



Pennsylvania  
**Department of Military  
and Veterans Affairs**

Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home

**Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home  
Advisory Council Meeting  
Erie, Pennsylvania  
March 13, 2025  
9:00 a.m.**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr. Gary Fry, President, AMVETS

Mrs. Bobbi Cumpston, Washington County Dir. Of Veterans Affairs

Mr. Richard DiGiacomo, Military Order of the Purple Heart

Mrs. Karen Foust, Disabled American Veterans

Mr. Joe Benacci, Director, Erie County Veterans Services

The Honorable Patrick J. Harkins, PA House of Representatives

The Honorable Daniel Laughlin, PA Senator (Katie Nagle)

Mr. William Rose, PSSH Resident Council President

Mr. Richard Supak, Catholic War Veterans

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT**

Mr. Raymond Chambers, Marine Corps League

Mr. David Price, Military Order of the Purple Heart

Mr. Anthony DiGiacomo, County Director of Veterans Affairs

Mr. Robert C. Eiler, Veterans of Foreign Wars



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**OTHERS PRESENT**

Mrs. Maureen Weigl, BG (PA Retired), Deputy Adjutant General-VA

Mrs. Barbara Raymond, RN, NHA, Director of Veterans' Home

Mrs. Cheri Spacht, RN, NHA, PSSH Commandant

Mrs. Elizabeth Seibert, PSSH Deputy Commandant

Mrs. Rasheda Goodwine, PSSH Commandant Assistant

Mrs. Emily Heubel, PSSH Admissions Coordinator

Mr. Ken Vybiral, PSSH Volunteer Outreach Coordinator

Mrs. Danielle Ahlbrandt, PSSH PCU Administrator

Mrs. Teresa Brown, PSSH Quality Assurance Risk Management Coordinator

Mr. Michael Montgomery on behalf of Congressman Mike Kelly's office

Mrs. Doris Svitek-Guest

Mr. Ed Kissell-Guest

Mrs. Chelsea Elsworth-Guest

Mrs. Alicia Grassi-Guest

Mrs. Alicia Goodwine-Guest

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Fry called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Fry led a moment of silence, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.



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**ROLL CALL**

Ms. Goodwine took roll call for all present.

**SWEARING IN OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Mr. Chambers was unable to attend. He will be sworn in at the next meeting.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

A motion was made by Mr. Fry and seconded by Mr. DiGiacomo to approve the minutes of the Advisory Council Meeting held on December 12, 2024. Motion carried, and minutes were approved and written.

**MEDICAL DIRECTOR UPDATE**

Mrs. Spacht provided update on behalf of Dr. Millie:

Mrs. Spacht started, "Good morning everyone. Deborah is not here today, so I will provide the update for Dr. Millie. There is definitely an uptick in upper respiratory, and norovirus at the hospitals and in the community that can affect our population at some point, just so that everyone is aware. We are doing pretty well here. We have 1 employee currently out with Covid. It did not pose any issues with the residents' population. We are optional for masking. Other than that, we are doing pretty well."

Any Questions?

**ADMISSIONS AND MARKETING UPDATE**

Mrs. Heubel provided update:

Mrs. Heubel began, "Currently our census is 160. We have 31 residents in our memory care unit, with 11 on the waitlist. There are 74 residents in our nursing care unit, with 12 on the waitlist. We have 53 residents in our personal care unit with 7 on the waitlist. For marketing, I'll let Ken touch base on the marketing events that we've been too, and any plans for upcoming events."

Any Questions?

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL**

General Weigl provided an update:

General Weigl began, "Good morning everyone. I just wanted to say in case any of you are not aware, General Pippy has been confirmed and promoted so he is our 55<sup>th</sup> Adjutant General. We are very excited that he is onboard. Last week I was down in D.C. I had a chance to meet and listen to the new secretary of



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the VA talked about his vision and his policies. He is looking to expand healthcare options for veterans, so they have choices. They have been, as you have been seeing on the news making many cuts, but we believe this is the best interest. So, I don't know the second or third effects of any of that yet. Stay tuned. I do know there was a news article in Pittsburgh that the federal building will be sold. I'm not sure what's going to happen with the field office there in Pittsburgh. As of right now, we haven't seen a lot of changes that impact on any benefits. Right now, we are waiting to see all the changes, and as we receive them we will keep you all posted. This morning with Senator Mastriano, Senator Brown, and Senator Baker at Gino Merli with Travis, we are having a roundtable discussion about our long-term care facilities and Advisory Boards. We will share those notes afterwards with all of the advisories. We are very supportive of our advisories, so I just want to say thank you for always having a forum up there in Erie. We appreciate your support. We've got a lot going on next week, we have our senior leadership conference. We are planning our Veteran's Conference for 2025. We are busy processing our claims and benefits at a really high speed, which is very good news. So, that's all I have for my report, unless anyone has any questions.

