



Andrew Tangen, Superintendent
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09/13/2023

VAC MEETING MINUTES

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

- Colors presented by Delegate DeReu
- Opening prayer by Delegate Honeywell

Roll Call of Members

- Number of members present: 31

Approval of minutes of previous meeting- May 17, 2023

- Motion made by Delegate Schultz
- Seconded by Delegate Mockapetris
- Motion to approve previous minutes passed

Superintendents Report

- Sherry Kruse resigned in July for personal reasons
- Resolution 23-007 to appoint John Murray as new Assistant Superintendent
 - Motion to approve made by Delegate Klauser
 - Seconded by Delegate Honeywell
 - Motion to approve Resolution 23-007 passed
- Land purchase and Special Use Permit (SUP) acquisition
 - Location is on south side of Grand Avenue in the lots previously used by Joe's Crab Shack and Outback Steakhouse
 - Our use is governmental, not commercial
 - SUP required
 - No tax revenue generated
 - No property taxes paid
 - Village of Gurnee does not believe this would be a hardship
 - Gurnee has not levied a property tax in 23.5 years
 - County and Village of Gurnee has reviewed architect's plans and submitted paperwork and ready to proceed
 - Zoning Board meeting set for end of September
 - Final approval in front of the Village Board will be in October
 - Original land purchase would have been finalized Sept 15 but was delayed for the Village Board to meet and approve this SUP
 - New closing date will be Oct 25 or once SUP is secured
 - Question: Has the VAC reached out to the school district since they are the main stakeholder of property tax revenue?
 - No, we have not. The Village of Gurnee does not think this is an issue. The County is not involved. It is a Zoning Board issue

- IACVAC conference
 - State organization
 - Held in Peoria
 - Andrew Tangen and John Murray will head down September 20, 2023
 - Shane McNerney, Summer Padoan and Jonathan Kellogg attend starting September 17
 - Jonathan will be attending for the first time
 - Shane and Summer who are part of the Education Team will be holding trainings for other VSOs to learn from
- NACVSO Conference Update and Leadership Update
 - Held in June in Madison, WI
 - Meetings were had with the Secretary of the VA, Undersecretary of Benefits, Undersecretary of Cemeteries, and several of their key staffers
 - Obtained a lot of really good information
 - Toxic Exposure Risk Activities Memos under the PACT Act
 - If a veteran had exposure to toxic substance risk activity during any part of their service time, the VA has to process the claim
 - Example: Heavy machinery operators or mechanics would be eligible under the Act even if they never went to Vietnam or Iraq based on exposure of fuel, grease, exhaust, etc. and things like Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma would be a known presumptive
 - Please advise your Post and other veterans even if they didn't serve overseas, they may qualify for toxic exposure based on their MOS so please urge them to reach out for help with benefits and health care
 - Benefits and conditions previously denied may be reconsidered and approved so reach out to a qualified organization for help
 - John Murray was elected as the Judge Advocate to NACVSO
 - Andrew Tangen was elected First Vice President for NACVSO
- New office space is operational
 - Tours given after meeting
 - Additional space allows room to grow and accommodate new staff
 - If asked why we are hiring additional staff, please advise Lake County is the **only** county in Illinois to increase their veteran population
 - Increase of 13,000-14,000 persons in a two-year time period bringing the total number from 31,000 to 45,000 individuals
 - Lake County is also the **only** county in the state where the majority of veterans are under the age of 60
 - Our organization will need to continue to grow to address the needs of those veterans and their families
- Veterans Day
 - Please make staff speaking requests earlier rather than later
 - Veterans Day, Fourth of July and Memorial Day are our most common requested days for appearances
 - Requests are evaluated first come, first serve
 - John Murray and Jonathan Kellogg are already committed to Lindenhurst as they have leadership roles there

