



Veterans Assistance Commission of Will County

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 veteransassistancewillco.org



March 26th, 2024

Commission Meeting
VFW Cantigny Post 367
826 Horseshoe Dr Joliet 60435

6:00PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Invocation

II. ROLL CALL ATTENDEES:

POST	DELEGATE/ALTERNATE	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
AL 5 Joliet	D: Joseph Kelley A: John Honiotes		X	
AL 13 Plainfield	D: Rick Todd A: Raj Pillai	D		
AL 18 Lockport	D: Mike Meyers A: Frank DiGiovanni		X	
AL 52 Romeoville	D: Steven Daley A:	D		
AL 191 Wilmington	D: Frank Mlyniec		X	
AL 241 Joliet	D: Michael White	D		
VFW 367 Joliet	D: Jim Clausen A: Dennis Havranek	D A		
AL 392 Peotone	D: Robert Krueger A: Rick Bolanowski		X	
VFW 725 Mokena	D: Paul Cravens A: James Hogan	D		
AL 935 Manhattan	D: Robert Angone A: Lisa McGlasson	D A		
AL 1080 Joliet	D: Tony Arellano A: George Madden	D		
AL 1288 Bolingbrook	D: Larry Shaver A: Wayne Macejak	D A		
AL 1977 New Lenox	D: Mark Razny A: Patrick McLeod	D A		

VFW 2199 Joliet	D: Kevin Pomykala A: Larry Smith	D A		
VFW 5422 Wilmington	D: Wally Wink A: Scott Durano		X	
VFW 5788 Lockport	D: Keith Carberry A: Mark Bowman	D A		
VFW 5819 Lemont	D: Kenneth Griffin		X	
VFW 5917 Bolingbrook	D: John Davin A: Gregory Palmer	D		
VFW 9545 New Lenox	D: Clarke Christiansen A: Donald Ibarra	A		

III. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND/OR FIRST TIME ATTENDEES (6:03 PM)

- Mark
- Mark White
- Matt AM 1977
- David LaFrancise
- Brian
- Jim Marter
- Dave Lombardo
- Chuck Maher
- Mark
- Raj from Naperville IL

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Anthony Troopa: VAC was set up to be a clearinghouse for will county. The organization assists our veterans. Veteran assistance with various programs. There has been so much progress made under the leadership of Raj Pallai. Personal mission that assistance has been provided to our veterans. Please continue to support the veterans in our community with electing Raj Pallai.
- Colleen: \$500,000 was handed over to Kristi McNichol. Removed a deputy out of closed session. This board cleaned up the corruption. More applications completed this year. Planed the first vetfest. The grant was rescinded in Joliet. MVAA-Military Veterans Assistance Act. Raj is loyal to our vets not politicians.
- Dale Fontana: Will County resident and tax payer. The VAC as existed prior to Raj Pallai were aloof, disconnected, inefficient, wasteful. VAC after Raj honest, transparent, proud. Highest servicing rate since he took over. How many units run by any party can make these claims. Its veterans they serve and the tax payers are who they serve. Dedicate to a bright future or return to fail opportunities of the past. We the people will watch every move.
- Chuck Maher: Running for county executive because he does not like how the building was in question. Spent 16 years on the county board and passed budgets helping the veterans. Worked with vets and people with PTSD. Who do you want to follow through the mind field

