

Illinois Veterans Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 8, 2021– 10:00am

Illinois Department of Affairs

WebEx

Attendance:

| NAME | APPOINTED BY | PRESENT |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------|
| Stanley Olenjack | Marine Corps League | X |
| | IDVA Director | |
| Al Reynolds | Disabled American Veterans | X |
| Senator Tony Munoz | President of Senate | X |
| Senator Sue Rezin | Minority Leader of Senate | X |
| Rep. Lance Yednock | Speaker of the House | X |
| Rep. Dan Swanson | Minority Leader of the House | X |
| Bill Wolff | IDVA Director | X |
| | IDVA Director | |
| Megan Everett | IDVA Director | |
| Vince Long | IDVA Director | X |
| Command Sgt. Maj. Dena Ballowe | National Guard | |
| Tom Banning | Attorney General | X |
| Greg Curran | IL Secretary of State | X |
| Jorge Bermudez/Rich Wuthrich | IL Department of Securities | X |
| Myron Kirby | The American Legion | |
| Keith Wetherell | AMVETS | X |
| Peggy Arick | Blue Star Mothers of America | X |
| Tim Kennedy | Catholic War Veterans | X |
| Dr. Jerry Field | Jewish War Veterans | X |
| Joe Schaler | Military Order of the Purple Heart | X |
| Michael Peck | Military Order of the World Wars | X |
| Lou Myers | Reserve Officers' Association | X |
| John Murray | IACVAC | X |
| Justin Miller | Veterans of Foreign Wars | X |
| Roy Dolgos | Vietnam Veterans of America | |
| | IDVA Director | |
| Bob Tyler | MOAA | |
| Bill Browne | Cook County VAC | |
| Senator Craig Wilcox | DSTF Position | |

New Members:

Guests: Steve Fixler

Call to Order 10:00am

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence

Introductions:

IDVA Staff:

Terry Prince, Acting Director

Anthony Vaughn, Acting Assistant Director

Kourtney Hopkins, Senior Programs Manager / Women Vet's Coordinator

Crystal Womack, Senior Programs Manager

Jenny Franklin – Director's Assistant

Mark Patterson – Field Supervisor

Connie Watson – Grants

Approval of September 8th, 2021 minutes with correction

Motion to approve the Minutes by Stanley Olenjack

Jerry Field seconded the motion

Chairman Mike Peck:

At this time I would like to ask the Acting Director Prince to give his report.

Acting Director Prince:

Good morning everybody. Thank you Mr. Chairman. A lot of information since we last met. We have a fast moving train with everything that's happening in and certainly around our country. To recap, we're still working through our 6 point plan. We have hired some incredible people and some are actually on this call including the new Chief of Staff, Senior Home Administrator, which is the big change since we last met. We have hired the administrator of the Anna facility who is not a veteran, but is the daughter of an Army Vietnam Veteran. She will be joining us for the next meeting. Kourtney Hopkins on your screen is an Army Combat Medic, 68 whiskey, who is now serving as the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Program Coordinator. I was lucky enough to recruit her from the Army Reserves and now she's part of our team here and as you can see she's coming to you live from the Manteno home. She spends a lot of time in our veterans homes that provides me with another set of eyes on things happening across our organization.

We recently completed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National VHA who provided significant resources and assistance for infectious control across our organization and has really helped our processes to the point where we're regularly complimented for the things that we're doing in our homes when it comes to infection control.

New items of business Mr. Chairman, if I may and then I can take questions afterwards.

We're in the final stages of the Chicago Veterans Home opening. You can see our assistant director US Marine Corps Veteran Anthony Vaughn is on, he has been working at the Chicago Veterans Home 2 or 3 days every week to help carry the ball across the goal line. We are at the half yard line, which is a couple of small maintenance issues that need to be addressed. Those are the kinds of things you would expect to see when a building has been this route as long as it has. to be addressed by companies that might not be in business.

We are cooking food in that facility and we've hired enough people to bring residents in. We have residents ready to go. As soon as we get that information, we'll certainly let all of you know because we want to celebrate the opening of our Chicago Home.

