

Illinois Veterans Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 17, 2020– 10:00am

Illinois Department of Affairs

Video Teleconference & Phone Conference Line

Attendance:

NAME	APPOINTED BY	PRESENT
Stanley Olenjack	Marine Corps League	X
Anthony Ortiz	IDVA Director	
Al Reynolds	Disabled American Veterans	X
Senator Toi Hutchinson	President of Senate	
Senator Sue Rezin	Minority Leader of Senate	
Rep. Lance Yednock	Speaker of the House	X
Rep. Dan Swanson	Minority Leader of the House	X
Bill Wolff	IDVA Director	X
Clayton Young	IDVA Director	X
Megan Everett	IDVA Director	
Quinn Triplett	IDVA Director	
Command Sgt. Maj. Dena Ballowe	National Guard	
Tom Banning	Attorney General	X
Greg Curran	IL Secretary of State	X
Jorge Bermudez	IL Department of Securities	
Myron Kirby, Chairman	The American Legion	X
Keith Wetherell	AMVETS	X
Maureen Cattani	Blue Star Mothers of America	X
Pat Noel	Catholic War Veterans	X
Dr. Jerry Field	Jewish War Veterans	X
Dan Finn / Joe Schaler	Military Order of the Purple Heart	X
Michael Peck, Vice Chairman	Military Order of the World Wars	X
Lou Myers	Reserve Officers' Association	X
Steve Fixler	Veterans Assistance Commission	X
Vince Long	Veterans of Foreign Wars	X
Roy Dolgos	Vietnam Veterans of America	
Ariel Shivers-McGrew	IDVA Director	X
Bob Tyler	MOAA	
Bill Browne	Cook County VAC	X

New Members:

Guests: Janet Long

Call to Order 10:30am

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Introductions:

IDVA Staff:

Linda Chapa LaVia, Director

Len Winnicki, Senior Home Administrator

Crystal Womack, Programs Manager

Gwen Diehl, Homes Manager

Approval of April 8th, 2020 minutes

Motion to approve the Minutes by Bill Wolff

Jerry Field seconded motion

Minutes approved

Director Chapa LaVia:

Thank you everyone for being present on the phone call today. IDVA staff is currently plugging away. We currently have a handle on all of our homes. At this time we have had no cases in our Quincy home. Anna did have 5 cases and is currently off the watch list. Our LaSalle home has no cases to report at this time. Manteno is currently dealing with the most cases at this time. We are doing more testing at our homes than most locations. We are trying to test our veterans and staff every two weeks. We have been recognized for being head and shoulders above other departments in our state on how we have dealt with Covid in the last month.

We have designed a program called Operation Rising Spirit that has been spreading throughout our state which connects folks from the outside to our veterans. We have received cards and video messages to all of our homes. Our homes are feeling the love.

We were able to negotiate a hazard pay for homes staff. This includes our union members and for the merit comp workers. Those frontline staff members are putting their lives on the line and for that we were very vocal in advocating for them.

On to some exciting news, in the next month or so we are coming up with a plan to start admitting as well as socially distanced visits. We have been blessed to survive financially due to federal funding and due to our general assembly. I would like to give a big "Thank You" to our representatives on this call right now.

If there are any questions or concerns, please never hesitate to call me or email me.

Question:

Stanley Olenjack:

Can you tell me when the testing began at the Manteno home as I heard it may have been a little late.

Director Chapa LaVia:

We began testing as soon as instructed. We were actually shoulders above by not allowing visitors into the facility and temp checking our employees. We are checking the employees upon arrival as well as other times throughout the day. We have also provided the entire staff with PPE. I do not have the exact date, but will provide you with that.

Answer:

First round of testing was May 9th, 2020.

Chairman's Report

Myron Kirby:

I want to thank everyone for their patience in the moving of the date of this meeting. I did have a medical procedure done which caused me to rearrange my schedule a bit.

I know we are still meeting in an unusual practice and I hope that by our September meeting we might be able to meet in person once again.

I would like to say thank you to everyone for your patience during this time. And with that we will begin with our reports.

I would like to echo what the Director has said. There has been a great job done by all IDVA staff in keeping this virus at hand. The care in all of the veteran homes has been outstanding.

We have a goal in assisting veterans in everyday life. Homelessness is a big push along with medical and women veterans. I ask our legislators to keep in mind that we do not currently have bill that assists with the family aspect of being homeless. Our veterans are not willing to ask for help in fear of losing their children.

Veterans' Homes Coordinator Gwen Diehl:

Gwen was not able to be on the call today. We will have a homes report for the next meeting.

Len Winnicki:

Len Winnicki has returned to IDVA and is now over seeing the Chicago home project. He will be in charge through the opening of the facility.

The Chicago home is at 99% completion. We are working on the last punch items currently. We currently do not have a date for admissions due to the Covid situation. We currently have about 100 names on the waiting list.

Questions:

Stanley Olenjack:

The census for the homes is dropping due to Covid and no admittance. Will you make a big push once restrictions are lifted to fill the vacancies?

Director:

Once we are allowed to admit we will resume as we have in the past with new residents being in quarantine for 14 days to protect themselves and the others.

Legislative Report:

No legislative update at this time.

Old Business:

Myron Kirby:

Fiscal Year 18 Annual Report:

Mike Peck Motion to approve the report as stands
Louo Myers seconded motion to approve

FY18 report approved

Motion made to use the FY20 Annual Report Draft for finalization
Seconded by Jerry Field

New Business:

Myron Kirby:

December elections for Chair and Vice Chair – Please be prepared to make nominations and vote during the Decmeber meeting.

General Discussion:

VETS Cash Lottery Ticket:

Connie Watson will provide an update on the September meeting

For the Good of the Veterans:

Retire the Colors:

Next Meeting Date: September 9, 2020 – WebEx

Adjourn: Myron Kirby, Chairman