

HOLLIDAYSBURG VETERANS' HOME (HVH) ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, January 15, 2026

10:00 AM

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ildephonse "Duffy" Hines (Council President), Marine Corps League
Brian Querry (Council Vice President), Centre County, Director of VA
R. Raymond Lenz (Council Secretary), American Legion Department of PA
David Wagner, DAV
Todd Warner, Pennsylvania State Association County Director of Veterans Affairs
Thomas Williams, VFW
Rick Orłowski, Resident Representative
Jay Buchanan, MOAA
Joseph Rodkey, Resident Representative
John "Goose" Marin, Catholic War Vets
Cathy Keefe, Resident Representative

VIP'S PRESENT:

N/A

DMVA PRESENT:

Travis Davis, Executive Director of Long-Term Care, Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs
Barbara Raymond, Director, Bureau of Veterans' Affairs

HVH PRESENT:

Chrissy Dambeck, Commandant
Kelly Smith, Deputy Commandant
Desiree Kearney, Director of Nursing
Donald Ratchford, Medical Provider
Joe Patterson, Admissions and Marketing
Theresa Britton, Nursing
Elisha Ritchey, Nursing
Mary Rainey, Nursing

Karen Robinson, Social Services

Iris Tatar, Assistant to the Deputy Commandant

Dylan Nelson, Assistant to the Commandant and *Recorder*

OTHERS PRESENT:

Amanda Walker

Samantha Cossman

Michael "Mick" Hoover, MOPH

Anna Marie Rodkey

VACANT POSITIONS:

None

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Henry Gaunt, AMVETS

Tim Susengill, Vietnam Veterans Association

Call to Order

- Meeting called to order.
- Moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance observed.

Approval of Previous Minutes

- Council reviewed the previous meeting minutes.
- No corrections noted.
- Minutes approved unanimously as written.

Medical Director Update – Richard Hall

- No significant updates; routine and chronic care continues.
 - **Flu shots:** Administered as needed; began last week.
 - **COVID-19:** No positive cases recently; not a current concern.
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Admissions and Marketing – Joe Patterson

- Admissions:
 - July: 4
 - August: 8
 - September: 4
 - Total: 16 (12 Veterans, 4 spouses)
 - Net gain: +3 for the quarter.
 - Events and Outreach:
 - Band performance
 - Blair/Huntingdon County Veterans Networking
 - National Volunteer Firefighters Recognition Day
 - Patriots Day
 - Meeting with Cambria County VSO
 - Navy's birthday celebration
 - Upcoming Events:
 - Veterans Day
 - Marine Corps Birthday
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Employee Recognition

- Leadership Excellence Awards presented to:
 - Kelly Cogan, ADON
 - Deanna Calderwood, QA Coordinator
 - Desiree Kearney, Director of Nursing
 - Jolene Hoffman, Human Resource Analyst
 - Longevity Award:
 - Grace Macaluso, Clerical Assistant 2 – 15 Years
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Budget and Government Updates – General Maureen Weigl

- Federal:

- Shutdown is impacting Philly and Pittsburgh National Guard field offices.
 - National Guard drills postponed; federal furloughs reported.
 - **State:**
 - Spending freeze continues; education credits delayed.
 - No day-to-day operational impact at the home due to State Veterans' Homes being considered essential.
 - Veterans' conference planned for next week at King of Prussia due to the funding having already been provided in advance.
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Surveys and Compliance – Travis Davis

- 19 visits since June 1st (DOH, VA, internal assessments) among the six State Veterans' Homes.
 - CMS Facility Performance Ratings:
 - Delaware Valley and Gino Merli: 5-star
 - Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home, Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, Southeast: 4-star
 - Southwest: 3-star
 - **VA Recruitment & Retention Grant:** Awaiting response.
 - **Construction Updates:**
 - CLC flooring replacement to be completed by end of October.
 - Awaiting delivery of Automated Transfer Switch due to arrive in October. No further updates at this time regarding date.
 - Resident council ballots being distributed for 2026 Advisory Council elections.
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Advisory Council Structure – Discussion

- New structure: 3 community representatives (1 must be a family member of a resident).
 - Current council members go through War Council.
 - New community members nominated by resident councils, approved by DAG, and finalized by the Governor.
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Resident Capacity and Waitlist

- There are around 250 people currently on a waitlist between the 6 State Veterans' Homes.
- HVH has openings; placement depends on needs/preferences.
- New facility will have 200 beds (currently at 197 residents).

