



SOUTHEASTERN VETERANS' CENTER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

April 9, 2026

The Southeastern Veterans' Center Advisory Council met on April 9, 2026 at 10:00 AM in the All-Purpose Room of Coates Hall at the Southeastern Veterans' Center.

Advisory Council Members Participating:

Barry Amole, American Legion, President
Thomas Applebach, Lehigh County Office of Veterans' Affairs, Vice President
Kenneth Schweitzer, American Legion, Secretary
Eric Hofer, Military Officers Association of America
Doug Forsythe, Disabled American Veterans
Kenneth Nadwodny, Catholic War Veterans
Emil Messikomer, Marine Corps League
Thomas Koch, Skilled Nursing Resident Representative
Michelle Messere, Family Representative

Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs/Southeastern Veterans' Center:

Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General of Veterans' Affairs – DMVA- **via Microsoft TEAMS**
Travis Davis, Executive Director, Long-Term Care – DMVA
Barbara Raymond, Bureau of Veteran' Homes Director – DMVA
Mia Woods, Compliance and Ethics Officer- DMVA
Michael Belcher, Veterans' Services Specialist- DMVA
Brian Gula, Commandant – SEVC
Johanna Valenti, Deputy Commandant- SEVC
Amanda Bokosky, Director of Nursing- SEVC
Sarah Klufas, Commandant's Assistant- SEVC
Shaun Honts, HR Analyst 2- SEVC
Iris Moyer, CNA- SEVC
Sarah Asante, CNA- SEVC
Shalonda Charles, Food Service Worker 2- SEVC

Visitors:

Nikki Whitlock, Chief of Staff, Senator Katie Muth's Office
Nate Schaefer, Constituent Specialist, Senator Tracy Pennycuick's Office- **via Microsoft TEAMS**
Linda Neiman, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
Paul Boyd, Personal Care Resident Council President
Dee Banyai, Visitor

Excused Absence:

John Getz, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Jeffrey Elliot, PA AMVETS
Thomas Coreau, Dauphin County Office of Veterans' Affairs
David Buckley, Personal Care Resident Representative
The Honorable Tracy Pennycuick, PA State Senate
The Honorable Dan Williams, PA House of Representatives
MG John R. Pippy, Adjutant General – DMVA
Dr. John Peacock, Medical Director- SEVC

Call to Order:

The Advisory Council Meeting was called to order by Barry Amole at 10:00 AM. There was a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Swearing in of Council Members:

No members were sworn in at the meeting.

Review and Approval of January 8, 2026 Meeting Minutes:

A motion was made by Doug Forsythe and seconded by Ken Schweitzer to approve the minutes of the Advisory Council Meeting held on January 8, 2026. Motion carried, and minutes were approved as written.

Report of the Medical Director - Dr. John Peacock - SEVC:

Amanda Bocosky, Director of Nursing, provided an update to the council on behalf of Dr. John Peacock. This quarter, SEVC experienced a change in our provider's leadership. Dr. Yeung's last day with the facility was April 3rd. Over the past two years, she has provided strong clinical oversight and played a key role in stabilizing and strengthening our provider department. Her dedication, professionalism, and commitment to resident care have made a lasting impact on our home. We are truly grateful for her contributions and wish her all the best in her next chapter.

At this time, SEVC is very pleased to welcome Dr. John Peacock as our new Medical Director, effective March 31st. Dr. Peacock brings many strengths to our organization, including familiarity through his work at our sister facility, Delaware Valley. He offers a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to resident care.

Dr. Peacock's background is both impressive and diverse. He served eight years in the U.S. Navy as a Hospital Corpsman and five years as an Undersea Medical Officer. He continues to serve in the Pennsylvania National Guard in multiple leadership roles. Additionally, his experience in long-term care and geriatrics—including his work as a Medical Director and Geriatrician at local facilities such as the Coatesville VA Medical Center—positions him well to lead our clinical team. We are confident that he will continue to strengthen and enhance the quality of care we provide for our veterans.

