

Southwestern Veterans' Center
Advisory Council Meeting
October 17, 2025

Advisory Council Members Present:

James Lamison, AMVETS
William Roland, Vice President, VFW
Matthew Zamosky, PASACDV
Kenneth Stubbs, Resident Representative
William Aronson, Military Order of the Purple Hearts
Edward Hanke, Disabled American Veterans
Gary Anspach, Marine Corp League
Thomas Tallon, Military Officers Assoc. of America
Paul Kennedy, TAL
Tim Sager, Secretary, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans
Cassie Betzler, Commandant
Erin Rakow, Deputy Commandant
Dr. Blinn, Medical Director
Cheri McAfee, Assistant to the Commandant
Barbara Raymond, Director of State Homes
Maureen Weigl, Adjunct General
Barbara Raymond, Director State Homes

Advisory Council Members Excused

Ken Vybiral, American Legion
Rommel Dacanay, BVA
Traci Nuzzo-Land, Director of Nursing
Travis Davis, Executive Director of State Homes
Julia Myers, Admissions Coordinator

Advisory Council Members Absent

None

Others Present

Others Excused

John R. Pippy, Major General, PAARNG
Adjunct General
Senator
Representative

Visitors

- none

CALL TO ORDER:

- *Meeting was called to order by Mr. Tallon at 10:00 AM.*
- *A Moment of Silence was held*
- *Pledge of Allegiance was recited.*

ROLL CALL:

- *Roll call was taken*

SWEARING IN CEREMONY

- *None*

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:

- *Accepted as read*
- *Tallon PA State Senta 29 question – Quorum now 15, should be membership now 15*
- *Mr. Roland made a motion to accept as amended, motion seconded Mr. Sager*
- *Motion passed*

REMARKS FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR:

- *Flu vaccine clinic next week for the residents*
- *Consents for Covid vaccines went out and awaiting return / the clinic will be scheduled in the beginning of November*
- *Covid infections – no resident positive since August, only 1 staff this month /4 last month – all staff following policy for return to work*
- *No flu cases amongst staff or residents as of yet*

REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL MEMBER STATUS

- *Terms reviewed*

ADMISSIONS & MARKETING UPDATE:

- *We have 37 veterans on waiting list*
- *5 Employee recognitions*
- *We had one employee recognition last month*

REMARKS FROM THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL:

- *Budget impasse*
- *Claims being processed but offices being closed down*
- *Lots of requests from veterans*

- *There are 2nd/3rd order with snap requests/everyone calling for VTA at the current time due to budget impasses*
- *Employees furloughed due to budget impasse*
- *No level of veterans' care being impacted at this current time*
- *There are dial in links if anyone wants to listen in on the committees to pass along information – we will send you the link*
- *Lots going on in November*

REMARKS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF STATE HOMES:

- *Not present*

REMARKS OF THE DIRECTOR OF STATE HOMES:

- *Travis is out today at another meeting*
- *From the budget perspective – anything mission critical for vets is not being impacted*
- *What is impacted is the ability to hire those who do not directly touch residents/but can hire those who directly affect residents*
- *Covid numbers good – 2 positives at Erie*
- *Recently went through outbreaks at Erie and Del valley – (Erie had 44) - out of the those 44 positives, 21 were without symptoms at all – 3 were hospitalized (had co- morbidities)*
- *There seems to be an increase in the communities regarding covid – we have been encouraging staff to practice hand hygiene to prevent spread*
- *No flu across homes at the current time – about 50% of the homes are vaccinated from flu*
- *Covid vaccine – a lot of back and forth regarding recommendations from CDC – 65 or older or with co- morbidities are eligible*
- *Residents are eligible /employees may not be*
- *Had some menu changes that started this week – looking to do more of a standard type of menu across the homes*
- *Gearing up for the holiday seasons/gearing up for the 250-anniversary celebration*
- *Hiring concerns across the nursing field/Registered Dieticians/Social Workers also a challenge/various campaigns out there to help with that*
- *CMS initiated a campaign to support nursing home staffing starting next year*
- *Survey wise we were very busy over the summer – federal survey at Del Val should be upcoming in the near future*
- *Recently had 2 situations at Southwest and Southeast that resulted in injuries to the residents/lift type issues/corrected very quickly with respect to these issues/both facilities had everything in line to correct the issues*
- *Facilities were right on top of the issue and had them corrected*
- *SB129 – Advisory Council changes, sent out quite a bit of information regarding these changes*
- *15 member council/War commission will be reviewing – 2 additional community members/residents*
- *Nominations come from the residents themselves/will go through Maureen and then the governor*

