



**DELAWARE VALLEY VETERANS HOME
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – November 13, 2024, 10:00am**

Advisory Council Members

In person

James Ritchie, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans
Leonard M. Johnson, Disabled American Veterans
Claudette Campbell, Military Officers Assoc. Of America
Benjamin Mastridge, Veterans of Foreign Wars, President Advisory Council
Douglas Craig, Catholic War Veterans
Ashley Conaway, for Senator Frank A. Farry
Patricia (Tricia) Udicious & Patricia (Patty) Leneghan for Martina White, PA House of Representatives

Conference Call

Samuel Huhn, Blinded Veterans Association

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
Rinisha Thomas, Director of Nursing, DVVH
Rita Yeung, Deputy Commandant, DVVH
Yahvae Jones, Admissions and Marketing Coordinator
Erica Moore, Regional Program Outreach Coordinator
Veronica Royster, Assistant to the Commandant

Absent

Allan Abramson, Jewish War Veterans
Daniel McCollum, American Legion
Richard Fine, AMVETS
William McGoldrick, Volunteer Resource Coordinator
Beth Werner, Regional Compliance Officer
David Petro, Resident Representative

Residents

Visitors

Mike Rang, Commander, Catholic War Veterans & Auxiliary, Dept of PA.
Dr. Wally Quinlan for Councilman Brian O'Neill

- Moment of Silence
- Pledge of Allegiance

- Roll Call
- Benjamin Mastridge- Vice President election – The president would like to nominate Jim Ritchie. Are there any other nominations for vice president 3 times. There being none, I close the nominations, and we make one anonymous vote for Jim Ritchie to be vice president.
- Swearing in of Council member Leonard M. Johnson by Maureen H. Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General-VA.
- Approval of Minutes from August 14th, 2024

Report from Violetta Berdichevskaya, Medical Director

- Good morning and welcome, congratulations to Martina White for another four years.
- We are still five-star facility. Thank you, admission office, you do an awesome job.
- The building is still clean, green, no infections, no diarrhea, no coughing, no covid, no flu no stomach virus.
- It does take a lot of effort from the Director of nursing and our Commandant, making sure the residents have clean hands before they touch their meal.
- We do have a few falls, much less than it used to be.
- I guess the covid error is over, we do have a lot of support when it comes to the nurses and the nursing assistants. The volunteer department is another big plus working around the building.
- Vaccinations, we have very good numbers, covid, boosting, flu vaccines. There were a few cases of measles around, Holy Redeemer hospital had them, two of them around August and September. We did not absorb any rushes here in this building.
- Hospice care, that is another big plus, and I am very proud leading the hospice care for which we provide. We have great feedback from our relatives of the patients. That is all I have. Benjamin Mastridge responded thank you so much, it is always a great report from you.

Report from Yahvae Jones, Admissions/Marketing

- Good morning, all, we are currently 156 skilled out of the total amount of 171. Which puts us at 15 empty beds. We are increasing our census to 165, I am going to fill all the units, and leave 5 open on the unit. I currently have 9 admissions to fill. I have 3 admissions this week, and 2 next week, and I think 3 the following week. Since the last meeting we had 7 admissions. Our wait list is currently 86 skilled, and 15 on our secured side. The wait time is between 7-9 months for skilled, and around 9 months to a year for secured, that is our primary waiting list. Our secured waiting list has 35 people.
- Marketing – I have been doing a lot of marketing, I have been out of the building around 3-4 times per week, in addition to doing the admissions. I also go out on weekends. We recently had the Elder Care Network of Philadelphia come here on Wednesday. It is for members that have a capacity of care for elders, nursing facilities, and different agencies that have some type of care for the elders. We were grateful enough to have them come here, that Bucks County now wants us in May for Memorial Day. I got 8 referrals and completed applications, so that turned out very well.
- The Veteran Community Partnership, I am the only state Veterans' Home, and the only VA contracted nursing Home on that list. All of the referrals come directly to me. I am working very hard on getting the VNA up and out, so everyone is able to know what we offer to the vets. Any questions? Ben responded, I am sorry, were there any questions for the medical director? Claudette Campbell responded, I have a question, where are the falls occurring, what are the units? Barbara Raymond replied, we are a certified nursing care. Claudette Campbell asked is it happening on the skilled unit? Barbara replied, it is happening all over. Dr. Violetta Berdichevskaya responded, it is all over, no

particular unit. Margo Coleman responded one of our initiatives is to always watch our falls, checking where they are occurring the most. That is something we do on a regular basis, that is why we quarterly have our meetings to make sure we do identify any trends, we can attack it at the source.

