

Illinois Veterans Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 14, 2022– 10:00am

Illinois Department of Affairs

WebEx

Attendance:

NAME	APPOINTED BY	PRESENT
	Marine Corps League	
Renyscha Brown	IDVA Director	
Al Reynolds	Disabled American Veterans	X
Senator Tony Munoz	President of Senate	
Senator Sue Rezin	Minority Leader of Senate	
Rep. Lance Yednock	Speaker of the House	
Rep. Dan Swanson	Minority Leader of the House	X
Bill Wolff	IDVA Director	X
Frank Gutierrez	IDVA Director	X
Megan Everett	IDVA Director	X
Vince Long	IDVA Director	X
Command Sgt. Maj. Dena Ballowe	National Guard	
Shannon Yount	Attorney General	X
Nathan Maddox	IL Secretary of State	X
Jorge Bermudez/Rich Wuthrich	IL Department of Securities	X
Myron Kirby	The American Legion	X
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
Ray Dieter	Reserve Officers' Association	
John Murray	IACVAC	
Justin Miller	Veterans of Foreign Wars	X
Roy Dolgos	Vietnam Veterans of America	
Kevin Wathen	IDVA Director	
Bob Tyler	MOAA	X
Senator Craig Wilcox	DSTF Position	X

New Members:

Guests: Dutch DeGroot

Call to Order 10:00am

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence

Introductions:

IDVA Staff:

Terry Prince, Director

Melissa Black, Chief of Staff

Crystal Womack, Senior Program & Policy Advisor

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

Maureen Hartigan, Public Information Officer

Jenny Franklin – Director's Assistant

Connie Watson – Grants

Gwen Diehl – Homes Projects

Sara Augustinas – Legislative Liaison

Mark Patterson – Field Services Manager

Danielle Luevano – Operations & Programs Manager

Anthony Vaughn – Assistant Director

Angie Simmons – Homes Administrator

Approval of June 9th, 2022, minutes

Motion to approve the Minutes by Bill Wolff

Jerry Field seconded the motion

Chairman Mike Peck:

I have just a couple of issues I wanted to bring up. What is the purpose of the council? We are to address in the veterans issues in the community and seek proper solutions for those problems. In the New Business sections there are several issues that are not directly related to IDVA but are problems for veteran community

Director, I will turn the floor over to you.

Director Prince:

Thank you so much for showing up in person, showing up online or telephone. I want to thank the IDVA staff at both facilities. You got everything ready from the donuts to the water.

I'm not gonna spend a lot of time on reports. I'm going to concentrate, basically, on what I've been concentrating on throughout my tenure and that's the 6 point plan from a senior leadership perspective at the agency. We've hired a new labor relations director who starts on Friday. She will work alongside our current Labor Relations director. She is expected to retire in December.

We've hired a new Home Administrator for the LaSalle Home. This individual is coming to us from the Arizona area. In that area, it's expected to be in October.

We also have worked on, and this is the most exciting news as well is that that our new Veterans Accountability unit starts up this Friday. Lt. Colonel, retired Renyscha Brown has been selected as the new Veterans Accountability Unit Director and our IDVA staff have been working hard for months in preparation including leasing a new building just down the street from our Springfield headquarters.

Our Senior Homes Administrator, Angie Simon's is busy making the route. She was at the Chicago veterans home the day before yesterday while she also continues to serve at Anna Home Administrator. We have been working on our culture and our communications, all of our staff oversees email accounts. At this point we have initiated a new text messaging service for those who want to opt in where we can send emergency text and other text information. Our website as we talked about has been completely revamped thanks to the efforts of many, but most importantly, our public information officer. We have been getting a newsletter out to 27,000 people who have signed up on our email roster. We've also instituted the Tuesdays with Terry Mr. chairman, the open dialogue or voice directly via email that they want to talk about in our organization.

Infection control, we have been working with and hired an infection preventionist who was busy working her way around the organization. The different veteran homes are providing onsite support, working directly with IDVA who has done a number of visits to our veterans homes throughout the state and helped us out in a couple of recent outbreaks that we've had at some of our facilities and they have been providing regular guidance and we meet with them on twice a month basis to share best practices and other information that may affect our veterans and our staff.