- Residents will vote on council president to be one of those members and then one other resident
- Admissions at 77% overall across the state/Nursing home side currently 84% filled
- Staffing challenges keep us from filling 100%
- Gained 10 residents across the state
- Star ratings are currently a 5 start at two facilities/2 at 4 star and SouthWest is currently a 3 star
- Anticipate some changes to the star rating/a little more difficult to be 4/5 star not sure how that looks yet
- Construction – Hollidaysburg is anticipating a move in in the spring – ribbon cutting late spring
- Tom Tallon had a question regarding SB 129 – Barb Raymond went over SB129 – Tom Tallon asked if a copy could be sent out to everyone – is it reducing the number of Advisory Council members appointed by War council from 12 to 10? – yes
- Tom Tallon inquired if the member count was staying at 15– Barb Raymond responded, correct – quorum remains at 6 – correct – and the report – annual report – what is the format? –the report is due Jan 26? – we have no format?? Barb stated that Travis is currently working on the format at the current time and it will be out soon
- Barb stated that she and Travis and worked on the report yesterday
- Mr. Roland – inquired about the length of time board members serve – suggested that it would be good to get together to determine what the length of service is to be – suggested having a meeting before the January deadline? –the War council was aware of everything – we will be reviewing everything regarding the decreases - I am on the war council – we know the 10 we are going to use for the site – the site will determine the length
- Barb asked if council members wished to facilitate a meeting to discuss– stated that Cheri could set up a meeting at the time yet to be determined if that is what was wanted
- Tom Tallon – I believe the 1 yr/ 2 yr language was already in their when they adopted it the first time – I think we should just continue with those lengths – the whole point – you don't want the council to loose the council every year or all at once – I say we adopt the length we have now and the process we have – when we submit a name where does it go – we never get updates or a status... - lets look at a process to get reappoint status
- Barb Raymond stated that we do coord with the governor's office for that process – we don't often hear back from them either
- Barb went over suggestions on how to handle length of services regarding family member / residents
- Matt suggested that perhaps retention would be three year appt – but at staggering times – rotation equally amongst the three years so there is not an absolute turn over/ staggering terms – a roundtable discussion on lengths of services terms of service rotation of service/replacement of members/by laws to be formulated/adjusted to address new members

REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT:

- No open compliance complaints
- Barb actually went over my list
- Went over commandant report

- *Tomorrow – Pittsburgh is hosting a walk to end Alzheimer’s – we have a team from Southwest participating as well as taking some residents to watch/participate*
- *Mr. Lamison – I don’t every remember Southwest having the fewest stars of all the homes – are there plans to change this – Cassie remarked that the struggle of the survey is the staffing star – went over the issue/resolution*

REPORT OF DEPUTY COMMANDANT

- *Starting Wednesday new menus rolled out – going well so far*
- *Some challenges of the new menus are diets have become stricter/liberalizes some menus if possible according to resident*
- *Funding on hold – do have some projects going on as they were from last year – went over the projects currently going on*
- *Just waiting for budget to get approval to be able to continue on with future projects*
- *Raised about \$1000 for the walk to end Alzheimer’s*

REPORT OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

OLD BUSINESS:

- *Mr. Tallon – the report which we need to submit – we need to have structure – as soon as it is sent we will share with everyone – we will call a meeting if need be - everyone good with that – once we have format we will brainstorm this and provide an information with respect to this report*
- *Mr. Zamosky – is the bill passed? and implemented? – Barb responded that it is an active legislation*
- *Mr. Zamosky – effective 60 days after passage ? – report is in January – I thought it said it was a standardized report – same format from all of the homes? – Barb responded that she and Travis already have the information there for you guys – you guys will have to review and no additional information will be needed – a lot will be what we talk about throughout the year –*
- *Mr. Zamosky – as far as the report – when implemented – I suggest a smaller committee to review it – then the whole body can make suggestions?*
- *Mr. Tallon – process? Is there a target date each quarter to review – what will the process of how it will work? We need to work on the best process – I will call a meeting in December –*
- *Mr. Tallon we will call a December meeting if necessary*

NEW BUSINESS

- *Nothing*

GOOD OF THE COUNCIL:

- *Nothing*

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS

- *Mr. Anspack – Broke femur in June was out of commission for 3 months – according to the MCI there was someone to take my spot – not sure if he did or did not – not sure how to proceed – would like to step up and do better job where needed - up for renewal which ran out in June – not sure if who has to vote on this –*
- *Mr. Hanke – quick comment – we appreciated the cooperation at the Sharing and Caring boat ride – participation was great – like to see what we can do to make things better – I think there is more that can be done by the outside vets organizations*
- *Mr. Kennedy –someone can get back to me what days are good sit down with staff*
- *Mr. Aronson – we continue to donate to SWVC bingo activities and we have regular meetings /fund raiser at end of August to continue to support SWVC*
- *Mr. Lamison – disappointed that our star rating is so low – anything the home needs from Council to help out this this let us know*
- *Mr. Zamosky – two things – as far as the HOH – I had spoken with Chris Vybiral’s mom – she is very interested – I’ll get working on this– the lack of funding is trickling down to the counties as well – our department was not directly affected – I do have someone leaving through attrition and not able to replace this new position until funding is restored via the budget – claims being processed remotely – appeals are actually happening –*
- *Mr. Sager – I do not have anything to report*
- *Mr. Stubbs – as the Commandant was saying, we are improving out home / everything else going well – 2 more posts added to our list*

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Mr. Lamison and seconded by Mr. Hanke to adjourn at 1105.

The meeting adjourned at 1105 AM.

***Next meeting will be held January 16, 2025
at 10:00 AM***