

Illinois Veterans Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 9, 2021– 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	X
Al Reynolds	Disabled American Veterans	X
	President of Senate	
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	X
Quinn Triplett	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	
Myron Kirby	The American Legion	X
Keith Wetherell	AMVETS	X
Peggy Arick	Blue Star Mothers of America	X
Pat Noel	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
Vince Long	Veterans of Foreign Wars	X
Roy Dolgos	Vietnam Veterans of America	
	IDVA Director	
Bob Tyler	MOAA	X
Bill Browne	Cook County VAC	X
Senator Craig Wilcox	DSTF Position	X

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  
Crystal Womack, Senior Programs Manager  
Gwen Diehl, Homes/Projects Manager  
Amy Brennan, Legislative Liaison  
Jenny Franklin – Director's Assistant  
Mark Patterson – Field Supervisor  
Connie Watson – Grants

Approval of March 10th, 2021 minutes  
Motion to approve the Minutes by Bill Wolff  
Al Reynolds seconded motion

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

As we begin our would like to turn things over the IDVA Acting Director, Terry Prince.

**Acting Director Prince:**

Good morning everyone and thank you for joining us today. I am glad to be to give you a quick overview of what is happening at IDVA. For those of you who do not know me, I was appointed by Governor Pritzker on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. We currently have 1,200 professionals serving 650,000 veterans and family members across the state. In my prior position I served as the superintendent of the Ohio Veterans Homes which included a 427 bed facility that is the largest nursing home in America along with a 216 bed domiciliary. I began my military career in 1986, my wife and I were both stationed in Great Lakes in 1990. Illinois has been a launching pad for my military career. I furthered my carrer at Walter Reed Medical Center. I have had 30 plus years experience plus years of military experience in assisting our veterans.

We are at a crossroads at IDVA right now. I'm sure that everyone has read the reports regarding the events that took place at the LaSalle Veterans Home during the Covid outbreak in 2020. My heart aches for every veteran and their family who had to deal with that situation. In any crisis there is always an opportunity to do things better which is what brings me to the position today. We are working on getting the resources that we need not just at LaSalle but across the board to all of our facilities which includes our veteran service officers and many other areas throughout IDVA. I have developed a clear path for our future working with our Assistant Director, Anthony Vaughn. We have

developed a 6 point plan that you should have had a chance to review. I have provided this to our legislative partners so they can see we are working our way to improve throughout the state of Illinois. I made it a priority ladies and gentlemen to visit our veterans homes. I have been to every veteran home so far at least twice. I have informed the staff at each home that those visits will continue and they will see my presence. I want to hear the all the news, the good the bad and put it to work. This leads me to my master plan. My assistant has been instructed to say yes to everything until further notice. We want to be out there and we want to show that we are all working together. We are going to center our services around the veterans and their families. When I say centering, generally what happens especially in a world where we have PTS, the veteran has to tell their story to each medical provider along the way. That story can change and it can be difficult to track. The idea behind IDVA is that our team reaches out to them and provides an experience like they have never felt before. Our field service offices and employees will be trained in a social worker type training. We are striving for transitional and not transactional. We want to change the lives of veterans. We will be working closely with our stakeholders like IJF, IVAC and service organizations across the state to put these things together. There is one thing to put a plan out and admire it from a distance but we plan to make it happen. I was brought in to accelerate those changes. The bottom line of the plan is this, we are restructuring our senior leadership to ensure that we have the best manager to each dedicated team and the rules and chain of command are clear for all to understand. We are going to improve the culture and communication across our facilities and to create a clearer presence in our homes. We will prioritize our infection control. We already go above and beyond standardized operations. You will be proud to know that the LaSalle Veterans Home recently received its licensure from IDPH with a clean bill of health. This is a great update and I would like to credit Assistant Director Vaughn for stepping outside of his normal lane but also for leading our team through one of the most difficult times. We do meet with the infection control coordinators at IDPH on a weekly basis and we are receiving fantastic support for the Veterans Administration. We are hiring experts in key roles. I know that you are concerned that we do not have a senior homes administrator as am I. We do plan to be making an offer for the position soon. We do want to make sure that we hire the right person. I have spent hours meeting with key positions and I look forward to announcing the joining of our new Chief of Staff in the coming month.