Very soon we will finalize our email and text messaging capability for our staff. So we'll be able to send email messages to all of our staff and also emergency texting similar to what you would see from a school.

Our website is going to be completely upgraded. Our new Public Information Officer, Maureen Hartigan is working closely with a number of our staff, including Kourtney to redesign our website to make it more user friendly and there will be a section specifically devoted to IVAC. We hope to get together in the future for an actual photograph of the IVAC members on there, along with the minutes and things of that nature.

The Vets Accountability Unit has been approved and we are efforting that situation as we speak. That will serve as a place for our veterans and staff to ask questions of us. Internal similar to an Inspector General internally to IDVA but reporting to a different organization.

We're working through our strategic plan, we've hired a Jennifer Loudon, she's been assisting DHS or Health and Human Services that would be Secretary O and her team. We've hired her on a contract to help IDVA start working through the baselines of its strategic plan moving forward. We're also looking to hire a national expert, I don't want to say her name until I finalize the contract, to be a big part of our suicide prevention efforts. Kourtney Hopkins has been key and reinvigorating the efforts of both IDVA and in the Governor's Challenge and suicide prevention efforts across our organization and we're looking to hire a suicide prevention director and supporting staff to work alongside our VA and state partners in this very important effort.

Our team is currently finalizing budget submission. We've had great success and support from our governor on the budget and we expect to continue to have that despite downturns in per diem, coming out of our veterans homes. You may have tuned in for hearings on rule care, and a task force that was set up to address veteran healthcare. So we have a number of individuals, and we're always looking for volunteers for those particular panels. In fact, I spoke with General Neely just the other day and asked him for some support with a medical officer and we expect to get a response back on that.

IJF update, there was supposed to be some changes to IFJ just some wordsmithing that didn't make it through this previous session of working closely with Erica Borgren to ensure that board members are named and that we're working forward in supporting

their new interim director Brenda. Brenda was previously the director of operations at the Navy memorial in Washington D. C. and a wonderful lady. IDVA continues to work with IJF on their efforts.

Certainly last, but certainly not least I've started at Tuesdays with Terry, kind of a CEO level email message to our staff every Tuesday that comes out and it's a high level. We are working on some personal reflections about our organization and the areas of opportunity and more importantly, areas of recognition.

I want to close by saying, thank you to all of you as members of the IVAC. It's very important to me. I appreciate all of you for being members of the IVAC and certainly those members that are appointed under IDVA especially the ones that reupped for another term as it were. So, Mr Chair that's kind of a quick overview of what's going on. I'm happy to take any questions as you can see, I still have a number of my staff who will be presenting, so I'll leave it up to you to decide how do you want to move forward with that?

Chairman Mike Peck:

Are there any questions for the director at this time?

Stanley Olenjack:

I see on the agenda it talks about an update. I haven't seen a newsletter come from this department in over 4 years and it's pretty concerning. We should get a newsletter every month out there with what's going on in the department. And the reason I bring it up is because of the fact that just recently the veteran scratch off ticket is out and I don't know anybody got a notification of which ticket was being used as the veterans scratch off ticket or any other communication on that at all. It used to be a a big deal before they switched it into a secret scratch off ticket that we had the official Illinois Veterans scratch off ticket for many years and for veterans day they had a special celebration, grand opening of the event so all the veterans in the state know about the ticket. And now it's really cool down and there's really no communication on it. Nobody really knows what's going on with it. Just by accident 1 of my members found that ticket and saw the IDVA marker on it. That's the thing that's concerning around the newsletter, which I like I said they used to sign up with your email address here and it was a person that took care of it and every month you get a newsletter and the email about what's going on, activities and information from the department. So, I just wonder what's going on with that.