We talked about hiring experts in the 6 point plan. We brought in a number of retired personnel and temporary personnel from other agencies to help us as in the last month we have lost our chief financial officer and we're still searching for a home administrator at the Anna facility. Our CFO resigned and the Chief of Staff has been working the phones and has been gracious enough to get support from other agencies that we have had someone to fill in.

On the human resources side we hired Tammy showers from the Iowa State University campus. Who's been directly with our Assistant Director, and I think you'll see on our website a number of jobs have been posted. So we're excited about that.

Plans and policies, the Chief of Staff's Senior Executive Assistant is working on making sure that all of our plans and policies on a SharePoint site, and that there's a regular routine and update and that's a process as you can imagine the thousands and thousands of different policies and procedures that we have. So we're excited to have Alicia Utterback program.

On the technology front, the Assistant Director recently attended the National Association of State Directors, Veterans Affairs Conference and brought back a whole bunch of great ideas. And one of the areas we looked at was the field services, and how

we can better equip our field managers in the veterans service office space to upload documents to the VA and streamline the process for our veterans benefits claims process. We are also looking at enhancing our point click care within our facilities and we are continuing to work on video support for our Veteran Homes. Lastly, what's not on the 6 point plan is to continue outreach by this organization. Crystal Womack led our team at both state fairs this year. We had a number of new veterans come to our booth. We had our women veterans program highlighted at our fair specifically in DuQuoin and we got a lot of feedback. We even met a future sailor, whose name now escapes me. Caitlin is her name and she wants to be a Naval Aviator. We were introduced to her pigs porkchop and hamburger. So we are doing a number of hours, these next few months we will continue to do monthly visits to our veterans homes and pop in visits to our veterans service offices. I was recently in the Rockford area and popped in on their veterans service office.

We have regular communications Mr. Chair with the IACVAC, Andrew Tangen and his group also with Brenda Osage over at IJF and routine conversations with legislators. Mr. Chairman that concludes my report. I'm happy to take any questions.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Any questions for the Director? Hearing none, is Gwen available for the homes report?

Gwen Diehl:

Good Morning Mr. Chairman. My report is included in your packets where you will be able to view the details we will go over:

IDVA has \$ 466,928,549 in Funded Capital Projects underway at the Veterans' Homes. (Including IVH-Chicago and IVH-Quincy)

- **Illinois Veterans' Home at Anna (One Projects)**
 - **General Building Repairs and Improvements**
(Design Development is 75% complete)
 - Requested and was approved to add (\$500,000) funding for design and repairs of the public restroom in the Admin Section \$ 2,566,700

- **Illinois Veterans' Home at Chicago (One Projects)**
 - **200 Bed NHC Building**
 - Substantially complete
 - (Still working to attain USDVA Certification for per diem) \$175,244,887

- **Illinois Veterans' Home at LaSalle (Four Projects)**
 - **Replace Nurse Call and Fire Alarm Systems (Original Building)**
 - Construction 83% Complete (Week of 8/22 Received and synchronizing Fire Alarm Strobes)
 - Final Completion 4/14/2023 \$ 583,100
 - **Replace Original Generator, Chiller, and Mechanical Systems**
(Designed and bid; some supply chain issues.)

- Construction 90% Complete (Week of 8/22 Installing stairs and platform at new Generator)
- Final Completion 6/30/2023 \$ 2,603,600
- **Replace Resident Room Doors** (27 each) in NW Isolation Wing
 - Design 100% - Contractor selected; completing paperwork and ordering materials (12% complete)
 - Final Completion 6/01/2023 \$ 300,000
- **Renovate Veterans Home**
(Project design is at 75%. May be some Supply Chain impact.) \$ 4,194,400
- \$ 7,681,100**

