

**HOLLIDAYSBURG VETERANS' HOME (HVH) ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**THURSDAY, October 17, 2024**

**10:00 AM**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Ildephonse "Duffy" Hines (Council President), Marine Corps League  
R. Raymond Lenz (Council Secretary), American Legion Department of PA  
John "Goose" Marin, Catholic War Vets  
Joseph Rodkey, Blinded Veterans Association  
Brian Querry, Centre County, Director of VA  
David Wagner, DAV  
Jay Buchanan, MOAA  
Tom Williams, Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Michael "Mick" Hoover, MOPH  
Tim Susengill, Vietnam Veterans Association  
Todd Warner, Pennsylvania State Association County Director of Veterans Affairs  
Henry J. Gaunt, American Vets  
Irene Fulton, Resident Representative

**VIP'S PRESENT:**

The Honorable Louis Schmitt Jr., PA House of Representative  
Amanda Walker, representing Senator Judy Ward

**DMVA PRESENT:**

Brigadier General (Ret.) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General - VA  
Travis Davis, Executive Director of Long-Term Care, Bureau of Veterans' Homes  
Barb Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans' Homes

**HVH PRESENT:**

Chrissy Dambeck, Commandant  
Kelly Smith, Deputy Commandant  
Desiree Kearney, Director of Nursing  
Donald Ratchford, Doctor  
Matthew Smearman, Maintenance Director

Joe Patterson, Admissions and Marketing

Adrienne Bilek, Dietary Director

Anissa Rosemas, Administrator

Flora Edwards, Nursing

LouAnn Dolinsky, Housekeeping

Kelly DeGol, Dietary

Dylan Nelson, Assistant to the Commandant and *Recorder*

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Sherry Collette

Elaine Warner

**VACANT POSITIONS:**

None

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance**

Duffy asked everyone to stand, and he led the Pledge of Allegiance. He then asked everyone to take a moment of silence.

**Call to Order/Roll Call**

Duffy called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM and asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves and to provide their title and/or Service Organization.

**Swearing In New Members**

None

**Review of Minutes from Previous Meeting**

Duffy asked everyone to review the minutes, then asked if anyone had any questions or comments. Tom Williams said that he was present during the previous meeting but he explained the situation to Dylan, all present agreed to approve the previous meeting minutes with the change to Tom Williams attendance.

**Dr. Donald Ratchford**

Dr. Ratchford said this was his second meeting attending, he is with Richard Hall CRNP here, and is still continuing to get to know the residents, that things are going well so far. Staff are becoming more accustomed to their presence on site. They are meeting with the VA staff repeatedly in order to get better services available for the residents. We have hired a second CRNP that will be starting soon; this will help to get things going concerning unnecessary med issues and initiatives. COVID cases have been rounding, we have been doing a good job minimizing the impact of potential outbreaks. We are working on vaccine initiatives, which is important with the population of individuals we work with.

### **Questions, Comments, Concerns**

N/A

### **Employee Recognition**

3 employees to recognize for longevity – Flora Edwards 20yrs, LouAnn Dolinsky 25yrs, Kelly DeGol 15yrs

### **Matt Smearman**

We are conducting staff interviews today. We have completed mac hall dining room renovations, still working through logistics for testing equipment, and have occupancy permits now. New building coming along nicely at 65%, starting to put drywall up on second floor, starting to install some fixtures. We appreciate the funding giving us the ability to create the opportunities for the residents **Question:** can we go in when January rolls around to give a tour? If it is deemed safe to do so by that time then it should not be a problem.

### **Joe Patterson – Admissions and Marketing Update**

Joe said that we are proud to continuing to work on improving the military tradition and culture here at the HVH. Report printed for all present, 20 admissions, 1 discharge and 19 no longer with us for a net of 8 and 2 non vet spouses for quarter with breakdown for county. **Question** – Is there anyone on a wait list? No wait list unless it is a day to day of the nonsecure unit.