We talked about plans to improve our policies and then checking on them in the facilities to be sure we are doing the things we say we are doing. We are also enhancing the departments technology. We are striving to be sure that all employees will have access to email in our facilities as well as a vast messaging system so we can send our text messages to employees in case of an emergency.

I have been familiarizing myself with the by-laws and statutes of the IVAC. I had the pleasure of meeting Col. Peck at the Memorial Day event in Libertyville. I appreciate him as he serves in many roles.

I look forward to working with all you in each capacity as at the end of the day we are all partners in serving veterans.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me the time to report out, I know we have several staff on the call that will continue to report out regarding specific roles.

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Thank you, sir. Anyone have a question for the Director at this time?

Hearing none, Gwen would you like to highlight your report?

**Veterans' Homes Coordinator Gwen Diehl:**

The department has several capital projects funded this fiscal year. Some are new, some were temporarily halted due to the COVID threat, and some are underway.

**Ongoing Capital Projects**

(Estimated costs)

- **Illinois Veterans' Home at Anna**
  - Replace Nurse Call System  
(The project is underway and will be completed when the equipment and materials are received and the contractor can re-mobilize.) \$193,700
  - General Building Repairs and Improvements  
(The Architect still has not been able to return to the facility and begin design work so we are able to control the number of outside people on the campus.) 2,166,700
  - \$ 2,360,400**
  
- **Illinois Veterans' Home at Chicago**
  - 200 Bed NHC Building  
(Substantial Completion was April 24, 2020 and the contractors continue to work as needed completing most of the punch list items.) \$ 175,150,000
  - 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.
  
- **Illinois Veterans' Home at LaSalle**
  - Replace Wander Guard and Nurse Call System (Original Building)  
(Project out for Re-Bid and bids were opened. There was a protest on the project and we are awaiting a decision on the protest from CDB and authorization to proceed) \$ 583,100
  - Replace Original Generator, Chiller and Mechanical Systems  
(Bids were opened we are awaiting authorization to proceed.) 2,203,600
  - Replace Two of the Original Hot Water Heaters  
The Hot Water Heaters failed and CDB has agreed to replace them; we are waiting for the equipment to arrive in 4-6 weeks – between 6/24 and 7/8) 60,000

- **Replace Resident Room Doors (27 each) in NW Isolation Wing**  
The doors will be replaced with doors that have windows and shades to allow for safety and privacy 200,000
- \$ 3,046,700**

• **Illinois Veterans’ Home at Manteno**

- **EMERGENCY Automatic Flush Valves, Mixing Valves & Water Filtration**  
(The Emergency Automatic Flush Valves and Mixing Valves is still evolving, but CDB needs to cut us off, so we will likely have to request some additional work in a future capital project request.) \$ 9,934,118
  - **Replace Air Handling Units in residential buildings**  
(Two separate projects: one for R1 & R2 and one for R3, R4, S1 & S2: IDVA requested scope revision to provide HEPA Filters (MERV-13) and UV-C lights.) 6,369,100
  - **Replace Various Roofing Systems**  
(Flat Roofing System and Structural Repairs underway. Shingle Roofing Replacement went out for bid and CDB is verifying the apparent low bidder is satisfied with their submitted bid prior to issuing Authorization-to-Proceed.) 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**  
(Project will renovate and update 120 Resident Restrooms plus Nurse Station and public rest rooms. Still undergoing Code Analysis and design development. Due to ADA requirements, additional architectural changes may be needed, requiring additional funding.) 3,187,300
- \$27,962,418**