- Larry Holman responded, the question we have at every meeting just about, staffing issues, what would the capacity be if it stepped up to where you want it to be? Travis Davis responded Delaware Valley leads all the Veterans Homes in the state in terms of occupancy rate. As Yahvae mentioned, they are almost full here. What is preventing us from filling all the beds here, is enough staff to do it, so our staff to ratio remain strong, we need more nurses, and direct care nurses, then we could fill more beds. Benjamin Mastridge asked didn't you also have a mandate at one point for staffing that was very difficult to accomplish, because of cost and availability of people who wanted to be in this organization, as opposed to private? Travis Davis responded, we face the state staffing minimum increase from the Department of Health initially, I will talk about what the federal staffing increase may or may not look like. Benjamin Mastridge responded, it is funny, I rushed out of the house, I just got back from vacation, I read an article in the newspaper about this staffing requirement that almost looks impossible, because of the finances involved. I can send copies if you want. Travis Davis responded, the bigger issue is having people out there to pull the people since the covid pandemic, we had a lot of people who retired early.

Report from Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General

- As you all know or may not know, we had a leadership change at Fort Indian town GAP. Major General Schindler retired, and Brigadier General, PAARNG John Pippy is the acting Adjutant General, we have to get him sworn in coming up in the next month or two. Keith Graham took over the position as Executive Director for Veterans outreach. We have a little bit of restructuring going on the outreach side.
- Veterans Day I think everyone was busy, we are all coming off of a big high from the weekend, we had lots of activities all over the Commonwealth. Gino Merli, Erie, Hollidaysburg, the Veterans parade on Sunday We appreciate all the support from the staff, it is not easy taking them out all the time, but they do a great job. Rita, Rinisha, Margo and the team, they were all there, so it takes a lot of people. Of course they had a lot of fun on Friday November 8th, all the mascots were here from Philadelphia sports teams, Gritty was not here, the rest of them were here. I would like to thank Martina White and folks, they passed a new law in Pennsylvania for a real estate tax exemption and other income based programs. Any income-based programs they cannot count your VA disability as part of the income, so that is a big change.
- Thank you all for your service and happy belated veterans' day. Benjamin Mastridge asked during this exemption is it all veterans or 100 percenters? General Weigl responded 100 percenters, based on income, you get the real estate tax exemption if your income is less than 109 thousand dollars per year. They used to count your disability check. This is a step in the right direction. Sam Huhn asked do you have to be combat related like before? General Weigl responded, a lot of it is the same minus the VA disability not being counted in.

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

- Good morning, thank you for all being here and thank you for the support at our Veteran Homes.
- Delaware Valley advisory, you do not always see this at other locations, I truly appreciate you for being here. I would like for us all to take a picture before you all leave today.
- Since the last time we meant, in terms of surveys, we had surveys at Gino Merli & Scranton. Department of Human Services annual survey going on at Southeast. We had the Department of Health annual survey here at Delaware Valley, I will let Margo go into some of that. Upcoming surveys, Delaware Valley is anticipating the VA coming for their annual survey, they usually come around December.

- Right now, covid across the state is green, zero residents, and three staff members. That has been for the past several weeks.
- Currently we have three homes that are five-star, Delaware Valley, Gino Merli & Southeast. Erie is a four-star, and Hollidaysburg & Southwest remain a three-star. When we look at CMS data, that is who put out these star ratings. We could break it down by county, every one of our Veterans Homes is above average, in terms of their overall star rating compared to the county, we are happy to report that. We also look at the data from the VA, to see how we compare to other Veteran Homes. Our Veteran Homes are very different from community nursing homes. The most unique thing about us is that we take care of primarily men, community nursing homes premier females. When we look at ourselves at the Veterans Homes, it is more like an apple-to-apple approach. Out of the entire country we rank 11 in our overall star ratings. There are many states that are ahead of us that only have 1 Veterans Home.
- Census wise, we have 1120 residents under our care, our census is around 73 percent on the nursing side, close to 80 percent, so that is good.
- Staffing- We have a lot of vacancies that has not changed.
- Our wait list has been coming down, thanks to Yahvae, and our other admissions coordinators who are doing a great job. Philadelphia region remains the highest in terms of review time.
- The one thing that we have been working on the last several months is the grant through the VA, to help us with nurse recruitment and retention. This something we are going to brief all of our Commandants and our Directors of nursing on, so Delaware Valley gets a little bit of a sneak peek today of what's coming. We were awarded this grant, we found out last week. What this is going to allow us to do is put a dollar amount into nurses who are coming into the door, and any also any current employees who refer someone that is coming in the door. We are really excited to do this, because we have been trying to think outside the box, trying to beat private sector. This is something that we struggled with. This VA grant has been awarded to us and we have the potential to utilize this grant for five years. We are hoping that this helps us. We find that people who are referred to us, through an employee are good. We are excited about that.
- The election, we talked about the staffing mandate. So, the federal staffing mandate is something that has not been implemented, the state side has, the federal side has been highly contested amongst our industry, because we do not have the staff to increase this. With the results of the Presidential election, we do foresee this federal mandate being squashed. We do not know it has to be in jeopardy for our industry going forward, we do strongly believe this federal mandate will be pushed back for a while. That is some good news for our industry.
- Construction update- We had a ceiling repair right outside the door here, on Main Street. That was completed two weeks ago. That was resolved, luckily no one was injured in that, it did cause a little bit of an inconvenience for us.
- Hollidaysburg, our new facility is about 70 percent complete, we did run into a delay unfortunately, that is going to push back our opening date until the fourth quarter of next year.
- We have our custodial meeting this week, out in Pittsburgh. Something that started last year, where we bring our custodial supervisors in together, we do this with various departments. It allows them to talk amongst themselves, a lot of them do not see each other, it brings them all together and it helps us with developing policies and standardizing things like chemical list and things like that. That are really my highlights, does anyone has any questions. Douglas Craig responded, I have a question if I may, last time you talked about hiring staff, there was up to a six-month waiting period from the time

