



Andrew Tangen, Superintendent
Sherry Kruse, Assistant Superintendent
Veterans Assistance Commission of Lake County
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5/17/2023

VETERAN ASSISTANCE COMMISSION MINUTES

Opening Ceremonies, Salute to the Colors, Opening Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance

- Colors presented by Sargent at Arms Gandara
- Opening prayer by Chaplain Honeywell

Roll Call of Members

- Number of members present: 33

Approval of minutes of previous meeting - March 8, 2023

- Motion made by Delegate Schultz
- Seconded by Delegate Voit
- Motion passed

Special Guests

- Owen Davidson, guest of brother Oliver
- Vince Martorano, Representing VFW Post 2245, though not a delegate
- Philip De Runtz, Lake County Health Department
- Marah Altenberg, Lake County Board, District 19 who hopes to learn more in order to help veterans in Lake County and is open to new ideas which can be submitted through her website

New Business

- Motion to re-elect Andrew Tangen to Superintendent and Sherry Kruse to Assistant Superintendent for a 3 year term by Delegate Honeywell
- Seconded by Delegate Gandara
- Motion passed

Superintendent Report

- Resolution 23.001 – VACLCL Policy and Procedures
 - Introduced in March 2023
 - Typos have been fixed
 - Executive Board approved with changes
 - Requested it be put to a vote
 - Text of Resolution read aloud
 - Motion to approve VACLCL Policy and Procedures by Delegate DeReu
 - Seconded by Delegate Ayers
 - Motion passed

- Resolution 23.004 – Staff Size
 - Total budget is \$5,493,104
 - Current staff is 10 persons
 - Lake County: very specialized veteran population necessitates more staff
 - Only county with increasing veteran population in Illinois
 - Just shy of 45,000 veteran population
 - Only county with majority of veterans under 65 years of age
 - 60% 18 - 64 years old
 - Gulf War and Post 9/11
 - New staff are post 9/11
 - Other counties - majority of veterans 65 +
 - PACT Act expansion and musculoskeletal injuries also contribute
 - Current wait for appointment is six weeks
 - Six week estimate does not include office closure due to moving
 - Staff recommendation: Increase from 10 to 16 staff members
 - Two Senior VSO, six VSO, one Executive Assistant, one Paralegal, three Administrative Assistants
 - Reflects both funded and unfunded positions
 - Staff salary - approximately \$1.33 million
 - Benefits offered and accepted may increase or decrease
 - Determined by Lake County calculations
 - Estimate: approximately \$368,307 by this year's numbers
 - Total suggested budget for salary plus benefits is approximately \$1.5 million
 - Motion to approve budget for staff by Delegate DeReu
 - Seconded by Delegate Schultz
 - Motion passed
- Resolution 23.005 – Capital Improvement
 - Finalization and signing for both land parcels have taken place
 - County warrants for payment are signed and expected closing date is September 15
 - Location of land parcels
 - East side of Allen Lynch Medal of Honor Bridge on south side of Grand Avenue
 - Lots previously occupied by Joe's Crab Shack and Outback Steakhouse
 - \$3.5 million to be raised from the budget reserve fund
 - Final purchase price was \$500,000 under projected budget
 - Plan in place for surplus
 - Motion to approve capital improvement funds by Delegate Hettich
 - Seconded by Delegate Ayers
 - Motion passed
- Resolution 23.006 – VACLIC Budget Fiscal Year 2024
 - Minimum .02 of assessed value of all property in Lake County
 - Determined by Illinois Public Act 102 - 0732 and 102 - 1132
 - Clarifies language in Military Veterans Assistance Act (MVAA)
 - Approximately \$5.7 million in 2024
 - Budget is made below .02 %
 - Expected to reduce as we go along
 - Important to raise capital now for expansion
 - Motion to approve budget by Delegate DeReu
 - Seconded by Delegate Honeywell
 - Motion passed