• **Illinois Veterans’ Home at Quincy –**

- **Construct Domestic Water Loop**  
(Moving forward, the design will accommodate the footprint of the new buildings. The project will also increase the size of the Water Treatment Plant and demo the water tower. The exact construction estimate is not available at this time) \$ 3,000,000
- **Construct New Nursing Home and Domiciliary (less Asbestos Remediation)**
  - Bridging Documents were completed October 2019.
  - Veterans United Constructors were selected & approved by CDB
  - Notice of award and contract completed by CDB.
  - Kick-off meeting was held 2/24/2021.
  - Design development continues
  - Project has been submitted to USDVA and approved for reimbursement of approximately \$197,047,500, which we will be able to draw down as expenditures are made
  - The 42-month construction project in March 2021; construction fences are being erected. Substantial completion is anticipated in about September 2024 240,564,444
- **Abated asbestos in seven buildings**  
(Completed in preparation for demolition to make way for the footprint of the

new buildings. The State Historic Preservation Office and US Department of Veterans Affairs have approved demolition following the submission of required documentation of the historic buildings. Demolition may start this summer)	724,000
• <b>Projects to Expand and Restore Sunset Cemetery w/NCA Grant</b> (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
• <b>Roof Replacement at Ehle Laundry and Tradesmen Buildings</b> (Project design is complete. We are waiting to see when CDB Contracts will be opening bids again before it is posted for bids.)	406,700
	<u>406,700</u> <b>\$ 245,745,144</b>

**IDVA is projected to receive four additional projects for Deferred Maintenance Projects in the Fall of 2021**

- **QUINCY - Upgrade Elec Sys @ HQs Building and install Emergency Generator at Water Treatment Plant** (October 2021 CDB Board)
- **QUINCY - Complete Fire Suppression Sprinklers** (October 2021 CDB Board)
- **MANTENO – Replace Air Handling Units S1 S2 A1 A2** (November 2021 CDB Board)
- **LaSALLE – Replace Original Air Handlers & Renovate East/West and Center of Original Building** (October 2021 CDB Board)

**The state may also release funding this year for the demolition of unused, derelict buildings on the state properties. (Most are on the Manteno Campus.)**

**IDVA is working with the Capital Development Board and the Governor’s Office to determine if additional preventative measures are available to stop the spread of various, future diseases and making our Veterans safer from future outbreaks.**

# VETERANS' HOMES CENSUS

Date: May 27, 2021

Home	Skilled Census	Budgeted Skilled Census	Skilled Vacancies	Admits This Week	Admits Next Week	Dom Census	Dom Vacancies
Anna	28	49	12	0	0	4	3
La Salle	86	190	106	2	2		
Manteno	167	294	127	4	3		
Quincy	236	384	150	6	4	41	47
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	4	0			9	0	54	22		6	12
La Salle	40	0	17	0			0	6	0	0	
Manteno	30	8-10	6	12			67	9	2	0	
Quincy	7	0	3	0	5	0	6	0	0	0	0
Prince	2	0									

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Thank you, Gwen. One question that is in our annual report I would like to see that the council members get the minutes from each of the homes meetings.

**Gwen Diehl:**

I will find out what we need to do to get those into the hands of the council members.

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

We are going to hold questions until we get updates from all of the staff members.

Mark Patterson, can you please take the floor for the Field updates...

**Mark Patterson:**

Mental Health / First Aid – This is a topic that we have spoke with our legal staff on and the actual first aid training itself is a liability, however we have taken steps of our own. We did have an annual training this year and we invited the Vet Center and had specific counseling in order to address the proper way to conduct an interview with a veteran that has direct needs. We also went over the process in getting that veteran to the needed counseling.

Incarcerated Veterans – This program is still on the horizon. Myself and Rich Wuthrich will be getting together and developing that structure. It is a very important program and was successful in the past.

Annual Training – Our annual training was held and went tremendously well. We did get a lot of feedback as we provided a survey after each training. We will use the survey's to make adjustments for future trainings. In addition, we do have a training coordinator now and there will be regular training provided to all of the VSO's on a weekly to bi-weekly basis.

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Mark can you explain to everyone that your annual training does give you accreditation and VA certification.

