



Call to Order	Chairman Nicholas Taylor
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The Pennsylvania State Veterans' Commission (SVC) meeting was called to order

Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chairwoman Constance Snavelly led the moment of silence.

Commission Introductions

BG (PA) John Pippy	Acting TAG
Mr. Keith Graham	Designee- DAG DMVA-OVA
Mr. Nicholas Taylor	SVC Chairman; President, MOAA
Mr. Robert Hammaker	Adjutant, Disabled American Veterans
Ms. Wanda Grover - TEAMS	Commander, Blinded Veterans of America
Mr. Alvin Loveless - TEAMS	President, PA State Association of County Directors of Veterans Affairs
Ms. Barbara Loncar	Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. John Getz	Adjutant, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Ms. Diana Henry	Commandant, Marine Corps League
Mr. Troy Michaels	Designee, Adjutant, The American Legion
Mr. Mark Baylis	Member-at-Large
Mr. Leonard Johnson	Member-at-Large
Mr. Michael Brooker	Member-at-Large
Mr. Larry Googins- TEAMS	President, Vietnam Veterans of America
Mr. Stanley Majocka	Commander, Italian American War Veterans
Ms. Constance Snavelly	SVC V-Chairwoman, Representative, Korean War Veterans
Mr. Michael Rang	Commander, Catholic War Veterans
Mr. Gerry Hawk	Adjutant, AMVETS
Mr. Peter Verbos	MOPH
Mr. Richard Hudzinski- TEAMS	VVA/LVMAC

Absent

Mr. Paul Foresman	Commander, AMVETS
Mr. David Gyger	Designee, Commander Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. John Fritz	Commander, The American Legion
Mr. Richard Fine	Commander, Jewish War Veterans
Mr. Stephen Lavelle	Commander American Legion
Mr. Philip Arnold	Commander, Military Order of Purple Hearts
Mr. Jesiah Schrader	CDVA
Ms. Lisa Kaye	Member-at-Large
Mr. William Hines	Commander, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Timothy Alexander	DAV
Mr. Robert Heister	MOAA
Mr. David Gui	DAV

Mr. James Hogan	TAL
Others Present	
Mr. Tim Liezert	VISN 4
Mr. Marc Ferraro	DMVA-EDS
Mr. Chris Fidler- TEAMS	Director, Keystone Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America
Mr. Nathan Silcox	Executive Director, PA Senate VAEP
Mr. Dusty Durand- TEAMS	DMVA-PPL
Mr. Seth Benge	DMVA- PPL
Mr. Troy Michaels	AM Legion
Ms. Jennifer Hagaman	DMVA
Mr. David Cowgill-TEAMS	VISN-4 Direct of Communications
Ms. Elizabeth Cooper	DMVA
Ms. Michelle Brandt-TEAMS	Closed Captioner
Mr. Brian Natali	DMVA
Remarks	Vice-Chair Constance Snavelly
<p>Let us remember Pearl Harbor and honor the 2,403 servicemen and civilians killed in the Japanese surprise attack on December 7, 1941. Also, the 1,178 people who were injured in the attack which sank six U.S. Navy battle ships and destroyed 188 aircraft. The attack led to the U. S. declaring war on Japan the next day and entering World War II.</p>	
Presentation of Award	Acting TAG- BG (PA) Pippy
<p>Award presented to Mr. Robert Lithgow for his outstanding achievement while serving the Commonwealth of PA 2024. Selflessly applying his skills as a registered nurse, quickly giving aid to a Veteran who collapsed at an event and treated injuries.</p>	
Vice-Chair Opening Remarks	Ms. Constance Snavelly
<p>“A reminder, Wreaths Across America being held on December 14th at cemeteries across the U.S and abroad. The mission is to remember, honor, teach by placing wreaths on Veteran’s Graves and Memorials. I know the national cemetery was at 62% coverage this year usually they make a 100%. So, there is a shortage of 17,000 or so wreaths.”</p>	
Chairman’s Remarks	Mr. Nicholas Taylor
<p>Mr. Taylor read an e-mail received from Mr. Michael Hillman, Executive Director of the house Veterans Affairs and emergency preparedness committee. “Chairman Solomon is looking to connect with any of your members who live in or serve in the city of Philadelphia” Mr. Taylor wrote back to Mr. Hillman that on the commission we have one person who lives in the city of Philadelphia, Mr. Lin Johnson.</p> <p>Mr. Taylor relayed that he also wrote an email to both Mr. Silcox and Mr. Hillman asking for a list of general assembly members who are Veterans. Waiting on that item, once received it will be distributed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Questions/Discussion</u></p> <p>None</p>	
TAG’s Opening Remarks	BG Pippy