- **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.) Construction is 91 % complete
 - Pending operating permits from IL EPA for the Filtration Plant constructed in the south wing of Prince Building \$ 9,934,118
- **Replace Air Handling Units in residential buildings** (Scope reduced to include R3 & R4)
 - 40% project design completed
 - Substantial Completion 7/29/2025? \$ 2,669,100
- **Replace Various Roofing Systems** (Project Substantially completed) 5,683,200
- **Replace Water Mains on campus** (Separating Domestic Water and Fire Mains)
 - Project design 89% completed
 - Substantial Completion 9/09/2024? \$ 2,038,000
- **Central Kitchen Renovation** Project will renovate the Kitchen floor and Dish Machine Room)
 - Still in design – 18 %
 - Completion 9/01/2023(?) – A/E in mediation with CDB regarding project scope and compensation. \$ 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.)
 - Still in design – 19 %
 - Completion 6/30/2023(?) \$ 3,187,300
- **Replace Shingle Roofing Systems**
Project has been designed and bid
 - Contractor completing paperwork and obtaining materials
 - Work will begin in September 2022 subject to availability of materials
 - Completion 6/30/2023(?) \$ 3,651,200
- **Upgrade HVAC /Replace Air Handling Units**
(Project is to provide additional ventilation R3 R4 S1 S2)
 - Still in design – 44 %
 - Completion 2/28/2024 \$ 5,215,000

- **(Additional) Renovation for Isolation Rooms**
(Project is to make final adjustments to the ventilation systems for isolation rooms in R1 & R2)
 - Punchlist items being completed \$ 557,038
 - **Upgrade HVAC /Replace Air Handling Units**
(Project is to provide additional ventilation R3 R4 S1 S2)
 - Still in design – 44 %
 - Completion 2/28/2024 \$ 4,313,900
- \$ 38,750,256
- **Illinois Veterans' Home at Quincy – (Eight projects)**
 - **Construct Domestic Water Loop**
(Overall project design is at 52% with design of the Water Loop nearing completion. Design for demolition of Water Tower is complete and out for bid.)
 - Anticipate substantial completion of the whole project 12/01/2024 \$ 3,000,000
 - **Construct New Nursing Home and Domiciliary**
 - Demolition is complete!
 - Construction is 24% complete
 - Anticipate substantial completion of the whole project 12/06/2025 \$ 271,396,616
 - **Project to Expand Sunset Cemetery w/NCA Grant**
Demolition is complete!
 - Construction is 80% complete
 - Anticipate substantial completion of the whole project 8/20/2023 \$ 1,336,025
 - **Roof Replacement at Ehle Laundry and Tradesmen Buildings**
(Substantially Complete.) \$ 406,700
 - **Emergency Repairs to Storm Sewer Line (under Railroad bed)**
(Project still under design in coordination with BNSF Engineers, IL EPA and IL DNR.) \$ 988,000
 - **Upgrade Electrical at HQs Bldg & Generator at Water Treatment Facility**
(Design development underway.) \$ 980,800
 - **Install Fire Suppression System**
(Complete installation of fire sprinklers in IT Room in the old Stone Building, Smith Hall and Reig Admin Building) \$ 1,156,500
 - **Improve Ventilation in Kitchen at Hammond Hall**
(Architect/Engineer Firm selection Approved)
 - Temporary Chiller installed
 - Design is 26% complete. \$ 250,000
- \$ 281,638,388

Capital Projects at the Illinois Veterans' Homes

Anna (1)	2,566,700
Chicago (1)	175,244,887
LaSalle (4)	7,681,100
Manteno (11)	38,750,256
Quincy (8)	<u>281,638,388</u>
	\$ 505,881,331

VETERANS' HOME WEEKLY STATUS SUMMARY

Date: Aug. 18, 2022

Home	Skilled Census	Budgeted Skilled Census	Skilled Vacancies	Admits This Week	Admits Next Week	Dom Census	Dom Vacancies
Anna	33	49	16	0	0	9	1
Chicago	25	200	175	0	0		
La Salle	94	190	96	1	1		
Manteno	167	294	127	1	2		
Quincy	249	382	133	3	0	35	53
Prince	9	15	6	0	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	10	0			2	0	5	21		8	12
Chicago	156 (107 wartime)	0	10				39	0	0	0	
La Salle	14	0	2	0			0	14	1	0	
Manteno	12	8wks	4	20			72	7	2	0	
Quincy	15	0	3	0	2	0	7	0	0	0	0
Prince	1							0			

Chairman Mike Peck:

Gwen gave a very detailed report, are there any questions?