Acting Director Prince:

Thank you for your service to us and the Marine Corp League and appreciate the question. One of the issues that was occurring is that we didn't have a public information officer for a significant amount of time and we were utilizing state resources i.e. out of the governor's office. Now we have a public information officer, that is a task that we want to get out by the new year. We're collecting email addresses from our veterans that come into our facilities and around the state so that we can send this message. I recently spoke with Major General Debbie Ashenhurst, she's my previous director in Ohio. I sent a copy of the newsletter that is sent out on a monthly basis for that very reason sir. I can see it as plain as you can on our website and it's a glaring open wound that bothers me. So you will see progress on that before we come to our next veterans council meeting. As for the lottery ticket, I'll give you a quick overview of

what I know and then I'll have Connie kind of update that in her brief. One of the issues with publicizing, otherwise really going out with a lottery ticket information is that personnel that go to buy lottery tickets will often not buy that specific ticket because they feel like the money is less, like there is going to be fewer winnings and as a result of it the money going to IDVA and so there has been has been a downturn in the publicizing. Connie, if you want to add to what I said, please feel free.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Connie if you would like to do your report now.

Connie Watson:

Good morning everyone. We had our FY21 4th quarter meeting on August 18th. We had 7 applications and 5 were awarded and 2 were denied based on funding availability. The total amount that was awarded was \$434,706 dollars and our current Vets Cash balance is \$1,405,597 dollars. We just had a recent Vets Cash committee review and that is in the process. So that is not official yet. Our next review will be February 24th. That is my report pending any questions.

IVAC Report – Vets Cash Scratch-Off Lottery Ticket Program

December 8, 2021

1. Vets Cash Committee Review

The FY21 4th Quarter Meeting was held on August 18, 2021, the Veterans Cash Grant Authorization Committee (GAC) reviewed 7 applications that were received from April through June1. The following is a summary of what the GAC decided about each grant applicant with a recommendation for 5 applicants to award and 2 applications to deny. All applicant votes described below were unanimous.

New Applicants:

| App. # | Rank/Score | Applicant Name | Requested | Denied | Awarded |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. 712 | (7/129) | Polish American Legion | \$56,500 | <u> X </u> | <u> </u> |
| 2. 713 | (6/135) | Turn 2 Growth | \$50,000 | <u> X </u> | <u> </u> |
| 3. 714 | (1/264) | Code Platoon | \$100,000 | <u> </u> | <u> X </u> |
| 4. 715 | (5/167) | Donka, Inc. | \$99,698 | <u> </u> | <u> X </u> |
| 5. 716 | (4/192) | AllenForce | \$44,677 | <u> </u> | <u> X </u> |
| 6. 717 | (2/220) | VFW, Dept. of IL | \$100,000 | <u> </u> | <u> X </u> |
| 7. 718 | (3/201) | Bravehearts Therapeutic | \$90,331 | <u> </u> | <u> X </u> |

2. Vets Cash Balance

Vets Cash Fund Balance (236 Revenues vs. Expenditures): \$2,279,303
(as of December 1, 2021)

Grants Currently Processing: \$189,000

FY21 Q4 Total Awarded: \$434,706

Reserved to Award in FY22 Q2: \$250,000

Remaining Balance for FY22:

\$1,405,597

3. **Next Committee Review Date:**

February 24, 2022

Chairman Mike Peck:

Anybody have a question for Connie?

Steve Fixler:

Maybe maybe it's going to be in a different part of the agenda but I think Dan Swanson who is on here, are we still looking at making the changes in January at the legislative for the new categories for Vets Cash?

Connie Watson:

I believe we are moving along with it, but I'm not sure if it's in January, but I know that we're moving along with it and it's in process.

Representative Swanson:

My legislative person in Springfield is drafting legislation based upon what we received from IDVA. We go back into session for January. By 4 January I intend to have the language and that language will go forward. The plan would be during our short time frame, but as many sessions from 4 January to 6 April to be able to move the legislation through. Once I do get the 1st draft copy of the legislation, I will share it with Director Prince and you Chairman to make sure we're all on track with the language. And if we can go without having to bring in before the quarterly council, I think it would be our best move to keep it moving forward. At this time I do not have a house bill number. So, I'll reach out to my colleagues across the aisle and across the tundra there and I'll work with the Senators so that they're aware of what our legislation looks like too.

