



**Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home
Advisory Council Meeting
Erie, Pennsylvania
June 13, 2024
9:00 a.m.**

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Gary Fry, President, AMVETS
Mr. Harry Stewart, American Legion
Mrs. Karen Foust, Disabled American Veterans
Mr. Keith Eller, PSSH Resident Council President

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT

Mrs. Bobbi Cumpston, County Director of Veterans Affairs
Mr. Raymond J. Chambers, Vice President, Marine Corps League
Mr. Richard DiGiacomo, Secretary, Military Officers Assoc. of America
Mr. David Price, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Mr. Anthony DiGiacomo, County Director of Veterans Affairs
Mr. Robert C. Eiler, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. Richard Supak, Catholic War Veterans
The Honorable Daniel Laughlin, PA Senator
The Honorable Patrick J. Harkins, PA House of Representatives

OTHERS PRESENT



Mrs. Maureen Weigl, BG (PA Retired), Deputy Adjutant General-VA

Mr. Travis J Davis, MHA, NHA, HSE, Executive Director, Long-Term Care

Mrs. Barbara Raymond, RN, NHA, Director of Veterans' Home

Mrs. Cheri Spacht, RN, NHA, PSSH Commandant

Mrs. Deborah Harris, PSSH Director of Nursing,

Mrs. Elizabeth Seibert, PSSH Deputy Commandant

Mrs. Rasheda Goodwine, PSSH Commandant Assistant

Mrs. Emily Heubel, PSSH Admissions Coordinator

Mr. Ken Vybiral, PSSH Volunteer Outreach Coordinator

Mrs. Alyssa Cooley, Administrative Officer

Mrs. Teresa Brown, PSSH Quality Assurance Risk Management Coordinator

Mrs. Ashley Meghat on behalf of Congressman Mike Kelly's office

Mrs. T. Alicia Grassi, Visitor

Mr. William Rose, Visitor

Mr. Ed Kissell, Visitor

Mrs. Kimberly Hackbarth, Visitor

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Gary Fry called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

MOMENT OF SILENCE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Gary Fry led a moment of silence, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Rasheda Goodwine took roll call for all present.

SWEARING IN OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mrs. Karen Foust was reappointed by General Weigl.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Fry and seconded by Mr. Stewart to approve the minutes of the Advisory Council Meeting held on March 14, 2024. Motion carried, and minutes were approved and written.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR UPDATE

Mrs. Harris provided update on behalf of Dr. Millie:

Mrs. Harris announced we are currently Covid free. We did get the recommended Covid vaccine in the spring season. On our Personal Care Unit, there was 29 residents that did receive it. On our Nursing Care Unit, 67 residents received the vaccine.

Any Questions?

ADMISSIONS AND MARKETING UPDATE

Mrs. Spacht provided update on behalf of the admissions coordinator:

Mrs. Spacht introduced Mrs. Emily Heubel as our new admissions coordinator here at PSSH. Emily was in the admissions office for 5yrs prior to accepting her new position. Mrs. Spacht stated that Emily is the coordinator now and is doing a great job. She will provide anyone with her contact information that needs to reach out to her. Mrs. Spacht thanked Emily and gave her the opportunity to speak from an admissions perspective.

Mrs. Heubel continued, currently we have 161 residents on our census. We have 30 residents on our Memory Care Unit (with 4 on the wait list). There are 75 residents on our Nursing Care Unit (with 8 on the wait list). Also, there's 57 residents in our Personal Care Unit (with 7 on the wait list). Mrs. Heubel explained that she would be attending the Northeast Stand Down Event this Saturday and plans on giving out applications and more information about our home to surrounding area VFW's, American Legions, and Personal Care Homes.

Any Questions?

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

Mr. Fry states that for the Employee Recognition portion of the meeting, he would like to recognize Mr. Ken Vybiral for the PSSH Memorial Day service. Mr. Fry continued, any event I have ever attended, he does a very good job and I think it's time we throw an "atta boy" at you and thank you for the amazing job you do.

Cheers and applause from all attendees.

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL

Mr. Davis provided update on behalf of General Weigl:

Mr. Davis states Good morning everyone. He continues, General Weigl is on the phone. She is down in Harrisburg, celebrating June 12th which is Women Veteran's Day. She has been busy this whole week, going across the state giving speeches. We also have Governor Shapiro coming out to Southeast Veterans' Home on Friday to see their carnival. Mr. Davis mentioned the Veteran's Conference to be held on September 4th -September 6th in Pittsburgh. The official invitations will be going out to all the veteran's service organizations soon.

Any Questions?

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Davis provided update:

Mr. Davis announced that we've been busy as usual with many surveys across the state. He continued, we've had the VA surveyors in all our homes, except one, since January. Also, we've had the Department of Health annual survey here in Erie, Pittsburgh, and the Southeast Veteran's Center.

Mr. Davis continued, we are seeing a few cases of Covid, here and there. Overall, the last few months have been pretty quiet pertaining to Covid and respiratory illness.

