



**DELAWARE VALLEY VETERANS HOME  
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – May 14, 2025, 10:00am**

**Advisory Council Members**

**In person**

Benjamin Mastridge, Veterans of Foreign Wars, President Advisory Council  
Claudette Campbell, Military Officers Assoc. Of America  
Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans  
James Ritchie, Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Douglas Craig, Catholic War Veterans  
Ed Horan, Marine Corps League  
Ashley Conaway, for Senator Frank A. Farry  
Patricia (Tricia) Udicious for Martina White, PA House of Representatives

**Conference Call**

Richard Fine, AMVETS

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

Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General-VA  
Travis Davis, Executive Director, Long-Term Care  
Barbara Raymond, Director of Veterans' Homes  
Margo Coleman, Commandant, DVVH  
Violetta Berdichevskaya, Chief Medical Officer, DMVA  
Rita Yeung, Deputy Commandant, DVVH  
Yahvae Jones, Admissions and Marketing Coordinator, DVVH  
Rinisha Thomas, Director of Nursing, DVVH  
William McGoldrick, Volunteer Resource Coordinator, DVVH  
Veronica Royster, Assistant to the Commandant  
Erica Moore, Regional Program Outreach Coordinator

**Absent**

Allan Abramson, Jewish War Veterans  
Samuel Huhn, Blinded Veterans Association  
Leonard M. Johnson, Disabled American Veterans  
Regional Compliance Officer

**Residents**

Bobby Malone, Resident Representative

- Moment of Silence
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Roll Call
- Swearing in New Member- Ed Horan, Marine Corps League
- Approval of Minutes from February 12, 2025, Larry Holman and Douglas Craig

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

- I have nothing to report because everything is awesomely well, as of today.
- I attend the morning meetings in this building, I do recognize how good we are here, I am talking about this particular institution. No big COVID, no deaths, no outbreak. We still provide our patients who are willing to get boosting for COVID every season. We are not mandating vaccination for staff. It is up to the person who would like to get one. We did not have norovirus outbreaks, no issues, no vomiting or diarrhea. Good job with the hand washing.
- We do advise all our residents' families not to come here if there are any respiratory issues. We still offer mask. As of this morning we had six residents who passed away.
- Yahvae in our Admissions department does a really good job. I reached out to her to assist with something, and she was able to help.
- Our volunteer department, Bill. He is such a great addition. I notice how good and attentive you are with the residents.
- I speak for the nurses and the people who work here, to Martina White office, about the potholes driving up to the building. I know that is a city issue, could we work toward getting that fixed. Tricia replied, we are working with the city to get those potholes fixed.
- As always, thank you to my left hand and my right hand, if you have any questions, you can always reach out to them.

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

- Since the last meeting we had 22 admissions, and 12 residents passed away since the last quarter.
- Our current census is 164 out of 171. I am planning 1 female bed for next week. We can maximize 165 beds. At that point we will be considered full. We will have 6 remain open.
- Our wait list is currently 51 people on our primary waiting list, 4 people are out of state. Our wait time depends on bed availability. No beds available at this point. About 7-9 months of a wait time.
- I am also putting in referrals to go to Southeast, Gino Merli and Hollidaysburg, they have availability, I reach out to the people on my wait list to let them know they have the option to go to one of our other homes, if that is something they would like.
- Marketing- I go to the community expos. I was at the one they had Saturday.
- There has been a recent shift in social workers for the nursing homes and hospitals, a lot of them are moving to different places. In the next couple of weeks, I do plan on going out and introducing myself to the new social workers who are not aware of the facility for Veterans. I stay in contact with the social workers at the VA.
- I got invited in mid-June to do another presentation, for the VA social workers at the Philadelphia clinic. Just so we can walk through how to complete an application, and things like that. I asked Erica, a representative from DMVA to help as well.

#### **Employee Recognition**

- Three employees for this quarter were invited to attend the Advisory Council meeting this morning. They were not able to attend. Margo read the names of the winners of our "Caught you Caring" recognition program winners. Sonia Varughese (Nursing department) Kaitlyn Hyers (Accounting department) and Lena Alford (Nursing department). Congratulations to our winners and all who were nominated.

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

- More than 70,000 employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs could be terminated as a part of restructuring, Army could take a hit. More to follow, it will be gradual.
- There will be different Memorial Day services going on throughout our Commonwealth the weekend of May 23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>. We will be honoring the fallen, VA will be hosting ceremonies, Indiantown Gap National Cemetery and other cemeteries will be having ceremonies. There will be a Memorial Day parade in Media, PA.
- State Veterans' Homes Week is June 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>. I hope you can stop by. The homes have some great events planned for our residents.
- We are opening a regional center outside Fort Indiantown GAP at Lickdale. We will be having a ribbon cutting ceremony sometime in June/July.
- PA VETCON this year is being held in Valley Forge October 22<sup>nd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>. There will be Senators, County Directors, resources, state agencies and industry leaders. You are welcome to attend.
- Cohen Veterans Network will be here visiting today. They will be here to do a tour of the building. You are welcome to walk around the building with them.
- Bill and Yahvae **do** a good job interacting with the residents. Activities does a good job getting the residents out to a lot of places, it takes work and is not easy.