At this time, we have no cases of COVID-19, influenza, or RSV within the building. This quarter, COVID-19 boosters are being administered by our Infection Prevention (IP) department.

We are actively preparing for our upcoming Department of Health survey. This is an important opportunity to demonstrate the quality of care and compliance we strive to maintain every day.

Nurses Week is approaching, taking place May 6th through May 12th. This will be a time for us to recognize and celebrate the incredible work of our nursing team, who consistently go above and beyond to care for our residents with compassion and professionalism.

Thomas Applebach asked when the new doctor was scheduled to start. Amanda Bokosky answered that Dr. Peacock's start date was March 31st.

Report of the Admissions and Marketing Coordinator - Jill Alwine - SEVC:

Brian Gula, Commandant, provided the Admissions and Marketing update on behalf of Jill Alwine, Admissions Coordinator. Brian Gula reported that our current census is 248, with 40 residents in personal care and 208 in skilled nursing. Our occupancy rates for skilled nursing and personal care are 87 percent and 74 percent, respectively. We had 21 admissions over the first quarter. We have 66 applicants on our waitlist, 57 veterans and 9 spouses. Our waitlist times for personal care and skilled nursing are about 3-6 months, and our secured unit is about a 6-7 month wait.

Employee Recognition:

The following employees were recognized in front of the council for their years of service to the Commonwealth. Certificates were presented by Brian Gula, Commandant; Amanda Bokosky, Director of Nursing; and Shaun Honts, HR Analyst 2:

- Sarah Asante-CNA- 15 years of service
- Iris Moyer-CNA- 15 years of service

Thank you for all that you do for our veterans!

Report of the Deputy Adjutant General – General Maureen Weigl – DMVA:

General Weigl thanked the council members and their service organizations for all that they do for our veterans and highlighted some events that took place recently. The VFW held a Women's Veterans Conference in Pittsburgh that had about 200 female veteran attendees, including a 100-year-old WWII female veteran that attends every year. The conference is open to all female veterans, not just those with the VFW, and is held every year during the last weekend in March. We will pass along info about the conference for you to share with women veterans in your organizations. The American Legion hosted a Veterans Business Network in Harrisburg. We had about 70 small business owners, that are all veterans, come together to network and market their businesses. Many of them said it was very effective, and they would like to do it quarterly. We are looking to do the next ones in Allentown and Scranton.

We appreciate all of your legislative help. We were able to work to stop legislation that would not have affected us favorably, with the medication being part of the Claims and Benefits process. Travis or Barb will give you some info on 2 Federal pieces of legislation regarding high-cost prescription drugs and dual surveys that we would like to get to the finish line.

Our PA VetConnect team is at the capital providing training to some of the legislative offices and their staff on what our service officers do. Legislators tend to field a lot of phone calls, so we want to make sure that their staff is prepared and can help refer veterans to the counties, service organizations, and our offices about the different resources that are available.

General Pippy is busy, he has been overseas. We have a lot of service men and women in the National Guard, Army and Air, that are deployed or deploying. We are also getting ready for this summer's 250th activities and Memorial Day activities.

Report of the Executive Director, Long Term Care – Travis Davis – DMVA:

Travis Davis started by giving an update on surveys at the homes. Over the last quarter, we have had 10 visits to our homes. The Federal VA performed annual surveys at Southeast, Gino Merli, and PA Soldiers and Sailors in Erie. The Department of Health is currently at Gino Merli conducting their annual survey. They were also recently at Hollidaysburg and Erie to conduct those annual surveys. Hollidaysburg also had their annual Department of Human Services survey for their Personal Care home over the last quarter. Finally, we had 2 complaint surveys, both of which were unsubstantiated, and we have had some Lifesafety inspections. Overall, nothing major to report on for those surveys.