- Additional updates with land purchase
 - Land Purchase has gone through
 - Documents are signed and the county is aware
 - Checks will be cut during this due diligence period
 - Architects have been contacted
 - One preferred firm is working on a mockup currently
 - Current zoning is Entertainment/Residential/Corporate Offices
 - Special Use Permit (SUP) will be acquired for us as a government entity
 - Allows us to be in a commercial space
 - Gurnee has expressed willingness to approve SUP
 - Assessment would be less than 5% of the total tax revenue
 - Schools still receive approximately 70%
 - Remainder going to county agencies, retirement funds
 - Police and Fire
 - Northridge Associates Consists of other business owners near land purchased
 - VACLIC Superintendent will be on the board
 - Anticipated compliance with VACLIC build project
 - Will be involved in plan moving forward
- Finalizing new office space updates
 - Plan to outgrow interim Hawkston Hall location
 - Only temporary location – 3 to 5 years
 - Plan to have larger conference room for meetings
 - New business cards for interim location now available
 - Anticipate to be up and running after August 1, 2023
 - Working with IT, purchasing, and builders
 - Painting and floors have been redone
 - Phone and fax numbers will not be changing
- FHCC Office Update
 - Lovell office closed years ago
 - Has been approved again after three year fight
 - Great thanks to John DeReu who led the charge
 - Two offices will be in Building 135, 2nd floor, rooms 106 and 107
 - Same building, same floor as special medical exams
 - Left off the elevator
 - In bad shape but renovations will be completed by Lovell staff
 - Previously used as storage
 - Furniture provided by Lovell
 - Computers provided by Lovell IT
 - No opening date is anticipated at this time
 - Question: Will VA computers mean a VA ID card is needed?
 - Yes, and staff will also need a PIV card to access VA files
 - Current staffing plan is one VSO and one admin on a rotating schedule
- Introduction of new staff
 - Jonathan Kellogg - VSO
 - Rachael Burke - Admin
 - Tony Roberti – Admin

- NACVSO annual meeting
 - 1st week of June
 - Andrew Tangen is now Judge Advocate and nominated for the 1st Vice President
 - John Murray was nominated for Judge Advocate
 - Elections after national convention
- Motion to close Superintendent's Report by Delegate Voit
- Seconded by Delegate Gandara
- Motion passed

Public Comment

- Presentation made at IACVAC Legislative Seminar in Carol Stream
 - Superintendent Tangen was commended for making an outstanding presentation with points to follow up on
- Fort Sheridan
 - Still attempting to get land but behind the scenes everyone agrees - 98% sure of approval
 - 100+ at meeting with board in an impassioned gathering
 - Gratitude for attendance and comments were expressed
 - Critical in helping broader community understand veteran concerns
 - Resolution estimated at one year for Fort Sheridan but no date set for formal vote
 - Affected by the Downstate Forest Preserve Act
 - Cook County has their own - everyone else is "downstate"
 - House and Senate passed this last week in May 2023
 - General Assembly then has 30 days
 - 60 days after for Governor to sign
 - Can be passed without his signature
 - Historically has been veteran friendly
 - Next step is contract approval to transfer land
 - Question: Are they only taking ashes?
 - Yes, and hopefully about 3000 veterans in ground cremains at oval where Vattman Monument is located currently but that will be moved
 - Medal of Honor recipient who was stationed there and a Two Star General requested a burial, but were denied without exception
 - 83,000 total veterans between the oval and columbarium planned
 - Abraham Lincoln Cemetery - also expanding in size

Unfinished Business

- Mental Health Class - March 8, 2023 was scheduled
 - No longer planned for after this meeting though it had been scheduled
 - Senior VSO Jilian "Summer" Padoan runs the class
 - Many dates were unavailable for Mental Health Classes as Summer prepared to testify at the General Assembly Veterans Ailment Task Force
 - Evaluates veterans conditions getting off active duty
 - Very important for improvement in Illinois' response to veterans' needs
 - Was presented by Summer and Will Sutton from the VAC of DeKalb County on May 16, 2023
 - Looking for time and place for next round of training
 -