they put in an application, until the time they get in the door. With this incentive will it reduce that time? Travis responded time to fill is what we look at from the state. Governor Shapiro, one of his initiatives is to improve that and I think his goal is to reduce it by five days. Right now, I think it is just under 40 days, which is still is too long. I think the grant is going to help us. We are very aware of this. Rinisha the Director of Nursing has so many responsibilities every day and is so busy, also utilizing the nursing team to conduct these interviews as well. So far, the last two years we have seen a decrease, which is a good thing. Douglas Craig responded, good luck with that, thank you. Benjamin Mastridge asked Are you going to tell us the amount of the federal grant? Travis Davis responded the grant is based on a percentage, without getting into the specifics, for the employee who refer someone, or the person coming in the door, it is about 4,000.00 dollars. They will get half of that when they start, after their probationary period which is six months, and after the one-year mark they will get the remainder. Leonard Johnson, responded, Travis I would like to say it amazes me how well the staff does here. When we do the entertainment, they call everybody by their first name, I just can't believe how they know everybody. It means a lot. Benjamin Mastridge responded, I must say I have been to other homes, and when you come here everybody seems to know each other. It seems to be family oriented. They try to make the residents feel as part of the family. The number one complaint I hear is that no one comes to visit, volunteers and everybody here seem to fill that void for them.

Report from Barbara Raymond, Director of Veterans' Homes

- Good morning, everybody, I will be brief for everybody. Just a few things we had going on prepping for the Acting Adjutant General, that General Weigl mentioned, he will be coming out to the homes for holiday visits within the next several weeks. The residents, vets and staff actually love this, it is such a great time, we are certainly looking forward to that. We do not have the dates on that. If anyone want to volunteer, we are always looking for volunteers to get the residents to the central location. It is great fun. We tend to have the National guards come through in uniform.
- We had a leadership meeting at our Hollidaysburg facility about a month or so ago, all of our Commandants were together, our Deputy Commandants, and our facilities Directors together, as Travis mentioned about what the housekeeping staff did, we also do it with various staff members, a lot of good feedback and information was shared at those meetings amongst the six homes to keep us all following best practices, regulations, following policies and procedures. It was a great meeting.
- Just this morning we had a governing body meeting, the governing body is a requirement from the centers of Medicare/Medicaid services. It entails General Weigl, Travis, myself, Dr. B, and a few others of the team members from that policy and procedures perspective. Following those regulations, getting feedback from what is going on at all six of the homes as this governing body meets. Fortunately, this type of meeting is information sharing of what is going on across the six homes and also great for feedback. The three of us have been in meetings all morning. We also had a medical advisory committee meeting this morning as well. That medical advisory meeting headed up by Dr. B., collaborate to get all of the six homes physicians, nurse practitioners, as well as some additional outside consultants, from hospice, pshyc services, infection control, as we incorporate those groups, yes best practices, what is going on in the commonwealth, what is going on in the country as a whole. What can we do to make sure our veterans and residents here receive that best medical care. Those were really some great meetings that we had over the last month. General Weigl did not talk about the conference, I will throw that plug in there. Since our last meeting we meant together as a group with Pennsylvania Veterans conference. General Weigl brought together varies members from your

organizations, Veteran service officers throughout the Commonwealth, she got the Governor to come on board, he gave a speech. It was a great great meeting. She did not give herself enough credit, so I will plug it. I've been around 100 years, I must say I even took away things from that meeting. It was really great.