- and go to bat for you. The executive branch of will county has no oversight other than need to provide a building to operate. The board members are held accountable to making decisions. Who will be out there fighting for you. Chuck will help fight win or lose.
- Joe Oljohnson: two things I learned: 1 we all want the same things, 2. If the ship is not sailing properly the crew is adjusted to make the change. In the past the ship was not sailing properly
 - Raj: Taxpayer of Naperville. Raj is an honest vet and a person of integrity. He uncovered \$500,000 misuse of funds. He has nothing but the best in mind for the VAC.
 - Dave LaFrancise: Senior vice commander of Plainfield 14. A letter from Raj since he could not be here. Raj dedication is there. There are claims of being too political. Built aligns through both party lines.
 - Mike Dean: Lockport VFW hall. Raj went into the books and did not earn any money from it. When Raj asked, they did not know where the money went. The FBI got involved and still could not find the money. There are a lot of good people in here that helped him with getting what he needed from the VA. Raj doesn't get a paycheck and should be overlooking. Are the funds right now? They are there and it is being run right. The executive lost a vote and turned around and veto it. Now the taxpayers need to go through the courts. The prior board did not allow the veterans to get up and talk. Raj strives and is motivated.
 - Jim Marter: Dad is an army veteran and mom served as a medical technologist at the VA. The staff is awesome. Raj is honest, integrity and vigilant.
 - David Lombardo: Raj pulled in David to a VAC meeting with the prior board. They did not listen to people who came to speak. The willingness of an individual to put themselves out in the public.
 - Walter Burketts: Personally, have seen Raj devote time. He dedicated years to this nation and it did not end there. It was his efforts that uncovered the money that was misused. He continues to give back to his community.
 - Katie Dean Schlottman: Here to speak on behalf of Raj Pallai. Raj identified a problem with missing money and his passion was to find the problem and fixing it to make it right. We have someone in leadership where the money goes. More things for women's services have been discussed. There is a vision and a passion that has been seen in Raj. Consider that and the impact he has had on the veterans that are here today.
 - Brian Shever: Commander of the Plainfield 13 legion. Raj is very loyal to his veterans. There are very few that are loyal to our veterans. He has done a great job raising awareness of the faults and the positive. Disrespectful behaviors were shown while people were talking.
 - Larry Shaver: The proven fact the VAC accomplishments are not due to Raj but the operations. She (Jen) did that not Raj. Working with elected officials to make it a better place. 40 years a veteran's advocate. Politics have no place in the VAC other than with Elected officials to take care of veterans. Raj ran for office and brought people here that are running for office and sitting in office. He marched them up there to make half-truths and untruths and make statements about Larry that are not true. Give Raj credit for fixing the issues that were identified. But he is still running for office. Not talking to the misguided veteran. I was in a foxhole in Vietnam. Asked for 2 minutes. Asking as a Vietnam veteran to shut up and let me do my talking. I asked you to and not telling you to. I am a marine. I was born a marine. This the way you will be leading your meetings in the future. Larry-No sir. Half the stuff with Raj Pallai is crap. I am sorry I like Raj and think he is a good guy but is misguided.
 - Brian (Plainfield 13 Commander): Sargent at arms Larry Shaver. The upholder is being disrespectful to our veterans here calling us politicians and misguided veterans. You told me to

shut up. It is recorded. This is the same board you want to keep continuing this is what I am talking about. I don't care about politics and this is about the veterans. You want to talk about fighting in holes we could talk but I am here to make sure things are right here in will county for our veterans. You want to be disrespectful this is what I was talking about. Now you want to back pedal a little. We could go into the trees and talk a little. We could talk offline. Will he represent all the veterans. Larry: Dam right I will.