Mr. Davis shared that there is a new full-time physician, Dr. Rashford, that started yesterday in Hollidaysburg. He comes to the bureau with extensive experience. Also, 2 new nurse practitioners joined the team that will be working alongside of Dr. Rashford. We have a new Commandant in Pittsburgh, Cassie Wexler. She started her position a few weeks ago.

He also states, we started an internship program this year. In which, we take 2 students from across the state, and they work within one of our Veteran's homes or at our headquarters. This year we have one student at Fort Indiantown Gap and one at our Scranton facility. They are working to complete the requirements of graduate school. They are going for their Nursing Home Administrator license. This program will happen every year. Next year in the first quarter, the one's interested were in the grad school level for health administration. It is a paid internship and a great opportunity that lasts roughly six months.

Mr. Davis announced there isn't really anything new to update pertaining to recruitment and retention. It continues to be our biggest challenge, as we talk about this every meeting. We have many vacancies. We're working with our office of administration to see what we can do.

He expressed; admissions have been going very well across all the homes. Our current census is 1,115. That is almost 75% of our beds that are full across the state. We have a waitlist for most of our homes.

We have Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center to celebrate their 30th anniversary on June 27th.

Mr. Davis stated, I'm not going to go into detail about our staffing, unless anyone has any questions. But I do want to mention that we are waiting for the Governor's budget to see what it needs to launch our care industry. The industry is asking for a lot of things in terms of reimbursement, and Medicaid. The Department of Health put into effect the new staffing minimum. We are hoping by the end of the month that we will start to see where this budget is going to go and how it is going to impact on our homes.

He added, I do want to mention that in the last two weeks, what our industry has experienced. In just the past two weeks we've had two nursing homes closed down, in the Pittsburgh area. We've also had two nursing homes across the state file for bankruptcy, which brings the total to 12 nursing homes that filed for bankruptcy this year in the Commonwealth. We've also had an emergency evacuation of the nursing home in Scranton 2 weeks ago. So, providers are really feeling the pressure right now. I just wanted to bring that to the attention of the council just to bring about an understanding of why this is necessary for our state budget, and we hope to get it done soon. This concludes my report.

Any Questions?

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF VETERANS' HOMES

Mrs. Raymond provided update:

Mrs. Raymond announced, good morning, everyone. She continued, from a Covid perspective, we have one outbreak at our Hollidaysburg facility. We have 12 residents that are currently Covid positive, along with seven staff members. There are 3 residents at our Southeast facility that is Covid positive, and one resident at our Southwest facility. Mrs. Raymond said everyone is stable. We did have a hospitalization at our Hollidaysburg facility, and the expectations are that they will come back without any issues or concerns.

Mrs. Raymond also reported, as Mr. Davis mentioned survey-wise, that we are quite busy. This week has been very busy. We recently had Life Safety in our facilities. Cheri will speak about our Erie facility. We had Life Safety last month, at our Delaware Valley facility for their revisit, which put them back into compliance. The VA is currently at our Hollidaysburg facility. The Department of Health is currently at our Southeast facility. The Department of Health is also currently at our Southwest facility, on an abbreviated survey. In fairness, it's a family member that has been a bit challenging. We've been working with that family member quite routinely, particularly with our new Commandant at the facility that Travis mentioned.

Mrs. Raymond continued, as far as deficiencies, there has not been any major concerns. We've had our fair share, if any of you saw the article in Go Erie the other day. Cheri will explain more on that subject for you. That was a situation where when we get those citations, we end up with those penalties. Generally speaking, we report those to the Department of Health, so these are self-reported areas. The Department of Health doesn't come in and find these issues. We unfortunately give it to them because we are required too. We don't try to sweep things under the rug. We do our due diligence. We investigate and put corrective actions into place. We are required to report and then the Department of



Health will come in and investigate. Unfortunately, there are times when we end up with what are called civil monetary penalties (fines), that we end up paying back.

She also states, overall, our surveys have been quite good. There are minor things from a Life Safety perspective, such as surge protectors in a room. We are not allowed to use surge protectors. Some residents like to bring those sorts of things in, so it was just a matter of constant monitoring. We have teams in the homes that routinely monitor these things. We just correct issues as they come along.

Mrs. Raymond announced, from the clinical perspective, the deficient practices are things that we are working on fixing. Most times it is infection control things such as missed hand washing after feeding an individual before giving another a tray of food. It's just really an on-going education with everyone. The team really does a wonderful job.

She concluded, from a construction perspective, our Hollidaysburg facility looks fantastic with very minor updates to the other homes. This completes my report.

Any Questions?

