

FOURTH QUARTERLY MEETING: June 28, 2013

The fourth meeting of fiscal year 2013 was held on June 28, 2013, at American Legion Post 23 in Mason County, WV. Following are the minutes from that meeting:

- Meeting called to order by Chairman Bare.
- Seven members were present-enough members in attendance for a quorum.
- Those present were: Chairman Randall Bare, James SeCarlo, Miles Epling, Harrison Gilliam, Cedric Greene, Bill Harris and Woody Williams.
- Motion made to dispense of reading of the minutes. Motion seconded and carried.
- Welcome to Rick Thompson, newly appointed Cabinet Secretary of the Department of Veterans Assistance.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Monument Honoring Underage Veterans.

- Move made to install the monument at the DCKMSVC. Move seconded.
- Discussion ensued. Concerns regarding the verbiage on the monument were expressed.
- Move to table the issue until next council meeting was made, seconded and passed.

New Nursing Facility Update

- A Steering Committee has been established and meetings exploring the possibility of creating a new veterans nursing facility in Southern West Virginia are underway.

Van Driver Program

- Discussion ensued regarding the veterans van driver program and the possibility of creating a Memorandum of Understanding between the West Virginia Department of Veterans Assistance and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), who operate the program, in an effort to keep the program within budget.

NEW BUSINESS:

Vacancy on Veterans Council

- Nominees now being accepted for position on Council due to resignation of Patrick Farrell. His resignation became effective May 10, 2013.

Veterans Homeless Summit

- Scheduled for July 19th at the Charleston Civic Center. Social Workers who attend can receive continuing education credits.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

- Secretary Thompson introduced himself and recognized former Secretary Keith Gwinn who was in the audience.
- Secretary Thompson informed Council and those present of his plans for the Department and of his goal to improve media coverage and communication to veterans about opportunities provided them by the state of West Virginia and the US government.

CLARKSBURG NURSING FACILITY REPORT (delivered by Kevin Crickard, Administrator)

- Most recent state inspection of the facility, we were deemed deficiency free.
- Right now, an average of 95 beds are filled.
- There are approximately 166 veterans on the waiting list with an average wait time of 1.2 years.

DONEL C. KINNARD MEMORIAL STATE VETERANS CEMETERY (DCKMSVC) REPORT (delivered by Larissa Wines, Administrator)

- 100 Veterans have now been interred at the DCKMSVC.
- 15 dependents have been interred.
- 40% are cremations.
- Current average is 9 interments per month.
- Current rate for dependents is \$722. For veterans, we receive this amount from the federal VA, so our services are free to them.

VETERANS HOME REPORT (delivered by Mike Lyons, WVDVA Operations Manager)

- There are currently 85 residents.
- Many residents are leaving because they are finding jobs and no longer need to reside at the Home.

FIELD OFFICE REPORT (delivered by Mike Lyons, WVDVA Operations Manager)

- It is estimated that approximately \$231 Million in federal benefits have been awarded to West Virginia veterans this fiscal year.
- Last fiscal year, that number was approximately \$161 Million.
- Vietnam era veterans may now claim and receive benefits for a condition known as "herbal aid."

- Claims offices serve an average of 20 walk-in veterans per day and 100 veterans via phone call per day.

REPORTS FROM GUESTS:

Update from Skip Gebhart, WV Higher Education Policy Commission, Director of Veterans Education and Training.

- Currently there are 16,300 Veterans and dependents utilizing GI Benefits
- Post 911 GI Bill - almost 13,000 are using the new GI Bill
- Cooperative Efforts with WVDVA and a Memorandum of Understanding has been established to ensure all employees are well versed on education benefits for veterans and dependents.

Update from Marsha Hopkins, VP of Excalibur Services, LLC

- This organization provides educational opportunities for veterans.
- They are considering holding a Veterans Expo somewhere in West Virginia. It would provide community resources, educational and training information, employment information, resume development, medical screenings, and a career fair.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS:

- Woody Williams noted that National PTSD Awareness Day set for June 27th.
- Discussion of requesting the WV legislature to proclaim PTSD Awareness Day in West Virginia ensued.
- Discussion about possibility of designating West Virginia a Gold Star Mothers State ensued.
- Former Secretary Keith Gwinn thanked attendees and everyone he has worked with over the years.
- **No motions made as result of visitor comments.**
- **Chairman Bare motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded, passed.**

A full transcript of the meeting is available at www.veterans.wv.gov.

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