- Chuck Mahar: This is getting really heated. As the only politician running, I did that to show how I am working for the veterans and representing here. I never mentioned anything on who to support. I said you need to pick the best person who will lead you in the future. Who would you want to go to a mine field with. I did not mention Larry or Raj. I am here to clarify the county executive has no role over your body. The board only has the control over the budget. You are the experts for services and leadership.
- Joel (2): Do not make general statements about the audience when 60% are not represented by the statements. This is a sinking ship if we go back.
- Lisa McGlasson: Judge Advocate appointed by the commission. I work for the entire commission. I am not running for anything which was a mis information. Found out I was no longer the delegate when I received a form (Speaking to Brian). Contacted Raj by email, text, and phone call. Unknown reason no longer a representative for Plainfield 13. Raj did step in front of the bullet and identified the issue. Zero response from 5 communications. Was no longer a representative for AL 13 for no reason. Raj stepped up and took it as a whistle blower for the \$500,000. I did shop around after the form was signed. Went to Manhattan since wanted to be a part of the process. Contacted by a lawyer that worked for the American Legion and wanted her to resign as judge advocate. Appointed by president and appointed by the commission. Talked to the legal representative from the post and told them she was appointed by the board. Retired after 35 years of service. 3 years army and the other 31 as a civilian in the pentagon. I was a labor relations officer. I was a manager and rep that dealt with unions but my job was to serve the president and the VAC. 3 calls from individual members to convince me to resign my post as judge advocate. If I can't send a message out to a forum of people then I would think the law would not allow to call one at a time and have these conversations. I know what I went wrong and went to a law school that was conservative in Virginia. If you ask to sell raffle tickets I would say no since you need someone to come in to have a gambling license. I would not do it under the VAC or the police department. If we are spending the day from people from killing themselves and have people going around with petitions asking people to sign things, I am going to tell you that is not our goal for the day. When you ask me who should fill out a financial disclosure, I will tell you it should include those who are appointed. I do not want to do anything that will get us back to the past. I am not running from anything. I was good enough to serve for the secretary of defense.
- Dave Lombardo (2): Leader never loses control. If the leader loses control everything goes to Hell. Never lose control. As a leader you never lose control. Never raise your voice or make promises you cannot complete. Didn't you run for the county board? Larry: I did. But I am not a politician.
- Robert Angone: I spoke out about the missing money. Came a long way a short time ago. Raj is a good person/president and there are a few items I want to clarify in the meeting. The staff did hit the goals and then some not Raj. Jen moved money around to get more VSOs. The staff worked hard and cleared the claims. I am not bashing Raj. This was the second Vetfest. The Vet fest was with the VAC, Police and the executive's office. Transparency-the last commission

is not transparent. No offense against Raj and talks about collaborating with the NFP and was not transparent. Rick Todd and Heather Falkenthal as part of the NFP board. The last commission did this. Heather Falkenthal did speak up and say the purpose and what the NFP does was discussed in a prior meeting and could provide the meeting notes to the commission from that meeting. He did not announce he is part of it. Kept saying his NFP. Kept saying the county is not part of it but according to IL 333459-A-8 the county does have to appoint someone. He keeps bashing, according to the MBAA does not. I wish Raj was here to hear this.

- Rick Todd: Clarify the will4vets was established by Raj to help raise to give back to Battle Buddies so they could send representatives to school to help stop suicides for first responders who are mostly Veterans. The money raised was for k9 for vets and battle buddies. They provide service dogs for our veterans. Conduit for the organizations to get the money raised. It is legitimate with a guy like Raj behind it. The \$500,000 would go a long way to help our veterans. Since then, raised money for recruits to have a thanksgiving dinner. This was not a link to a VAC. We did it for the VetFest. They needed us for the little push to help. I will stand by my brother from the Navy any day. We are trying to help any veterans' organizations get over the line.
- Donald Ibarra (Post 9545): Hard to get a hold of and cannot get an appointment back then. Present day able to call and get an appointment quick. I see division. We need to work together and collaborate. If we do not become unified, we will fall farther behind. It is tough enough with the VA and we need to come together in unity. I hope we fight for each other. This VAC is doing an outstanding job.
- Rocky Ausek: Gone to VAC in years past and did not get any help. Today he was able to get his appointments and get his benefits corrected. These guys get up and are negative about Raj. You will suffer the consequences of being negative. It will be wrong on your part.
- Commander Brian: Leadership position will command in the services. Everything rolls down hill on everyone else. He will always reap the benefits. The president/commander will always get the reward. The president will always get the award even if it is done below. He brought things to light and jumped up and down. Larry-Don't take the staffs recognition. What they are trying to say. Raj gets his permission and the VSO get theirs.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

- Commission Meeting December 13, 2023 (open)
 - Accept the minutes as is
- 1st: Paul Cravens
- 2nd: Rick Todd

VI. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. Award Log

- a Working on going paperless. Use Vetraspeck for the award log. Half of the retro payments as last year in the first quarter. Leaving it to the individual VSO to enter it into the system. Moving forward the numbers should shoot up. Money for the veterans should shoot up.

B. Financial Assistance

- a December 1st started the Q1. We are on track for all of our budget plans for 10 years. We should be about 25% or lower. Taking a look at our financial assistance program. Discussing revamping of programs since there will be money.

