

Illinois Veterans Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 20, 2019– 10:30am

Illinois Department of Affairs Office

Video Teleconference & Phone Conference Line

Attendance:

NAME	APPOINTED BY	PRESENT
Stanley Olenjack	Marine Corps League	X
Roman Ortega Jr	IDVA Director	X
Al Reynolds	Disabled American Veterans	X
Senator Toi Hutchinson	President of Senate	
Senator Sue Rezin	Minority Leader of Senate	
Rep. Jerry Costello II	Speaker of the House	
Rep. Dan Swanson	Minority Leader of the House	X
Bill Wolff	IDVA Director	X
Clayton Young	IDVA Director	
Megan Everett	IDVA Director	
Amy Sherman	IDVA Director	
Command Sgt. Maj. Sean Carney	National Guard	X
Thomas 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	
William Bradford	Catholic War Veterans	
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	
Vince Long	Veterans of Foreign Wars	X
Roy Dolgos	Vietnam Veterans of America	X
Ariel Shivers-McGrew	IDVA Director	
Bob Tyler	MOAA	X

New Members:

Guests: Janet Long, Doreen Misiorek, Sharma Wolfe

Call to Order 10:30am

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Introductions:

IDVA Staff:

Linda Chapa LaVia, Acting Director

Russell Litko, Assistant Director

Mark Patterson, Acting Legislative Liaison

Len Winnicki, Senior Home Administrator

Crystal Womack, Assistant to Director Chapa LaVia

Darla Reed, Assistant to Chief of Staff

Brittany Hawkins, Legal

Dan Wellman, Veterans' Education & Training

Approval of December 13th, 2018 minutes

Motion to approve the Amended Minutes by Lou Myers

Greg Curran seconded motion

Minutes approved

Myron Kirby:

Welcome to the committee and thank you for attending. It is my great honor to introduce Acting Director Linda Chapa LaVia who is fellow Army.

Director's Remarks:

I am very humbled to be standing here with you today as the Acting Director of IDVA.

I want to reflect on a couple of things, my heart and focus is on reconstructing our VSO's. As opposed to working in silos, I would like to work together with everyone throughout the state. Bringing in as much money as possible every day to our veterans and really serving them as opposed to just pushing the paper through. We are working on how to transform the state of Illinois from last in benefits to the middle and eventually the top. Working together hand in hand will get us there. Any ideas or suggestions that you have on helping us get there is appreciated. You have my commitment as the Acting Director that we will be working together.

The three other areas under the administration that we really want to look at. The first is our homes. You will hear an updated from the Homes Administrator shortly. Great things are happening at all of our homes. Secondly, our focus is on female veterans.

We have not done a great job on that topic so we are looking to focus in that area. One of the areas with that is when female veterans are homeless, their children are as well. We plan to hone in on the over 70,000 female veterans that we have in the state. Our homeless veterans deserve a home and we plan to work hard to provide that. We are working on a list of homeless shelters throughout the state. Once completed we are going to start calling the facilities to request their numbers of veterans as well as female veterans.

Lastly, our focus will be centered on the LGBTQ community. Regardless of how you feel about the issue, they have still served this community. If we have a transgender veteran residing in one of our homes and they have went from male to female who would think to check if they have prostate cancer. Same situation if we have a female to a male. The need to check for breast cancer is relevant. With that being said we have a lot of issues in this state, but nothing that we can't work on together.

I am dedicated and motivated and I am up to the task of making sure our veterans are taken care of. We have the greatest country in this world and we need to make sure we showcase it.

Roy Dolgos: At one time we did file the paperwork to open up a female veterans home which is known as the Prince home.

Director: The Prince home is actually full with male occupants at this time. The tricky part to the situation is that we may be able to house the female veteran, however we do not have the ability to house the children. With that said, I would take any advice on how we may join forces with DCFS and our veteran benefits to say this is a package deal. The ideal situation would be to combine the benefits together and then providing them a home.

Even with all the property at the veterans homes we could look into tiny homes. We also have to make sure that there are jobs and schools near by. We do cloth and feed a lot of people but we do not get them back to being a tax paying citizen. My quest is that we do get them back to being a tax paying citizen.

I would like to walk hand in hand with this organization as well as the IVAC committee on eradicating veteran homelessness and suicides. We need a game plan on how to save those veterans. The problem is only going to grow.

Stanley Olenjack:

We do have female clients every now and then in the Prince home. The Marine Corp League has helped with them with personal issues as well.

Director:

So I was in the Army and the problem is when we have women and men together it just does not work. I believe they need to have separate living quarters.

Roy Dolgos:

Who is the new Chief of Staff going to be:

Director:

Tony Kolbeck will be the new Chief of Staff. Ginny has done a wonderful job during the transition and is now going back to retirement. The transition with Tony is going to be smooth and he will be at the disposal of those who may need him.

One of the other issues is transition with our veterans. We do not have a detox program to go from soldier to civilian. We need to provide the steps down to help them be ready for the civilian world with all the benefits we have available.

Mike Peck:

Director I think the first step in the right direction is to change the IDVA website to include the information of all the VAC's.

Director:

That is a great idea. We will absolutely get that done.

Roy Dolgos:

Years ago when I was Director we received a couple of grants for the cemeteries. It's been many years and we have not received any more. There is still a lot of work to be done.

Russ Litko:

We have applied for a grant through USDVA and the National Cemetery Association for repairs to the cemetery property. They estimate that we have for repairs is 2.3 million. We did apply for the full amount and in February after speaking with those involved I feel pretty confident that we will be getting this grant. This a big plus for the folks in Quincy.