- Budget Update
 - Budget was submitted well ahead of time
 - Similar to last year at \$5.4 million dollars
 - Includes increased staff size, money allocated for land purchase and some towards the building itself
 - Currently in the capital raise phase which is gathering capital to build
- Offices at the Captain James A. Lovell Center
 - In process for the last 14 months
 - Two offices located in Building 135 right off the elevator
 - Walls are painted, new furniture, new phones
 - Ceiling collapsed before open to water damage from repair work done on floor above
 - Open is delayed
- Update on Fort Sheridan Cemetery Land Purchase
 - Land was originally donated to the Forest Preserve
 - Approximately five acres needed to be transferred under the Downstate Forest Preserve Land Act
 - Act had to be amended in order to accommodate this transfer which happened
 - Approved amended Act then needed to be approved by the Forest Preserve which happened
 - General Assembly then wrote a bill to approve amended Act which went through both houses and be signed by the Governor which has happened
 - Currently back to the Forest Preserve to actually enact the transfer of deeds and land
 - No firm ETA but Andrew will reach out to the Forest Preserve for more concrete estimates keep the delegation informed
 - Coalition support has been critical to this process
 - Fort Sheridan will be all cremated remains
 - Only in-ground exception will be remains of those Killed In Action that have been repatriated
 - Higher level veteran in-ground burial requests from a Medal of Honor recipient, a Two Star General, and a Four Star General are currently being denied by National Cemetery Administration
 - Other entities are looking into this policy for possible revision for these specific exceptions
 - In-ground allotments are 6'x6' allowing for 3,000 additional in-ground burials
 - Columbarium allotments are 4'x4' allowing for 80,000 additional columbarium burials
 - Question: If the veteran reserved an in-ground spot at Fort Sheridan before the policy was changed will that be honored? This is iffy. Fort Sheridan falls under the Abraham Lincoln Cemetery Director's control and last communications 24 months ago were that the no exceptions will be upheld: Cremains only unless Killed In Action
 - VAC office can help with Pre-needs Burial Evaluation Requests
 - Funeral Homes can help prep with forms that would be submitted upon death but not ahead of time
 - Other scam entities may be charging for preparing forms for burial or headstones or incur the family later charges by filling out forms incorrectly so please speak directly to the VAC for these matters
- Motion made to approve Superintendent's Report by Delegate Klauser
- Seconded by Delegate Wagner
- Motion to approve Superintendents Report passed

New Business

- Assistant Superintendent John Murray introduced staff
 - Executive Assistant Suzette Uchick
 - Administrative Assistant Rachael Burke
 - Veteran Service Officer Allan Lacson
 - Veteran Service Officer Jonathan Kellogg
 - Senior Veteran Service Officer Jilian “Summer” Padoan
 - Senior Veteran Service Officer Shane McNerney, not present
 - Administrative Assistant Tony Roberti, not present
 - Superintendent Andrew Tangen
- The VAC has an extra POW flag which any Post is welcome to have free of charge
 - See John Murray for details

Delegate Reports

- President Konz began by thanking Post 771 for hosting our meetings

Delegate Peacy (Post 281):

- We will have a Veterans Day Parade and ceremony on November 11, 2023 at 10:30 AM and 11:00 AM

Delegate Gabriel (Post 703):

- Fox Lake Post 703 reestablished our Take-A-Vet Fishing and hopefully next year will resume our ALR Burgers and Bikes
- We are hosting our SAL gun raffle this Saturday 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM
- Our Annual Veterans Day Remembrance at Fox Lake Lakehouse at 10:30 AM and then our Veterans Day Dance at 7:00 PM on November 11, 2023
- Our 41st Annual USMC Birthday Breakfast and Toys-4-Tots Drive will be held November 18 at 8:00 AM. Cost is \$8 per plate with the donation of an unwrapped gift or \$12 per plate without a gift

Delegate Johnson (Post 964):

- Post 964 will be having a 75th Anniversary on November 11, 2023 by invitation only

Delegate Chan (Post 329):

- Libertyville Post 329 is hosting a Veterans Day Steak Dinner on November 11, 2023

Delegate Klauser (Post 867):

- Our Post raised over \$5,000 from poppy distribution over Memorial Day weekend. We also conducted a parade and gathering on Memorial Day. 2023 fundraisers had a very successful golf outing and Mundelein Carnival Day

Delegate Schultz (Post 1247):

- Post 1247 held five Memorial weekend events: Flagging of veteran graves at Vernon Township and Willow Lawn Cemetery plus three Memorial Day Commemorative Ceremonies
- Provided support to the VHPD and Operation Blue Line for the Front Line at the Jim Heier Fishing Derby for In-patients and Residents at the Lovell FHCC on June 25, 2023
- In partnership with the Village of Vernon Hills, the Post led the July 4, 2023 Independence Day Parade
- Will present the Colors at Vernon Hills High School Varsity Football for Military Appreciation Day on October 6, 2023
- Provided significant financial support to a Legion Brother in need in the replacement of key household appliances
- Acquired a like new condition hospital bed and provided it to the Midwest Veterans Closet (MVC) for re-distribution
- Acquired another motorized wheelchair and arranged for refurbishment and distributed it to a Legion Brother in September
- Successfully conducted our 5th Annual Support the Heroes Golf Outing on August 26, 2023 with proceeds going to philanthropic efforts
- The first monthly Bingo Fundraising event of the season will be conducted in October. These events are held on the first Thursday of every month from October to May at the Vernon Hills Golf Course beginning at 6:30 PM
- Plan to participate in the Hawthorn School District Veterans Day events with students
- Plans to participate with Wheeling AMVETS Post 66 in support of Veterans Day events at that Post specifically as the Rifle Detail
- Plans to participate with the Village of Vernon Hills and GLMV Chamber of Commerce in support of the Annual Midwest Veterans Closet Coat Drive

Delegate Castella (Post 911):