C. Veteran Problem-Solving Court

- a Involved in the court system when a veteran committed a crime. Advocate for that to empower and encourage them. The solving court has a vet group that is a support group. The vets have been through a lot and they help with the recovery. A lot of veterans that are sleeping out on the street and turn to drugs and alcohol. This position in the VAC has been helping and looking to come together and help.

D. Legislative Update

- a 26 bills will be emailed to everyone the discussion on them. Went to the legislative summit. Dutch sends out updates regarding bills and the witness slips. There are a lot of bills out there that look like they are supporting veterans, but they are not. Jen will be sending emails out regarding the legislation and if you are not on the distribution list let her know and she will add you. There are two bills we need to watch HR 1139 and HR 1822. 1822 is the veteran's agencies and organizations there is a small fee to file a claim. Veterans should never have to pay to receive their benefits. Veterans are a vulnerable population, and some agencies are like ambulance chasers. Agencies stating they will get them service connected. HR 1139 we support.

E. Motion to File Superintendent's Report

Motion to accept the superintendents report as it stands.

- a 1st: John Davin
- b 2nd: Paul Cravens

VII. New Business

A. Nominations and Elections

a. President

1. Nominations

- Romeoville AL 52 Nominates: Larry Shaver
 - 1st: Steven Daley
 - 2nd: Rick Todd
- Mokena VFW 725 Nominates: Raj
 - 1st: Paul Cravens
 - 2nd: Patrick McLeod

2. Nominee Statements

- Larry Shaver: Veterans Advocate and passionate that is why I do it. I apologize to everyone in the room for the outburst of passion. The young Marine was right and I lost my cool and I apologize. I am not trying to change anything and want to move forward. The president of the old VAC was in too long and there was a loss of oversight. If you elect me as president, I do not care if my mother was on the board and misappropriated funds, disrespectful or negative to a veteran or a family I would be the first one to scold her, chastise her and fire her.
- Raj Pallai: (Rick Todd read the statement) My dedication to our cause is wavering. The staff at the VAC have done a great job. There are claims that I have exploited the VAC for my political career. I have prioritized veteran's advocacy above all else. I am driven solely by the love of our nation and the community seeking unity not division. I believe we have seen a lot of success as a result. These accusations are not new to me. I choose to confront issues even through obstacles. The

transformation of the VAC from last year to this year is a testament to our results. The achievement was not mine alone, but the support of the community members and the staff at the VAC. I take pride of our achievements. My leadership is being challenged saying I have become too “Political”. Securing funding for our operations is vital regardless of political affiliations. This is about serving those who serve us. Concerns of my lack of presence at the VAC office was brought up. The role is to help raise awareness and securing funding and aiding in legislation matters. My goals to build positive alliances, raising awareness, legislation and developing stronger policies.

3. Election Ballot

- AL 13: Rick Todd
- AL 52: Steven Daley
- AL 241: Michael White
- VFW 367: Dennis Havranek
- VFW 725: Paul Cravens
- AL 935: Lisa McGlasson
- AL 1080: Tony Arellano
- AL 1288: Wayne Macejak
- AL 1977: Mark Razny
- VFW 2199: Kevin Pomykala
- VFW 5788: Keith Carberry
- VFW 5917: John Davin
- VFW 9545: Donald Ibarra

4. Formal Count/Declaration

- 8:09 PM
- 8 votes Larry Shaver
- 5 votes Raj Pallai

b. Vice-President

1. Nominations

- Nomination Robert Angone
 - 1st: John Davin
 - 2nd: Steven Daley
- Nomination Mike White
 - 1st: Mike White
 - 2nd: Rick Todd

2. Nominee Statements

3. Election Ballot

- AL 13: Rick Todd
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- VFW 5788: Keith Carberry
- VFW 5917: John Davin
- VFW 9545: Donald Ibarra

4. Formal Count/Declaration

- 8:20
- 9 votes Robert Angone
- 4 votes Mike White

c. Sgt-at-Arms

1. Nominations

- Nomination: Steven Daley
 - John Daven
 - Paul Cravens
- Nomination: Mike White
 - Lisa McGlasson
 - Mark Razny

