



**DELAWARE VALLEY VETERANS HOME**  
**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – August 9, 2023, 10:00am**

**Advisory Council Members**

**In person**

James Ritchie, Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Benjamin Mastridge, Vietnam Veterans  
Claudette Campbell, Military Officers Assoc. Of America  
Allan Abramson, President Advisory Council (JWV)  
Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans  
Charles Trainor, Marine Corps League

**Conference Call**

John O'Donnell, American Legion  
Samuel Huhn, Blinded Veterans Association

**Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Delaware Valley Veterans Home**

Dontie Brooks, Regional Compliance Officer  
Travis Davis, Executive Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes  
Maureen Weigl, DAG  
Andrew Ruscavage, DVVH Interim Commandant  
Rinisha Thomas, Director of Nursing  
Yahvae Jones, Admissions Coordinator  
William McGoldrick, Volunteer Resource Coordinator  
Rita Yeung, Business Manager  
Violetta Berdichevskaya, Medical Director  
Veronica Royster, Administrative Secretary

**Absent**

Richard Fine, AMVETS  
Bruce Boice, Disabled American Veterans  
Daniel McCollum, American Legion  
Charles Petronis, Catholic War Veterans  
Barbara Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes  
Aurelio Peter Ojeda, Commandant  
Mia Woods, Compliance Officer  
Martina White, PA House of Representatives

**Residents**

William Groomes, President Resident Council

**Visitors**

Dr. Wally Quinlan; For Council Member Brian O'Neill Office

- Moment of Silence
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Introduction of Attendees
- Approval of Minutes from May 10, 2023

### **Report from Yahvae Jones, Admissions/Marketing**

- Good morning, there has been 20 new admissions since the last meeting, and 2 discharges.
- We have a census of 156 out of 171 beds. There are 12 beds closed for shower renovations.
- There are 3 beds open to be filled in the next 2 weeks.
- Marketing – I am still doing virtual weekly meetings, also going out into the community connecting with the VA Medical Centers in Philadelphia, Horsham, Coatesville, as well as neighboring hospitals and facilities.
- I am utilizing the fax referrals to increase the wait list, over 200 faxes are received. I have received 17 Veteran referrals from the faxes. There were 6 people who toured DVVH and 0 applied or completed applications. I am getting more referrals from HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) and VAMC people transitioning from PC to LTC.

### **Report from Violetta Berdichevskaya, Medical Director**

- Good morning, we are a COVID free building.
- We are about to face the flu season.
- There are some salary obstacles, we have people that come here, work and leave because of the money.
- Staffing is a major issue; we do not have the hands to take care of the residents. We will do what we must to take care of our residents.
- Benjamin Mastridge asked Dr. B, does the residents get the new Covid vaccine that is supposed to be better? Dr. B. replied, yes, we have it here. It is not new; we do have it here.

### **Report from Dontie Brooks, Regional Compliance Officer**

- We have three on-going items to report on, the first is BVH is non-compliant with the federal law. This law says that we must run exclusion checks, which is background checks on individuals who provide direct services to our residents. We now have a contract with VistaMed. The compliance department is conducting reviews for the contracts Benchmark and VistaMed, to ensure that the services they are providing us align with the contract.
- That is all I have, any questions? Claudette Campbell asked Dontie, do you have issues when we renewed the contracts? Dontie replied, not at this time.

### **Report from Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General**

- Good morning, the budget was passed and signed off, they will be back in September. There is no new legal news they are on vacation.
- An increase is being proposed for the blind veterans' pension from \$150.00 to \$200.00 or \$250.00.
- I was at the National Cemetery meeting yesterday, Philadelphia cemetery is full, we have four other cemetery's we can use. More folks want to do cremations, Washington Crossing does cremations and have green areas.
- We are doing town halls to inform people about the six Homes.
- August 9<sup>th</sup> was the date to put the claims in for the Pact Act, you could file retroactively and receive backdated benefits.
- Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home construction project has started, the first day the new commandant started they cut the power lines by mistake.
- PA Wounded Warriors has been great.
- The residents will have their new Eagles Jerseys soon.
- I will be meeting with Twilight Wish Foundation, it is for seniors, it is similar to Make-A-Wish.
- Allan Abramson asked General Weigl why we cannot have more space at the cemetery, it has to do with the funding.
- Ben Mastridge asked General Weigl about the Advisory Council members who do not attend the meetings and update the board members. He also asked about the Advisory Council appointment/ reappointment letters and

why does it take so long for the members to receive them. General Weigl said I will have someone look into that and get back to you.

