



Veterans Assistance Commission of Will County

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



March 25th, 2025

Commission Meeting
Cantigny VFW Post 367
826 Horseshoe Dr Joliet

6:00PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Invocation

ROLL CALL ATTENDEES:

POST	DELEGATE/ALTERNATE	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
AL 13 Plainfield	D: Rick Todd A: Raj Pillai	X X		
AL 18 Lockport	D: Mike Meyers A: Frank DiGiovanni	X X		
AL 43 Naperville	D: Luke Opyd A: Tom Jorstad	X	X	
AL 52 Romeoville	D: Steven Daley A: Virgil Oikion	X	X	
AL 191 Wilmington	D: Frank Mlyniec A: Thomas Stec	X X		
AL 241 Joliet	D: Michael White A:	X	X	
VFW 367 Joliet	D: Jim Clausen A: Dennis Havranek	X X		
AL 392 Peotone	D: Robert Krueger A: Rick Bolanowski	X	X	
VFW 725 Mokena	D: Paul Cravens A: James Hogan	X X		
AL 935 Manhattan	D: Robert Angone A: Lisa McGlasson	X X		
AL 1080 Joliet	D: Tony Arellano A: Russ Pesko	X	X	
AL 1288 Bolingbrook	D: Larry Shaver A: Wayne Macejak	X X		
AL 1291 Crete	D: Rick Onate A: Larry Black	X X		

AL 1977 New Lenox	D: Mark Razny A: Patrick McLeod	X X		
VFW 2199 Joliet	D: Lawrence Smith A: Kevin Pomykala	X	X	
VFW 5422 Wilmington	D: Walter Wink A: Ken Piehl		X X	
VFW 5788 Lockport	D: Mark Bowman A: Dale Jacobs	X X		
VFW 5819 Lemont	D: Ken Griffin A: James Andrulewicz		X X	
VFW 5917 Bolingbrook	D: John Davin A: Gregory Palmer	X X		
VFW 9545 New Lenox	D: Clarke Christiansen	X		

II. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND/OR FIRST TIME ATTENDEES

- Dale Jacobs-Served in the Marine Corp
- Larry Black-Commander for post 1291
- Rick Onate from 1291
- Luke Opyd from Naperville
- Welcome Naperville AL 43 & Crete AL 1291

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

- Vietnam Veterans Recognition Act: Show appreciation to those who served and are never forgotten.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES PREVIOUS MEETING

A. Commission Meeting December 3rd, 2024 (open)

B. 1st: Paul Cravens

C. 2nd:Steve Daley

VI. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. Introduction of New Team Members

- Update new staff positions.
- Jim and Ponse joined the team as part time drivers.
- Jim Richards retired Navy
- Ponse: Actively in the reserves as a staff sergeant. Owns a small gym by Joliet Junior College
- Amy is Assistant Superintendent
- Eric is the certified VSO working on the higher level.

B. Update NACVSO Leadership Summit Washington D.C. (April 6-10)

- National organization that accredits us. Jen is the delegate for IL on the state level.
- Opportunity for delegates to meet with representatives as well as bring issues to the group.
- Focus on the disability memorial affairs. The disability would be tested against a means test.

C. Update Veteran Legislative Summit Springfield, IL (March 19th)

- This was put together by AMVETS
- Discussed the proposed legislation. Opposed SB 2018, This was sponsored by Lake County.