Marketing report – July 9<sup>th</sup> attended outreach program, attended Senator Ward's August 1<sup>st</sup> expo, Future events – veteran resource affair at Altoona Library today, VCI 19<sup>th</sup> annual vets symposium in Johnstown, Senator Ward has November 7<sup>th</sup> event. **Question** – For marketing, every quarter at the Lycoming county coalition, they carry application packets with business card for here, along with a radio spot about how to apply. 9 inquiries have popped up since then.

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

Major General Schindler retired, General Pippy is acting adjutant general. Travis and I are thankful to Schindler for bringing us on board and building the team we have now. Pippy is a Westpoint grad, was with the national guard and was also a CEO. He was down at DC this week, looking forward to working with him. Joel Mushler has left DMVA to take a position closer to his house; replaced with Keith Graham. Philadelphia field office position being put out. We used to be the 4<sup>th</sup> largest population of veterans, we are now the 5<sup>th</sup> and we are trying to figure out ways to bring vets to PA. 1<sup>st</sup> ever

vet conference last month, brought together counties to talk about veteran issues. Will do it again next year, details to follow. Busy next few weeks with election season, all out covering those events and also for Veterans' Day. **Questions** – Can you go into detail on the 5<sup>th</sup> largest veterans statistics? We are under 7,000 now, oldest vet in homes now is 104 years old.

### **Travis Davis, Executive Director of Long-Term Care**

Thanks to all who continue to support the veterans here on site. Surveys continue across the 6 SVH's. We will wrap up annual surveys soon, with the surveys doing well across the board. For the 5 star ratings, right now we have three 5 star facilities with one 4 star and two 3 star. We have different field offices coming in, right now zero 4 stars and zero 5 stars in this county. Reason for highlighting that is that this area is dealing with very difficult issues regarding getting the star ratings up. We are working on getting HVH and SWVC star ratings up. Increasing admissions across the state, we are 73% full currently, with 80% full at just our nursing homes. Highest wait times in Philly, everywhere else getting vets in quickly. **Question** – how quickly are they getting in? It depends on their level of care and if they have an immediate emergency need. Scranton was a 6 to month wait list at the beginning of the year, now it is at 3. The toughest ones are for the secured locations concerning increases in dementia. **Question** – People are saying that they are waiting for too long. At Philly, Erie, SW etc. there are waiting list but for here we do not have a waiting list. The wait times change every month. Staffing wise for recruitment and retention, did submit a grant to federal VA to take percentage of per diem rate to reinvestments to pay nurses more. Best referrals we can get come from our current staff, will potentially be able to pay them more money. **Question** – For new nurses, is there any way for the state to be able to pay for their college loans? Yes, we are working on that with our HR department with multitudes of ways through the state to have that taken care of. As far as the commonwealth paying for it, there is no mechanism currently. There is a commonwealth program that can be used. Unfortunately, there are not enough nursing graduates coming out to fill these roles. From a legislative perspective, 668 passed. Established new position called Certified Medication Aide, providing nursing assistants an opportunity to grow professionally, waiting for that to become signed. We have been ahead of schedule, for the new Community Living Center (CLC) but we are now waiting for transfer switch problems that are looking at pushing our start time back by about 2 months. Hopefully we can move the residents by October of next year.

### **Questions, Comments, Concerns**

N/A

### **Barb Raymond, Director**

Barb said that they appreciate everyone's feedback and support. Holiday visits are gearing up across the 6 homes, with upcoming vets day holiday and thanksgiving, Christmas etc. we will be very busy visiting the homes coming up. Leadership meeting yesterday with all 6 commandants and facilities directors, had some great interaction and feedback from procurement, construction viewpoints. We will continue having those meetings moving forward. Vetcon went very well back in September; well attended and successful event. From COVID numbers, only have 1 resident at Erie facility, coming off of recent outbreaks across the board but goes through quickly. We did have a passing with COVID, various other comorbidities but COVID was put on as a contributing factor. Flu perspective, no influenza except 1 at Delaware. Updated vaccines on schedule as usual, being offered to both veterans and staff. Staffing mandate coming up, not enough graduates unfortunately. Revenue perspective, still business as usual to lessen vet costs.