- General Weigl added I am going to NY next week for the Navy SEALs swim across the Hudson River. If you want to see some motivated young folks, you are welcome to join me.

#### **Report from Travis Davis, Executive Director, Bureau of Veterans**

- Good morning, I will cover mine and Barbara's.
- Congratulations to Rinisha, she started as Director of Nursing here at DVVH, we are proud of her, and happy she accepted the position.
- We are waiting to hear about the State budget, last year was one of the biggest increases 17 ½ percent. July will be another increase.
- DVVH is leading the way with getting the building filled and our beds, they are doing a good job.
- We have five 5-star facilities and one 4-star facility.
- This year there has been 20 surveys throughout all six of our homes.
- We have over 300 vacancies in the six homes.
- There are changes being made for the minutes from our Advisory Council meetings. They will be posted publicly in the newspaper, and online. All our stakeholders will be informed about the meetings.
- Hollidaysburg Veterans' Center has a new Commandant Christina Dambeck.
- We are recruiting for a fulltime Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner at Southeastern Veterans Center.

#### **Report from William McGoldrick, Volunteer Resource Coordinator**

- State Veterans Home was super successful in June, we had outstanding sponsored events.
- Please pass back to the members of your organizations that we are greatly appreciative of their time and support of our Veterans.

A special thank you goes out to the organizations and people who donated, volunteered, or spent time with our Veterans' during State Veterans Home week. I would like to recognize the following; VFW Aux 148 members, American Legion Jesse W Soby Post #148, VFW Aux 6495 members, Knights of Columbus, Edward Kligge(KOC), Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial Society, CEI Group, American Legion Post 810, Ladies Auxiliary & Sal, American Legion Post 754, Trumark Financial Credit Union and, VFW Aux PA State Representative.

**Report from Andrew Ruscavage, Interim Commandant**

- I wish Commandant Peter Ojeda well, he will be out of the facility tending to personal issues for the foreseeable future. My name is Andrew Ruscavage and it is an honor for me to be the Interim Commandant at DVVH.
- Over the past 3 months DVVH has admitted 19 new Veterans into the home, and there were 2 discharges back into the community.
- Monetary donations for the past 3 months totaled \$1053.65. We continue to have a great presence here at the home from Veteran Service Organizations.

**Activities**

- For the months of May, June, and July we had many events including bingo, music trivia, devotions, shopping, games and birthday celebrations. We have a list of upcoming events including, casino day, an outing to Golden Corral, and art with Cassandra.
- General Weigl has assisted in arranging for students from West Chester University to spend some time today to tour DVVH.
- DVVH completed a mock survey put on by the BVH headquarters team last week, we had a good inspection, there were several areas identified for us to work on and Dontie from the Compliance team at FITG will get the results out to us shortly.
- We have numerous vacant positions for all departments and positions here at DVVH. If you know people who need a job, let them know we are hiring.
- Our recent successes are 4 nurse aid trainees. They will attend a 3 ½ week course to be certified to nurse aid. It will be a paid training & they will come work here. Benjamin Mastridge asked do they have to work here for a certain amount of time after training? No. We have 9 agency staff who are all nurse aids. When the construction is finished on the bathrooms, we can get more.
- Claudette asked are there any concerns on quality of care? There are no issues on the quality of care, no direct issues.

**COVID**

Presently, Covid is pretty much under control, but things can change daily. If there are changes, we will go back to wearing mask and following source control measures.

**CONSTRUCTION**

The new flag poles have been installed at the front of the driveway, continued projects for the center island are being planned and include the addition of a gazebo. DVVH is currently in the middle of a construction project to upgrade resident bathroom shower stalls, this is taking place on several units to replace older equipment. General maintenance continues of the grounds and building.

**Old Business: None**

**New Business: None**

**Good of the Counsel:** Allan Abramson said I been away for a while, and it is good to be back. Andrew Ruscavage said we will have lunch for anyone who would like to stay and eat, lunch will be on B-Unit

**Adjourned: 10:48 AM**

**Next Meeting: November 08, 2023**