

New Hampshire Military Leadership Team

*A Meeting to Build Partnerships & Improve Services for
New Hampshire Veterans, Service Members and their Families*

August 23, 2022

10:00am – 11:30am

Edward Cross Training Complex, Pembroke, NH

New Hampshire Military Leadership Team Attendance

A	Major General David Mikolaities, Adjutant General, NH National Guard
X	Warren Perry, Deputy Adjutant General, NH National Guard; MLT Co-Chair
X	Kevin Forrest, Director, Manchester VA Medical Center; MLT Co-Chair
X	Amy Cook, Administrator, Community Based Military Programs, NH DMAVS; MLT Facilitator
X	Jim Adams, Chair, NH State Veterans Council
A	Steve Ahnen, President, NH Hospital Association
A	Matt Albuquerque, Next Step Bionics and Prosthetics
A	Pete Burdett, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army
X	Madeline Dreusicke, NH State Veterans Council
X	Ed Drury, Community Behavioral Health Association
X	Brendan Finn, NH State Veterans Council
A	William Gaudreau, Director, Division of Veteran Services, NH DMAVS
X	Jason Grower, Regional Director of Operations, Dead River Company
X	Karen Hebert, Director, Division of Economic and Housing Stability, DHHS
A	Ena Lima, Director, VA Regional Benefits Offices in MA, NH & VT
X	Paul Lloyd, Chair, State Veterans Advisory Committee
A	Kim MacKay, Commandant, NH Veterans Home
A	Sarah Morrissey, Employment Service Bureau Director, NH Employment Security
A	Vacant, Family Representative
A	Jeffrey Newman, Administrator, Division of Higher Education, NH Department of Education
X	Dr. Brett Rusch, Director, WRJ VA Medical Center
X	Roger Sevigny, NH Veterans Council
GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE:	
X	Matt Henry, NH Veterans Home
X	Jessica Hunt, VBA
X	Sarah Classy, VBA

Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome, Introductions, Membership Updates

MLT members participated in the meeting in-person and via a virtual Zoom link.

Ginger Munson resigned as the MLT Family Representative. Carole Hitchcock from White River Junction VA will be leaving the VA—she often represents WRJ VA when Dr. Rusch is not available.

- II. Review of April Minutes**—April 2022 minutes were reviewed. There was no meeting held in June due to the Ending Veteran Homelessness Summit. Correction made to April minutes—Julie Vose’s name was spelled incorrectly on original version, amended to correct spelling. Jason G. moved to accept the minutes as amended. Brendan F. 2nd, all members approved. The April 2022 minutes can be found on the DMAVS—MLT website page: <https://www.dmavs.nh.gov/about-us/councils-and-committees/nh-military-leadership-team>.

III. Review of Ending Veteran Homelessness Summit

Amy C. provided an overview of the intent and outcomes of the Summit from June 2022. Veteran Listening Sessions were held prior to the event. These were effective to learn about the experience of those using the system and its resources. Provider input was given on Day 1—need more centralized and coordinated resources, help with landlord engagement, and communications and more coordinated communication between providers themselves. Intent of Day 2 was to inform stakeholders and get input as to how they can contribute to efforts. Steering Committee was created as result of feedback throughout Summit. SC is currently creating action plan and will focus on statewide coordination efforts.

IV. Presentation: Red Cross of Northern New England, Celeste Stimpson

Due to technical difficulties, the presentation was not able to occur. Celeste gave a brief overview of what she will present when it can be rescheduled. Amy will follow up to reschedule for October meeting.

V. Initiative Status Updates

A. Legislative Updates—Warren Perry

Details are sent regarding status of all LSRs the Department is tracking in the LSR Tracker compiled by Warren P. and distributed by him and also Amy C. Each week Warren compiles updates on the status of each. Warren provided insight as to what he expects to see this legislative calendar. Change to definition of “Veteran” did not pass. Warren will be meeting with Rep Carson to discuss again. SB 360 passed—After min period of service, NHNG can transfer educational benefits to spouse for use in NH Community College System. Burial Equity Act started—12 have used since 3/15/22.

