



DELAWARE VALLEY VETERANS HOME
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – August 14, 2024, 10:00am

Advisory Council Members

In person

Claudette Campbell, Military Officers Assoc. Of America
Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans
James Ritchie, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Douglas Craig, Catholic War Veterans
Ashley Conaway, for Senator Frank A. Farry
Patricia (Tricia) Udicious, for Martina White, PA House of Representatives

Conference Call

Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General-VA
Beth Werner, Regional Compliance Officer
Samuel Huhn, Blinded Veterans Association

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Delaware Valley Veterans Home

Travis Davis, Executive Director, Long-Term Care
Violetta Berdichevskaya, Chief Medical Officer, DMVA
Rinisha Thomas, Director of Nursing, DVVH
Rita Yeung, Deputy Commandant, DVVH
Yahvae Jones, Admissions and Marketing Coordinator
William McGoldrick, Volunteer Resource Coordinator
Elle Cutler, IFSS, DVVH
Veronica Royster, Assistant to the Commandant

Absent

Allan Abramson, Jewish War Veterans
John O'Donnell, American Legion
Daniel McCollum, American Legion
Richard Fine, AMVETS
Benjamin Mastridge, Vietnam Veterans
Leonard M. Johnson, Disabled American Veterans
Margo Coleman, Commandant, DVVH
Barbara Raymond, Director of Veterans' Homes

Residents

David Petro, Resident Representative

Visitors

- Moment of Silence
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Roll Call
- No Approval of Minutes from May 08, 2024. A total of five Advisory Council Members (four in-person & one on conference call).

Report from Violetta Berdichevskaya, Medical Director

- It has been a very interesting season. We always advise patients if it is 90 degrees and above not to go out. Even if they want, we do not restrain them. If they do we provide extra hydration, and things of that nature.
- We are still good when it comes to Covid, we check every single symptom. We do not have any cases of flu, the flu season is around the corner. We will start vaccinations around the end of August.
- I was praising all morning today our activities department for taking our residents out. Today the residents are having a lobster lunch. They took them out to Parks casino and there was no food poisoning, that's my point, that is what I am trying to bring to the table. I am happy for that.
- Handwashing was never cancelled, every single meal served in this building. I am sure across all our buildings in Pennsylvania we do provide handwashing. We provide sanitizing for the wheelchairs.
- So far so good, I can only praise the staff in the buildings, especially this building where we are. Thank you.

Report from Yahvae Jones, Admissions/Marketing

- Good morning, sorry for just coming in, I have a new admission who is coming in now.
- Since our last meeting we had a total of 20 admissions, 9 people passed away, and two discharged. We remain at or above 90 percent filled for the most part. Our current census is 160 out of 171 beds. That is only 11 beds to be filled. Hopefully if we get more staff to come in, I will be able to fill the 11 beds. Our current waitlist is 69 people on the skilled waitlist, 14 people for secure, and we have a total of 34 non vets in or out of state waiting for admission.
- We are currently admitting those who applied around February of this year, it is about a 6-7 month waiting time at this moment.
- Marketing, we just continue along working very closely with the VA for Philadelphia, Coatesville, and Lebanon. I also do a lot of community outreach, making sure we are giving as much knowledge to the people about what we do for our veterans.

Report from Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General

- Good morning, everybody, I am doing very well. Sorry I can't be with you today; I have some meetings here.
- I just want to give you an update, we have a new employee, Keith Graham retired, he was staffed as the Colonel up here. We made a new Executive Director position. He is my equivalent on the other side as Travis is on my side. We are excited to have him onboard.
- We are very busy getting ready for the Pennsylvania Veterans Conference in Pittsburgh, September 4th-6th. We will be having a lot of wonderful speakers State secretaries, Federal, Common Pleas, The Head of PHA, DVA will come and talk to us. If any of your organizations want to attend, I will make sure you get a copy of the agenda. We are excited to get together.
- This Friday I am going to be out in Pittsburgh, I will be at a round table, we will see how much we have done since PAC Act. What other presumptive and issues we want to add to the PACT Act, so if anyone has feedback for me to take there, I will bring it up on Friday, I am looking forward to that.
- We been doing a lot of outreach events, senior aging veterans, and just engaging benefits. That is all I have right now.