Thank you.

Any Questions?

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LONG-TERM CARE**

Mrs. Raymond provided update on behalf of Mr. Davis:

Mrs. Raymond states, "Good morning everyone. As General Weigl mentioned, Travis is unable to be here today. He's at our Gino Merli facility, as General Weigl is at that roundtable discussion to be had later this morning.

From the homes perspective, I'll try to keep this report fairly short, with all the changes going on at the Federal end of the house. But one of the things that we do see affecting us is the federal VA surveys. Three of our homes were in survey mode in mid-February. Our Erie facility, Gino Merli facility, and our Southeast facility. The federal VA surveyors for state veterans homes throughout the entire country, in accordance with 38 code federal regulations. What happened was, it is currently a contracted entity that the VA provides those survey's for. And all of those contracts are being looked over. We did get word from the federal VA that the surveys may resume tentatively beginning next week. It's all tentative at this point in time. We are not entirely sure if they will pick back up at our 3 facilities or if they are going to pick up right where they should have been the week of March 17<sup>th</sup>. So, it's just a little bit up in the air, but we are anticipating and getting ready at those three locations for the federal VA's to resume their surveys. But unfortunately, I just don't have any other information at this point in time. We of course continue to do everything that we can to maintain all the required regulations. We still continue to have our CMS, & DOH surveys on an annual basis. The Pennsylvania Department of Health does come in based off CMS recommendations and regulations. So, we are not without surveys. We just had a little hiccup from the federal side of the house.

Any questions?





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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF VETERANS' HOMES**

Mrs. Raymond provided update:

Mrs. Raymond continued, "From a funding and support perspective, we are seeing no changes in the homes at this point in time. We have no new issues or concerns. We are still getting paid by the federal VA. Our plans are being processed anything from a service connection perspective, we are seeing no changes at this point in time. Our veterans are well taken care of, there are no issues or concerns from that perspective.

My report from the homes side of the house, we are actually doing quite well. There are no major concerns from a survey perspective that we've thus far this year. There were minor issues or concerns, Cheri will go into Soldiers' and Sailors' Home visitors, here in the recent past weeks for that.

As General Weigl was in D.C., I also had the opportunity to be in D.C. back in mid-February. I went to Congressman Kelly's office and had a meeting with his staffers, and with all of our U.S. representatives down in D.C. for the six veteran's homes locations. To let them know some of our concerns that we are having. Some of those concerns do indeed surround those federal VA surveys. We continue to work with our federal representatives from that perspective.

As Cheri mentioned in Dr. Millie's update, with Covid being high in the community, throughout the Commonwealth, and throughout the country, we all know that the flu has been part of a quad demic this past year, with the Norovirus, RSV, Covid, and Influenza. The State Veteran's Homes across the board, we did have some peaks and valleys, right now we are in a very nice valley. We have no residents that are Covid positive across the six homes. At this time, we just have 2 staff members that are Covid positive. One as Cheri mentioned is here at the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home and the other is at the Gino Merli facility. 2 Staff members have the flu across the state veterans homes, no residents currently have flu or RSV. We do not have any current G.I. outbreaks. Those levels are high throughout the community and Commonwealth. Thankfully, we are doing very well in that perspective. From the vaccine perspective, we have about 70% of our residents did accept the most recent Covid vaccine. We are monitoring the changes that are coming out from CDC with new recommendations. We will certainly offer the Covid vaccine to our residents and staff as we hear recommendations from the CDC. About 80% of our residents accepted and received the flu vaccine. Which is typical. We tend to have more residents accept the flu vaccine than the Covid vaccine.