- Covid – We do have residents and the 3 staff members at Southwest, Gino Merli, and none here. Over the last quarter we did have significant outbreaks 10 plus at all of our homes except for Hollidaysburg, thankful everybody was stable, and really minor. We currently have 3 RSV cases at our Southeast facility, again, stable.
- Vaccinations- We are about 50 percent for our flu vaccines for our residents, and we are up to about 60 percent for our covid vaccination with that most recent 24-25. We continue to offer various vaccinations, shingles, RSV, flu, covid, and TB. We keep our nursing staff busy putting those shots in the arms, it definitely helps from the illness perspective. Travis talked about the staffing mandate, we are very hopeful from that perspective.
- The only other thing that is on my list is, our revenue teams continue to plug along making sure they are getting our veterans as high of a service connection as we possibly can, as well as looking at any type of PACT Act funds. We like to try to decrease any amount that they have to pay us for they stay here at the facility. Any questions for me?
- Benjamine Mastridge asked is there any compliance report? No, compliance is not in attendance. Barbara Raymand responded usually what they are talking about is when we have performance assessments, the mock surveys. When we go in the homes and do anywhere between 3 and 5 prior surveys, that is mostly what they give feedback on.

Report from Margo Coleman, Commandant

- Thank you everyone for being here, I really appreciate your support. I always say, it takes a village to take care of our veterans, I really appreciate you being a part of ours. Also, thank you very much for your service to our country, I hope you had a happy Veterans Day. I heard on the news, the veterans are the backbone of our nation, and I could not agree more. Thank you for all you do to serve our country, serve your community, as well as serving our veterans here. We did have a very nice veterans day weekend. It was a party from Friday through Monday, I think they are still recovering. The mascots were a huge hit as always and the cheerleaders, there were no complaints. They had a beautiful time at the parade. General Weigl thank you so much, they got to meet ABC 6, Alicia Vitarelli, they love her very much, got some hugs. Here on Monday the Junior ROTC was here to do the presenting of the colors, as well as the folding of the flag. They finished it off with a dessert bar, and a 35-piece brass band to play, there was not an insulin shot that was not given. We also recognized our fifteen veteran staff members here in the building, with a certificate and a small token of appreciation for their service, while they serve the veterans here.
- We are working on a few things in the building. When you are coming in you proceed through the guard shack, we do have the gates installed, and we are looking on getting power hooked up to them. A procedure that we are anticipating that the gates close at 8:00 at nighttime, and they will open back up at 6:00 in the morning. If there is some type of emergency, or we have to close the gate down during the day, God forbid a resident trying to get out, or there is an active shooter in the area, we can close those gates, then we will have a security guard manning it at that time of the emergency. Other than that, we should be able to man those gates from inside of the building. You will also see the

traffic pattern will be changing, at some arrows painted on the road too, so we will know which way to go. There is more to come with that.

- Back in September, we had our annual employee recognition ceremony, that is kind of led by our Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, through the human resource department, and we were able to recognize staff members here. Our maintenance department was recognized for outstanding service to the veterans. Bill our resource coordinator was recognized by one of the volunteers who comes here, Steve. He had written a beautiful letter about Bill and how he devotes his time and efforts towards our veterans, he was recognized for outstanding service as well. Also, we had one of our nursing team members recognized for outstanding service. They were all presented with a certificate and a coin of appreciation.
- Coming in January, Delaware Valley Veterans' Home is getting a new policy and procedure for caught you caring. So, we will not have to wait the whole year or quarterly to recognize our staff. We will be able to recognize our staff every month. I already have a couple of nominations that are out there, we will get together in January to recognize someone.
- I've been here for one year in this December, it will be one year that I have been in this role. The one thing that has not changed is the hearts that is in this building. I could not be more proud to be a part of this team, and work every single day side by side with the men and women who show up everyday for the veterans, to make their lives better. Thank you very much for everyone who is out there on that scene doing that. I look forward to being able to start those recognitions for them.
- The Department of Health was here back in October, they did have a week of survey, where they looked at all our different care that we provide. From nursing notes to care plan, to how clean our building is, and I am proud to say, that the amount of deficiencies they cited us with were very minimal, six total. It was not nothing that were major care related. That plan of correction is in place and has to be in compliance by the 22nd of November. Our team is well on the way with audit education and making sure that everything that they found as deficient is back in regular compliance. We did have one citation that we have to make sure we review in our policies and procedures for off campus outings, that new change has been going very well. Rinisha and her team have really knock that out of the park. We have a really good process in place to make sure that we have really good intervention in place for when they go out to outings, make sure they have staff. We do have our VA survey coming up sometime in December, so we are not out of the survey window yet, but we are ready for them.
- One update from the staffing perspective, is part of our culture change effort. Through DMVA and the press forward initiative, Delaware Valley is part of a culture change initiative. To make sure that the staff and management are working as one, to make sure that the building continues to move forward, and everyone is happy and comfortable in their job as possible. Part of that is the human resource department does have a new position in place. That position is going to be Leonard Luka, he has been here for about 25 years, so he has been promoted. I can not think of a better person to be in that role. He knows the building, he knows the staff, and really knows how to make those relationships work. He is currently in that role, and he will be on our floor on a daily basis interacting with staff, finding out what support they need, what education they need, and any area of a particular processes to put in place to continue to make those relationships productive and happy. I did hire someone for Leonard's role, Zanetta. She is going to be focusing on the labor and relations side of things, working with like grievances, working with different payroll. She has been here for about two months, she fits in perfect, and we are very happy to have her as part of our team.

