



Veterans Assistance Commission of Will County

2400 Glenwood Ave. Ste 110 Joliet, IL 60435
Ph: (815)740-8389 Fax: (815)740-4329
veteransassistancewillco.org



September 24th, 2024

Commission Meeting
American Legion Post 1977
14414 Ford Dr New Lenox IL

6:06PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Invocation

ROLL CALL ATTENDEES:

POST	DELEGATE/ALTERNATE	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
AL 5 Harwood Joliet	D: Joseph Kelley A: John Honiotes			
AL 13 Marne Plainfield	D: Rick Todd A: Raj Pillai	A		
AL 18 John Olson Lockport	D: Mike Meyers A: Frank DiGiovanni	D A		
AL 52 Romeoville	D: Steven Daley A:Ernie Breitbarth	D A		
AL 191 Lester Smith Wilmington	D: A: Frank Mlyniec	A		
AL 241 Buffalo Soldiers Joliet	D: Michael White A:	D		
AL 392 Peotone	D: Robert Krueger A: Rick Bolanowski	D A		
AL 935 Manhattan	D: Robert Angone A: Lisa McGlasson	D		
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 367 Cantigny Joliet	D: Jim Clausen A: Dennis Havranek	D A		
VFW 725 William Martin Mokena	D: Paul Cravens A: James Hogan	D A		

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

II. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND/OR FIRST TIME ATTENDEES

- Tom Stec AL 191
- Post 52 Romeoville Ernest

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES PREVIOUS MEETING

- A. Commission Meeting June 25th, 2024 (open)
- B. 1st: John Krueger
- C. 2nd: James Hogan

VI. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. Award Log

- a. The numbers are through August 30 with the total awards for the year vs 2023 as a comparison.
- b. Increase from 1047 to 1230 with awards
- c. Total amount from Jan 1- August 30 for retroactive amounts is \$7,201,246.08.
- d. New veterans added 185 from the last meeting.
- e. December 1-August 30th 2024: Office visits were up 609, emails 802, calls 1292
- f. The numbers will look different meeting since the report form will be different due to a new system but will work on showing a comparison.

B. Financial Assistance

- a. Uptick in a number of veterans served
- b. To date there was 26 veterans helped for gas, 29 veterans for electric bills, 11 water and sewer
- c. Rent and land building helped 47 veterans
- d. FYI: 2025 re writing the financial assistance to do a procedure to help get the benefits up with the qualifications down.

C. Veteran Problem-Solving Court

- a. 156 veterans were helped this month.
- b. Outreach with 15 veterans in the last 6 months
- c. Helping the veterans get back to where they were picked up from
- d. Assistance and guidance is provided to help with substance abuse or mental health issues to help get the veteran back on track.

- D. Mental Health Coordinator
 - a. March of 2024 the program was introduced to other groups in the area. 18 organizations were reached out to for letting them know what is being offered.
 - b. Veteran did not want to go back to the VA so has been coming to the VAC for help
 - c. Certified grant writer
 - d. Access to veterans who are in jail or prison to help see what benefits their family would be available for.
 - e. Search for funding to help grow the program as well as other opportunities we could help the veterans.
- E. Motion to File Superintendent's Report
 - a. 1st: Bob Krueger
 - b. 2nd: John Davin

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. 1300 Copperfield Building Update
 - a. JBT and Mike Mahoney attended to provide the update for the Copperfield building.
 - b. JBT: The building was purchased prior to JBT taking office. Intent is to put the VAC as well as other county offices there.
 - c. The intent was never to not put the VAC offices there.
 - d. The county board went back and forth to keep it or sell it but was determined to keep the building. The county board decided to get rid of the building and then a couple months later they decided to keep the building.
 - e. They are committed to holding on to the building.
 - f. 4 story former medical office building bought in 2021. The building was built in 2003. 7200 total square feet. The intent is not for the VAC to take the entire building. They will take the 1st floor which use to be the cardiac floor. Includes a track and bathrooms with showers. A place for veterans to work out and hang out.
 - g. 4th floor possibly transitional housing for veterans. Right now is step 1 to retrofit the basement and the first floor for the VAC.
 - h. 4 million available for the roof and critical systems in the building. Hoping to complete some of it by the summer of 2025.
 - i. Good location with the medical center and the housing right there.
 - j. Looking at other Nonprofits to possibly come in to serve as a one stop shop.
 - k. Hired a firm to take a look at it to do a format with where we could have some offices.
 - l. We are hoping to see movement this year with the roof.
 - m. The primary goal is to keep the building veteran focus first.
 - n. As representatives of the county we looked at the transitional housing as well as Nonprofits like K9 for vets. Want to make sure the conversation continues.
 - o. Coming down for funding to help with the bigger picture.
 - p. Looking for federal grants to help get at the bigger picture.
 - q. First priority is to get the VAC over there.
 - r. There are a lot of pipes that will need to be rearranged and taken out which was seen on the tour.
 - s. Looking at the IDVA, VA and Crisis center to try and bring on board once the VAC gets in there. This would allow to have more veteran services in one spot.
 - t. Multiple people and groups pushing for this. The money is ready to start the needed construction.
- B. Financial Assistance Policy Review Update
 - a. Committee meeting which decided to have everyone send in comments to take a look at them.