Steve Fixler:

All right. Thanks.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Okay, we have a big agenda folks so I'm going to move on, but if we have more questions for the director, we can pick that up under old business. Gwen, are you on?

Crystal Womack:

Chairman, Gwen is actually attending another meeting that she was not able to connect with IVAC today. I did include in your meeting request the Homes report including the census for your review.

While the COVID threat halted some, the Architect/Engineer Teams and Contractors have accepted our mitigation strategies and most projects have resumed.

28 Ongoing Capital Projects

(Estimated costs)

- **Illinois Veterans’ Home at Anna (Two Projects)**

 - **General Building Repairs and Improvements**
(in Design Development) 2,166,700

- **Illinois Veterans’ Home at Chicago (No Change)**

 - **200 Bed NHC Building**

 - We still need:
 - Licensure by IDPH
 - Inspection by USDVA
 - Continued recruitment and hiring of staff; provide staff orientation
 - Accepting waiting list applications. Will have to undergo review and approval to ensure we can meet the needs of the applicants.
 - Will begin admitting veterans after licensure by IDPH and certification by USDVA and sufficient staffing. \$ 175,150,000

- **Illinois Veterans’ Home at LaSalle (Four Projects)**

 - Replace Nurse Call and Fire Alarm Systems (Original Building)
(Nearing Substantial Completion) \$ 583,100
 - Replace Original Generator, Chiller and Mechanical Systems
(Authorization to proceed was granted and equipment is being ordered.) 2,203,600
 - Replace Resident Room Doors (27 each) in NW Isolation Wing
(Project in design. Doors will have windows and shades to allow safety and privacy) 200,000
 - Renovate Veterans Home
Project will renovate the center core, east and west wings of the building. 4,194,400

- **Illinois Veterans’ Home at Manteno (Eleven Projects)**

 - EMERGENCY Automatic Flush Valves, Mixing Valves & Water Filtration
(The Emergency Automatic Flush Valves and Mixing Valves is still underway.) \$ 9,934,118
 - Replace Air Handling Units in residential buildings
(Separate projects for R1 & R2 and one for R3, R4, S1 & S2 and A1 & A2 and the Interconnects.) 6,369,100
 - Replace Various Roofing Systems (Flat and Shingle Roofing) 5,683,200
 - Replace Water Mains on campus
(Still in Design and cost estimating. Separating Domestic and Fire Mains) 2,038,000
 - Central Kitchen Renovation
(Still in design and cost estimating. Project will renovate the Kitchen and Dish Machine Room) 750,700
 - Renovate Restrooms
(Still in design and cost estimating. Project will renovate and update 120 Resident Restrooms plus Nurse Station and public rest rooms. Undergoing Code

- Analysis and design development. Due to ADA requirements, additional architectural changes may be needed, requiring additional funding.) 3,187,300
- Upgrade HVAC /Replace Air Handling Units
(Project is to provide work in the Interconnects, Admin 1 and Admin-2) 4,313,900

- **Illinois Veterans' Home at Quincy – (Ten projects)**

- Construct Domestic Water Loop
(Still moving forward, the design will accommodate the footprint of the new buildings, increase the size of the Water Treatment Plant, demo the water tower and re-establish water service to Sunset Cemetery. The construction estimates still has not been determined.) \$ 3,000,000
- Construct New Nursing Home and Domiciliary (less Asbestos Remediation)