From a construction perspective, Our Hollidaysburg facility is our biggest factor. We did reach out to our federal VA for support for a recognition survey for the Fall of 2025. We are anticipating completion in June 2025 for that facility. We are waiting until fall of 2025 for the recognition surveys because there is a transfer switch that has to be built for the generator, and we don't expect that to be in place until October. We will not get recognition or authorization to operate until that is completed. But we are anticipating a groundbreaking ceremony, and we will certainly invite everyone. If anyone would like to head down to the Altoona area to see this beautiful facility that we've got opening there, sometime this year.

As General Weigl mentioned, we have our Senior Leadership Conference next week at our Gino Merli facility. So, that's were we bring in all our Commandant's, & DON's to go over the new regulations from the federal end of things. We go over all the different regulatory updates that we are tracking.



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One of the things we've talked about over the past year and a half is the staffing mandate. Right now, that is still in place, but we are anticipating CMS to change it, but we are not counting on it. And we are continuing to prepare in case those staffing mandates do go into play. As it has been, CMS did have regulations that were going to change, minor changes, but changes, nonetheless. CMS was planning to change some requirements for nursing homes starting in February of 2025. It was pushed back to March of 2025, and most recently it's been pushed to April of 2025. Again, from the changes for those regulations, it's nothing that is going to cause any hardships for the homes, it's just some minor tweaks, but nothing like that staffing mandate that we are all anticipating. We are all waiting for CMS for further direction and guidance from CMS. Those are the highlights of my report.

Any Questions for me?

### **REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT**

Mrs. Spacht provided update:

Mrs. Spacht began, "Good morning. I'm going to review our open positions currently, here at our facility. We are authorized to have 278 employees and of that 278 we have 221 positions filled. We have a total of 50 vacancies. There are 11 LPN's, 1 RNS, 1 (Nurse Educator) RNI, 19 Nurse Aides, 2 Food Service Workers, 1 Cook, 1 Clinical Dietician, 2 Aide trainees, 1 Maintenance Repair, and 1 Security Officer position open. Giving us a total of 50. We are interviewing for the nurse educator position and the first shift Registered Nurse Supervisor position, currently. We will be conducting interviews for the Clinical Dietician as a part time position. Interviewing continues for the other positions as well. Walk-In Wednesday's continue, and we are attending job fairs and outreach events that are scheduled. The facility is also working on an assortment of schedules, to give a good life balance to our current employees. That would mean a possibility of 10, 12, or 13hr shifts, which would calculate out to less days worked but longer hours. The employees have shown interest in this schedule change. We also still have CNA trainee program and that is a continuous job posting. CNA trainee is a paid position. Applicants would just apply, then they would be sent through the training class at HVA and tested for certification. The applicant would be paid during this timeframe. Once the aide graduates from that course, they have the option to apply for one of our positions as a CNA. Currently, we have 5 trainees that are ending the program right now for certification. Once they're done testing, they will become part of our work force.

From a construction point of view, we have job order contracts to replace various doors within the facility, which is currently going on. There will be some flooring replacements going on in some offices on the nursing care units, as well as the personal care units. The Unit C nursing station floor replacement is also in design. We have an upgrade of GFCI outlets that is in design. We have in design a divider wall to be put up in the nursing dining room across the way. Our paving construction project was completed. But we are getting some quotes together for some transitions at both ends of the bridge outside, and repairs to a catch basin out back in the lower parking lot. The Personal Care dish room, which has been under construction since July, has finally been completed, and we are utilizing it. Our break room renovations are completed. We are just waiting for furniture that is going to be delivered for those break rooms. The roof replacement on the front of the Personal Care Unit has been completed, with the DMVA



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logo installed. The bridge signage has been executed, and we are just waiting for the weather to get the bridge signage hung with the lighting. We also had Verizon on site yesterday, because we are moving forward with commercial wi-fi for the entire campus. Hopefully by the next meeting we will have more information on when that will be completed.