COVID-19 and Flu Update – Barb Raymond

- Erie: 2 positive residents (asymptomatic), past outbreak still impacting numbers.
 - 1 COVID-positive staff at Southwest.
 - Delaware Valley outbreak handled effectively.
 - No current RSV cases.
 - Flu shots: Administered later in season as per medical advice.
 - COVID vaccines available; residents with comorbidities have extra guidance.
 - Celebrations/events continue despite budget freeze.
 - Staffing updates: Nursing, dietetics, and social work actively recruiting.
 - Fall menu updates aimed at cost/labor efficiency, not removing popular items. Menus are being standardized across the 6 homes.
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Compliance Report – Kelly Smith

- Ethics and compliance posters updated across facilities.
 - HIPAA concerns directed to Karen Davis.
 - Last compliance meeting was held on September 15, 2025.
 - Training was held on September 30, 2025, for new committee members.
 - No outstanding issues reported.
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Facility Construction Update – Matt Smearman

- Some weather-related delays continue to impact the completion of the CLC.
 - Courtyard landscaping, fencing, and sidewalk connections underway.
 - Switch installation is scheduled for this month; exact date unknown.
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Commandant's Report – Christina Dambeck

- Sound system reactivated; podium mic use resumed.
- No lunch was provided due to budget impasse.
- DOH survey corrections completed, facility is back in substantial compliance, VA survey corrections underway.

- Next major survey: February (occupancy), DOH, Life Safety, Nursing Division, followed by VA recognition survey after March 15.
 - Survey readiness: goal is first-pass success.
 - Nursing census: 197 (excluding Mac Hall); new building capacity = 200.
 - Staffing: 447 employees (13 out long-term).
 - Resident highlights: Mary Lidwell turned 102; a bridge dedication ceremony was held last week at the Ashville VFW.
 - Events held: Oktoberfest (well-received), therapy animals, employee recognition, vehicle shows, POW/MIA ceremony.
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Dietary and Staffing Discussion – questioned by community member representing Henry Grant, AMVETS about removing the Every Other Weekend (EOW) agreement

- Dietary schedule: Shifted to 1 weekend off per month due to staffing needs.
 - Vacations: Limited to maintain operational levels.
 - Current vacancies: 3 in dietary, which are being posted to fill.
 - OT concerns discussed in monthly labor-management meetings.
 - Catering responsibilities adjusted to ease staff load.
 - Proposing to limit consecutive days of vacation to 9; this would allow employees with less seniority the ability to be able to request time off as well.
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Memory Care Discussion – Tim Susengill

- Rising dementia concern among Vietnam-era veterans.
 - Arnold Hall (East 2) designated for memory care improvements.
 - Engagement through short activities, entertainment, and outdoor access.
 - Future expansion possible.
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Council Member Updates

- **Tom Williams:** Update on Duffy – currently at Van Zandt Hospital (5th floor), doing better, expected at next meeting.
- **Brian Query:**

- Death certificate documentation discussed – presentations in progress.
 - Federal burial benefits – will be reviewed with revenue and admissions teams. Families should be advised to contact local VSO.
 - Term dates for offices to be included in future meeting folders.
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Council Elections

- Duffy is interested in remaining President, if possible.
 - Due to the amount of absent members, elections will be postponed.
 - **January 2026:** Officer elections to be held.
 - Dylan to follow up on election schedule and procedures and include names and tenure in the packet for the next meeting.
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Good of the Council

- **General Weigl:** Wished members a happy Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.
 - **Ray Lenz:** Praised success of Oktoberfest and employee efforts; emphasized strong teamwork within the council and staff.
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Adjournment

- **Motion to Adjourn:** By Brian Querry
- **Time:** 11:25 AM

Next Meeting: January 15, 2026


R: Raymond Lenz, Secretary