- Demolition is mostly complete and footing and foundations have begun! 240,564,444
- Projects to Expand and Restore Sunset Cemetery w/NCA Grant
(Restoration phase of project to raise and realign the headstones and restore the turf was re-bid and again had only one bidder, that was significantly over the estimate and funding. Project will be put out for bid for a third time.)
(The Expansion Phase of the project will construct a 1,025 sq ft committal shelter, a columbarium with 140 niches, and a 35'x15' open air shed for storing soil and gravel, etc. Bids on this phase are scheduled to be opened 6/11/2021.) 1,050,000
- Roof Replacement at Ehle Laundry and Tradesmen Buildings
(Nearing completion.) 406,700
- Re-install Air Conditioning Units at Hammond
(Project is underway) 200,000
- Upgrade Electrical at HQs Bldg & Generator at Water Treatment Facility
(Architect/Engineering Firm Selected; design will begin.) 980,800
- Emergency Repairs to Storm Sewer Line (under Railroad bed)
Project design is still being coordinated with BNSF Engineers, IL EPA and IL DNR. (An old clay tile drainage pipe has collapsed under the BNSF railroad track and will be replaced. Will also install a conduit for future utilities to pass under the tracks.) 988,000

- **Install Fire Suppression System**
Complete installation of fire sprinklers in IT Room in the old Stone Building, Smith
Hall and Reig Admin Building 1,156,50

VETERANS' HOMES CENSUS

Date: December 7, 2021

| Home | Skilled Census | Budgeted Skilled Census | Skilled Vacancies | Admits This Week | Admits Next Week | Dom Census | Dom Vacancies |
|----------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------|---------------|
| Anna | 28 | 49 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 |
| Chicago | 0 | 200 | 200 | 0 | 0 | | |
| La Salle | 88 | 190 | 102 | 0 | 0 | | |
| Manteno | 168 | 294 | 126 | 2 | 1 | | |
| Quincy | 232 | 382 | 150 | 0 | 1 | 35 | 53 |
| Prince | 9 | 15 | 6 | 0 | 0 | | |
| | | | | | | | |

| Home | Short Waiting List (Waiting Time in Weeks) | | | | | | | Long Waiting List | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|-------|-------------------|-----|-------|-----|
| | Skilled | Wait Time | SNU | Wait Time | DOM | Wait Time | PTime | Skilled | SNU | PTime | DOM |
| Anna | 13 | 0 | | | 2 | 0 | 5 | 22 | | 7 | 12 |
| Chicago | 114 | | 5 | | | | 20 | | | | |
| La Salle | 28 | 0 | 7 | 0 | | | 0 | 7 | 1 | 0 | |
| Manteno | 48 | 24 | 5 | 4 | | | 63 | 7 | 2 | 0 | |
| Quincy | 22 | | 7 | | 0 | | 14 | | | | |
| Prince | 1 | | | | | | | 0 | | | |

Chairman Mike Peck:

Everybody should have a copy of that, if not please drop Crystal an email and get your copy of the veterans homes report. Mark Patterson are you available?

Mark Patterson:

I am good morning. I have got quite a list today to update you guys about. One thing that we just concluded on Monday and Tuesday of this week, we had our quarterly Field Leadership meeting. Some of the things that we discussed were VSO duties we also are reviewing our locations. So we're doing a total scrub of all of our location reviews for full time and itinerant offices, training updates on the modules that we have out right now which are through the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs University training modules. The establishment of it was started back at the end of 2019 and we've been utilizing it for approximately a year now and it seems to be a great educational tool that we've developed for our new VSO staff and for some of the senior VSO's that are out

there that go through the program along with the new VSO's so that we can ensure that we have a good facilitation of communication and experience so that they can actually speak through and walk through some of the issues that they're being trained of to help inform them in. We're also in the process of opening up all the itinerant offices. So, the locations that we determined are and going to go back, which right now is going to be 99% the same locations as they were previously subject to change based on me, which is always how we do the itinerant service locations. But those will be opening backup for more convenience. Aside from the quarterly meeting we're still operating by appointment only. In 2022, we'll be putting a major emphasis on vacancies that are out there. New processes have been put online by Central Management Services and we have a new criteria that's in place for our veterans service officers. Also FY22 and FY23 will be a renovation of our offices when it comes to computer assets, so we're going to try to be as close to modernized and outfitted with the I. T. equipment as we possibly can be through the procurement process. That concludes my report ready for any questions.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Okay, any questions for Mark?

Representative Lance Yednock:

You talked about trying to fill some of the spots and I think you referenced VSO's. Does anybody have any information on and maybe that'll be in the report later on, like, how many other positions within our care facilities that need to be filled yet.