As Barb stated, we had our VA survey, that was here the week of the 14<sup>th</sup>, but then it was halted in the middle of the survey. I will let Danielle report on the Department of Human Services survey, because they were also here on February 6<sup>th</sup>. On March 4<sup>th</sup> we had our annual VA nursing survey, with very few confirmed findings such as: cleanliness of an oxygen machine, settings of oxygen (reviewed), there were a few food items in our pantry refrigerators without a discard date, documentation of rationale, a few questions on our legionella water testing processes. On March 11<sup>th</sup> we had Department of Health Life Safety for they're annual survey. There were very few findings such as: a mechanical room that was changed into a storage area closet and we needed to update our plan on the outlets that need updated to meet our regulations, some conduit ceiling that was needed, ceiling tile replacements, and a fish tank that was connected to an extension cord. We are awaiting our plan of correction from those agencies (minus Department of Human Services) which Danielle will talk about.

Just one more thing, from a VA perspective, with all the changes, we have not seen any issue with care for the veterans here, going up to our local VA, or even specialty clinics like Cleveland or Pittsburgh. All appointments remain the same and we have not seen any changes, in case anyone was curious about that subject. That sums up my report, unless anyone has any questions.

Any questions?

*Mrs. Raymond interjected and stated, "I don't have a question, but I know everyone loses their mind when they hear about legionella and our veterans. We do not have a legionella issue. The issue is simply that we didn't follow our own policy. The requirement is to test on an annual basis. Our current policy goes well above and beyond that. We test 4x's a year. We simply needed to irradiate and then retest. We did all of the irradiation, but we just did not have the retest documentation done."*

*Mrs. Spacht continued, "I should have elaborated on that, I apologize. Our policy does go above and beyond the requirements. And the vendor that comes in, there are guidelines for irradiating, and we go above and beyond the guidelines that we have to perform, which we did do. It was just the policy verbiage that they read to us that we weren't following. But again, our policy is well above what is required."*

Any other questions?

*"Hello, Rich Supak with the Catholic War Vet's here. The veteran population of this facility, all use the Erie VA medical center, correct?"*

*Mrs. Spacht answered, "The majority do, yes. There are some non-vets that have their own insurance. But there are quite a few that do utilize the VA and specialties in Pittsburgh and Cleveland as well."*

*Mr. Supak continued, "But I mean, you said they are all taken care of currently. That's the part that I think always lies in our minds, about the veterans here and down the road. I mean, I don't particularly*





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*care for what's going on down in D.C., but I don't always agree with what they're saying. I just want to clarify from your understanding."*

*Mrs. Raymond answered, "Once a resident becomes a State Veteran Home resident, we take over primary care. So that is part of the regulation in 30 code regulation. The VA no longer provides primary care. That is nothing new, that's how it's always been. From an insurance perspective, very few of our folks use tri-care anyways. Most of them use Medicare or Medicaid. From a primary care perspective, we already take care of them. But we utilize them for specialty services. And across the six homes even from a specialty perspective, about 30%. It's our folks that have 0 insurance, if they are eligible to use VA services, they use VA services."*

*Mr. Supak concluded, "Thank you to both of you."*

### **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY COMMANDANT**

Mrs. Seibert provided update:

Mrs. Seibert states, "Good morning all. This report will be very short as well. I am going to give an update for the Compliance Department. Kristol Ferron our regional compliance officer, confirms that there are no open complaints or investigations for PSSH or BVH as a whole. That's really good news! We continue to have our quarterly compliance meetings. We had one this past week and everything was uniform and consistent."

Mrs. Seibert added, "I just want to point out that in your folder packets, you will see the signed annual recognition form that our policies and procedures have been reviewed. That's a typical routine that we have where we highlight some of the different manuals that host all the policies and procedures that we are guided by."

Mrs. Ahlbrandt also added, "Our annual Personal Care Unit license was completed and posted on February 19<sup>th</sup> when the prior license expired. As Cheri said, the Department of Health came in and accepted our plan of correction and our date certain is the 19<sup>th</sup> of this month. We will submit all documentation. They were all minor violations: there was an open bag of cookie dough which had a small air pocket, it was immediately corrected. Education and audits were completed as well. Another minor violation: started in 2006, they want the Department of Human Services training course to be provided to anyone providing care, including certified aides, drivers, anyone that might transport a resident without a licensed staff member. So, we are implementing that in our orientations. We are already covering all topic areas. We are just doing a more thorough job of including their course. Another example is a carbon monoxide detector outside of a laundry room. We have one gas dryer, and the room was too small for it to be in the room. It was immediately placed outside of the room; audits were completed, and education was done. The last one was that we didn't have a letter from the Fire Marshal for our Fire Safety Specialist stating that he is able to provide training. He immediately got that letter and re-educated those staff members."