Five-star rating update: we did have a significant drop in Erie due to a Payroll-Based Journaling (PBJ) audit. Payroll-Based Journaling is how they look at our staffing numbers. We tried to challenge the deficiency, but unfortunately, we lost. We know our numbers are well above where they need to be. However, there was an issue with our timekeeping system where some duplicate entries were created. These duplicate entries had to manually remove and resubmit. For the time period reviewed by the auditor in Erie, the auditor felt that we did not have it cleaned up the way it should have been. The consequences, unfortunately, are pretty severe. They drop your overall rating for staffing to a 1 star for a 90-day period. This caused Erie's overall rating to drop from a 4-star to a 2-star. However, July 1st their rating will go back to where it was before. The correction has been made across the homes, so we should not see this happen again.

From a respiratory illness standpoint, we have been doing really well. Across the homes, we have one staff member with the flu and no Covid or RSV. We have had a few minor GI outbreaks, but they have all been well controlled in house.

Census update: we are almost at 1200 for the first time in several years. Southeast has been doing really well over the past month with admissions. Three of our homes are over 90 percent full and a few others are close. We have about 162 veterans and spouses on our waiting list.

Our Director of Business Operations, Mike Hoover, will be retiring at the beginning of July. We are currently conducting interviews for this position. Our goal is to have a candidate selected and start as soon as possible, so that they can spend some time with Mike prior to his retirement. As Amanda Bokosky briefly mentioned, Dr. Peacock has been with Delaware Valley for about 8 months. He is the State Surgeon for the National Guard and is also a geriatrician at the Coatesville VA. He is planning on stepping back from his duties at the Coatesville VA in July/August and coming on board with us full-time. Doug Forsythe asked if he is the same Dr. Peacock from the West Norriton CBOC. After some discussion, it was determined that it is the same Dr. Peacock.

Construction Update: We have received our Occupancy Permit for the new building at Hollidaysburg. We are hoping to do a ribbon cutting on Veterans Day. We plan for the building to be operational and full of residents a few months before then. We will probably start moving our first batch of residents tentatively around the first week of July. Right now, we are waiting for the cable television to be finalized since it had to go through legal and out to bid. The other obstacle we are facing is getting all of our furniture delivered. It has been coming in waves. Once the building is complete, it is going to be a game changer for our residents and staff.

Gino Merli also has a small construction project going on to their first floor. We found that the building did not have a lot of space for the residents to congregate other than their multi-purpose room. A lot of them stayed up on their units as they had nowhere to go. We took their chapel and are converting it into more of a lounge/ coffee shop area. It is coming along really nicely. We moved the Chapel to the area that used to be their Canteen. In Gino Merli, their church service is their most attended activity, and they could not always fit in the old chapel. They instead would have to use their multipurpose room. This construction project should be wrapping up in the next couple months. We also requested a major renovation upgrade to our Southwestern facility. We did not make the Federal VA's priority list for the funding last year, but we did make it this year. That construction will probably take place around 2027/2028.

As General Weigl mentioned, there are two Federal legislative bills that the National Association of State Veterans Homes has been pushing for years. This year is the first year that we have had some Pennsylvania cosponsors supporting them and we are asking for support from anyone that could help. The first bill is HR 1970; this is the Providing Veterans Essential Medication Act. If you have a veteran who is 70 percent service-connected disabled in the community or in a community nursing home, the Federal VA will pick up the cost of their medication. However, if they come to a Pennsylvania State Veterans Home, we are responsible for the cost. We do not know if this is an oversight, but we think it is something that needs to be changed. The second bill is Senate Bill 3532, which also has a companion bill in the house (HR 7747). The Federal VA annual survey and Department of Health annual survey that we go through are almost identical. The Federal VA does go a little bit more in depth and look into our financials. This bill would allow the Department of Health to accept the Federal VA's results for the survey. We are not looking to get out of oversight; the Department of Health would still come out regarding complaint surveys. However, this would allow our administration to spend more time focused on our residents as these annual surveys can take up a lot of their time.