Mark Patterson:

I believe that Gwen's report may answer the questions you have.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Director of any news on replacement for Amy?

Acting Director Prince:

Unfortunately we don't have a replacement right now. We do have a couple of candidates we're working through the governor's office. We are blessed with a chief of staff who has a legislative background as well as my assistant has legislative liaison background. So, they're kind of fielding the calls and working through some of the processes. I don't know if my chief of staff is on right now she was going to try to join us there were some family things going on. So, with that being said, we'll wait till the end. She's not on we'll do our best update you as best we can.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Thank you, sir.

Kourtney Hopkins:

Melissa did send me some updates for legislation. I'm happy to read those off to the group. So as Director Prince mentioned Amy Brennan our legislative liaison has moved on to another opportunity. So our chief of staff, Melissa Black and Jenny Franklin in the directors office will be covering down on legislative duties until that position is filled. Currently there are 4 pieces of legislation that impacted IDVA and veterans. First one is SJR28 Medal of Honor Highway. It passed the House committee unanimously and now

waits full approval in January hopefully we get final action in the how soon after they convene and it will be effective immediately.

Next is HB359 the veteran accountability unit bill, which passed. This bill creates a new governor appointed accountability unit at IDVA for accountability and oversight of all programs in homes, a place for individuals with concerns to find an independent body to report to. The effective date of this unit is June 1st, 2022 and there will be much work to establish the unit. But more to come as that develops.

Third we have our HB594 the transfer of the veterans business program, which passed. It transfers the veterans business program to newly created commission on equity and inclusion, which will be formed early next year. This was not IDVA's initiative but supported the move of the BEP to the new commission along with the Business Enterprise Program where it will have staff with expertise and helping businesses grow.

And lastly we have HB2369 IJF bill, currently stalled in general assembly which will likely be worked on next session. This legislation would have made technical changes to the ways in which IDVA and the Department of Military Affairs supports IJF. There was not enough time for the general assembly to both ask their questions and get the bill passed. During veto IDVA collaborated with general assembly members and DMA but did not finish. And we'll continue the important discussion in the spring session. Pending any questions those are the updates I have from our chief of staff.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Ok, any questions for Kourtney?

Would any legislators like to make any comments?

Representative Lance Yednock:

Thank you, the only real comment I have is that hopefully we can all put our heads together and work with with Director Prince to come up with more solutions on staffing issues in healthcare in general. We're in need. There are no different than they are in teaching or anything else. So any, and all suggestions that anybody on this advisory panel may have, please send them to us. If there's a way that we can help with legislation that's what we'll do. Thank you.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Sir our number one bill that we supported is HB2378 this is the amendment to the banner homestead exemption include those surviving spouses receiving DIC. It's still a rule I think we have both sponsors any suggestions on that.

Representative Lance Yednock:

I can't really say I have any suggestions on it and someone that's relatively new to the process within the last 3 years. It's all about getting enough people to join on and get it out of rules. So we can keep working on it.

Representative Dan Swanson:

Morning once again. A couple legislative issues, first I appreciate the VSO offices opening up again, they certainly help serve our veterans in the way we should be and I very much appreciate that Director Prince and the team for doing that.

I've already discussed the draft language for the vets cash scratch off. Some history on that specifically for those new members. Back last spring we were unable to assist a grant request because it was for behavioral health services, which was not a part of the general 5 or 6 rules that we could provide grant money to organizations for specifically behavioral health services. We had a couple different coalition meetings and decided that we should add that, we brought it to the board I believe last quarter. The board approved or Vets council approved it and we'll be moving that forward along with providing veterans emergency financial assistance. That part will also be in the legislation. So, I think it's going to be a good bill, and we'll look forward to meeting with everyone and all the stakeholders and be able to push that through.