#### **Report from Travis Davis, Executive Director, Long-Term Care**

- VA contract freezes have slightly impacted our Homes. Ascellon is the company the Federal VA contracts to conduct our annual health inspections. Three of our six homes were in their survey windows at the time of the freeze; Ascellon was on site at-Southeastern conducting their annual survey. The survey team had to leave in the middle of the inspection. We received word that the survey would be resuming.
- Star ratings- Our five-star ratings are looking good. Three of the State Veterans' Homes are five-star facilities, Delaware Valley Veterans' Home, Gino Merli, and Southeastern Veterans Center. We have two 4-star facilities, Erie and Hollidaysburg and one 3-star Southwestern Veterans Center. We are proud of the work our homes are doing.
- COVID update- There are small outbreaks here and there. We did well to educate staff and residents on the benefits of being vaccinated.
- Admissions- We are at around 1156 residents and spouses with approximately 250 veterans and spouses on the waiting list. Benjamin Mastridge asked how many beds are left, and Travis responded 1500 beds.
- Construction update- The construction for Hollidaysburg is ongoing, we are waiting on some parts that has slightly delayed the process. Hollidaysburg is downsizing. Tentatively, we are looking at mid-September for the ribbon cutting. We will not have the residents in the building at that time. DVVH has construction going on here, the back patio is being renovated. We are looking to open a new nursing home in Chester County.
- The hiring pool continues to fluctuate. A \$4,000.00 referral bonus is being offered **for** referring new RNs, LPNs, and NAs. Fortunately, we have seen an uptick in applications. This may be a result of marketing or from federal job searchers. Since January we have received double the number of applications, and some success on the hiring side. Members of Pennsylvania Health Care Association, LeadingAge PA, the hospital and Healthsystem Association of PA, which advocates for hospitals in PA, got together and wrote a letter to Governor Shapiro discussing how workforce staffing challenges are

impacting access to care for Pennsylvanians, especially seniors. There was also a report that was included with the letter, it really highlights the needs across all sectors of healthcare. The purpose of this is pushing the administration to do something for us to help strengthen the pipeline of healthcare workers. The continued and increasing use of nursing agencies is highlighted. We have seen in the past few years; we are spending a lot of money on overtime. We have a marketing initiative going on for our nursing campaign. We encourage veterans and spouses to get on the list.

- Gino Merli Advisory Council meeting is tomorrow.
- State Veterans' Homes Week is the week of June 14<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup>, the date will change next year.

#### **Report from Barbara Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans Homes**

- We did have a small outbreak with COVID. We are thankful everyone was stable. We recently had a flu outbreak at our Gino Merli facility, a few hospitalizations, but everyone returned to the facility. We had positive residents at Southeastern and positive staff. We still offer the COVID vaccine and RSV vaccine. CDC considers the end of flu season to be March 31<sup>st</sup>.
- The Centers of Medicare and Medicaid adjusted some of their regulations. They initially were supposed to take effect in February, but they were pushed until April. Our homes are being prepared for these changes. There are just some language-type changes and some changes as far as the number of the federal deficiencies. Overall, there are no major changes to current practices at the veterans' homes. The Office of Inspector General also has some new regulations. Our compliance team is ensuring that we fall into compliance with those new regulations.
- The homes are doing well. We have to do minor tweaks with the regulations policy and procedure updates. Southeast recently had their survey with the Department of Health.
- Nursing staffing is 100% our issue, we are working to bring in as many nursing members as we can, but we are still using **agencies** across all six of our homes. The highest agency use is at Southeastern and Southwestern. To help with our staffing challenges, we have partnered with local schools across PA to create a Nurse Aide Trainee program. We hire individuals interested in becoming a Nurse Aide, and they assist with various tasks at the facilities. They are paid for their time working at the facility, as well as, for their time in class. After completing the class, they have 120 days to take their certification exam. Unfortunately, we cannot mandate that they stay at the facility after they pass their exam, but we do typically have good retention from this program. Southeastern is the final facility to come on board with the program.
- We get our veterans what we can. Our revenue team is working to get our veterans' service-connected disability ratings increased as much as they can and are completing Catastrophic Disability forms to decrease any out-of-pocket costs for medications for our veterans.
- State Veterans Homes week (June 14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>), Father's Day, and July 4<sup>th</sup> are all coming up. The homes have a lot of fun activities planned for our residents.
- The Compliance team was not able to attend the meeting, Barbara stated, the Compliance team usually report on the mock surveys, licensing surveys, and explained why they come out to the facilities to ensure there are no significant findings across the homes.