Representative Swanson:

Great report Gwen. I always appreciate hearing and seeing what all you are doing. My question is when you talked about the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy, you said 24% completed with a completed early with completion early next year, is that 2024?

Gwen Diehl:

No sir the domicillary will be completed early next year and we'll be able to move the residents over. Then in 2025 we anticipate substantial completion of the nursing building and at that point, we'll be able to move residents out of Markward hall and begin demolition on that and clear the site for green space. So it's a multi year project.

Representative Swanson:

Thank you. I was in Quincy for meetings on Friday, and I did a drive by through the Quincy veteran's home and my gosh, every street was closed. It's great to see all that going on, but big cranes and big equipment it's amazing. Great to everyone who's been a part of that.

Chairman Peck:

Gwen, one thing, I would like the advisory council minutes from the veterans homes available to the council members. If you could urge the superintendents to have our council members, get those minutes. I appreciate it.

Gwen Diehl:

I will ask sir.

Chairman Peck:

Any other questions for Gwen?

Is Mark Patterson available?

Maureen, please...

Maureen Hartigan:

Thank you very much, as the Director mentioned the monthly newsletter "Veterans Connections" is reaching about 20,000 veterans via email. There is a 50% open rate of that email as well and is 46% up from the August edition. The industry average is 34%, so we're pretty good in that regard. We also pushed out on social medium to our IDVA staff encouraging them to share with the network and our veterans service partners.

Also as the director mentioned, the website was updated in January. Since January we have at 141,000 people visit the website. In August alone we had 23,610 visits. The top pages that are visited are communications which shows that the site is effective. Field offices, Veterans Homes and permits are getting traffic. So, I'm very happy about traffic on our website.

We're also working on rebranding to make our collateral in the way that we communicate or reflective of who we are as an agency. The updated collateral will have a more uniform look across the agency.

Social media we continue to on a monthly basis reference days, programs, events, share relevant information from other agencies. Kourtney Hopkins is amplifying suicide awareness month with a very robust push and we'll be launching our Hispanic Heritage Month. This is an area I would love to get more traffic on our social media. We have a great audience really good content. We would like to have more followers and any way you can support that effort is appreciated. Our Annual Report is due in in January and we are on target to have that submitted on time.

That is my report pending any questions.

Chairman Mike Peck:

Thank you Maureen. Any questions?

Representative Swanson:

Is there a chance that you could upload that newsletter on your Facebook page? So we can share it from there?

Maureen:

We do upload there so I will make sure that you are seeing on our Facebook page.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you.

Connie Watson.....

Connie Watson:

Vets Cash Scratch-Off Lottery Ticket Program

IVAC Report Summary – September 14, 2022

1. Vets Cash Committee Review – FY22 Q4

The FY22 Fourth Quarter Meeting was held on August 24, 2022, the Veterans Cash Grant Authorization Committee (GAC) reviewed 3 applications that were received from April through June 2022. The following is a detailed summary of what the GAC decided about each grant with a recommendation for 2 applicants to award and 1 applicant to deny. All applicant votes described below were unanimous

Grant #	Rank/Score	Applicant Name	Requested	Denied	Awarded	Amount
1. 734	(1/221)	Goodwill of Central Illinois	\$30,000.00	_____	__X__	_____
2. 735	(3/185)	Midwest Veterans Closet	\$97,684.26	_____	__X__	_____
3. 737	(2/197)	ERASE PTSD Now	\$96,002.84	__X__	_____	_____

- Funds Available: \$500,000.00
- **Grant Funds Awarded: \$127,684.26**
- Balance Remaining: \$372,315.74

Vets Cash Balance

Vets Cash Fund Balance (236 Revenues vs. Expenditures): \$1,769,908.84
(as of August 24, 2022)

Grants Currently Processing: \$127,684.26

Reserved to Award in FY23 Q1: \$500,000.00

Remaining Balance: \$1,142,224.58

Next Committee Review Date:

November 16, 2022

Chairman Mike Peck:

Any questions for Connie?