Any questions?





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**REPORT OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Representative Harkins started, "Good morning everybody. Great to be here with you. No report from my end. We haven't been in Harrisburg for about the last month due to budget reports and appropriation hearings. We're going back on Monday, and we'll start in earnest all the way through until the end of June, hopefully for a budget. There are a lot of things hanging out there, a lot of uncertainty from the federal level. We are going to take it day by day. I will keep you posted, if anything changes. Thank you."

Mr. Rose stated, "I have a couple of quick notes. Cheri and I have talked about the elevator. We've been having problems with the elevator here. It's great for the resident's right now with the way they have it blocked off from going to the bottom floor, so we don't have any problems from a resident perspective. All of the trash from the personal care unit side goes down out those doors and it's all carried out, up and down the steps by the employees. It's not the best situation, especially when it's winter and snowy out when it tends to get a little icy going up and down those steps. So, we really want to get the elevator up and running the way it's supposed to for those employees."

Mrs. Spacht replied, "Just really quick, Will and I did speak about this, and the elevator has been in repair. We have utilized several visits from our elevator vendor to repair certain elements that they were finding that could be triggering the issue. We do have it slated to be completely replaced this coming year. The staff does take the garbage out the back door, or they do utilize the elevator, it's their choice. But they do use that elevator to go to the ground floor. If there is a hiccup with the elevator operating when we do that, we reset it immediately. It's been, as Will stated, much better. But again, it is able to be used to be taken to the ground floor. And as Will stated employees on occasion do take the garbage out using the steps. But we are slated to get it repaired."

Mr. Rose continued saying, "One thing I wanted to touch on is State Veterans Homes Week, statewide has been pushed back for a week."

Mrs. Raymond answered, "It has. It got pushed back a week because of people being unable to attend due to another holiday that honors female veterans (the week that it had been)."

Mr. Rose carried on saying, "And typically we have this Advisory Board Meeting here, during the week of State Veterans Homes Week."

Mrs. Raymond inserted, "We've always adjusted it to make sure everyone can attend."

Mr. Rose asked, "Can we do that again to make sure that we all show up here during State Veterans Homes Week?"

Mr. Rose also asked, "Can I make a motion for that?"

Mr. DiGiacomo seconded the motion.



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Mr. Fry commented, "We have a motion on the floor, and it is dually seconded. Does everybody understand the motion or have any questions on the motion?"

Mrs. Foust asked, "This is in June, correct?"

Mr. Rose answered and asked, "It would start Sunday June 15<sup>th</sup> and runs through Saturday June 21<sup>st</sup>. So, we would be looking at Thursday June 19<sup>th</sup>. Is that Juneteenth? Well that maybe a problem, correct?"

Mrs. Raymond answered, "Yes, currently we moved it to that week. That Sunday starts with Father's Day and yes, your right that Thursday is Juneteenth. From an employee perspective we're going to treat it just like we do on Veterans Day, where we may end up with some additional overtime. But when we looked at the schedule as a whole, that week really seemed to work out the best. If it doesn't work, we'll adjust again next year. But from an Advisory Council perspective, yes your right it's possible."

Mr. Rose asked, "Do we have any suggestions for that week? From my perspective, as a resident we love having you come in here during State Veterans Home Week. We put our best foot forward as residents and staff. And it's nice to have you all come here, especially during State Veterans Homes Week, to see some of the events we have going on and participate with us and enjoy some of the activities with us. So, I really would like that to coincide with State Veterans Homes Week."

Mrs. Raymond asked, "Does the 19<sup>th</sup> work for the council?"

Mr. Fry responded, "If there isn't anything else, we will vote on the motion. All in favor say I. All opposed say Nay. Motion carried."

Mr. Montgomery spoke on behalf of Congressman Mike Kelly's office, "Representative Kelly doesn't have a report to add, just wanted to let you know our office is committed to keeping the lines of communication open. So, if there are any concerns, please feel free to reach out to our district team, or D.C. team. Thank you."

Mrs. Nagle spoke on behalf of Senator Laughlin's office, "Senator Laughlin is going to be holding his Veteran's Appreciation Breakfast that he holds annually on April 29<sup>th</sup> this year. It is a free event for any Erie County Veteran and General Pippy will be the guest speaker. So, we are looking forward to it, Ken always does a nice job of bringing about 10 residents or so we look forward to having you all and if anyone has any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out."

