

NH STATE VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: 7 March 2023

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

OFFICERS and VOTING MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Chairman - Paul Loyd

Vice Chair - Andrew Patterson

Secretary - Denise DeBlois

Treasurer - Kelly Dobens

Chair Emeritus - David Kenney

Chaplain - Armand Soucy

Air Force Association

Kevin Grady (prim)

Air Force Sergeants Association

Martha Gladu (alt)

American Legion

Mike Lopez (prim)

Bill Roy (alt)

AUSA - Col. Cross Chapter

Greg d'Arbonne (prim)

Catholic War Veterans

Denise DeBlois (prim)

Robert Guldner (alt)

Armand Soucy (alt)

Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association

Disabled American Veterans

Rick Borrazas (prim)

Andrew Patterson (alt)

Korean War Veterans

Mike Lopez (pri)

Marine Corps League

Military Officers Association (MOAA)

Peter Burdett (prim)

Laurance Miller (alt)
Robert Jaffin (alt)
William Luti (alt)

Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)

Laurance Miller

National Guard Association of NH

Peter Duffy (prim)
Steve Greco (alt)

NH Army Retiree Council

Mike Rice (alt)

NH National Guard Enlisted Association

Mike Rice (alt)

NH Veterans Association

Patriot Resilient Leader Institute (Camp Resilience)

Steve Veinotte (alt)

Reserve Officers Association of NH

David Kenney (prim)

Rolling Thunder

Bruce Garry (prim)
Robert Brown (alt)
Diane Domenicis (alt)

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Leon Rideout (prim)
Paul Lloyd (alt)

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA-41)

Raymond Goulet, Jr. (prim)
Robert Heichlinger (alt)

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORS - non voting

Governor's Office - Trevor McAden

Senator Maggie Hassan - Justin Troiano

Senator Jeanne Shaheen - Chris Scott

Congressman Chris Pappas - Brett Lavasseur
Congresswoman Annie Kuster - Molly Small

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS

Sen. Regina Birdsell

COMMITTEE ADVISORS/AGENCIES:

VAMC, Manchester, NH - Kevin Forrest, Director
NHNG - Warren Perry, Deputy Adjutant General
NH Veterans Home - Kimberly MacKay
Margaret "Peggy" LaBrecque, Sage Emeritus
Martins Point - John Reed
State Veterans Council - Jim Adams
Easterseals/Veterans Count - Andrea Christoffels

GUESTS:

Carissa Elphick - Director of Human Service Programs - Partnership for Public Health

Chris Pierce - President of the Veterans Coalition in Laconia/Lakes Region

J. Justin Moeling, LICSW - Manchester VA Suicide Prevention

David Duren Ph.D., DAC - Program Manager, Harbor Care

Henry Och - CEO, Harbor Care

David Tille - Harbor Care

Cheryl Neiverth - Clinical Project Director, Easterseals/Veterans Count

Richard Marsh - NH Veterans Cemetery History

Jack Domenicis

OPEN MEETING/CALL TO ORDER:

Paul Lloyd, Chairman, convened meeting at 1700.

Pledge of Allegiance: Chairman

Invocation: Armand Soucy.

Welcome - Remarks of the Chair: None

Secretary's Report:

Meeting has a quorum; attendance on file.

No edits to minutes of last meeting on 7 February 2023; approved and placed in the record.

Treasurer's Report: Account balance is \$652.67. No change.

Comments from Vice Chair: Andrew Patterson - none

Comments from Director Emeritus: David Kenney - none.

Guest Speakers:

1. Multiple speakers on Suicide Prevention - Carissa Elphick, Chris Pierce, and Justin Moeling.

Carissa Elphick is the Director of Human Services Programs with the Partnership for Public Health. There are 13 regional Public Health networks. They partner with the Veterans Coalition to prevent veteran suicide.

Chris Pierce is the President of the Laconia/Lakes Region Veterans Coalition in rural areas.

Justin Moeling is a Social Worker for suicide prevention at the Manchester VA. The VA teamed up with the Public Health Coalition. The greater Nashua coalition is coming together. The goal is to create more coalitions. The program needs as many people as possible to get involved.

Carissa mentioned that funding is from the Veterans Coalition. They are working to build more coalitions. The Veterans and Military Families need assessment. Find where the gaps are to prevent suicide. They need to connect with existing groups. Need to create a web across New Hampshire before folks fall through the cracks. Need one central hub.

Justin works out in the community. Folks are coming together in Manchester and Rochester.

2. Multiple speakers from Harbor Care - David Tille, David Duren and Henry Och.

David Tille: Harbor Care is the state leader in helping with veterans homelessness, housing, health, dental, jobs, etc. There is a grant from the VA called the SSGT Fox Grant. Harbor Care is proud to serve veterans and is the top employer for veterans. David Duren is the Program Manager and Henry Och is the CEO.

David Duren: Suicide is a prevalent challenge. The SSGT Fox Grant allows services to veterans. It helps bridge the gap and find resources. Community collaboration is needed to help reach veterans. Harbor Care wants to collaborate and provide community based training. Free direct services are available for veterans and family members. Family dynamics add to the struggle. Harbor Care is looking for a partnership with SVAC for outreach, awareness and referrals. Websites are under development.

There was some questions and comments. The VA has identified homelessness and suicide as concerns. The goal is to help veterans find housing and give them the resources to keep it.

Bill Roy added that the American Legion National Commander is coming the end of April. This years theme is "Be the One."