- Commissioners would be elected officials and not appointed by the post.
- c. SB 1368/HB1352 They want to combined counties to create a VAC. The funding would need to be determined along with how the commission would work. The VAC is for this bill with the amendments.
 - d. Please complete the witness slips if there is an email that goes out since there is usually only a 48-hour turnaround time.
- D. Nomination for President of Illinois Association of County Veterans Assistance Commissions (IACVAC)
- a. The mission is to organize and educate the VAC colleagues.
 - b. Jen is nominated by the IACVAC. This is a nomination; she will need to run for the role
 - c. 1st: Larry Shaver-Motion to ok the ok for the nomination for Jen to serve with the IACVAC
 - d. 2nd: Mike Meyers
- E. FY26 Budget
- a. The next meeting we will be discussing the budget
 - b. Will reach out for suggestions
- F. Extended VACWC Office Hours
- a. Extending to help provide services to people who work later.
 - b. First Tuesday of the month will stagger and stay open till 7 PM. Starting in April. Will determine the need and adjust as needed.
- G. VA Claims Award Log
- a. Q4 2024 ended with \$28.1
 - b. Q1 2025 seeing growth of \$4.8. The trends have been showing the overall impact is about 66%
 - c. The 32.9 million dollars impacts Will County since this is going to our veterans in the county.
 - d. 591 new veterans: December 1st to 3/24
 - e. 278 new claims
 - f. 46 were higher level review claims.
 - g. 14 claims for burial
 - h. 2 claims for Pension
 - i. 315 for POA claims
 - j. Total interactions 6,166 (Phone calls, emails and fax)
- H. Financial Assistance
- a. Provide \$5,232 in shelter assistance
 - b. Electricity \$749
 - c. Gas \$371
 - d. Water \$78
 - e. Only used 11% of the budget and need to work on getting awareness to the community about this program.
- I. Peer Support Recover Specialist Updates
- a. The group meetings that are coordinated for substance abuse and mental health.
 - b. Housing Wednesday-Assisted 16 veterans to find housing. Including transitional housing as well as community shelters
 - c. Will County Court Support Mentor 36 veterans for therapeutic support groups.
- J. Mental Health Coordinator Updates
- a. January 10 veterans that were successfully referred to VA for extended help
 - b. Strength after Service will be developed and started
 - c. Morning coffee meeting to start in May
 - d. Extended hours to help working veterans
 - e. Will County detention facility to help the veterans with their benefits and what will happen when get out

- f. Will County Community Health board grant was applied for. Help to get another vehicle as well as allow more money into these programs.
- g. There are a lot of veterans that do not qualify for the VA or the veterans do not have a good experience and will come in to see Sam.
- h. The support system for the veterans also need help at times so this helps to provide that service
- i. This also helps with not having to wait for an appointment if needed immediately.
- j. This would also help the cold era since they do not have benefits to go to the VA. This is a service they could utilize.

K. Outreach Updates

- a. Jeff is the newly appointed for outreach.
- b. Multiple outreach events at various posts.
- c. DuPage township does want the VAC to be there since it is helping in the area.
- d. Teamed up with Allen Force to be at their office once a month to assist
- e. Will also be at the Plainfield township once a month to assist
- f. Receiving multiple emails for events that the VAC can go to.
- g. December to March 25 there was an interaction with 81 people with only being at each event for 2-3 hours.
- h. Reached out to the townships to further get involved.
- i. Reaching out to police departments as well to get the word out to see if the VAC could provide information so if dealing with a veteran, they could help send them to the VAC for services if needed.

L. VetFest 2025

- a. In the planning phase for VetFest.
- b. Another meeting coming up to discuss the additional details
- c. Stone City VFW will host the event
- d. Benefits will go to Farm 2 Veterans
- e. Each post provides a raffle basket that represents and defines the post.
- f. Each post provides a side dish to feed 100 people
- g. Chicken and pulled pork will be provided by Wilmington
- h. September 27th is the date for VetFest
- i. Car show
- j. Rain date is September 28th

VII. Approval of Superintendent Report

- A. 1st: Post Robert Krueger
- B. 2nd: John Davin

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. 1300 Copperfield Building Update

- a. Met with the architects. They started the roof and boilers with 3 million worth of work
- b. They are moving forward with the 3 major repairs.
- c. Interior work is going out for RFP April 1st and due April 10th
- d. There is a room for a board room which is sunken in and requires to have the concrete corrected and lifted.
- e. There will be a mental health wing to offer some privacy
- f. There will be a conference room for group counseling
- g. The basement will be where the gym will be located
- h. There will be two locker rooms

- i. Trying to get a grant to get an industrial washer and dryer in the space.
 - j. Sent a request out for letters of support from community stakeholders. This is to help with the 4th floor for emergency housing
 - k. Food & securities will need to get a grant to try and offset the cost
 - l. Cooking will try to get a grant for an industrial kitchen
 - m. November 1st or sooner will be the move in date
 - n. The lease is up on 11/1 so the county is pushing for the move to happen, so the lease does not need to be renewed
 - o. 2 HAVAC units are needed for the roof. Looking at 5-6 weeks to find something big enough for us to use.
- B. Financial Assistance Policy
- a. Look at reverting to what was previously in place in the interim. Look at enhancing in 2026.
 - b. Eligibility part is what needs to be changed since there are not enough veterans that would qualify
 - c. June meeting will need to discuss the enhancement.
 - d. This is for direct aid. The separate policy would be an emergency assistance policy since this would be a separate pot of money.
 - e. Veterans are being referred to our Veterans Grants which is only \$1000 or other community entities.
 - f. There is nothing for emergency services at this point so it would need to be two separate policies.
 - g. We could call a special meeting per the open meetings act to discuss emergencies.
 - h. If the commission says that we need an emergency fund and we would need to provide the county with data to justify the ask in the budget.
 - i. Maybe extend it to be more open than just natural disasters. Set this up as a crisis fund.
- C. Update 2025 Budget Amendment Request for FTEs
- a. Last meeting the commission approved to add additional positions. Add 1 VSO and 1 parttime driver. Said to hire the positions and will budget and cover it later. They will look in a few months to see where the budget is.
 - b. The salary is the only line item that is high.
 - c. Hoping by Friday will send an offer for VSO
 - d. Will try to move money and not request additional money from the county