The first week of January I'll be meeting with Randy Sikowski and some members of the Scott Air Force base and one of the things that we know we've been trying to do and we're going to try and to continue to do it more of an active duty thing but the licensing portability once again has come up and we just need to try and work the framework to get that so when active duty members, the dependents move to Illinois if they're a licensed practicing medical or real estate or teacher or whatever barber, we can help get them their license sooner rather than sometimes it can take as long as a whole tour before they're actually licensed. So it is very important that we were able to work together and help get that pushed through because once again, the military members rely on that second income too in order to support their families. I will keep the IVAC posted on where we're at with that, but also reach out to Senator Munoz and Senator Rezin and to Representative Yednock to get their support as we move all this forward. So that's all. I've got Mr. chairman.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Thank you, the DLD has what's called the defense state liaison officer, and that bill and the bill to keep the dependent children in one school district rather than moving around to their goals and this is not federal legislation but it's a state by state legislature. Speaking of which Medal of Honor Highway US Highway 20. Once it passes I've asked Marty Conatser of the American Legion, he's got the flag there's a U. S. flag It's walked from Oregon to Iowa. Some of you may know a Highway 20 ends up in Massachusetts. So Marty's going to have that flag taken from Dubuque to Indiana where we'll hand it off once we get the Medal of Honor Highway approved.

Under old business. I'm going to ask Crystal to update on the harassment training in order to stay on the on IVAC you have to have completed that training. Crystal where we at on that?

Crystal Womack:

We have 6 members remaining. We are in a really good spot, I will follow up again today just with the few that we're waiting on.

Chairman Mike Peck:

All right, thank you very much.

The last I've heard on Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery is that the city of Joliet annexed some of that property so that they can complete those truck terminals. Does any of our representatives have an update on where we are at with Abraham Lincoln?

Lou Myers:

As long they have continued resolutions. In the federal until they get a bill passed permanently for a new year As far as I know there's nothing been done. Do you know anything Joe about that?

Joe Schaler:

No, sir. I do not.

Lou Myers:

Same with me, I'm trying to keep track of it but right now we're just in a hold pattern.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Okay Lou I think your updating on the memorial for Oak Ridge cemetery aren't you?

Lou Myers:

Well there there is. They went on their own with the Gold Star Mothers and they're getting close to the amount of money that they need to start that. It will be built to the south of the Korean and the World War II memorial. They did buy some land off of the cemetery to do that. They were hoping to get it done this year but it looks like it may be next summer before they can get that thing going. They're getting very close to the amount of money they need to do that.

Chairman Mike Peck

Okay, is there any other old business that we need to discuss?

Stanley Olenjack:

I have a couple of questions, I know Gwen's not on the call here but you know I have here a copy of the December home census here in front of me and I have a copy of the one from September 2nd of this year. Looking at the skill census at every home it has increased. At Manteno there was 171 and now there is 168 beds open there. It seems that every home has lost veterans, lost population in the homes. Just in October there was an Advisory Council meeting with the Manteno Veterans home and I have talked to the adjutant there and I asked her "What's the current waiting list right now?" and she said there's 30 veterans waiting to get in. I asked how long will it be before veteran number 30 gets in there, and she said about 6 and a half months. I think it was totally unacceptable to our veterans having to wait that long. There's only 30 veterans waiting and why wait six and a half months. I was curious how long this was going on. So, I went out and visited a couple of nursing homes in the area and they seem to be having no problem at all. I don't know what they're doing right or IDVA is doing wrong but there is still a lack of the veterans getting into these homes. In the December census the bottom chart shows how many veterans are waiting and it's really jumped up a lot. In the September waiting list at Manteno was 29 for skill now we are up to 48. Everything's going backwards. Getting the veterans into the home and I spoke about that before and about trying to find a way to speed up the process to get these veterans in the homes. If

Mr. Vaughn or Mr. Prince can answer. I was told before it was because of Covid reasons. Other nursing homes seem to be rolling right along and they're admitting.