Mr. Benacci began, "Good morning. I just wanted to do a follow up from our last conversation regarding the water issue and cleaning of the headstones. Ken Vybiral and I met with Major Ando from the National Guard. He actually came up and visited the site. He didn't see any problems with bringing a water buffalo here to put onsite. The only issue is that we need to find a place where we can secure it, maybe locked



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into a fence post, or tree. But that water buffalo will have the ability to hold 400 gallons of water. Previously, the headstone cleaners had to bring their own water or travel for it.”

Mr. Supak asked, “When you talk about those guys who clean the headstones, because we have a similar thing down here at St. Patrick’s Cemetery in Franklin, and there’s Civil War Veterans and so forth there. We were told not to use certain types of chemicals, is this topic what your speaking of?”

Mr. Benacci replied, “Yes. Mary Jane Koenig, she’s got it all! There is a certain cleaning agent that they use from the National Cemetery Administration to clean these headstones. I can get you that information. But yeah, there is a specific cleaner they use to keep the integrity of the stone.”

Mr. Fry questioned, “Is that going to occur with the staff or would we have volunteers take care of this?”

Mr. Benacci answered, “Mary Jane Koenig has been driving that mission. She just puts out volunteer requests and she has no problem filling them. She does them a little at a time, she may get 5 or 6 people that way she can sit there with them to show them the proper way of cleaning the headstones. She’ll do 5 or 6 headstones a night or on the weekends. It’s a slow process, but I think she has got roughly 50% done.”

Mrs. Spacht added, “She was here for the Wreaths Across America, and you could really tell the difference between the one’s that had been cleaned from the one’s that hadn’t been cleaned yet. She has a whole plan for this coming season.”

Mr. Vybrial also commented, “So, D2 is the name of the cleaner and kind of what Joe eluded too as well. It’s kind of hard for her to accommodate large groups because it is a methodical process that you want to make sure is done right. You just don’t want to send a bunch of scouts out haphazardly to clean the headstones. Again, it is a methodical process that we span out the spring and summer months to stay at it. So, 5 or 6 volunteers at a time, learning the correct process, being able to complete it in the right way is going to allude to an end product that is going to be great for the cemetery.”

Mr. Benacci stated, “The issue with the water was that everyone had to bring their own water. So, with a water tank onsite, we can eliminate that. We will have to work on some signage because it will be nonpalatable water, but the spickets have locking lids on them. So, we could probably get a couple locks with a master key for whoever needs to gain access to it.”

Mr. DiGiacomo inquired, “Do we need any help getting the cleaning agent D2?”

Mr. Benacci responded, “The last word that I heard from her is that she has enough for now.”

Mr. Supak asked, “The subject of the Senate Bill, do you have a number for that, or is it still in the committee?”





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Mr. Fry replied, "Right now, it's in the Veterans Affairs Preparedness Committee. I don't know if it's been over to the house yet or not. From what I've been told it's sort of a house keeping thing. It's nothing to be alarmed about."

Mrs. Raymond also replied, "The agency is aware."

Mr. Fry continued, "This sounds more like an amendment to Title 51 rather than a major change."

Mrs. Foust began, "Well as Ken stated, we had a pretty successful holiday tour (a week later), because the snowstorm kept everyone away. The leadership of the American Legion department, some of them came when it was rescheduled to the second week. The department Commander and Adjutant were not able to come. And we had less attendance than we usually do, but it was still a very successful day, and everyone had a great time. One of the next big pushes will be to make sure you all get a bingo machine as fast as we can raise the money for it."

Mr. DiGiacomo asked, "What's a bingo machine go for these days?"

Mrs. Foust responded, "\$18,000."

Mr. DiGiacomo started, "I've seen most of you, but Happy New Year. This is really the first time so Happy New Year. I hope the year ahead is filled with good health for everybody, peace in all your dealings and prosperity. Thank you."

Mr. Fry continued, "This where we get to the guests, please tell us who you are and introduce yourselves."