I've gotten feedback for some reason, and they think it has got easier on the grants application. I have to contribute that to your efforts and guiding these people through. Thank you very much.

Connie Watson:

Thank you. Mr. chairman.

Director Prince:

Mr. Chair, if I may. I have also asked Connie to sit in on the Cook County presentation. As you are probably aware, that Cook County grants 1.5 million dollars. This will ensure we are all working from the same page.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you sir.

Sara, if you are available.

Sara Augustinas:

Good morning everyone, so the legislative division at IDVA is looking toward the fall veto session and the spring 2023 session. I have started to work on official legislative proposals for 2023 with various divisions at IDVA. We have had conversations about what proposals will either go in extensive review process, we won't have decisions on the proposals that for a week. But in the December meeting, I will be able to update this group with our initial legislative proposal and have draft language and everything I need to go by then. So more to follow on that.

As far as implementing the bills that passed this past spring session, we are finalizing the administrative rules internally for SB3762. This bill stemmed from our Veterans Education and training administrator. The enrollment, basically, the bill is effective, it's in place, but we are required to adopt rules just to make sure that the provisions of that bill live within the Illinois administrative code. So it is a tedious process. It can be time consuming, but it has to be done and Dan has been our subject matter, expert and a huge help, and helping me format these to get them to the Secretary of State. We'll go through a pre-review process. By late fall they should be submitted and approved during the course of the spring.

My next update is that you all saw that there was a summary of the PACT ACT in this month's edition of "Veterans Connection". Obviously this group is already aware of how impactful this legislation is. The overview in "Veterans Connections" is just meant to be a high level overview. It's a summary of various VA, documents that have been put out, but we did want to make sure we were putting out the news in that newsletter that reaches so many.

My next update is that as far as my role and responsibilities that I have for the agency, I draft, review and monitor legislation during session and in the downtime between session. But I'm also responsible for constituent cases and inquiries from the legislative

offices. Over the last 7 months, we've had about 116 constituent cases, which is roughly 16 cases per month. In terms of volume, it's nothing like what our field services sees and obviously most of these cases go to our veterans service officers. The cases that don't really fall in benefits and claims, or require a referral to another veterans service organization tend to come into my inbox. The reason I wanted to mention this is that there's been a couple of exciting cases. I've seen emails where it looks like some organizations might now be able to apply for a Vets Cash grant on the behavioral health change in 2023. I recently spoke with the surviving spouse who will be eligible for the property tax exemption with the changes made in SB1975, so that's been really exciting to see on the individual level.

My last update is for spring 2023, I will always monitor legislation related to service members and veterans. That's in the title or a keyword. That's my job. I will also be looking and taking a renewed focus on monitoring bills. An example is that this past spring, there was a bill about disposable utensils that affected a multitude of state agencies, IDVA being one of them. That bill was amended and did pass but in its initial form could have been very challenging and would have needed to be implemented at all of our Veteran Homes. I'll be taking a closer look at the procurement code, the personnel code in environmental bills, this spring session that may, or may not be of interest in this group, but for the agency that can affect our physical operations or our administrative operations. This past legislative session, about 30 to 40 of the bills I monitored closely, had the word "Veteran or Service member" in them and then the other 30 related to nursing home regulations, utensils, personnel, procurement, you name it. So, and that was a short session, so more to follow on this spring I think it'll be very busy, but an exciting time as well.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you very much take any questions for Sara? If not, I'm going to ask Senator Wilcox, you have any remarks you'd like to make it this time?