Acting Director Prince:

Mr. Vaughn had to get off the call for the Chicago update. I'll happily take the call. I can appreciate the reference earlier to staffing and Mr. Olenjack and I have talked about this and it is an area of extreme concern for me as well. I'm also forced into some constricts as a result of staffing. I have to have a specific Covid unit in each of the facilities. So, if a veteran gets Covid positive they're moved into a specific ward of the building that has to be fully staffed. So, for example, at Manteno there's 1 ingenious resident who has figured out a way to stay on the Covid wing because they get one on one care the entire time. So that's at least 3 to 5 staff members dedicated to 1 individual. Nobody wants to fill our veterans homes more than I do, as a 31 year veteran myself and experience in veterans homes operations. I also have to make sure that I have enough staff to do that. And I know this does sound like a cliché, but the great resignation is occurring before our very eyes and that is 5 million people left their job across our country in 1 month. The good news is that I offer a mission set that's different than most organizations. We're veterans, we take care of veterans because we love veterans of Illinois and so we are hiring as fast as we possibly can. An area that's an extreme concern to all of us, the entry level veterans nurse aides, VNAC's as we call them. Entry level jobs that provide very difficult work that a lot of younger people don't want to take on. So, strategically, we're looking at it both in the short medium and long term. How do we address that while we still continue to admit residents? I can tell you that I have the report in front of me this week alone we admitted 3 new residents to Manteno. The census is 171 as of December 7th. At Anna we admitted 3 residents as well, so we are meeting in a responsible nature. And if I can close with this, none of those other nursing homes are under the same shall I say spotlight that IDVA falls under. So we have to make sure that we do it right and we do it correct every single time. We're getting our policies and procedures up to speed and running. And I'll say that the Adjutants have been tasked to work with our families to make sure that they find other places as a temporary stop gap to ensure that they're not just the name on a waiting list. It's a living breathing person. We had a veteran who could not get into the Manteno home for reasons unrelated to this and our adjutant was able to help through our work with the VA's vision to place them at the Danville CLC living center. And the family was completely appreciative of that. And so we do have other options that we're utilizing. I hope that helps a little bit. I will be able to give you a plan of action and milestones as I work with my team, but hiring is a is a very unpredictable situation.

Stanley Olenjack:

Okay, thank you.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Thank you Director. Under new business I have just one item and that is the fact that our annual report is due June 1st of 2022. We have one meeting coming up in March. I'm going to ask Dr. Fields to assist me in getting that report done. In that vein I've also asked the Director if I can receive copies of the County VAC Reports. I'd like to do some changes on our annual report to include the best practices in state. I can consider the VAC where we can go to receive programs that work, and maybe passes on to the state. In particular, I want to make sure that the general assembly members are aware of what what we're doing both at the state and county level. In looking at the legislation that we proposed, none of our bills have been moving along. So I think there's a lack of information on what we're trying to do. Especially with the active duty dependents. I've

talked to our Department of Defense state liaison officer and other states are moving along on these issues, but Illinois hasn't.

Anything else for new business?

Justin Miller:

I'm the VFW. Rep. I'm also involved in a lot of veteran service organizations here in Chicago the networking. I wasn't able to speak last time because I was on the phone and there was a there was a muted setting. I had emailed everybody as the newest member, I think I am. I would love some time to do new member introductions. If that's something that we we do here. I also would love to know how I can best help. I'm very versed in military transition, veteran education, and Behavioral Health, and those are my my big 3 things that I focus on in the nonprofit space. Would love to know if that's something that we bring up a new business or when that gets done.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Well, Justin, I would really appreciate it if you could help me on our annual report. That would be the biggest thing because we need some fresh ideas on that. You gave us your background and I really appreciate that. I will be in contact with you personally. I also work with Jay often on the VFW legislative committee. In fact, I'll be in Washington in March representing the VFW of Illinois.

Justin Miller:

I feel like we're all in the same circles. I just want to know how I can best help as the newest member here. So, and if it makes sense to take it offline, that's great too. Love to spend some time with you and just figure out how I can best serve.

Chairman Mike Peck:

All right, thank you.

Any other new business anyone? If not, I will recognize a motion to adjourn.

Motion to Adjourn by Stanley Olenjack
Seconded by Justin Miller