**Chairman's Report**

Myron Kirby:

I would like to start off by talking about the direction that I would like to see this committee take. We are talking about taking the meetings on the road. Visiting the homes so we can see the veterans and the staff. I think it is important for all that they know we are here to advise on their behalf.

Roy Dolgos:

It really is appreciated when we do visit the homes and show that we are concerned with that is going on in their area. They homes do have a quarterly meeting as well and we might be able to attend to be able to help with their issues that are concerning them.

Myron Kirby:

Even if we don't go to each quarterly meeting they will still be able to relate to us. It's great to have meetings here as most of the staff is here in Springfield, but sometimes we need to be present elsewhere. I believe in boots on the ground.

Our December meeting in the past was held at the Governor's Mansion. We would have a luncheon where you brought your spouse, significant other or partner to the meeting. We are going to try and bring that back, so I will keep you updated.

Acting Director and I have spoke and we are both on the same page with providing the veterans their compensation that they deserve.

For the female veteran population, there is a home being constructed here in Springfield. I believe the opening date is coming soon.

It is important for us to work with DCFS. As the females step up for help their children are taken, that is not how this should work. We need to provide some insight to help with the situation.

Are there any other issues that you as the committee would like to add to the to do list?

Joe Schaler:

While we are all here, I think it would be a good step for us to meet with the Veterans Affairs Committee face to face so they know who we are and what our priorities are.

Acting Director:

I think that is a great idea. Mark Patterson, can you get us on the schedule please.

Lou Myers:

I have been approached by the Daughters of the American Revolution who has about 103 chapters in the state of Illinois. They are interested in assisting with veteran issues such as homelessness. I would like to bring them in as the more local it is the more likely we will have good results.

Myron Kirby:

We have heard that there are also some areas in Quincy that might be converted to short term housing. This committee is successful because each of you at the table have a different expertise.

Mike Peck:

Each year the VAC is required to submit what is called a "Governor's Report". I think if we can compile the best practices from the report we would have a gold mine of information.

Vince Long:

I am thankful that you are taking the committee back to the homes once again. When you are actually present in one of the locations you able to see a whole different view. The residents are able to voice their concerns as well.

Myron Kirby:

This will show that we are interested and engaged and we want the best for all of our veterans. We do have some big tasks ahead of us.

I would like to Thank everyone for having faith in me to guide this committee along.

Home's report by Len Winnicki:

**Veterans' Advisory Council Meeting**

**Veterans' Advisory Council Meeting – March 20, 2018**

**Census and Waiting List Overview**

(as of 3/20/19)

Home	Total Census	Skilled Care	DOM	Short Waiting List				Long Waiting List			
				Skill	SNU	PTime	DOM	Skill	SNU	PTime	DOM
Anna	57	49	8	20	-	43	5	27	-	6	13
La Salle	182	182	-	13	13	17	-	7	0	0	-
Manteno	284	284	-	18	4	83	-	26	3	0	-
Quincy	355	310	45	3	0	6	2	0	0	0	0
Prince	15	-	15	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>

**Current Program Initiatives**

- Hammond Hall remodeling is completed; initial group of residents has been moved in.
- Chicago Home prep continues; last beam put in place Friday, 3/15/19. Still on target for substantial completion December 2, 2019; Admissions to start Spring 2020; Full census December 2020.
- Manteno legionella response remains in effect. Only the original case has been identified at the Home.

Len Winnicki:

The bed count has changed due to homes having to close buildings as well as when we stay at 90% capacity the federal VA will pay for the beds when the veteran is in the hospital.

The Chicago home is planned to be handed over on December 2, 2019. Hires will begin July 1, 2019. We hope to start admissions in the spring of 2020.

Each home reports to a VISN which is a Federal VA entity. Mental health is a priority for each of the homes. Quincy will be starting a pilot program in the future to allow us to expand.

## **Legislative Report:**

Mark Patterson:

For contact purposes, you are able to reach me at [Mark.Patterson2@illinois.gov](mailto:Mark.Patterson2@illinois.gov) as I am filling in for the Legislative Liason.

Bob Tyler:

Has SB110 replaced HB34?

Dan Swanson:

HB 34 will go nowhere due to language and SB110 will now be sponsored.

Acting Director:

I will need your lift from this committee as well in showing why having a VSO in each county is not cost effective.

Dan Swanson:

I have a HB for the Cold War license plates.

HB835 is based on a request from the VFW for the Honor Remember Flag.

Mike Peck:

I am urging everyone to support SB1255 (Veterans Transfer of Benefits)

## **Old Business:**

Myron Kirby:

Vets Cash lottery ticket is sold out.

## **New Business:**

Myron Kirby:

First item under new business is I would like to make an appointment. I would like to appoint Crystal Womack as the secretary.

Mike Peck & Dr. Jerry Fields 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Appointment carried.

If there are any Memorial Day activities you would like to share please do.

State Fair – 1<sup>st</sup> meeting is being held next week. Looking forward to a great year as the theme is “The Year of the Female Veteran”

We currently do not have a sponsor for the lunches but will be seeking such.

## **General Discussion:**

Push for the 2020 census is underway. With veterans being a hard to count population we will be attending upcoming meetings to discuss ways to spread the word throughout the state.

Bob Tyler:

Medal of Honor Highway; discussion of legislation to be created for the upcoming session. We do have 204 Medal of Honor Reciepients.

**For the Good of the Veterans:**

The American Legion has passed a resolution to include our dates from December 1941 up until today to elgible into the American Legion.

A bulk lot sale will be taking place at Camp Lincoln on May 3,4,5.

**Retire the Colors:**

**Next Meeting Date: June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019 – LaSalle Veterans Home**

**Adjourn: Myron Kirby, Chairman**