Senator Wilcox:

Just know that we knew we would have trailer language to the VAC bill and it was supposed to take 2 forms, 1 actually defining a state chartered program since it is called out that there could be veteran organizations that are state chartered right now or really have no state charter, so many of complaining that the charter they get from the secretary of state for filing for their nonprofit status fills that bill, we just need to define what it means to have a state charter and build that program out that's likely now to no longer be in the trailer bill, but it will be a separate bill and the AG office is working on that internally at the moment. The other portion for the trailer bill was to define what an arbitration process would look like under the AG, so that when VAC's and county boards do have disputes or different interpretations of the statute they don't necessarily have to go to court, which is the recourse right now. And one of the reasons we sponsored that bill last year. There are some questions that likely need to be defined. I think we know what the answer's likely are, but that's going to take some time. So, there'll be a few other changes, like should the VAC levee fall under the detail limitations for counties? It currently does and I don't expect a change there. There are some that are making a push, but I'm not sure the general assembly is willing to kind of incentivize counties who have neglected to comply with the law in the past, all of a sudden, getting the benefit of moving the VAC levee out from underneath them. But those are

forthcoming. I don't know if they will be presented in veto session or not, or whether they will be the new general assembly session. So that's yet to be determined.

Chairman Peck:

Any questions for the senator?

Thank you senator, I appreciate your time and efforts.

Representative Swanson, any questions sir?

Representative Swanson:

Really no comments here, I just appreciate Sara's hard work. We pass it off and it's up to her to clean it up and we appreciate how she does that and the great work she does.

Chairman Peck:

Senator Wilcox, we had a question about the increase of property value that would put folks outside of the homestead exemption. Do you have any comment on that?

Senator Wilcox:

So, you're talking about how the exemption on property taxes is in all or nothing based on the assessed value. There have been some different discussions. There's always a challenge of when you open up that type of a discussion, you may not always like the outcome even if you do get what your ultimate goal was. So we have to just be cognizant of that. There have been many gains in the aspect of Illinois being veteran friendly and this is certainly one of them. My fear, and I know this, because one of the former sponsors of that bill, who used to be a state rep. in my area has publicly stated that he did not mean it the way it is written, which means it would be 1/3 of what it currently is. Now we think he was doing that politically for issues up here. But you do have the potential that instead of that 250,000 eav, it becomes a 250,000 dollars value. So just be aware of that. But, yes, I do understand the implications that it is a cliff and I'm not so sure my recommendation would be to make a push on that at this time.

Representative Swanson:

I totally concur with the Senator that it is one of those cans of worms that if we open it up, what may be those results. So it's very concerning. If you prorate it on a house over 250,000 eav prorated to reduce the tax rates is one way to skin a cat, but it's still once you open it up, it's what what else may fall out of that? So it's a concern.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you very much, I appreciate it. At this time I would like to go back to Field Service officers. Chief of Staff, Melissa Black, do you have a report for us?

COS Melissa Black:

Mark Patterson sends his regards, he is actually in interviews right now and so he is bringing us on additional people.

Field Services has hired a number of new VSO's around the state and we have additional vacancies being filled. We have also hired an administrative staff member that is located at the claims management center in the VA regional office. We have

moved a few offices and have additional offices that are being prepared to be moved. A lot of the reason we are moving some of those offices is to make sure that we get into communities that need representation but also to have accessible locations. Some of the future locations that we'll be announcing over the next 6 months. You hear heard it here first. Elgin and southern Cook County are a couple of them. We also are in the process of working with CMS to better relocate some of our offices in the Southern Illinois region.

In all areas, we're continuously looking for itinerary locations to be able to expand our locations. So that is definitely something if you have thoughts around your neck of the woods that we could be considering as an itinerary location. I'm sure Mark would be interested in that. As we work with CMS on those and we were taking possession of the newer properties that we're moving to. We're certainly be working with Maureen and others to make sure that that media gets out in our alerts and our updates on our webpage and things like that. So the people know where we're going to be.

One of the things in the conversations with Mark is to make sure that we actually have longevity in the locations that we're at. So we're not just thinking about what makes sense today but what's going to make sense down the road. So that if we move out of a building or a VSO office. Because people kind of always know we can go ahead and get people down there. They're always on the courthouse square, or they're definitely going to be in this location. So, what we don't want to do when we're making these office moves is to be only thinking about today, not thoughtful about having longevity in those locations, because we want to certainly be accessible and make sure that we're visible for the community that we're serving. So those will be announced through media, as I said.