- My final update we do have our holiday meals still in the works. For Thanksgiving, that is the 21st, and our Christmas meal will be the 19th of December. Our activity staff is working, getting those invitations out, we will be able to host the families for our veterans for the holidays. Any questions? Barbara Raymond responded, I just wanted to give everybody a little bit of an update on why we had to take this off-premises activity policy and make it a little more robust. Here at our Delaware Valley facility, we did have a situation where we were out, as General Weigl mentioned earlier, we like to get everybody out and about. We encourage our veterans and our residents to attend various activities off premises. However, back in August we did have a situation, where we were out at a local playhouse and the residents were enjoying the show, and the staff was enjoying the show as well. One of our residents did get up and walk away. That entailed quite a bit of a search for that resident. Resident at stake was ok, when something like that happens, we fly into action. The team did a really great job at Delaware Valley, getting policies in place, getting education completed, getting audits completed. However, those are things that we have to report to our licensing agencies, so we reported that as we are required. When they came in for this annual survey, they of course took a close look at this whole event, at the whole investigation the team did, what did we put into place to prevent it from happening again. When that happens, once they looked at the entire situation, we did get put into what is called an immediate jeopardy. With that immediate jeopardy, when we get the deficiencies from those type of surveys, because the team did such a good job at putting everything in place to prevent it from happening again, they gave us what they call past non-compliance. What that means is that, yes it happened, we know it happened, we put steps in place to prevent it from happening again. When it happens from that five-star rating that we always talk about, we are anticipating it dropping our health inspections portions, but we do not anticipate it dropping our overall rating. We anticipate from a points perspective; We anticipate see that five star overall. If you go on those websites, you will see the health inspections likely known to drop to what we are looking at is a three-star rating. We wanted to prepare you for that, if you notice anything like that on websites or if any of your members said anything. We are aware of the situation, we put measures in place to prevent it from occurring again, and we also did that across the six homes. Benjamin Mastridge responded, I was privileged to help out when we visited the eagle's stadium, probably because the fellow I was pushing around was in the same unit I was in Vietnam, of course he was a lot more decorated than I was. I found that the security the stadium took and the security we took here was excellent, no one was getting away. We had one gentleman I believe he was 90 something, and he walked, I can't walk. It was an experience that was good. I understand the problems of making sure that everyone is safe, because at any time something could in that stadium that we could not anticipate, but it went well. Claudette Campbell responded, I just want to thank you for your report and your frankness that you share with the advisory board. It is so important in our relationship. The other question, the health area, will CMS come back before the year is up? Barbara responded, every two years. Travis Davis replied, it is a waited system it will basically hang on for two years. Heavily weighted in the first year, it drops a little bit in the second year, before it will fall off. Delaware Valley does a great job with their quality measures, that is a five overall and their staff is a five overall. Those two categories is really helping them. If we see the health inspection go down to a three, we should include that overall, five. Claudette responded, During the health inspection when the state goes out to inspect nursing homes including veterans nursing homes, it is important because the public see this report. When they see the three, they won't have all the information. We will get a chance to see it on your statement of deficiencies, that is a blow. I appreciate the frankness number one, and number two, your prompt