Report from Travis Davis, Executive Director, Long-Term Care

- Good morning, I am going to cover my report, and our director report.
- Some of our team members are at NASVH which is the National Association of State Veterans Homes, for their annual conference this week. A few of our Commandants are down in Florida for the conference. My report is a little bit lengthy; I will go quickly for you.
- The State budget that was questioned earlier, that was passed. The Veterans Homes budget did go down a little bit this year. It decreased to 2.5 million, it seems like a big number, I don't expect any significant impact on that, because we are carrying so many vacancies right now, that we know we are not going to fill this year. Right now, we maintain our complement of over 2,100 employees, and we have 370 vacancies right now. Overall, the state budget was promising for long-term care providers, there was over a seven percent increase in Medicaid. There is also a bill that was passed this year, that is going to require the Department of Health field offices to meet with nursing home providers on a regular basis. I am looking forward to that starting this year.
- In July we went into year two of the Department of Health minimum staffing increase, we are in compliance with that staffing mandate across all of our homes.
- DMVA kicked off a culture change initiative last year, across all of DMVA, including our veterans' homes. We hold surveys for employees to see how we are doing, so we can do better. We also had working groups, we had culture change champions in the building, to help us drive some of these initiatives. Really it is taking a lot of feedback that we got from employees, we made it as transparent as possible on screens across our homes. Where they can see everything that was brought up in these meetings and the status of what we are doing with them. Some things were easy fixes where we can work on them right away. Other things we are working with unions regarding pay increases, we are working with the office of administration on some more flexible work schedules. This way our team can look and see the status of everything that was brought up. I am looking forward to this culture change, I think it is starting to move in a positive direction.
- From a survey standpoint, we are done with our VA annuals at all of our homes except for Delaware Valley, which usually come at the end of the year. The Department of Health surveys Delaware Valleys will be at the end of the year, last year they came at the same time.
- Three of our homes are five-star ratings including Delaware Valley, Gino Merli, and Southeast Veterans Center. We have one four-star PA Soldiers and Sailors Home, and two three-stars Hollidaysburg and Southwestern. We continue to see improvement with our quality measures across all of our homes.
- From a respiratory standpoint, I will start off with what Dr. B. presented. The covid cases and respiratory illness, like flu and RSV, has been low this summer. Currently right now we only have two positive residents with covid across all of the homes, and we have about nine staff members.
- The key personnel moves across the homes, at Southeast Veterans Center and Hollidaysburg we had a lot of change with the medical team with the physicians and Nurse Practitioners. I am happy to say, at both of those homes we now have full complements.
- Yahvae gave a great update on Delaware Valley admissions, we still have a pretty robust list. Especially in the Philadelphia market, Southeast and Del Val they are usually the two homes that have the longest wait time. The current census across the state is 1,107 residents, with about 73 percent of our beds being full. Delaware Valley, Gino Merli, and PA Soldiers and Sailors Home are all up around 90 percent occupancy level, so they are doing a great job getting veterans in the door when beds are open.

