$15M to address continue the PFAS health study contamination piloted at Pease
- Supporting military readiness at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard
- Helping victims of directed energy attacks
- A commission to examine the Afghanistan war

Improving interagency response to directed energy attacks: Building off provisions Senator Shaheen secured in the committee-approved bill, Shaheen successfully fought to add her bipartisan measure with Senator Collins that will require the President to designate a senior national security official to organize a whole-of-government response and direct the heads of agencies involved in the interagency response to designate a senior official to be responsible for their agency's response to directed energy attacks. Shaheen's provision is based on her standalone legislation, which she introduced earlier this year.

Prioritizing submarines maintained at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard – Senator Shaheen joined Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) on a measure that requires a report on material readiness of the Virginia-class submarines, which are maintained at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. A senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Shaheen successfully helped procure two additional submarines during committee consideration of the defense bill.

Enhancing oversight of the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program to invest in the future of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and other U.S. shipyards – Senator Shaheen worked with Senators Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and Kevin Cramer (R-ND) to secure a provision that would enhance oversight of the Department of Defense's implementation of the 20-year effort to modernize the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and the Navy's three other public shipyards.

Establishing a commission to examine the war in Afghanistan: Senator Shaheen helped secure a provision led by Senator Duckworth's (D-IL) to establish a nonpartisan, independent commission to examine every aspect of war in Afghanistan, including the political and strategic decisions that transformed a focused military mission into a vast, nation-building campaign that became the longest war in U.S. history. The amendment is based on standalone legislation, which Shaheen cosponsored.

**Rep. Pappas DC Actions for Veterans
November 2021**

Sponsored Bills

- **H.R. 3944, the Burial Equity for Guards and Reserves Act**
 - Update: The bill was passed out of the House Veterans Affairs Committee on November 8, meaning the bill can now be voted on the House floor in the future. Our office is speaking with the VA, who recently said it supported the bill, to figure out how to implement the policy moving forward – either through legislation or through regulation.
- **Legislation to Standardize DD-214s for National Guard and Reserve**
 - Update: Planning to introduce a bill that would establish a single-tier document system so that all servicemembers receive the same all-purpose document and that there's no difference between the active and reserve components. We've secured bipartisan cosponsors from both HVAC and HASC, so we're just finalizing details before introduction.

Cosponsored Bills

- **REACH for Veterans Act:** The Revising and Expediting Actions for the Crisis Hotline (REACH) for Veterans Act would implement key improvements in staff training and management. The bill also facilitates the VCL's transition to 9-8-8 as part of the national suicide prevention hotline.

HVAC Committee Activity

- Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Hearings
 - November 18: Modernizing VA's Medical Supply Chain: Progress Made?

Check Register

LEGEND

DC = Debit Card
 CK = Check WrittenAutomated Teller Wit
 AD = Automatic Deposit

AP = Automatic Payment
 BP = Online Bill Pay
 TR = Online or Phone Transfer

CURRENT BALANCE

\$1,002.67

CHECK/CODE	DATE	TRANSACTION	DESCRIPTION	WITHDRAWAL	Cleared	DEPOSIT	BALANCE
	6/1/2018	Deposit	Opening Balance			\$366.00	\$366.00
AD	7/11/2018	Deposit				\$100.00	\$466.00
AD	8/7/2018	Deposit				\$100.00	\$566.00
CK 251	10/2/2018	Dave Kenney	2018 Summer Outing Food/Bev/Paper	\$412.82	Yes		\$153.18
Ck 253	10/2/2018	Dan Mercek	Payment for Award trophy	\$85.00	yes		\$68.18
AD	12/4/2018	Deposit				\$100.00	\$168.18
AD	6/7/2019	Deposit	VFW 41			\$100.00	\$268.18
AD	6/18/2019	Deposit	VVA			\$100.00	\$368.18
AD	6/20/2019	Deposit	Martins Point			\$100.00	\$468.18
AD	6/26/2019	Deposit	AUSA			\$100.00	\$568.18
AD	7/18/2019	Deposit	Rolling Thunder			\$100.00	\$668.18
AD	8/9/2019	Deposit	National Guard			\$250.00	\$918.18
Ck 254	10/1/2019	Saymore Trophy Company	VOIDED and rewritten to Dan	\$0.00	Yes		\$918.18
Ck 255	10/4/2019	Dan Mercek	Payment for Award trophy	\$85.00	Yes		\$833.18
AD	11/21/2019	Deposit	Retired Officers			\$100.00	\$933.18
Ck 252	1/8/2020	MG Gretchen Dunkelberger	Coffee for Meeting	\$35.51			\$897.67
Ck 101	10/6/2020	Dan Mercek	Spirit Award Trophy	\$95.00			\$802.67
AD	4/9/2021	Deposit	Nat. Guard Assoc of NH			\$100.00	\$902.67
AD	4/9/2021	Deposit	Air Force Assoc.			\$100.00	\$1,002.67

CHECK/CODE	DATE	TRANSACTION	DESCRIPTION	WITHDRAWAL	Cleared	DEPOSIT	BALANCE
Totals		Transaction count: 20		\$713.33		\$1,716.00	\$1,002.67

STATE VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

White River Junction Healthcare System

December 2021

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

COVID-19 and Area Hospital Capacity

- NH & VT have been experiencing a surge in COVID cases
- Some area hospitals are at capacity
- Hospital admissions are predominantly unvaccinated patients
- WRJ VAMC has extended its Fourth Mission agreement with the State of VT

WRJ VAMC COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic

- Booster shots are offered at the Blue Clinic, WRJ VAMC campus on Tuesdays & Thursdays.
- Veterans with appointments in Primary Care can also get a shot on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
- We will continue to offers vaccinations and boosters at each CBOC every week.

Veterans & Spouses/Caregivers should call the number below for information, scheduling updates, and appointments:

802-296-5151



Market Assessment Updates



Access Expansion Plan submitted for VHACO approval

STATE VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MANCHESTER VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

White River Junction Healthcare System

December 2021

VA₁



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Items of Interest

- NH Covid Posture – Highest Covid Prevalence/Bed Crisis
- Flu Shots – Available at Point of Care
- Manchester VAMC CLC – Staff Reallocation to Operate Additional Beds
- Women Veteran Program Town Hall – December 9 (5:30-6:30pm)
- Urgent Care Center Ribbon Cutting - December 28 11:00 am/Opens January 18, 2022

COVID Update

- We have doubled the staffing in the Vaccine Clinic and are offering Covid Boosters by appointment M-F 0830-1600.
- We are offering Covid Vaccines and Boosters at point of care across the medical center in order to increase access.
-
- We have joined with the State's Booster Blitz program and will be offering a large vaccine clinic on Saturday Dec 11th. We're expecting close to 500 people to receive Booster Shots at that event.
- Vaccine clinic:
 - Administered over 10,890 vaccines to Veterans, caregivers and their spouses.
 - 88% of employees vaccinated
 - 60% of registered Veterans vaccinated

Personnel Updates

- Chief of Staff – Negotiation Underway
- Grace Stanley, MD joined Primary Care team at Somersworth CBOC
- Jessica Donigian, APRN joined Primary Care team at Manchester
- Pulmonologist – Negotiation Underway