action to recognizing. General Weigl responded, our homes do really well. Travis compared us to other nursing homes in the counties, and all of our homes do really well. Travis responded, when we lose sight of someone, if someone was to walk out the door and you don't know where they are, it is called an elopement. An elopement is the number one cause to send a home into immediate jeopardy. What is alarming to us is the trend of how many immediate jeopardies are being issued by the state. In 2020 there were 19 immediate jeopardies, last year in 2023 there were 70, every year they are jumping up and up. Maureen and I spoke earlier before the meeting about a new bill that was passed this year that is going to require the Department of Health to meet with providers annual, this is one thing we want some more transparency behind, why are we seeing these dramatic increases in this? If there is a penalty associated, where are all those dollars going back too? Because they are supposed to go back to facilities to improve resident care, to improve quality of care, to improve education in staffing. Those are the things that we want to know. Is it because they are getting better at reporting it, maybe, also the dollar amounts that we pay, where is the money going? Are the provider and residents going to benefit from this. Benjamin Mastridge responded, one thing I want to say is, I want to thank Ms. Campbell for her knowledge of this, because a lot of us are not medical people. you always have some great input, very professional, very knowledgeable. I appreciate that, because you bring out a lot of the stuff us non-medical people are not aware of. Claudette Campbell responded, I did federal regulatory reporting over 30 years. Benjamin responded, I had a feeling you did. Claudette responded, I been away from it for a while, it never leave you.

Report from Rita Yeung, Deputy Commandant

- Good morning, everyone, again, good to see you all.
- As mentioned by General Weigl, and our Commandant already, this past Sunday we took our residents to the annual Veterans Day parade, in the Philadelphia area. There was like 14 residents and 10 staff members, and the residents from our sister facility Southeast Veterans Center was also there. We all sat in front of the Art Museum steps where the parade actually ended, so that was a good spot for us. It is a very open area, the residents liked it. The weather was nice, a little bit cold. We watched the performers, and the marching band march down the route, it was really cool. Action news was there. Many people actually stopped by to greet our residents, the Grand Marshall, Chef Robert Irvine, and other military officials stopped by, and some beauty queens. They took pictures with them, our residents really enjoyed, they really had a good time there. Thank you to General Weigl, Commandant, and our staff members who participated to make this happen. I heard there will be an even bigger parade next year, we look forward to that. General Weigl responded, 250th anniversary of Navy and Marine Corps, Philadelphia is going to be hopping next year, I am sure that whole parade is going to be hopping, 4,000.00 participants, there biggest one yet, 10-year anniversary.
- Our annual Thanksgiving dinner will be held a week before Thanksgiving Day. This year like Margo say, it will be November 21st it will start at 5 o'clock. Families are welcome, the invitations were sent out. Right now we have over 100 family members signed up already. We expect another big Thanksgiving dinner event to serve over 300 people. Hopefully they will all enjoy the event.

Report from Rinisha Thomas, Director of Nursing

- The DOH survey is completed, audits still going on.
- All covid clear, we continue quality measures.

- A new Assistant Director of Nursing started this week, he was working with the DMVA for the last 10 years.
- The LPN and CNA training program is going well, one just graduated.
- Activity trips is once a week, they schedule the residents to go outside.

Douglas Craig, Catholic War Veterans

- I will give it over to my boss, Mike Rang. Do you have any thing to say? Mike Rang responded, thank you everybody for letting me come to this today. My goal as Commander, is to visit all the state veterans' homes. I was up Soldiers and Sailors in September, I made a trip up to Erie, I was up there at their meeting, very nice meeting, I meant the Commandant. My next trip is to Hollidaysburg in January, if the weather is good. Speaking of Hollidaysburg, I was in Altoona Monday for a Veterans Day parade. I am not sure if anybody is aware, I was at the last Penn State War Veterans Council a couple weeks ago, we had Senator Mastriano there, and he made an introduction state bill 1160. The Governor signed into a Veterans War Veterans Day. Vietnam Veterans Day, they tried a federal day with President Trump, a couple years ago, but the Governor signed one for those of us. Benjamin asked, will that include veterans who spent time in country? Mike responded, that includes every veteran who served Vietnam 65. Benjamin responded, I agree a lot of this, they departmentalized this, and people get angry with other veterans. They think they should be recognized too. Obviously, somebody that served in Germany in 1965, who was sending ammunition to buy artillery, we appreciated them.

James Ritchie, Veterans of Foreign Wars

- Last Thursday November 8th, I had the pleasure of meeting General Pippy. Very nice man, we shared a few war stories. I am glad to be elected to be vice president of the council, I am glad you had confidence in me, and I will do the best that I can. I am happy to be here. Benjamin responded, I am very happy they made you vice president.

Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans

- I appreciate all the information who was shared by everybody here. I was able to get to some Veterans Day events on Veterans Day, Washington square. The director of the VA medical center was there. The mayor was there, one thing she reminded everybody is one Philly-one united city, we want to try to repeat that slogan, so we can agree that we ought to be united together and help the city move forward. After that we went to the Korean War Memorial, both of those first two events a judge resided over them. Then we went over to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It was a very nice presentation, I was happy to be a part of that. I had some chemotherapy, that started about a year and a half ago, I finished that up. There was a 1 percent chance that what they used on me would cause lung disease. Well, I was in the 1 percent, I already had COPD before I got the cancer. Now I have two pulmonary diseases. I have to manage it, and sometimes I have a little bit of trouble breathing. Don't anybody get concerned about little ole me. Thank you.