**Mark Patterson:**

Our training, and every VSO has met the required 8 hours needed per year along with additional hours. Once the new program is active they will exceed the requirements greatly as the training will be throughout the year.

**Chairman Mike Peck**

Thank you sir, appreciate it

Connie Watson, lottery....

**Connie Watson:**

**IVAC Report – Vets Cash Scratch-Off Lottery Ticket Program**

**June 9, 2021**

**1. Vets Cash Committee Review**

The FY21 3rd Quarter Meeting was held on May 27, 2021, the Veterans Cash Grant Authorization Committee (GAC) reviewed 8 applications that were received from January through March 2021. The following is a summary of what the GAC decided about each grant applicant with a recommendation for 5 applicants to award and 3 applications to deny. All applicant votes described below were unanimous.

New Applicants:

<b>App. #</b>	<b>Rank/Score</b>	<b>Applicant Name</b>	<b>Requested</b>	<b>Denied</b>	<b>Awarded</b>
1. 702	( _7/132_ )	America Cares Too	\$44,000	_____	<u>  X  </u>
2. 703	( _5/180_ )	Central IL Housing Network	\$100,000	<u>  X  </u>	_____
3. 704	( _6/172_ )	Connect Vets	\$70,260	<u>  X  </u>	_____
4. 705	( _4/186_ )	Fishing for Freedom	\$25,000	_____	<u>  X  </u>
5. 706	( _8/129_ )	Turn 2 Growth	\$50,000	<u>  X  </u>	_____
6. 707	( _3/221_ )	Brushwood Center @ R.W.	\$40,000	_____	<u>  X  </u>
7. 708	( _1/275_ )	Legal Aid Chicago	\$50,000	_____	<u>  X  </u>
8. 709	( _2/235_ )	Goodwill of Central IL	\$30,000	_____	<u>  X  </u>

**2. Vets Cash Balance**

Vets Cash Fund Balance (236 Revenues vs. Expenditures): \$2,528,600  
(as of May 25, 2021)

Grants Currently Processing: \$60,297

**FY21 Q3 Total Awarded: \$189,000**

Reserved to Award in FY21 Q4: \$500,000

Remaining Balance for FY22: \$1,779,303

**Next Committee Review Date:**

August 18, 2021

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Thank you ma'am for that report.

Amy Brennan, legislative report

**Amy Brennan:**

Good morning IVAC members. We had an unusual legislative session as was last year. I would like to give a special Thank You to Representative Swanson, Representative Yednock and Senator Wilcox. It has been a very challenging year with everything that is going on. IDVA has strived to keep in contact with all legislators throughout this

pandemic. Prior to this meeting 2 separate reports were sent out to each of you. One is a list of all the bills that we were tracking. These reports will help you track where all of the legislation is. The 2<sup>nd</sup> report is the bills that passed both houses. Rather than go through all the bills I will just highlight a handful of them. There are 4 initiatives that IDVA introduced. HB3255 will help out our HR department to keep consistency and clarification with the vso job positions. HB3865 is a good consumer protection bill that IDVA partnered with the Illinois Attorney Generals office to provide disclosure to organizations besides DVA, VAC and Federal Government that help veterans with their benefits. SB1539 will help us continue on with the Quincy building projects. And the last is Senate resolution 28 the Medal of Honor Highway. It has passed the senate however we are hoping next week the house and senate will go back and it will pass the house. HB1290 is regarding if veterans have discharge papers who identify folks lgbtq benefits. HB1815 extended dates regarding the veteran service related illness task force. House Resolution 62 will require an audit of the LaSalle Home. SB2250 requires a report to give to the general assembly and to the Governor of all the IDVA home funds.

That concludes my report, and I am available should anyone have any questions.

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Thank you Amy.

Representative Yednock would you like to make any comments?