General Pippy provided an introduction and his background. General Pippy mentioned that one of his goals within the next year is to sit down with the stakeholders to talk about issues and how to inform more veterans about all the available programs.

General Pippy mentioned the great turn out for the Fort Indiantown Gap open house even and spoke about the upcoming events- Tree lighting ceremony, Wreaths Across America, 80th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, and the Farm show recognition ceremonies.

General Pippy spoke highly of Four-Star General Chris Donohue. He recognized that he was just confirmed and is now the commander U.S. Army Europe and Africa leading one of the most critical missions in all parts of the world.

Questions/Discussion

None.

Approval of the October 4, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Motion: Ms. Barbara Loncar, Commander, Veterans of Foreign War, made a motion to approve the minutes.

Second: Ms. Diana Henry

The body agreed; motion carried. Minutes approved.

Reading of Official and Other Communications

Chairman Taylor

None.

Deputy Adjutant General-VA Remarks

Designee – Mr. Keith Graham

Keith discussed the National Guard deployments and support during the blizzards. Keith discussed Vet connect and broke down the different programs in the five regions of the state. Spoke on the reintegration and outreach events. One focus he would like to see the Veteran registry grow by 10,000 next year.

Turned over to Jeff King to discuss the program reports: Amputee & Paralyzed Veterans Pension program experiencing a little bit of a surge and are at 42% execution rate. Blind Veterans Pension 99 Veterans on that program. Education Gratuity program paying \$500 a semester with 150% increase over the last few years making it about 300 students on the program. Veterans' Temporary Assistance is at about 58% budget, budget allotted is \$850,000 and on track to hitting that number this year. Military Family relief program paid out 28,000 and are on pace with budget. Real Estate Tax Exemption Act 27 is a need base program and added just about 2,000 people to the programs since the beginning of the fiscal year.

Questions/Discussion

Mark Baylis, MAL, question why a recently referred vet who makes \$1400 a month was denied assistance. Jeff requested to take down the name and will investigate it once he has the file. BG Pippy highlighted PAVet benefits that have 2000 Veteran partners that would want to help.

Another question about the process of the Real Estate Tax Exemption. Jeff stated it was to go through the county to get the application.

- Currently no residents with COVID, but two employees with COVID currently.
- Erie is functioning well with 6 feet of snow.
- The homes have been awarded a grant with the VA which will allow to give incentives for many hiring workers. Well over 350 vacancies across the homes and the grant will assist with this. Each home will get about \$8,000. Next year will be about \$700,000 per home. Working through some advertising to get the word out.
- Construction on Hollidaysburg is ongoing, issue with getting transformer has pushed back the timeline. Once there is a firm date for the ribbon cutting everyone will get an invite.

DMVA Bureau of PIRO

Mr. Keith Graham

None

Approval of State Veterans' Programs Reports

Motion: Mr. Mark Baylis, MAL, made the motion to approve the programs report.

Second: Mr. Robert Hammaker seconded the motion.

The body agreed; motion carried. Programs reports approved.

DMVA Policy, Planning, and Legislation

Mr. Seth Bengé

Briefed on the pass legislation 2023-2024. Briefed on the 2025-2026 session. Mentioned new Senator in the state, Mr. Dave McCormick and two new congressmen as well. Three out of the four House members are resigning to be cabinet members and there will be a special election. All bills that have been briefed in the past two years have gone away. The bills will be changing numbers and will be reintroduced

Questions/Discussion

Question on the house bills, specifically looking for the paralyzed pension bill up for increase. Answer: Influx shouldn't have to much of an influence on the increase, but the bills will have to be reintroduced.