Leonard M. Johnson, Disabled American Veterans

- Good morning, everybody, again I will start off by saying, I am so honored to be here, blessed to be here. I had a short stint in the hospital. I just kept going, kept going, I thought I was the energizer bunny, but when the batteries run out it will tell you when it is time to sit down. That stop me from

doing the honor guard duties at the tomb of the unknown soldier, with my honor guard unit, which I been doing since 1990 something. Also, from there over to the Korean memorial, The Vietnam memorial, and I did not sleep all night because I knew I wasn't going to be there. It took something out of me, but I am so honored to be back on my horse and getting organized again. I am back at it, and I am not going to stop. I am the energizer bunny once again. I would like to say, my DAV chapter group we will be here November 29th, I think that is the Friday after Thanksgiving. We are going to bring all the love to these veterans. Benjamin responded, I hope you continue in good health.

Claudette Campbell, Military Officers Association of America

- I have made some comments, so I will not go over them again. I am certainly impressed with how quickly you respond to issues, and moreover the quality of care, it is outstanding. I am flattered to be on this advisory board. I think that grant program is going to be great for you, you do not have a lot of incentive programs. You will get over this issue. I missed another thing, she is sitting right across from me. The General will be speaking for the military Officers Association at our December Gala, we are looking forward to that.

Erica Moore, Regional Program Outreach Coordinator

- We cover 13,000 in the Commonwealth, we been a little busy for Veterans Day, after Friday we will be able to breathe a sigh of relief. It has been real great honoring the veterans.

Samuel Hunh, Blinded Veterans Association

- I am doing fine, I know this is my 9th year on the council, I appreciate all the information today. It was very good, it was informative, from everybody, even with out my hearing aids, which is dying on me, I can hear very good over the phone. One other thing, if anybody has any influence at all with the VA we would appreciate, us blinded veterans, the low vision specialist has been absent, the guy who was there retired in December, they still have not replaced him. It is becoming a real problem since the VA hospital low vision, not only take care of the veterans in this area, but also South Jersey. It is quite a bit of people that are not getting the attention that they need. The VA hospital said the problem is the budget restraint, and a hiring freeze. I do not understand because there is a lady who wants to work there and she is down Charleston South Carolina, and she has double degrees, she wants to come to Philadelphia, and they seem to be holding up somewhere. I called the Lyons Veterans down Virginia, and I called a couple people at the VA that I know at the central office. Everybody said they will try to take care of it but, they never do. If anybody could persuade them to bring this lady up on a transfer, rather than a hire, that would be terrific and solve a lot of problems. I wish everybody a belated happy Veterans Day, Marine Corps birthday Semper Fi, and that is it. General Weigl responded, Travis and I will be at the Federal VA Monday, we will bring that up.

Patricia (Tricia) Udicious, PA House of Representatives (Representative Martina White office)

- I just want to say Representative Martina White is very grateful and honored to be representing this district, especially our veterans for the next four years. I just took over our veterans in our office, and Yahvae has go through a lot of things with me. I have a few more on the way, I just wanted to thank you.

Patricia (Patty) Leneghan PA House of Representatives (Representative Martina White office)

- Hi, also want to thank you all for all your hard work with our veterans. We care deeply about our veterans. She has a son who is in the military, I have a daughter that joined the national guards, she just graduated Penn State, now she is in the National Guard. It is near and dear to our hearts also. We thank you all for all your hard work. We will do all that we can. We have our veteran specialist come in, and we try to get as many veterans in as possible to get them the help that they need. Thank you all.

Ashley Conaway, PA House of Representatives (Senator Frank Farry office)

- On behalf of Senator Farry, we want to say thank you to Yahvae and Delaware Valley Veterans Home for coming to the senior expo in October in Bucks County. Happy Veterans Day.

Dr. Wallace Quinlan, Philadelphia City Council (Councilman Brian O'Neill office)

- My name is Dr. Quinlan, I been representing Councilman O'Neill at these meetings for I do not know how many years now. The one thing that I noticed is that we don't have the veterans' representatives here anymore. It used to be the blind veterans and the marine corps, and different organizations. I noticed that it is a decrease in the number of organizations that are represented here. I am a member of the American Legion for over 50 years, and we used to have two American Legion representatives here, and I do not see any of them here anymore. Benjamin responded, each one of those organizations has to nominate somebody and go through the process through the ward council. Every one of the organizations are more than welcome to be represented as long as their leadership send them, that is up to them. General Weigl responded, Sam does represent the blind veteran's association, Daniel McCollum is American Legion, but he is not here. They do have somebody designated to be here. Sam Huhn responded, I have been coming to this meeting for a long time, I never heard of anybody from the City of Philadelphia, the County Director, he does not attend these meetings. When I was on the Southeast Veterans advisory council, we always had Delaware County Director of Veterans, Montgomery County Director of Veterans Affairs, Chester County Director of Veterans Affairs, and not Philadelphia, I wonder why that is? General Weigl responded, Philadelphia does not have a Director of Veterans Affairs, it has been vacant since I have been here. The only county that does not have a Director of Veterans. Erica Moore responded, we were just at Mayor Coleman's Saturday and I brought it up to the lady that was there from Philadelphia.