Mrs. Svitek began, "Good morning. I'm Doris Svitek. I'm a state representer for the VFW Auxiliary for the Department of Pennsylvania. We give funding to our many auxiliaries by donations and through that we supply the many wants and needs of our veterans. I've worked with Ken; he is a beautiful person."

Mrs. Elsworth spoke, "Hi my name is Chelsea Elsworth. I'm with the Department of Military Veteran Affairs, working from the outreach side of things. I see Ken all the time, at all the outreach events, we power through them together sometimes. We do a lot of outreaches, and I cover the 15 counties of Northwest Pennsylvania. Thank you."

Mrs. Grassi started, "Hi Everyone. I'm Rasheda's mother. I'm here representing for the community and my daughter."

Mrs. Goodwine began, "Good morning everyone. My name is Alica Goodwine. I'm Rasheda's little sister and I came with my mother to support the community and my sister. I'm very glad to be here."

Mr. Kissell began, "Good morning. I'm Ed Kissell, Vice President of the S.O.N.S of Lake Erie. We have around 2300 members. The name of the bridge was one of our concerns and that has been taken care of. The other thing is it might be nice to put emblems of the different military wars or conflicts on the inside



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of the bridge so as people walk across, they can see those plaques of the different military events that have taken place and are of the people that are here or have been in the home. Other suggestions are some

of the VA clubs and organizations might want to contribute to that. To at least add some color to the inside of the bridge. Hopefully, the Veteran's Memorial Bridge is what it's going to be named and that should be a highlight as people use our Bayfront more after the roundabouts are installed and construction is done. One last thing, Mr. Harkins is my representative and new neighbor. Thank you."

Mrs. Brown started, "Good morning, I'm Teresa Brown. No relation to Rasheda. I am the homes Quality Assurance Risk Management Coordinator."

Any Questions?

### **OLD BUSINESS**

No old business to discuss.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

No new business to discuss.

### **GOOD OF THE COUNCIL**

Mr. Vybrial started, "Good morning everyone. Just to recap our events from the last time we met, we had another successful Wreaths Across America campaign and that continues to grow. We had good weather this year, clear, cold, but no wind here on the bluff. That's always a key to a successful event as well. And thank you to all the organizations that supported and the volunteers that came out that day. We also had the rescheduled American Legion Christmas Tour, that occurred the following weekend due to our snowstorm. The turnout and participation from our district American Legion Post's are always impressive and continued this year. I was able to attend the Military Order of the Purple Hearts, Washington dinner in January. At the beginning of February, we commemorated the saga of The 4 Chaplains with a ceremony in our Chapel. A couple of weeks ago, Fairview Highschool was here. We conducted a history tour with them on the grounds. Last week we were able to attend the Erie Resource Meetup and as spring and summer come into play, a lot of our outreach and engagements will pick up. In April, we have a couple of VA resource fairs on our schedule at the Erie Institute of Technology and the Fort Lebouf American Legion. And Mr. President, as you alluded to, I'll look forward to welcoming everyone on March 25<sup>th</sup>, as we commemorate Medal of Honor Day. It is really special this year because we have a former resident, William Young, that was a Medal of Honor recipient, and we'll be telling his story and commemorating other Erie residents. This will be the second annual Medal of Honor ceremony as we talk about it's history and connection to the home and to the Erie community, as well.

Mr. President, thank you, that is my report.



Pennsylvania  
**Department of Military  
and Veterans Affairs**  
Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home

Mr. Rose added, "About a year ago I put this out, and I want to put it out again. If you all in your daily travels have the opportunity to talk to any WWII, Vietnam Veterans, Revolutionary War reenactors, we continue to try and get reenactors to come in during State Veterans Homes Week and maybe setup a static display and maybe answer questions from some of the kids on Carnival Day. We are open to it and would like to see that happen. It's been a struggle for all the reasons that we know. So, if you run across anyone such as reenactors or anything, can you do me a favor and point them in Ken's direction. We really would like to see something like that as part of our festivities during State Veterans Home Week. Thank you."

Mr. Fry thanked everyone for coming and reminded everyone about the date change for the next PSSH Advisory Council meeting. The meeting is rescheduled and will take place on Thursday June 19, 2025.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.

The next Advisory Council Meeting is scheduled for Thursday June 19, 2025, at 9:00 am.

Approved:

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Gary Fry, President AMVETS

Minutes submitted by: Rasheda Goodwine