VISN-4

Mr. Tim Liezert

MyHealthy Vet sign on will be retiring January 31. Moving towards two different types of sign-on, either ID.me or Login.gov. Teams will be available to help with transition.

Flu Vaccines continue to be available at any of the care sites.

Questions/Discussions

Keith Graham highly recommended using ID.me.

Committee Reports

Legislative Committee

TDB

Still looking for Chairman of the Legislative Committee.

Mr. Nick Taylor sent out to commissioners on 21 November the ask from the house, VA, emergency preparedness committee, to weigh in on bills. House bill, 2466, prohibits charging compensation for veteran-related services except for permitted by federal law. House bill 2469, providing for mental health evaluation for 911 dispatchers. House bill 2576 ensures ambulance availability by providing a waiver for

statutory requirements. House bill 2578 requires State Veterans Commission to review eligibility to our Veterans real estate tax exemption every 10 years rather than 5 years. House bill 2602 expand emergency for stream clearing and maintenance activities by Department of Environmental Protection from 50 feet of a bridge to 250 feet of bridge during disaster declaration. House bill, 2659, modifies training and certification requirements for certain emergency medical personnel, for advanced life support, ambulances and exigent circumstances. Passed this on to Mr. Hillman and Mr. Silcox to see if they could give more than a week or so turn around time.

Questions/Discussion

None.

Pensions/Relief/Grave Markings/State Military Cemetery Committee	Mr. Larry Googins
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Mr. Googins recognized Greg Holler and his outstanding work.

Questions/Discussions

None.

RETX	Mr. Alvin Loveless
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No official Report

Questions/Discussions

None.

MAL	Vice-Chairwoman Constance Snavelly
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Applications were gathered and results submitted to Mr. Taylor and DMVA with information of primary and alternate selectees. TAG approved and applications were hand delivered to the Governor's office. Letters for the non-selectees are currently being worked on.

Transportation Committee	Mr. William Hines
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Mr. Hines was absent

Mr. Nick Taylor would like to see some vehicles that are not being utilized move. There's a need in some counties and would like that committee to make some recommendations on how to utilize these vehicles.

Questions/Discussions

Mr. Brooker, driver for Westmoreland County, mentioned there are a lot of unintended consequences. For example, the maintenance, a group of VAs used to have a maintenance person who would assist if there was an issue with a van. Mr. Taylor mentioned he will work with the committee and come up with some possible solutions.

Veteran Health Committee	Mr. Mark Baylis
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No report, but Mr. Baylis wanted to recognize Greg Holler for taking the time to make phone calls so that Veterans can go hunting at the prison grounds at Dallas State Correctional Institute.

Questions/Discussions

None

VSO Grant Committee	TDB
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Mr. John Getz agreed to take on the responsibility of this committee.	
<u>Questions/Discussions</u>	
None.	
Womens Health	Ms. Lisa Kaye
No Offical Report	
PAWVC	Mr. John Fritz
<u>Questions/Discussions</u>	
None	
Unfinished Business	
Rich Hudsinski questioned about the status on the Vetcon reports. Mr. Taylor mentioned that it was all wrapped up and will be sent to Nick.	
New Business	
On behalf of General Pippy, An invite to the commissioners to attend the 80 th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge on 16 December at Fort Indiantown Gap.	
Good of the Order	
None	
Agenda for Next Meeting	
None	
Closing Remarks	
Mr. Taylor reminded everyone that the next meeting will be held at the DMVA, Hartranft Conference Room.	
Next Meeting	
Friday, April- 4th, 10:00 AM Forum: Arrowheads Community Center, FIG Annville, PA 17003	

The minutes of this meeting are respectfully submitted by:

BG (PA) Maureen Weigl
Deputy Adjutant General
Veterans Affairs