## **Questions, Comments, Concerns**

N/A

## **Compliance Report – Kelly Smith**

With compliance committee, addresses concerns staff bring up for regulations, policies, etc. We have a regular committee with FITG as well. Last meeting was September 9<sup>th</sup>, looking over 5 year plan items and ordering processes. 66% completion concerning CLC, will be moving into everything as soon as we can, with furniture for the dining room being on backorder and residents agreed to temporarily utilize old furniture until new came in.

## **Chrissy Dambeck, Commandant**

Chrissy asked everyone to look inside their folders for the Commandant Report; said that we had a busy last quarter with the DOH survey that concluded on July 18<sup>th</sup>. Revisit on September 11<sup>th</sup> that cleared up any deficiencies. Life safety came in for July and then again in August to clear any deficiencies. DHS came in for a survey, Barb mentioned upcoming Holiday activities – Nov 7<sup>th</sup> thanksgiving meal, second week of December will be Christmas event. We are having a meeting today to reopen west 2. We will be able to transition to 25 in all areas making it easier for acuity levels to be maintained and prepare equivalent numbers for the CLC move. CLC meetings every 2 weeks. For hiring, we will reinstate Walk In Wednesdays; will allow applicants to come in and interview on site. Will be hiring nurse aide trainees, will be able to assist staff but will not be counted in numbers. Donations and volunteer hour report in the packet. We had Korean war vet recognition, purple heart recognition, etc. Lindy Sisters came in to perform. Had Oktoberfest, had POW/MIA recognition, Sharing and Caring boat ride. Question – with Christmas around the corner, will we have a promotion for Christmas gifts for the donations? Yes, Volunteer services is currently working on it. We had our 1<sup>st</sup> resident and staff talent show, a lot of residents and staff participated and everyone had a great time. We may open it up to the public next and see if anyone is interested in volunteering.

## **Anissa Rosemas**

Criteria through Department of Human Services; follow-up through 3 reportable services. Violation for HIPPA, put all staff on campus through a HIPPA training. 1 violation was for the RASP, physical altercation between two residents did not have expanded content concerning the incident on the RASP.

## **Questions, Comments, Concerns**

N/A

## **Old Business**

N/A

## **New Business**

Elections; all present adjourned regular meeting and moved into regular elections. Nominations for secretary – none. Volunteer for secretary – Raymond Lenz said he would stay. Any other nominations to be made? None. Vice president – none. Volunteer for vice president – none. Duffy asked Joe if he would like to be the vice president, Joe said no due to his vision being impaired. **Questions** – Is this positing for 1 year? Elections are every year, that’s the way that they were setting it up at the time. All info contained in draft that was put together, an expansion on 1 page law that was written, which had provisions as the start but it was not intended to be the long term picture. Brian Querry volunteered for the position of vice president. Nominations for President – none. Volunteers – Duffy said that he would be the President. All present were in favor of the positions being taken. **Question** – Would Senator Ward or Representative Schmidt be willing to create a small presentation that they could give to the advisory council for each meeting? Yes, we could put a legislative update moving forward.

### **Announcements/Good of the Council**

Legislative update, house reps in Harrisburg, as of Nov 30<sup>th</sup> will be dissolved but will be going again in January. Does not anticipate a lot will get done next week. Will find out more after finding out the results of the election next month. Question – does the dissolution happen every year? Every second year it happens, based on seniority will be getting people better positions and then they will continue to conduct business. Maring Corps celebrating 249<sup>th</sup> birthday on November 10<sup>th</sup>.

Spoke about Rep Schmidt supporting ALS initiatives, the work and funding is appreciated.

### **Adjournment**

Duffy reminded everyone that the next Advisory Council meeting is set to be held on Thursday, January 16, 2024, at 1000hrs.

Meeting was adjourned at 1127hrs.

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**R. Raymond Lenz, Secretary**