We are conducting actually interviews for the central region supervisor position. And right now. I am trying to think that's the other thing that we're doing is into the director of 6 point plan earlier with the VSO's is that we're deploying all new smartphones out to our VSO's so that they can actually utilize the hotspots when they're adding those itenerate locations and they can use their phones to be able to do all the things that we're doing. Social media gives us a lot of opportunities that technology can allow us to take snapshots and upload documents as opposed to having a printer and a scanner and all of those things. So, we're increasing make sure that those VSO offices and, of course, we have an an overarching technology plan for our organization. So that would be the report from Mark Patterson and I'm sure he'd be happy to answer questions. I can field them right now or I can or Crystal can direct you to him.

I also chairman, I have some additional information at some point, just specifically related to the agency's efforts in doing business with individuals all around the state specifically business owners related to veteran, owned businesses, minority owned businesses, women owned businesses and businesses owned by persons with disabilities and so, at a point if appropriate, I'd be happy to share that information with that as well. That concludes my report.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you ma'am.

Just one quick question on Camp Lejune, I wanted to make sure that our message is the same. What the veterans service organizations are doing is telling people to go see certified service officer before they talk about having a lawsuit on Camp Lejune, what is the message for giving to the public?

Assistant Director Vaughn:

We obviously concur with your message but I am not aware of any specific messaging that is going out at this time. We will confirm with the Field Services Manager and get back to you on that.

Chairman Peck:

I have asked the AG's office on this question too. I'm concerned about the veteran but as well the surviving spouses.

Any other questions for the Chief of Staff?

Shannon Yount?

Shannon Yount:

Thank you chairman, since the June meeting the office has been busy so I'll highlight just a few things. We conducted presentations at each veteran service organization state convention. The attorney general himself spoke at the American Legion State Convention.

On August 1st, the Attorney General, Kwame Raoul led a coalition of 9 Attorney Generals, urging the U. S Senate to pass the Sergeant 1st Class Heath Robinson honor our promise to address comprehensive toxics the act of 2022. This would expand healthcare eligibility for more than 3.5Million veterans exposed to military toxins at a later date. The U. S. said it passed the PACT ACT with the vote of 86 to 11, which a lot of you are familiar with the PACT ACT and all of the most recent information being pushed out as the president signing the act into law on August 10th. We're keeping up to date on all the information that's coming out. We understand that the VA is pushing out more information later in October in regards to the Attorney General's letter to the Senate and our press release. I sent a mass email out the 1st week of August to the members of IVAC. If you have not received my email, or you had questions about the press release, or the letter, please feel free to reach out to me.

We also had a member of the bureau staff, a table during the resource event for the Veterans day at the State Fair. I went to both of the fairs in Springfield and DuQuoin. I got to meet a lot of members of IDVA, members of the organizations, a part of the IVAC, and it was a great turnout. I think that the Veterans day is kind of back to where it was beforehand. Veterans came by asked questions. A lot of them had questions about the PACT ACT and what we're doing, so it was very, very good.

Just to touch base on the chairman's question pertaining to the Camp Lejeune act. I have not received any guidance at the moment about if we're going to really say anything or if we are going to provide any guidance or information to the general population chairman. If you would like, I can reconnect with the office and then I can reach back out to you. And I think that's everything I have. So, if anybody has any

questions, please feel free to ask, or you can reach out to me, I could put my email address in the chat box.

Chairman Peck:

Any questions for Shannon? I thank you very much, but I do urge the Attorney General to put out some type of message. They get these, not just the veterans, but the surviving spouse before they enter into an agreement with an attorney on that.

I think it's very important.

I have spoken with the Director of the cemetery and there have been no changes on that situation.

Under new business, I do want to make a nomination committee. I've asked Bill Wolff to chair it along with Vince Long and Al Reynolds and I need to have a motion made and approved by the council for nomination committee. We'll get their report at the December meeting.

Keith Wetherell made motion to approve
Dr. Jerry Field 2nd the motion

Any questions on nominating committee, everybody's open to the position of chair and vice chair. I would urge that you give the chairman an email showing your interest so you can be considered. Any questions?

All in favor signify by saying I.