**Representative Yednock:**

I appreciate the nice comments and I certainly appreciate the amount of communication that the new director has shared with me. We have been working day and night to be sure to keep our veterans safe. I can't be anymore happy about the direction that I see things going. I take a lot of leads from Representative Swanson and Senator Wilcox. I am appointed to this council to be another voice to the community and to be sure that we are listening to your concerns. Thank you for allowing me to say a few words.

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Thank you, Representative Swanson...

**Representative Dan Swanson:**

Thank chairman. I would like to thank all of the employees at the homes who have been as diligent as they can to protect our veterans. It is unfortunate that we did lose veterans in these circumstances. Wednesday we were able to look at some bills that were not covered in normal session. Thank you everyone for all of your work.

I do have a question for Director Prince, where are we at in the hiring of the Senior Homes Administrator?

**Director Prince:**

Rep. Swanson, I will reach out after this call to bring you up to date.

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Thank you, Senator Wilcox...

**Senator Wilcox:**

Thank you chairman. I would just like to say that I am very excited with progress made during this last general assembly on veterans bills. I did get some question as to why I never called SB2149 on the floor. It deals with veterans and members who are serving who are also teachers. There were issues on not getting credit for time being called up after the 5 years. In essence, TRS adopted policy changes that comply with federal law. If we had run our bill, we may have given a pension boost to people who are purchasing TRS credit for prior service. Thank you for allowing me to give an explanation of that.

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Thank you sir. Before we go on to the next part, I just wanted to explain as we have done last year and the year before, we have legislation that we have recommended to the Illinois Congregational regarding 2 main issues. The 48 hour review which this council has urged repeatedly that we handle and the Abraham Lincoln Cemetery. Director Prince have you heard anymore on that? I did hear yesterday that there was a possible deal struck. The would be using Arsenal road for truck traffic.

**Director Prince:**

I have not heard any additional information at this time.

**Stanley Olenjack:**

Mr. chairman, I have a couple of questions regarding some of the reports.

Gwen, on the census report you had mentioned that they started admitting but compared to the last numbers it does not appear there are any changes.

**Gwen Diehl:**

We are only admitting a couple per week. We are going at a slower rate due to Covid.

**Stanley Olenjack:**

I have a question for the Director as well. What is your opinion on hiring veterans to run our homes?

**Director Prince:**

When a job is posted we do interview who show interest in those positions. One of the challenges in this is that there are not a lot of nursing home administrator types of positions in the military so it does hinder the finding of qualified veterans for the job. The most important aspect of the hiring is to be sure that the person is qualified and has a genuine love for veterans and their families. It is high on my list to hire veterans when at all possible.

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Thank you Stanley and Director Prince.

Connie Watson I do have a follow up question, what is the status on getting mental health added to the grant program?

**Connie Watson:**

We are awaiting a recommendation from Representative Swanson to be submitted to the Director.

**Representative Swanson:**

I do need some background information so I can proceed with that recommendation.

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Under old business I would like to get to General Myers. Can you please update the Gulf War Memorial?

We are not able to hear Lou so we will try to come back to him.

If you see the minutes you can see the memorial from the meeting. This is the last plot that we will be able to add a memorial too.

Next topic the Annual Report. This report is due to the general assembly by July 1<sup>st</sup>. We have done a lot of work on this report. We have sent this out for all to review prior to printing.

Do we have a motion to accept the Annual Report as is?

Motion Made by Lou Myers

Seconded by Bob Tyler

Thank you very much for your assistance.

One last item, on the IDVA website I feel very strongly that we are not communicating with our veterans very well. I have looked at the website and wondered if you have any plans to work on the website?

**Director Prince:**

I am glad that you brought that up. I have specific group that is looking over the website to help us create a new look. We are looking to streamline and simplify the process for folks that visit our website.

**Chairman Mike Peck:**

Thank you sir. Any questions for the director?

If not is there a motion to adjourn

Motion made by Stanley Olenjack

2<sup>nd</sup> by Megan Everett

All in favor meeting adjourned

**Next Meeting Date: Septebmer 8, 2021 – WebEx**

**Adjourn: Mike Peck, Chairman**