New Business

- Mundelein American Legion will have a golf outing June 13, 2023 and there are two free spots open with a hot dog lunch provided
- Question: VA Financial Reporting was issued for state and nation showing dollars spent per veteran. St. Clair County spends more per veteran, why? West Virginia spends more, why?
 - Illinois used to be 52nd in the nation
 - Allen Lynch created Attorney General's Military Veterans Rights Bureau in 1984
 - County level services weren't being funded properly
 - Cook county is a perfect example
 - Only 27,000 veterans received Compensation and Pension exams
 - Veteran population is 160,000 in Cook County
 - 13 or 14% in Cook County is far below the national average of 26%
 - Billions of dollars missed out on for Cook County
 - Benefits desert in Cook County skews data for whole state
 - Home Rule removed only recently which allows for greater funding
 - No longer links funding to population size of county
 - Steady, slow increase in Illinois ranking
 - County funding and VSO staffing improved
 - 52nd in 2020 to 50th in 2021 to 48th in 2022
 - 80% of veterans in Illinois are North of I-80, it is not just city of Chicago
 - VAC of Cook County total budget is still only \$400,000
 - Far too little, but plans to submit a more realistic budget will be soon
 - Zero VSO's at Cook County VAC, relies on IDVA and VA VSOs
 - Located in South Loop Juvenile Detention Basement
 - Delegate Schultz observes IL is not affordable for veterans to settle in long term so pension dollars go elsewhere
- Delegate Gandara shared Fort Sheridan has several Memorial Day events
 - Main event is Sunday, May 28, 2023 at 1:00 PM
 - Bike run is Friday, May 26, 2023 and will go from Hines to Lovell
 - Prayer is Saturday night, May 27, 2023
 - Ceremony is Saturday, May 27, 2023
- Recognition week is this week at Mission BBQ
- Lack of Bingo at Lovell
 - Used to be run by VFW Libertyville
 - Superintendent Tangen trying to end the Covid restrictions
 - Working with the Lovell Hospital Director's supervisor at VISN and Undersecretary of the VA on any inconsistencies with guidance/policy
 - Mask restrictions are not VA/DOD guidance any longer as of May 11, 2023
 - Great need to open up and relax or do away with testing so social programs can return
 - Current Volunteers advise loosening up is coming soon
 - Practitioners tested twice a week, Volunteers tested once a week
 - Staff frustration is of concern
 - Advisory Council would also been a good place to voice concerns
 - Would censure or punishment be appropriate for delaying the open?
- Libertyville's Memorial Day parade
 - Scheduled along side streets
 - Not felt to be giving proper respect
 - Representative DeReu lobbied successfully to return parade to Milwaukee Avenue

- Healing Circles/Talking circles/Powwow
 - Looking for speakers
 - Rotating locations
 - Welcome to all, both veterans and civilians
 - Recent meaningful healing circle, mother of veteran who died of suicide
 - See Delegate Gandara for details

Delegate Reports

Delegates Marciciak and Hudson (American Legion Post 964):

- Event being held - Ceremony will commence at 11:00 AM on Monday, May 29, 2023 at the Lake Zurich Veterans Memorial which is located at 200 Mohawk Trail in Lake Zurich and features Guest Keynote Speaker Andrew Tangen with picnic luncheon to follow at the Post

Delegate Gandara (VFW 8741 and 1st Auxiliary):

- Poppy Distribution - May 26 and 27, 2023
- Memorial Day Parade and Service - May 29, 2023 9:00 AM Cook Park to Lakeside Cemetery
- Firing Squad for Memorial Day Service at Fort Sheridan Cemetery: May 28, 2023 1:00 PM
- May 21 2023: Lake Shore/ Rolling Thunder helped in Garrison Flag raising/Poker Run to raise money towards creating the first Fisher House in Lake County
- Donations of \$500 each made to Blue Star Families Appreciation Event, American Indian Center, Catholic Charities Food Pantry and Operation Fetch
- Donations have been made to Potawatomi Powwow Trail in Zion, IL and also to the Gold Star Families Breakfast to be held at the State Fair this year
- Presented two \$200 Americanism Awards, one male and one female student of Libertyville High School
- Presented two \$200 Americanism Awards, one male and one female student of Vernon Hills High School

Delegate Percy (American Legion Post 281):

- Memorial Day Parade - May 29, 2023 Arrive 10:45 AM Ceremony 11:00 AM
- Will be participating in Waukegan Independence Day Parade
- Placing flags May 26, 2023 at five cemeteries

Delegate Desfor (American Legion Post 911):

- Annual Memorial Day Parade on Main Street beginning at 10:00 AM

Delegate Desfor (VFW Post 2486):

- Two VAC members taking on additional county level duties:
 - VAC Chaplain Marie Honeywell is the Commander of Post 2486 and is also 5th District VFW Commander
 - VAC Admin Assistant Tony Roberti will be VFW Post 2486's Senior Vice Commander and is VFW 5th District Service Officer
- Wauconda Memorial Day Parade on Main Street at 10:00 AM

Delegate Lopez (MOWW Chapter 082):