Motion passed

We had an issue up at the Fort Sheridan, which the VA, as requested a transfer of 4.7 acres from the lake county forest preserve back to the VA so they can extend the life of the cemetery by 50 years. Over 100 veterans met with Reserve Board, and they have unanimously approved the transfer, Well the committee did. They still got to go in front of the board. One of the things about it is because they're not hold rule it has to be approved by the general assembly. So, I'd like to have a motion in which we endorse to the General Assembly the transfer of that 4.7 acres to the VA for Fort Sheridan national cemetery.

Motion made by Dr. Jerry Field
2nd by Joe Schaler

Any, any questions on on this. I mean, this is a no brainer.

A great location with almost 2/3 of our population in northeastern Illinois. So any questions? all in favor signify by saying, aye, any opposed motion carried.

Any other new business from the members of the council?

Representative Swanson:

I had someone reach out to me, inquiring about each county has a coroner and what's been taking place as through covid and it's been happening for quite some time. A veteran will die with pneumonia but the coroner won't do any research to see if they're getting a VA disability for COPD, so that prevents the widow from following up with any VA claims. I'm wondering if it's something that we couldn't help with, and I know the coroners just had their annual meeting just this past weekend. It's something where you can put on the agenda to get in front of the States Coroners Association, or somehow post information to them to suggest that if it's a veteran, and if you don't know, just ask a family member, if they're a veteran and inquire if there's any way the death could be related to a veteran's claim. Because most coroner's and most people in the general public don't understand the repercussion of just saying, hey, they died of a heart attack. What's the 2nd effect that caused that heart attack? And I just think it's something that maybe we as a body, or we as a state agency should bring forward and bring it to the attention of the Coroners Association. So I'll leave it at that any thoughts.

Chairman Peck:

I totally agree with you, sir. I'd like to ask the Director if this body urges it, would you write a letter to the Coroners Association?

Director Prince:

I would be happy to take the advise of the committee.

Chairman Peck:

Representative Swanson I would entertain a motion to have the Director send a letter.

Representative Swanson made a motion
Robert Tyler 2nd

Mark Patterson:

Let me, let me jump in with a little bit of information for claims when it comes to these situations. Although the coroner may not have a process in because they are not doing an autopsy. They may only be processing for the death. When we make a claim for DIC we're also going to include medical diagnosis, that was already obtained. And we're also going to if that's shy of what is needed for a diagnosis we can also and will be requesting medical opinion on whether any of the past medical attention that was received meets one of the criteria is to think that it is just as likely or not that they suffered from a condition. So on the coroner side, I think it would be kind of a minimal situation but it's not going to hinder us from being able to prosecute a client for DIC for these conditions.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you Mark.

Any other new business?

Frank Guterrez:

The University of Illinois in particular has the children of veterans tuition waiver and every county within Illinois is offered 3 waivers for children of veterans that fall within a certain service period. My only concern, when you look at the equity involved in each county. Pope County has 500 veterans and Cook County has 152,483. That just means that the children of Cook County veterans aren't all for the same amount of equity as someone from a smaller county. I am just wondering if there is a better way we can address this. Would we be able to go off of districts or population vs. area?

Chairman Peck:

Representative Swanson have you had any concerns on that 3 scholarships per county for University of Illinois?

Representative Swanson:

No, I have not out of my neck of the woods. I can understand the issue and understand the point that's being made here. I just don't know how we could make it equitable with something certainly Senator Wilcox has a some input here.

Senator Wilcox:

No, it's not an issue that's kind of come across my desk. So it's something I would need to kind of look into a little bit more.

Chairman Peck:

So, we'll do our best and we'll try and put this under old business for the next session.

Sara Augustinas:

Just one comment to add to that, I want to say, at least one or two legislative efforts have been made to change it. You may want to speak with Senator Tracy and Senator McClure about that section of statute.

Chairman Peck:

Thank you very much.

Any other new business?

Well ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your time. Is there a motion to adjourn?

Motion to adjourn made by Bill Wolff

2nd by Keith Wetherell

Next meeting date: Wednesday, December 14, 2022