Report from Margo Coleman, Commandant

- I did just want to say one other thing, truly the reports here are so good to here. The best part to me is actually seeing that in action. Martina's office we always reach out to you, and we have a really great relationship, and I have to thank you for that. We had a veterans family stop by they weren't sure about their paperwork, what the designation was for their service, and Yahvae reached out to Martina's office, and you immediately went into action. Received that family immediately, they sent us a letter to say thank you so much. Doing the action in real life means that much more to us. Thank you so much. General Weigl responded, I just want to remind everybody December 14th is Wreaths Across America Day, we encourage everybody to participate, also there are short wreaths, encourage people to go buy a wreath, I think for \$10.00, They do need people to buy some wreaths and participate in all the ceremonies. Larry Holman responded, you have to be up at Washington Crossing at 8:30 am in the morning, get there on time because it happens quick. General Weigl responded, Fort

Indiantown Gap has a huge ceremony, we will be doing the one in Erie, we have a Soldiers and Sailors home there that has a cemetery, our only cemetery at the State Homes.

Douglas Craig, Catholic War Veterans

- I go to the Marine Corps League Honor Guard every three weeks at the Gap, that is one of the things they are pushing. They need people, they are always flooded at the Gap for people to put the wreaths on. January to take the wreaths off, nobody shows up. If you are willing to do it one way, you need to be able to do it the other way too. If anybody who has not visited Washington crossing cemetery, it takes you away. I have about eight or nine people I could visit there.

Benjamin Mastridge, Veterans of Foreign Wars

- I want to apologize first of all for not being at the last meeting. I had my third bout of covid, I am vaccinated, when I called, I was over it, they said if it has not been more than ten days you were over it, we do not want you here. I apologize for that.
- Just on a personal note, I was very honored in the last week to be taken to South Dakota as a Military recipient of Purple Heart was a pleasure. Only 5 people in the country were taken. It was not one of these things where you go to a restaurant and have a fancy dinner, we ate sloppy joes in a garage, I also found out I wasn't a good shot. My visit to the Eagles was terrific. My wife is also a volunteer here, speaking of that, she gets at least 3 marriage proposals every time she is here. I was also here for our commanders visit from the VFW. It was done so well, and she left with such a good opinion of everything that was here. I obviously been on a tour a few times, she really loved it, and she sends her thank you. I guess that is all I have, I am obviously the president, I appreciate your confidence in me.

Old Business: Benjamin Mastridge – I have to go ahead and apologize again, for not following through as well as I should have on the wall of honor with Al. The three of us are going to get together and get that done. I am sorry, covid, vacation and other things.

New Business: Samuel Huhn – I would like to make a motion that the attendees from the council should wear their service caps to all these meetings. Last time I was at a meeting I do not think anybody had a service cap on. I kept mine in my pocket, because no one else had it on. I think that is something we should do. I thought the American Legion as an organization, said anytime there was an American Legion member at any kind of meeting is supposed to wear the service cap. Benjamin Mastridge – Are you making a motion to do that? Samuel responded, yes, I am making a motion. This motion is that everyone who is in a service organization wear their service cap while we are in the council, have I got a second? With their being no seconded the motion, Samuel responded, I withdrawal the motion, I tried.

Good of the Counsel: Benjamin Mastridge- I think we already did the good of the council. Leonard M. Johnson responded, I attended the VETCON in Pittsburgh, and I hope General Weigl is able to get that in this area. For the next time they have it, hopefully it is in 2025, it was fantastic. General Weigl responded, we are planning on 2025, right now, it would be in the Valley Forge area, options and the dates. We do not have that locked in yet, it will probably be somewhere in the center part of the state, we will have it figured out, we should know by the next meeting.

Benjamin Mastridge – Anyone who wants to wear their service cap, they are more than welcome, that is up to you. I think it would be somewhat appropriate, but if you don't care to do it that is fine.



Does anyone have anything else? Stick around we are going to take a picture. I adjourn the meeting.

Adjourned: 11:22 AM

Next Meeting: February 12, 2025