### **Report from Margo Coleman, Commandant**

- Thank you for being here today and for your support of our Home and for our Veterans and their spouse.
- Monday was the close of Nurses Week. This year nurse's week was celebrated May 6<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> with the final day coinciding with Florence Nightingale's birthday. And thanks to our Employee recognition committee, Rinisha and to Dr. B we were able to recognize our wonderful nurses with walking tacos, gift basket raffles, ice cream sundaes and more.
- The employee recognition committee was recently added to our Quality Improvement initiatives and their start up began on April 1<sup>st</sup>. They will ensure staff are recognized during the specific month designated as appreciation days for different departments and disciplines. The goal is to not only bring recognition to our staff for the hard work they do but to bring back a little fun and show how valued they truly are.
- Our back patio renovation was started at the end of March, but we have run into some engineering changes causing a short pause in the construction... we do anticipate this project to be back in full swing this month and hope to have it open in time for the fall.
- In March Delaware Valley Veterans Home was recognized by the Bureau of Veterans Homes with a certificate for reduction efforts in maintaining consistently low falls for the past 2 years. I would like to extend my congratulations to our Director of Nursing and our staff on their achievement.... DVVH recognized their achievement with a "Sweet Success" celebration with cookies, candy and ice cream sundaes.
- Our volunteer luncheon was a huge success! Delaware Valley Veterans Home honored 40 volunteers for hours totaling 3,582 hours in the year 2024! We continue to be overwhelmed by the love and support from our volunteers every day and are so grateful to be able to honor them.
- State Veterans Home Week is coming up in June and planning is already underway. This year our residents selected a Carnival circus theme. We are going to be hosting circus performers, a funnel cake truck and much more...we will also be unveiling the new names for our neighborhood units during this week. With the help from our renaming committee, we tallied the votes, and four new names have been selected. Because we recognize DVVH as a home where our cherished Veterans and their spouses live rather than an institution where they are placed, we are updating unit names from our current lettering terminology to specific neighborhood names.
- We have started working with the Warrior Canine Connection, the organization bring in a service dog to connect with our veterans. Ed Horan spoke about how robotic therapy cats and dogs are said to be helpful. Bill McGoldrick replied, we have 4 donated robotic therapy pets here, 2 cats and 2 dogs.
- Donation totals from the past 3 months are \$8,455.25.

### **Report from Rita Yeung, Deputy Commandant**

- State Veterans Home week is in 1 month. Army birthday celebration is June 14<sup>th</sup>, Father's Day June 15<sup>th</sup> we are having a picnic. We have some fun activities we are doing for the residents during that week. It is going to be a carnival theme with a circus performance, magician, comedian, carnival games, and more. There will be some good food, we are having a pig roast, cheesesteaks, crab fries, and funnel cake. There will be a car show, mummers' parade, and casino night. There are a lot of good events lined up.
- The patio outside in the back, the construction was stopped, we will resume the patio project this month. The security gate system will be implemented by the next meeting. It will be remotely controlled by security starting June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025.

**Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans**

- Mission BBQ is giving away a free sandwich for Armed Forces Week, until May 17<sup>th</sup>. Ben Mastridge stated, Mission BBQ came out to us last night and gave us free stuff.
- I would like to give you a health update, I have to get more Chemotherapy. They are going to try something different.

**Claudette Campbell, Military Officers Assoc. Of America**

- Larry, I hope the treatment **will** work out for you.
- RN is my background, and I have 30 years of experience. I am impressed with the overall quality and care here. You are to be commended. Custodial, dietary, other departments here, is hard work. I think this is quite an opportunity for me to be here.
- General Weigl came to our event in December, we enjoyed having her, it was nice. The Military Officers Association of America would like to make a donation to the residents of DVVH. The check in the amount of \$400.00 will be given to the Commandant, we like and appreciate what you are doing here.

**Benjamin Mastridge, Veterans of Foreign Wars, President Advisory Council**

- Thank you to Claudette for the encouraging words.  
It was great to hear what you said, and the knowledge you have with your nursing background.
- Happy birthday to the Army.

**James Ritchie, Veterans of Foreign Wars**

- Have a memorable Memorial Day, everyone.

**Douglas Craig, Catholic War Veterans**

- Our closest council is in Norristown, we are here to help and support.

**Bobby Malone, Resident Representative**

- I appreciate being invited to this meeting. It has been beneficial. I look forward to coming to the meetings.



**Ed Horan, Marine Corps League**

- We meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday at 7:00pm, except November and December, we meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday. You are welcome to come, we meet down the street at the FOP. We have some members you may recognize, who have served here in the past at the picnic. I appreciate being here with you. We do what we can, with what we have, when we can.

**Report from Rinisha Thomas, Director of Nursing**

- Nurses' week was last week, we had some great events for the nurses. Nurses won baskets, were served ice cream, walking tacos and we had breakfast.
- We have two new nurse supervisors. One has already started on night shift and the other nurse supervisor will be coming to day shift.
- A-unit working on a sensory room.
- Our nurse aid training program, five came back.
- Five dietary staff are moving to the nursing department as a nurse aid trainee.

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

- We got the approval for **Sol Stark**, I handed out the Hall of Fame applications. The next Hall of Fame ceremony will be after the meeting in August.
- Benjamin Mastridge- Thank you Bill for the volunteer luncheon, I really enjoyed the event and the food was delicious.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** None

**Good of the Counsel:** None

**Adjourned:** 11:05 AM

**Next Meeting:** August 13, 2025