Doug Forsythe asked why there is a difference between the Federal VA and state since any veteran that is 50 percent gets his scripts for free with the Federal whereas with the state it is 70 percent. Barb Raymond stated that the veterans that are 50-60 percent service-connected are different than the 70 percent and higher. Those that are 70 percent and higher are what we consider our 'prevailing rate veterans'. Those prevailing rate veterans we are responsible for paying their prescriptions, whereas the 50-60 percent veterans we are not. The way the Federal VA looks at it, everything comes out of that Prevailing Rate including their medications. The difference is in a private-sector nursing home that has a VA contract to receive the funding for that prevailing rate does not have to pay for those medications. We just want to be on equal footing. Barb Raymond told the council that she will forward information on the bills to Sarah Klufas, and she will send the info to the council members via email.

Report of the Director of Veterans' Homes – Barbara Raymond – DMVA:

Barb Raymond started by welcoming Michelle Messere, our new family representative board member.

Over the past quarter, we have had many fun events at our homes', including serving green beer for St. Patrick's Day. We are gearing up for more fun events for Veterans Home Week in June. Also, as Amanda Bokosky mentioned, we are preparing for National Nurses' week in May.

We received a VA grant that we will be putting towards recruitment and retention efforts. We are able to get promotional items, such as t-shirts and tote bags, through our union team members as well as Commonwealth funds for our direct-care staff. We are also going to get some things for our other non-direct care staff members for Veterans Home Week. It just has to be through different funding.

Another fun thing we have coming up is our veterans' homes' Facebook page launches. We currently have a Department of Military and Veteran Affairs Facebook page, but we do not have anything to individually highlight the homes and all the fun things that go on. We received approval to have individual Facebook pages to highlight each home. We have a few more things to complete behind the scenes before we can get them up and running, hopefully around May/early June. We will make sure to share these Facebook pages with you once they are up and running, so you can share them with your service organization members.

Menu Change Update: we talked in the past about some changes we made to the menus at the veterans' homes and the concerns that residents and their family members had. The initial intention was to create a more standardized menu across the 6 homes. We pivoted a little bit to allow more flexibility between the homes to fit resident preferences. Our Spring/Summer menu will be out later this month, and we will be offering more of those favorites that our residents enjoyed.

We have been providing support in writing bylaws for the Advisory Councils and are close to finalizing them. Once complete, we will send them to Barry to forward along to everyone. Due to the changes with the Advisory Councils, we also had to update the Resident Council Bylaws. Since our Resident Councils at the homes are now responsible for nominating three of our Advisory Board members, we wanted to ensure that the bylaws for both councils were married together regarding things like voting.

We did recently go through an Auditor General Report. Our last Auditor General report was about 10 years ago and was quite extensive. We are happy to report that our Auditor General report for this past year only resulted in one deficiency in two different areas. One area included how we offboard our staff members. Although our separated employees do not have any access to Commonwealth records or equipment, we were not able to prove that to the Auditor General. As a result, we created proof that separated employees cannot access resident medical records through offboarding tickets. The other area was also IT-related and had to do with a report, called a SOC Report, that our medical records provides to our Informational Technology Analyst. The Analyst has to review the report, and again, we just did not have any proof that it was provided to them and that it was reviewed. Two very minor issues from a very long, year-long audit, so we are quite happy with that.

Compliance Report – Mia Woods – DMVA:

Mia Woods stated that over the last quarter there have been no hotline emails or calls regarding complaints for Southeast. Regarding staffing, we currently have a Regional Compliance Officer position

open. We want this position focused on HIPAA and privacy, so we are looking to modify this role to help provide support to the Bureau of Veterans' Homes as they have a lot of privacy needs. Once we adjust the job description, we will go to a hiring agency that focuses on privacy professionals to fill this role. We also hired a supervisor about 4 months ago that just tendered her resignation this week. She is going back to the Federal government; her last day will be next Friday. That position will remain open until we sit with Barb and Travis to figure out the best way to move forward. SEVC's next Facility Performance Assessment is scheduled for November 17,18,19, 2026. This internal mock audit will help them prepare for their 2027 external agency audits.