- b. Need to determine when the benefits should end. Need a legal opinion to see how you could end benefits without requiring.
 - c. Need a legal way to cut off temporary benefits.
 - d. Looking to finish by December.
 - e. Making great progress
 - f. Motion to send the draft policy to the attorney for the attorney to ensure it is in compliance
 - 1st: Mark Razny
 - 2nd: Ken Griffith
- C. By-law Committee Update
- a. Table till next meeting since Lisa is out
- D. Superintendent Annual Review Committee Update
- a. The president was able to collect some input for the review.
 - b. They will need additional information and create the report.
 - c. Report will be given in the December meeting.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Volunteer Driver Program
- a. The program only has one driver that is part time and suggested to see if they could get volunteers to help.
 - b. Will be putting together a program so a phone tree could be utilized to assist get veterans to and from appointments.
 - c. There will be a vetting program to ensure no crashes or DUI's.
- B. Motion to enter into close session:
- a. 1st: Ken Griffin
 - b. 2nd: John Davin

IX. EXECUTIVE CLOSED SESSION

- A. Motion to enter closed session :
 - a. 5ILCS 120/2 Sec2(c)11: Litigation
 - b. 5ILCS 120/2 Sec2(c)21: Approval of closed minutes, June 25th, 2024
- B. Motion to return to open session.
- C. Motion to approve items discussed during closed session.

X. FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMISSION

- A. Commission President Updates
 - a. Motion had in closed session for Larry and Raj to speak to the Sherriffs office
 - b. The VAC has accomplished a lot, have new staff, new mental health program and believe we are in good shape.
 - c. Still building this organization and will continue to build.
 - d. Jen is working on the budget for next year for us to move to the Copperfield building.
 - e. Rose is the new VSO in training. She is an army veteran and served as a nuclear transmitter. When transitioned from military back to civilian life she had a good relationship with her VSO and wanted to continue to help serve her country in this role.
 - f. DAV service officer every 1st & 3rd Tuesday at the VFW 9545 post and is retiring. Jen will be working on sending someone out to go to the post to fill in. Working on trying to find people.
 - g. Amy Benson Senior VSO is made to be the trainer at the national level.
- 1st: Clarke Christiansen
- 2nd: Ken Griffin
- B. Sgt-at-Arms Michael White
 - a. Mike White Sargent of Arms: Appointment cards they have the VAC phone number and the back is where you put your name and post. Provide the card and let them know if they need anything at all to reach out.
- C. Recurring Outreach
 - a. Every Other Month Third Thursday Peotone American Legion VSO Papineau
 - If there are any events that are out there where a lot of veterans will be at, the VAC could coordinate to get the VSO's out there.
 - b. Every Thursday: Together We Stand Peer Support Group at VACWC Office Joe Martin
 - c. First Monday: VSO Papineau Outreach Manhattan American Legion 935 Breakfast
 - d. Monthly on Third Friday: VSO Papineau Outreach at Wilmington VFW 5422
 - e. Every First Monday: VSO Benson at Blueberry Hill Café Homer Glen
- D. VACWC Calendar: www.veteransassistancewillco.org
 - a. Make sure the post information is updated on the calendar.
 - b. Send the flyer to Eric of any events that are coming up in the area
- F. VetFest 2024 September 28th
 - There will be a car show as well as other events
 - If you have baskets, please get them to the VAC to post them to increase attendance
 - Donations from posts for drinks and ice. Do not want to use money from the sponsorship since that goes Allen Force.
 - Looking for an enclosed trailer to store the tables and chairs since the vendor can not make it back until Tuesday. Need volunteers on Friday to help with set up and Saturday to help sell raffle tickets.

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- VSOs- Anna and Joe have been doing a number of outreach events on weekends.
- Few commission members join for the MBAA meeting. Appointed to the commission and spent time listening to the lawyers on what the responsibilities and rights are. Raised questions about operations like the court decision will impact the financial policy.
- Patrick McLeod Newly elected vice commander for the 11th district and Wayne Macejak is also an elected to the revitalization of the county commanders. Department survey that needs to be filled out for the department.
- Need to have a big presence at the county fair to help get population of new veterans to come to the table. Consolidated tables.

XII. MOTION TO ADJOURN

- A. 1st: James Hogan
- B. 2nd: John Davin