- Maureen mentioned our VETCON conference is coming up in September, our commandants will all be out there. We are going to also have a day at the Senior Leadership Conference for them.
- From a construction standpoint, just two updates, our new facility at Hollidaysburg looks tremendous. For anyone who is driving through Altoona, hop off the exit, just drive through the town and you will see our building, it is beautiful. It is about 60 percent complete; the exterior casing of the building is almost enclosed now. They are working on laying tile, putting up drywall, and we are anticipating it will be open about this time next year. In Scranton at Gino Merli, we are renovating a lot of the interior of the building, on the main floor. We are trying to replicate what Delaware Valley does here with their main street. This is one building I think they did a really good job on the design. You see when you walk in Delaware Valley everyone hanging out on main street. A lot of our other homes, and it is critical for nursing homes, people are gathered around nurses' stations, it does not really look like a good area for them to congregate. That is going to start in September.
- The last thing I want to leave you with, is just an awareness point, the spouse benefit for veterans' homes. It is a huge benefit for veteran spouses, majority of residents in nursing homes across the state are Medicaid residents. That means the state pick up their room and board in the nursing home. They are allowed to keep a personal allowance, this is male/female vet/non-vet in a community nursing home, it is about \$80 what they can keep per month. Here at our state veterans homes we have a special program called (EVR), it is the Enhanced Veteran Reimbursement rate, where our veterans and spouses are allowed to keep \$450.00 a month. On top of the staffing ratios, we have here, the great clinical care, just another benefit that people unfortunately do not know about and they are eligible for. That concludes my report, I will be happy to answer any questions.

Report from Rita Yeung, Deputy Commandant

- Good morning, everyone, I am Rita Yeung the Deputy Commandant at Delaware valley Veterans Home. Today, I am covering for Margo, she is in Florida at a conference.
- Last quarter was filled with a lot of events, from picnics, field trips, to a fishing derby. The residents enjoyed a beautiful day fishing with their peers and staff, not only from our home, but also from two other facilities Gino Merli Veterans center and Southeast Veterans Center. Our residents won three prizes, the biggest fish, the smallest fish, and the most fish, they really enjoyed and had a fun day. Last week we also celebrated our resident Mr. DeMarco, for his 100 years young birthday. The events included a birthday party, a trip to the casino and also a visit from our Adjutant General to honor this World War II Veteran. He was happy.
- I would like to highlight our Delaware Valley Veterans Home monthly newsletters, produced by our Volunteer Coordinator Bill McGoldrick, over there. Bill really does a very wonderful job highlighting our activities and events held during the month, also to recognize our sponsors and benefactors. You can access our newsletter from our website DMVA.PA.GOV, click on the veteran's home tab.
- Our D-wing staff has done a very good job to prevent our residents from falling. The entire month of June, D-wing has no falls. We really appreciate that and thank our staff for doing a great job and the dedication to our residents.
- We also recognized our employee of the quarter, his name is Alex Straiton for his excellent customer service, he really goes above and beyond for our residents. We been working very diligently the last quarter to fill our vacant positions. Last quarter we hired 22 new employees, among the 22 of the employees, 21 remain in that position. This is a good report just to show that our hiring and retention efforts that we make.

- I want to introduce our new employee Elle Cutler, she is our new safety Specialist, we call that IFSS, stands for Institutional Fire Safety Specialist, so we welcome her.

Report from Rinisha Thomas, Director of Nursing

- Since our last meeting we have 8 nursing staff when everyone is here, and we have 17 agency staff working for us.
- We had minor deficiencies, and we are working on the plan of correction.
- There is no covid or flu, no staff or residents are positive.
- We started the pet therapy once a month for the residents.
- We have restaurant trips, and Walmart trips scheduled every week. Thank you so much.

Report from William McGoldrick, Volunteer Resource Coordinator

- Hi, just a quick review from the past quarter. American Legion has supported trips to Walmart, restaurants, and the ball game. Thanks to the American Legion Post 810, who send members of the post to these locations, and help us transport residents while they are shopping, at the ball game, and different restaurants. They are going to a restaurant today, so the American Legion will meet the residents and help them have a lunch.
- Thanks to the Vietnam Veterans for hosting a monthly lunch and a movie indoors, weeks ago to the movie theater. We are able to touch more residents here, by providing lunch and a movie in the activities room.
- Today The VFW Auxiliary is hosting a picnic out front, you see all the decorations, tents and tables that are going up. They are having steak and lobster for the residents.
- Thanks for the support for all the organizations that are at this table that provide support for Delaware Valley Veterans Home. Thanks again.
- Mr. Kelly, Commandant from the local Marine Corps League, he reached out to the Philadelphia Police Department, and the Fire Fighters. I think it was at least 40 police cars, fire trucks engine ladders that came by and drove out front to honor Mr. DeMarco for his 100th birthday party. Marine Corps League were also out there. The photographs will be in our upcoming newsletter. Bill Kelly is also from the Marine Corps League, I was looking at him getting on this panel, hopefully he will be a member of this panel sometime soon. They went above and beyond. Our next 100th birthday is January, Army World War II, he flew an aircraft. Multiple missions during World War II, that is Al Teplitsky, so a lot of you guys know him. Hopefully the American Legion will provide some nice things for Mr. Teplitsky.