We have one pending policy regarding our Facility Performance Assessment process. Once we add a few more details, the Corporate Compliance Committee will review it and then it will get sent out to the homes. We also have a Quarterly Compliance Committee Meeting Policy coming out. Regulations require that we do these meetings at a corporate level and at all 6 homes. We updated the Medical Records Fee policy, so that it is more affordable to our residents. We also updated our BVH Privacy Audits Policy along with a document called the Notice of Privacy Practices. We are working on getting that document posted on the website per regulations. We are also working with BVH management on a Medical Records Retention Policy update following our Matrixcare Reloaded rollout.

We updated the Fraud, Waste, and Abuse training and our HIPAA and Privacy training that is required to be completed annually by all staff. This was the first year that the compliance department was able to give input to make it relevant to the staff. We will continue the effort to make sure that it is updated yearly.

We currently have one open privacy investigation regarding a lost chart that was reported. We are working on tracking it down to see if it is truly lost. If so, we would then send an internal notification to the resident and their family. It is not a reportable incident, nor is it considered a breach.

In reference to the Auditor General deficiency that Barb Raymond mentioned, Doug Forsythe asked how the Compliance team handles any staff member that leaves, and how they are securing HIPAA information. Mia Woods stated that the Compliance team was written in to the Corrective Action Plan for that deficiency. The Corporate Privacy Officer will work with the local Privacy Officers and Human Resources to ensure that we are doing a periodic review of those offboarding slips. Like Barb Raymond said, we had practices in place, but we could not prove it satisfactorily to the auditor. We do monitor access to records and are able to do it from the GAP on any given day. If we find anything suspicious or notice someone looking at info that they do not need to look at, we contact Brian and Amanda. If we cannot determine a good reason as to why they were in a chart, we make recommendations for disciplinary actions. Doug Forsythe also asked when employees tender their resignation, are they automatically removed from access to the computer. Barb Raymond explained that once a Personnel Access Review (PAR) is completed, the employee stops getting paid and their email, computer access, etc. automatically stops. Also, about a year ago, we renewed our contract for our Electronic Health Record system. When this happened, we looked at what everyone has access to and made some adjustments to that as well.

Mia Woods finished by stating that regulations dictate that the Compliance team does an annual assessment of the BVH structure from a privacy and compliance standpoint. Historically, we were working with the Health and Human Service Department to get that done by a consultant. That process is now

being brought in house, so we are working to find appropriate training for our IT professionals to make sure that our risk assessments is done annually.

Report of the Commandant – Brian Gula– SEVC:

Brian Gula stated that we had our Annual Federal VA Survey back in February. We have devised a Corrective Action Plan on how we are going to correct those deficiencies through auditing, education and training, to ensure that we are in compliance moving forward. We are awaiting official approval of that Corrective Action Plan, but our team has already started on auditing and training to get a head start. The reason we wanted to start on this so quickly is because we are also in the window for our Annual Department of Health survey. We can expect them anytime between now and the beginning of fall.

Brian shared some data regarding staffing. One big thing that we monitor is our overall turnover rate across all departments. The first quarter of 2026 (January-March), our overall turnover rate is 16.1 percent, which is a drastic drop from the past few years. Last year our overall turnover rate was 23.8 percent. Since we are a nursing home, our biggest department is the nursing department. Every nursing home struggles with nursing staffing and turnover. For a 12-month rolling period, SEVC is at 32.9 percent turnover for our direct care staff (RNs, LPNs, CNAs). In comparison to the rest of the industry, the turnover rate for PA nursing homes is between 48-52 percent and the turnover rate at other veterans' homes across the nation is about 40-55 percent. Year-to-date, our nursing staff turnover rate date is 13.9. Another thing we look at is our time to fill, which includes the amount of time from when an application is received to the start date. SEVC within the last quarter is at 35 days, which is really good. Year-to-date we have had 25 new hires. We are incredibly proud to see the number of new hires pick up, as well as see that we are getting candidates through the door quicker and that they are staying. We are always looking to see how we can improve, so we are going to shift our focus a little more towards recruitment efforts.