- I had the good fortune to have dinner with the Hawaii American Legion Commander who advised they have put together a disaster fund for wildfire relief and are looking for donations. 56 Legionnaires and 400 veterans were affected. Four Legionnaires lost their homes and all possessions. Two Legionnaires lost both their businesses and their homes and all possessions. Their dues have been covered by local members. Please consider donating to the American Legion Department of Hawaii Disaster Fund at 612 McCally Street in Honolulu, HI 96826. They can be reached by phone at 808-946-6383, by email at info@hilegion.org. There is general website of 501 (c) (3) organizations for Maui at www.mauinuistrong.info who are accepting donations for the area as well
- Post 911 will attend Veterans Path To Hope Gala on September 29, 2023 at Boulder Ridge Country Club

Delegate DeReu (MOAA):

- Lovell FHCC: Flu vaccinations will be starting in October. Covid vaccinations will begin in mid-October. The facility has received a five-star rating from the National Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services who rate civilian and military hospitals across the country
- MOAA will be hosting the State Council on October 28, 2023
- Next monthly meeting will be held this Sunday and will feature LTG Rigby discussing Ukraine weapons systems
- Our chapter has committed to a \$5000 donation to the Veterans Closet

Delegate Duncan (Post 865):

- Over the last several months, Zion-Benton American Legion Post 865 has been working closely with the Ansel Brainerd Cook Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution to provide a Final Salute for three Army Veterans buried in unmarked graves at Mount Rest Cemetery. Two of the Veterans are World War II Veterans and the third is a Korean War Veteran. On September 30, 2023, there will be a ceremony at the cemetery to unveil the grave plaques for these three graves. Post 865 is providing a Color Guard, Rifle Squad, Flag Folding Detail, Bugler and a Chaplain. Also, the Post's Food trailer is providing food concessions following the ceremony
- Through July, August and September, the Post food Trailer supported the Zion Park District by providing food concessions for weekly Concerts in the Park, Monarch Mania, and weekly movies in the park
- The Post Color Guard led the Zion Labor Day Parade. Following the Color Guard was the Legion's float carrying members of the Post. We received the "Best Theme" Trophy
- Zion-Benton American Legion Post 865 received Third Place for posts with 101-200 members in the Department of Illinois Commander's Community Service Award for 2023

Delegate Dutkovic (MOWW and POA Chapter 48):

- Seven members of the Chapter participated in the annual MOWW Convention at Annapolis, MD
- Many members of the Chapter participated in the July 4, 2023 events in their respective communities
- July 23, 2023- Chapter meeting was held at Dover Straits. Members and guests were from the POA, AUSA, MOAA, and MOWW members. 35 people were in attendance
- The Chapter donated \$250 to the Lindenhurst Golf Outing in support of the 100 Club of Illinois and Chapter 48
- August 31, 2023- Veterans and families get together at the Kishwaukee Brewing Company held in Woodstock sponsored by Illinois State Senator Craig Wilcox who is a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee. Approximately 20 + Veterans were in attendance to voice their concerns. Thank you to those that showed
- Participation in the 9/11/2001 Remembrance Day in their respective communities
- Preparing for upcoming luncheons and meetings for both MOAA and MOWW
- Preparing for Veterans Day
- Next meeting is at Dover Straits on September 24, 2023 along with AUSA at 11:00 AM, ROA at 12:00 PM and MOWW starting at 1:00 PM

Delegate Honeywell (Post 2486 and District 5):

- Illinois state is visiting the VFW National Home in Michigan. Tours are available on Saturday, September 23, 2023. The local VFW Post will provide dinner at 6:00 PM on Friday, September 22, 2023 for those already in town for the tour. Travel and hotel expenses are self-paid but if you would like to go, please reach out to see if carpooling can be arranged. VFWil.org will have more information for those interested
- On Saturday, September 19, 2023, VFW District 5 will hold a Day of Instruction, a training session for all Posts with specific focus on compliance with IRS documentation and reporting requirements

Delegate Voit (Post 8741):

- Color Guard will present Colors this Saturday, September 16, 2023, in Lake Villa in conjunction with the Lake County Veteran and Family Services at 08:30 AM
- Color Guard will present Colors at Equestrian Connections Annual Banquet and Silent Auction in Lake Forest on September 30, 2023

Delegate Rock (Navy League):

- Navy League held a “Liberty Call” on July 27, 2023, at O’Toole’s in Libertyville. Captain Jason Williamson, CO of NAVSTA Great Lakes was the guest speaker. Next “Liberty Call” will be held on September 21, 2023, at 4:30 PM at X-Golf in Libertyville and will feature guest speaker Captain Chad McKenzie, CO of NMRTC Great Lakes
- Seabees are having an Oktoberfest on October 18, 2023, at Fatman’s Pizza from 5:00 PM- 8:00 PM. They are located at 36309 Skokie Highway in Gurnee. Please register at seabeehf.org
- Open invitation to any veteran to attend graduation at Recruit Training Command Great Lakes which is held every Thursday morning. For more info, please call Ted Rock at (630) 866-5499

Motion to Adjourn

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

Next meeting will be held on November 15, 2023 at the American Legion Post, Gurnee