Report from Beth Werner, Regional Compliance Officer

- Hi, good morning, everyone my name is Beth Werner. I am a Regional Compliance Officer out of the GAP. The update that I have is the Compliance department has completed most of the facility performance assessments, we have one left in December out at Southwest. We were down at Del Val, and they were very gracious when our whole team descended upon them back in June.
- The facility performance assessments are done with a very large group of staff, to help the facilities prepare for their surveys for the Department of Health, VA surveys. If they are personal care, they are licensed by the Department of Human Services.
- Hopefully the Compliance team coming out is a help to the facilities, and the surveys will go well. Del Val survey is expected pretty much any time after September through December. We wish them well with their survey coming up. Does anyone have any questions? Thank you very much.

Larry Holman, Jewish War Veterans

- Is there hospice services here? A few people replied, yes. If a veteran's organization would like to make a financial contribution how is that? Bill McGoldrick replied, there are multiple ways to do a contribution for the homes. Online go to DMVA website and there is a link to donate to every single home throughout the state. If your organization want to donate to Southeast, they can click on their link. Also, here If you are local and you want to donate via check, make out a check, make the check payable to Delaware Valley Veterans Home. In the comment section, you can put donate to the resident welfare fund, and it will go to the resident welfare fund. We will be able to provide different activities that we do, trips and entertainment, parties, state veterans home week. We take checks, money orders, and cash. We also take body wash, mouth wash, electric razors, not just monetary items, wall clocks, watches, and wireless headphones. Any items that you are interested in donating or you have an organization that want to donate, just have them contact me Bill McGoldrick, Volunteer Coordinator at the home. All the other homes Volunteer Coordinators I believe receive the donations for the homes. Larry replied thank you.

Tricia Udicious, PA House of Representatives (Representative Martina White office)

- Hi, I am Tricia from Representative Martina White office, some of you may know Kelly Kolodi, she retired from our office, so I will be taking over coming here. It is very nice to meet you and I am excited, and I will go back and report about the meeting.

Claudette Campbell, Military Officers Association of America

- I just have a few comments, first I am glad to be here, good morning.
- The culture change initiative, that is a nice idea, I wish you a lot of success with it, not only in the end, I would also like to see what actions can be taken. That is always helpful with the challenges of your staffing shortage, it is a great effort to keep the veterans well. Hopefully just continue the hard work and dedication to the veterans.

Douglas Craig, Catholic War Veterans

- Hi, I am Doug Craig, sorry I was late again, I am less late today than I was last time. Next meeting hopefully, I will be here on time.
- A couple questions, how many residents are actually in this facility? Yahvae replied 160.
- Mike Rang who is our department head of the Catholic War Vets, was planning on being here today, but something else came up. He made me a promise he will be here for the next meeting in November. Our Catholic War Vets state president will be here at the next meeting hopefully. Other than that, this is all I have. Thank you.

Samuel Hunh, Blinded Veterans Association

- I received my reappointment to the council for another three years, from my neighbor, the Governor. I am happy to be here for another three years, it will get me close to 90, so we will see.

James Ritchie, Veterans of Foreign Wars

- I don't have anything to report, except I saw on the news a birthday celebration for a 106-year-old World War II Veteran.



Old Business: None

New Business: None

Good of the Counsel: None

Adjourned: 10:30 AM

Next Meeting: November 13, 2024