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Nominations and Elections

- a. President
 - 1. Nominations
 - a. Larry Shaver
 - b. 1st James Hogan
 - c. 2nd: Raj Pillai
 - 2. Nomination Statements
 - 3. Election Ballot
 - 4. Formal Count/Declaration
- b. Vice-President
 - 1. Nominations
 - a. Mark Razny
 - b. 1st:Patrick McLeod

- c. 2nd: Mike Meyers
- d. Robert Angone
- e. 1st: Larry Shaver
- f. 2nd: Lisa McGlasson

2. Nomination Statements

a. Mark Razny:

- i. Post member for 34 years
- ii. Active in the reserves
- iii. In law enforcement for 36 years
- iv. Lived in a lot of small towns
- v. Working in the fire departments for 33 years
- vi. Second year for the board
- vii. Have been involved with the policy for the employees that go on military lead, financial issues, updating the financial assistance policy
- viii. Need to take care of all your people. This will help him to assist his fellow citizens
- ix. Watched his father fight for his benefits to the day he died

b. Robert Angone:

- i. 4 years and 2 years have been VP.
- ii. Working with the VAC as much as he can
- iii. Retired mechanic
- iv. Cold war vet that serviced in the Army
- v. He is here to fight for the cold war vets that do not receive benefits.
- vi. Is here to help the veterans.

3. Election Ballot

4. Formal Count/Declaration

- Mark Razny: 11
- Robert Angone: 6
- Abstain: 1

c. Sgt-at-Arms

1. Nominations

- Mike White-
- 1st: Paul Cravens
- 2nd: Robert Angone
- Steven Daley
- 1st: Larry Shaver
- 2nd: Dale Jacobs

3. Nomination Statements

a. Mike White:

- i. Cold War Vet
- ii. Retired Will County Custody officer
- iii. 2nd year working with the commission since no good confidence with the VA and if he works with the commission would give the best job.

b. Steven Daley:

- i. National Guard and went AGR.
- ii. With the Military Affairs department

- iii. Committed to the soldiers and feel that he could bring knowledge to the committee.

3. Election Ballot

4. Formal Count/Declaration

- Mike White: 10
- Steven Daley: 7
- Abstain: 1

X. EXECUTIVE CLOSED SESSION

A. Motion to enter closed session :

- a. 5ILCS 120/2 Sec2(c)21: Approval of closed minutes December 3rd, 2024

B. Motion to accept the minutes December 3rd, 2024

C. Motion to return to open session.

D. Motion to approve items discussed during closed session.

XI. FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMISSION

A. Commission President Updates

- a. Gratitude to stand before you as the President again. My position still stands the same if I could help or assist in any way.
- b. Do everything to aid Jen and her staff

B. Judge Advocate Lisa McGlasson VACWC Liaison to EMA

- a. Couple of situations popped up during the tornados that hit last summer. There was a veteran whose care giver could not get out since there was a tree that landed on the house.
- b. Great network in Will County that will come out and help regardless of the situation that comes up.
- c. Asked by the director of the EMA to be a liaison between the VAC and the county and EMA.
- d. Reach out to our net work to try and help out if there is a veteran in need.
- e. Registry of people who have medical issues to ensure they are higher on the list (Ex: power goes out and person is on a ventilator)

XII. DELEGATE ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Plainfield American Legion 5K Charity Run: April 5th from 9:30 am to 10:30

B. April 13th: Plainfield American Legion for the Round Table

XIII. MOTION TO ADJOURN

A. 1st: Robert Krueger

B. 2nd: Paul Cravens

Next Meeting June 24th, 2025
Location TBD