Some fun things that have happened over the last quarter: we had our very first Hot Wheels Derby in February. It was an absolute hit, and every resident was able to select their own car and participate. Our Valentine's dinner was absolutely amazing and we had representation from every department that stayed late to help. Our clubs are really taking off as well. We have a cooking club, a men's club, a women's club, a chess club, and more. We also have a travel serenading club, which is a group of residents that visit residents that are bedbound and play music and sing. One of the newest, hottest clubs right now is the Rolling and Strolling club. Right now, during the cooler months, they are doing laps throughout the facility while playing music, dancing. Both residents and staff have been participating. We also had our very first Sock Hop dance in Tilghman Hall with a DJ and ice cream floats provided by a volunteer organization. As Barb mentioned, we are gearing up for Veterans Home week and getting all the events lined up for that week.

Thomas Applebach asked what the breakdown was of the 32 percent turnover rate as far as retirements versus people going elsewhere. Travis Davis said we do track that info, but do not have the breakdown at this time. He noted that we have it for the next meeting. Brian Gula stated that one of the direct care positions with the highest turnover is LPNs and that data shows they are leaving within the first 12 months. However, if they make it past that 12 months, there is longevity. So, we are working with HR and our Director of Nursing, to find out what program we can put in place to mentor those LPNs for the first year, to help them get over that hurdle and want to stay. Thomas Applebach mentioned that employee involvement in things like the Rolling and Strolling club can help employee retention and promote positivity at work.

Report of the Deputy Commandant- Johanna Valenti- SEVC:

Johanna Valenti, Deputy Commandant, provided an update on facility and security upgrades.

Facility Upgrades: Our security team is working on an upgrade of the sprinkler system, which includes replacing the sprinkler heads. We have an alarm panel for our fire system that is also scheduled to be replaced for Coates Hall. Finally, all of the flags out front were replaced.

Resident Canteen: The accounting and volunteer departments continue to work closely to revamp some of the canteen expenditures to ensure the best management of the welfare funds. Soda vending machines were installed this past quarter, and the accounting team is managing the purchasing and inventory of snack items to reduce waste.

Welfare Committee: The committee has been working very diligently on reducing spending. Activities is working with our dietary department for food-related needs for programs and special events. Activities and the volunteer department are working jointly to offer alternative prizes for in-house games rather than solely offering canteen coupons. The committee is focusing on better fiscal management with the assistance of the accounting department to ensure the best management of donations in the welfare fund.

Maintenance Projects: SJ Thomas is working with our team on a project in our CLC building to convert the A-side Kitchenettes into an open nursing station, as well as renovating the B-side Kitchenettes to better improve the functionality of those areas. Two new boilers will be installed to the CLC Penthouse for the domestic hot water. The upper roof of Tilghman Hall has been replaced and the next step will be for the lower roof to be replaced.

Resident area upgrades include renovations of the Coates Hall lounges on the 2nd and 3rd floors with new furniture and larger TVs to enhance their living spaces.

Michelle Messere asked if the vending machines in the Canteen were there to stay. Johanna Valenti stated that they were. There has been some concerns with the residents. Unfortunately, our Canteens had been losing money, so we needed to look at how we were fiscally managing the Canteen. However, we have been voicing to our residents that the Social Services department can assist with helping residents purchase items through other avenues. The Canteen is just one small option to gain access to those treats. We want to ensure that we are properly managing the Welfare Fund that supports the Canteens and doing due diligence with the funds that all our volunteer organizations are providing us.

Comments from the Council:

Eric Hofer stated that he dropped some stuff off for the Nurses' Week celebration.

Doug Forsythe thanked everyone and stated that everyone answered his questions.

Emil Messikomer thanked everyone for the updates.

Old Business:

Nothing to Report.

New Business:

Nothing to Report.

Good of the Council:

Nothing to Report.

Time and Date for the next Meeting:

With no further business to discuss, a motion was made to end the meeting. Motion carried. The next regular meeting of the Advisory Council will be held on July 9, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

Approved:

Kenneth Schweitzer, Secretary

Minutes submitted by: Sarah Klufas

DRAFT