PACT Act—Kevin Forrest & Dr. Rusch

VAMC is receiving 3-4 calls/day to inquire. 350 on Burn Pit Registry; VAMC doing direct outreach to schedule exams for those they can identify. 5 Providers volunteered to conduct screenings during additional hours. Will build capacity as time passes. 23 conditions on list. Presumptively eligible IF served in Gulf Era after 1990 OR in Middle East after a certain date AND you have 1 of 23 listed conditions, then you are service connected. This is different than what Veterans experienced for determining eligibility for Agent Orange. This is single biggest expansion of VA care in our lifetime—this is a marathon, not a sprint.

Status of AIR Commission—Kevin Forrest

This is dead at this time.

B. Veteran-Friendly Business Recognition Program Update—Amy Cook

Number of recognized businesses continue to increase slowly. Network will be hosting a virtual, national recruitment event 10/5/22 to encourage military-connected students across the country to choose New Hampshire for where they live, work, serve and play. Annual Symposium to recognize and provide education for businesses will be held 11/15 in Manchester.

C. Supports for Military Spouses/Families—Amy Cook

MLT will need to fill the Family Representative position. Please consider people you may know who might be a good fit for the intent and purpose of the MLT.

VI. Information Briefs

A. Member Updates & Announcements—

- 1) **VA Medical Center, WRJ**—Dr. Brett Rusch
VAMC WRJ experiencing staffing challenges. By October will be re-opening beds that were previously closed due to lack of staffing. Workforce housing is needed. Hard problem to solve, but all hospital systems are experiencing the same.
- 2) **VA Medical Center, Manchester**—Kevin Forrest
11% growth in primary care 2019-2021. Looking at infrastructure that is needed to support future growth. More specialists start this week. One is for ear/nose/throat and this will be first specialist in this field since 2016. HR continues to work on recruitment challenges—have restructured salary rates to stay competitive with local market.
approach across the nation. Exploring technology solutions for faster processing of claims.
- 3) **Dept of Military Affairs & Veterans Services**—Warren Perry
Cemetery—25th Anniversary Celebration event will take place 9/24 10am-3pm. Main event will be 11:00am. State Fair-like with booths to visit. Theme is *gratitude*. Shawn Buck was on radio yesterday promoting event.
DVS—190 appts/month on average which is lower compared to past months and years. Still in process of recruiting/training new staff. PACT Act may make processing claims take longer.
Department—in process of working through budget for new biennium.
- 4) **State Veterans Council**—Brendan Finn
SVC has been working with Jill O’Neill, Chair of the Justice Involved Veterans Task Force to ensure Veterans in NH have access to legal aid when needed. Jill recently prepared a report that outlines work currently being done by various stakeholders in NH related to this topic. 433 low-income Veterans were provided free legal aid last year. Low-no-cost legal aid (civil & criminal) services through 603 Legal Aid will be available soon. SVC briefed TAG on 8/10 and submitted a written report (including Jill O’Neil’s report) to him and Warren Perry. *Attached to these minutes.*
- 5) **Veterans Home**—Matt Henry
NHVH census = 131 currently. This represents growth despite staffing vacancies. LNA Training Program has been successful so far. 8 grads are currently participating and will transition to full time employment at NHVH. A new student will start soon. NHVH has a robust capital plan this year. A sprinkler system needs updating and ARPA funds will be applied for to meet this need.
- 6) **DHHS**—Karen Hebert
Karen indicated that she’d like to explore with the MLT how DHHS can collaborate better with the MLT and the organizations represented by members. DHHS would like to strengthen its relationship with the Veteran community. Amy—it’s helpful to get information about upcoming funding opportunities in case Veterans can be a part of the large funding applications that DHHS puts together.

VII. Next meeting date

October 25, 2022; 10am-11:30am

Edward Cross Training Facility, 722 Riverwood Drive, Pembroke, NH