Warren Perry added that the Governor has a Council on Housing Stability. Affordable housing is a number one need.

SUPPORTING AGENCY REPORTS:

Manchester VA Update: Director Kevin Forrest oral report.

The SSGT Fox Grant is entering its second year. Grantees need to submit applications by May 19th. Grants are available for suicide prevention.

Personnel update:

New Congressional liaison - Ken Christopher.

Chief of Urgent Care - expected in April 10th

Chief of the Spinal Cord Program - Psychiatrist

TBI Program

Chief of Medicine - coming soon.

A new Podiatrist and new Dentist are coming.

Facility Update:

It has been tough going.

The Operating Room remains closed. Mobile OR trailers have a wait of 8 weeks. The surgery staff is at White River Junction VA.

Wheelchair entrance - should be ready late April or early May.

Other:

Women's Health event - Saturday, March 25th from 10 am until noon.

Veterans Town Hall - Thursday, March 30th at 5:30 pm at the Sweeney Post.

Clinic for Covid long exposure and concerns.

Veterans Compact Act - all veterans in crisis can go to any Emergency Department free of charge; must meet criteria.

The VISN is planning an infrastructure meeting on March 17th in Portland, ME. This is for directors.

Travel claims are down to 1600.

Tilton CBOC - opens March 15th.

Directors office moved to downtown.

There was a question on the garage. No answer at this time.

Full service hospital - the Congressional team is advocating for replacement.

Seismic funding - special through the VA; use for complete replacement of Building 1; the Manchester VA sits on a fault.

DMAVS Update: Bill Gaudreau gave an oral report.

NHSVC (Shawn Buck): nothing to report.

NHOVS (Bill Gaudreau): the phones are not working; send emails until phones are fixed.

Dept of Military & Veterans Services: nothing to report.

NH Veterans Home: Commandant Kimberly MacKay gave an oral report.

Resident status: 129 veterans (118 men and 11 women). Average age is 85.

There are 25 on the waitlist. There are 60 in the process of applying.

Covid - the NHVH has been in an outbreak status for almost 3 months. Two weeks of no positives in both residents and staffs are needed to be considered Covid free. The 2 weeks restart if there is 1 positive.

The budget season for 2024-2025 is being worked on. The goal is to keep the same staff funding for 225 veterans. There is a 35 percent vacancy.

Another LNA class graduated.

Facility: They are in phase II of installation of hooyer lifts (from ceiling, not the floor). They are asking for 11 hooyer lifts each year at a cost of \$175,000.

There is a request for canopies. Some entrances have no canopies or awnings.

There is a drainage issue from rain storms and snow melt. Water goes in the basement up to the electrical box.

The NHVH is trying to get more normal. They are having cookouts again and keeping it under 10 people. You can come in for a tour. Reach out to the volunteer coordinator.

Admissions for homeless veterans are being expedited but there is still a process. RSA Law requires homeless veterans to move to the top of the list.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Amend the By-Laws: This is a housekeeping amendment. A handout was provided last month with the Current Language and the Proposed Language. A motion was made by Peter Burdett to change the language regarding the Secretary. This was seconded by Andy Patterson. Motion passed.

2. Set up roundtable discussion on a full service hospital. There was a question regarding what we should do in the short and long term. Kevin Forrest mentioned that the veteran population in NH is decreasing. More veterans are enrolling in VA healthcare.

3. NH Veterans Home: The NHVH is in need of awnings and hooyer lifts. A motion was made by Bill Roy to address all the needs for awnings and hooyer lifts in the NHVH. This was seconded by Mike Lopez. Motion passed.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFINGS:

Kevin Grady, Legislative Chair, gave a brief report and update on LSR's.

HB 163 - passed the house as is.

HB 189 - executive session moved to the 15th..

HB 206 - made it through the house.

HB 229 - retained in committee.

HB 330 - passed the house..

HB 543 - ITL.

SB 26 - retained in committee.

SB 45 - passed the Senate - OTP.

SB 174 - passed the Senate - OTP.

Definition of a veteran - include those still serving.

Most towns have a tax credit. The application does not have an option for "currently serving." Forms need to be changed across the board. Towns may require a warrant article.

Bills move over on the last Thursday in March.

An all veterans tax credit passed a few years ago. Towns have to support this. Some do, some do not.

LEGISLATIVE ADVISORS: Written reports attached or emailed separately if submitted to Chair.

Trevor McAden ((Gov. Chris Sununu): not present.

Chris Scott (Senator Shaheen): brief report.

Justin Troiano (Senator Hassan): brief report

Molly Small (Rep. Annie Kuster): brief report..

Brett Levasseur (Rep. Chris Pappas): brief report.

Upcoming Events:

15 April 2023 - Conference at the Puritan Backroom

1 June 2023 - Our Community Salutes - Fisher Cats Game

1st Wednesday - Monthly POW/MIA Vigil - 1900 at Veteran's Park, Manchester, NH

4th Tuesday - Monthly POW/MIA Vigil - 1900 at Langdon Park, Portsmouth, NH

Every Thursday - Weekly POW/MIA vigil - 1900 at Hesky Park, Meredith, NH

1st Friday - Monthly POW/MIA vigil - 1900 at Pine Grove Cemetery, Salem, NH

Next meeting date: Tuesday, 4 April 2023

Adjourn Meeting: 1848

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise DeBlois, Secretary