- Presented seven certificates of recognition at Eagle Scout Court of Honor, Next Court of Honor is May 20, 2023 in Lake Zurich and in Wisconsin
- Members of MOWW attended MOAA April Luncheon with Speaker Tricia Menke
 - Gave history of Great Lakes Training Center
 - Operates the American Sailor Museum of Great Lakes at the Main Gate
- Fort Sheridan Memorial Day event is on Sunday, May 28, 2023 at 1:00 PM
- MOWW Region II meeting at Fort Knox, KY on May 20, 2023
- MOAA Luncheon on May 21, 2023 at Spring Green County Club
- MOWW Convention at Annapolis from July 31, 2023 to August 6, 2023

Delegate Schultz (American Legion 1247):

- \$5,300 was donated YTD in 2023 to a number of Veteran and Community Organizations including Food Banks and Local Pantries. These donations assist in covering operating expenses and provide direct support to Veterans and community members in need
- Conducted its final Monthly Bingo event of the season in May 2023. These events are held on the first Thursday of the month, from October through May at the Vernon Hills Golf Course, beginning at 6:30 PM on the First Thursday of the Month
- Presented colors at Vernon Hills High School Varsity Softball for Military Appreciation Day
- Recruited 10 new candidates for the 2023 Service Honors Program in partnership with the Village of Vernon Hills. This is the program where banners are created and hung throughout the Village honoring both Active Duty and Veterans for their service
- Assisted in the development of a Video Presentation that Honored the Banner recipients (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9_tMJSSsw), based on the formal presentation ceremony and dinner held on May 2, 2023
- Post Service Officer attended IAVAC Seminar in Carol Stream on VA and IDVA Benefits
- Post acquired several motorized Wheelchairs and arranged for refurbishment and distributed them to members of the Community (one Veteran and one Community Leader)
- Holding five Memorial Weekend events: one flagging of graves at Vernon Township and Willow Lawn Cemetery and three Memorial Day Commemorative Ceremonies
- Providing support to the VHPD and Operation Blue Line for the Front Line at the Jim Heier Fishing Derby for Inpatients and Residents at the Lovel FHCC on June 25, 2023
- Planning its 5th Annual Support the Hero's Golf Outing on August 26, 2023. Proceeds are used to fund philanthropic efforts

Delegate Dutkovic (ROA Chapter 48):

- Next meeting will be joint with MOAA and MOWW at the Rolling Green Country Club in Arlington Heights on May 21, 2023 at 12:00 PM
- Minuteman Scholarship push – free money

Delegate Duncan (American Legion Post 865):

- May 25, 2023 - Placing flags on Veteran's graves at five cemeteries
- May 29, 2023 - Memorial Service at the Monument in Veterans Park, located at Shiloh Boulevard and Sheridan Road in Zion, IL beginning at 10:30 AM and includes Presenting of the Colors, Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation, Proclamation by the Mayor, A Memorial Address, POW and MIA Remembrance, Roll Call of Honor, Wreath Placement and Taps, Music will be provided by the Lake Area Swing Band
- June 15, 2023 to August 10, 2023 - Providing concessions for the Zion Park District's Thursday Night Concert in the Park Series
- May 26 and 27, 2023 – Passing out poppies in Zion

Delegate Ayers (VAC/ MCL 1395):

- Signup sheet for Memorial Day Weekend Post events to be distributed by May 19, 2023

Delegate Rigsby (VFW Post 7448/ District 5):

- 1st Sunday Breakfasts will discontinue for the summer and will start again in October
- 5th District Meeting will be held in Woodstock at VFW Post 5040 on May 20, 2023 with breakfast at 9:00 AM, meeting at 10:00 AM, and instillation at 11:00 AM
 - Election of District Officers
 - Officer elects take their chairs after Department Commander installed June 2023
- Memorial Day parade and services will be held May 29, 2023 stepping off at 11:00 AM, memorial services at 12:00 PM at Memorial Park with a picnic to follow at post

Delegate DeReu (MOAA):

- Illinois State Fair is having Veterans Day on August 13, 2023 and will feature a Gold Star Family Breakfast, music, static displays, JROTC competitions and free lunch for veterans
 - Additional funding is needed, approximately \$10,000 shortfall
 - Angel investors welcome
 - Contributions can be mailed to:
Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs
Attn: Crystal Womack
833 South Spring Street
Springfield, IL 62704

Motion to Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn made by Delegate Gandara
- Seconded by Delegate Voit
- Motion passed

Next meeting will be held on September 13, 2023 at the American Legion Post , Gurnee