2. Nominee Statements

3. Election Ballot

- AL 13: Rick Todd
- AL 52: Steven Daley
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- AL 1977: Mark Razny
- VFW 2199: Kevin Pomykala
- VFW 5788: Keith Carberry
- VFW 5917: John Davin
- VFW 9545: Donald Ibarra

4. Formal Count/Declaration

- 8:26
- 7 votes Mike White
- 6 votes Steven Daley

C. CISA Report

- a The report shows there are risks to the staff's safety with the current office. There are some basic items that could be implemented within the budget. There will be crisis training along with first aid training. There will also be other additional trainings, door locks and support bars.

VIII. Old Business

A. VACWC Policies and Procedures in Accordance with 330 ILCS 45/Military Veterans Assistance Act

- There was a question regarding the guard being activated at the local level by the governor vs the president. If you are guard and activated by the governor then you would be treated the same as if it was the same as the president. Will check with the other VAC as well as the attorney. See if it should be the same as the guard and receive the same employee benefits.

B. Motion to Table the policy

- i. 1st: Donald Iberra
- ii. 2nd: Larry Shaver

C. VACWC File Plan Update

- Scanned every file within the office. The financial assistance still has some files that need to be scanned.

D. 1300 Copperfield Building

- Email for VAC build out to fill out an application to ear mark the funding for 2025. The money is for the VAC build out. The application was submitted for the money to rehab the building. This is not a guarantee.

E. Mental Health Coordinator

- There is no mental health available for spouses or dependents. This will help to find mental health places throughout the community. She is currently in school for grant writing. This would help to offset some costs for the holistic help that would be provided. Sam Luko is the new mental health coordinator. Sam is a marine core veteran. There is a lack of counselors leading to high caseloads and not available. No health care available to children. Strategy is she is enrolled in a program for grant writing. Flexibility to help with a whole program. The grants could help supplement the costs. Sam could work with the veteran and work towards being able to file claims for that veteran. Implementation, evaluation, and sustainment are the phases to implementing this program. Once we get the Copperfield building this will help for this program.
- Motion to table VACWC Policies VIII, approve part C, D and E
 - Motion to table the policy procedures section VIII A and approve part C, D, and E.
 - 1st: Donald Iberra
 - 2nd: Larry Shaver

VIII. Executive Closed Session:

A. Motion to enter closed session (8:58 PM):

- 1st: Lisa McGlasson

- 2nd: John Davin
- a. 5ILCS 120/2 Sec2(c)1: The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific individuals
- b. 5ILCS 120/2 Sec2(c)11: Litigation
- c. 5ILCS 120/2 Sec2(c)21: Approval of closed Minutes, December 13th, 2023
- d. Motion to return to open session.
- B. Motion to approve items discussed during closed session.

X. FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMISSION (10:00)

- A. Manhattan motion to adjust the bylaws to have the superintendent appoint the secretary.
 - a. 1st: Lisa McGlasson
 - b. 2nd: Mike white

- B. Motion to move forward and contact law enforcement
 - a. 1st: Lissa McGlasson
 - b. 2nd: Keith Carberry

Motion to approve the December 13th, 2023 notes

- c. 1st: Lisa McGlasson
- d. 2nd: Steven Daley
- C. Commission President Updates
- B. VACWC Monthly Newsletter
- C. Recurring Outreach
 - a. Every Thursday: Together We Stand Peer Support Group at VACWC Office Joe Martin
 - b. Second Monday: VSO Papineau Outreach Manhattan American Legion 935 Breakfast
 - c. Every Third Friday: VSO Papineau Outreach at Wilmington VFW 5422
 - d. Every Thursday: Rotating VSOs Outreach at Joliet CBOC
 - e. Every First Monday: VSO Georgakopoulos at Blueberry Hill Café Homer Glen
- D. VACWC Calendar: www.veteransassistancewillco.org
- E. Upcoming Events to post on VACWC Calendar from the posts.

XI. MOTION TO ADJOURN (10:03)

- 1st: Jim Clausen
- 2nd: Steven Daley

**Next Meeting Will Be Held On
June 25, 2024**