REPORT OF THE COMMANDANT

Mrs. Spacht provided update:

Mrs. Spacht started her report by welcoming everyone. She states, we will start with the personnel status report. The total authorized employee number is 278. We have 241 positions filled. We have a total of 37 vacancies. Mrs. Spacht continued she is glad to announce we do have a new Personal Care Unit Administrator that was offered the position, and she has accepted. The new PCU Administrator will start July 8th. Her name is Danielle Ahlbrandt. She will be at the next meeting. Currently we are interviewing for an Assistant Director of Nursing, because one of our Assistant Director of Nursing is retiring next week. There is also a position open for a Human Resources Assistant 2. There was some movement in our Human Resources department. There were some different duties that were assigned to others so that gave us an additional position. We have a Social Worker 2 position that we conducted interviews for. We made an offer of employment, and her name is Holly Rendow. Holly will be starting July 22nd. There are 4 open positions for Licensed Practical Nurses, 4 positions for Registered Nurses, and 23 nurse aide positions. We have a Clerk 2 position that has also been filled. There is a food service position, that's still open. There have been new additions to the administrative staff in addition to the new PCU Administrator. Marc Bush is our new Personal Care Unit Social Worker. Marc started with us 2 weeks ago. He has a very strong background in social work, long term care, and he is a veteran. He was assigned to us during Covid on a mission, and when he left here, he had a desire to try and get a job here and he did. Our Quality Assurance (QA) Specialist position was also filled internally, with our social worker (Anthony Zenobi) from our personal care unit. We always have on-going postings for the nurse aide trainees. Again, if you know someone calling for employment, just have them contact us. We continue to have walk-in Wednesday for interviews.

Mrs. Spacht continued, from a Covid perspective, we currently have several plans of corrections and awaiting grievances for our regulatory agencies. The Department of Human Services, which surveys our personal care unit, came in early February. They had 4 areas of deficient practice, which is not bad for the number of deficiencies for the Department of Human Services. The deficiencies were for sanitation and storage of glucometers, support plan documentation and individualizing support plan documentation, a little bit more. We're just waiting for them to come in and do their revisit to put us back into compliance. Our Department of Health nursing survey was in April, which had 2 deficiencies. One was on documentation of resident care plan, and the other issue was a resident that was ordered to have mechanical lift usage, but the lift was not used appropriately. The Department of Health Life Safety visit was also in April. We had 1 deficiency in our entire facility, it had to do with the fire alarm system and trouble signals. We just had to call our contracted vendors

and have them come in and review that. We submitted our plan of correction and was put back into compliance from a Department of Health perspective on 6/10. Our annual VA survey was back in March. We had 5 areas of concern on the nursing home unit. There was an issue with the coffee spill and burn, where actions and corrections were taken. Also, medical equipment testing schedule for our fire system and battery testing, appropriate use of masking (from Personal Protective Equipment perspective), and payment of covered and non-covered services. Which, we are getting guidance in correcting that. There were 2 areas of concern on the Personal Care Unit. The fire system batteries had to be added to the nursing home side and there was a sprinkler noted that needed to be placed in a certain area, which was all corrected. We are currently working our plan of correction for the VA.

There was an article published a few days ago regarding an incident that occurred back in May of 2023 here in the facility. We have talked about this previously at our Advisory Council meeting since that occurred. We took immediate action as soon as we knew of the situation. There was a great deal of investigation, education, correction, and documentation with the staff to correct that issue. We did very well with the corrective action. It did put us into an immediate jeopardy situation according to the guidelines of the Department of Health. We are all aware of that. Again, if you have any questions about the article, or you receive any calls about that situation, please contact me, as I can explain or answer any questions anyone may have about the situation. The article involves us and another skilled nursing facility. So, within the body of the article they also reference another skilled nursing facility, that had similar instances of why they went into an immediate jeopardy situation.

Pertaining to our Construction Report that is also listed in your folders, the Commandants' Quarters demo does not have an ETA on the start date, yet. Renovations to the Nursing Care Unit dining room to include tv and IT equipment. This is still in the design phase. Upgrading the Staff Employee Breakrooms on campus, there is not an ETA on that yet. Our State Veterans' Cemetery improvements continue, and the design site is currently being surveyed. Elevators were mentioned at our last council meeting, we have a quote and know what we need, we are just waiting on the parts for repair. But the issues with the elevator have been very minimal as of today. We are also replacing various doors. Purchase orders for construction have been issued. The contractors are currently ordering doors, and we are waiting for those to come in. The paving of the parking lot is also in the works, as well. The roof replacement out front of the Personal Care Unit is on-going. We also had construction going on last year with the Personal Care Unit entrance. After this is completed, hopefully next year during State Veterans' Home Week we will not have any construction going on for the front entrance. Masonry worked on our nursing care side, our PA system campus-wide is due to be replaced and upgraded, which is now in design phase. There will be a replacement of HVAC equipment and replacement of chillers. There will be a renovation of the dietary department dish room, the design is complete. We are just waiting for a few final things to get that project up and going. The bridge signage design is complete. We are just waiting now to see when there will be an installation date, and then there will be a ceremony for that. We had a design meeting to discuss placement and plans of the pavilion a few weeks back. Our cable issue has been resolved. There is going to be a new duress system for all our veterans' homes, and that's in the process of being discussed as well, for a safety perspective of our staff.

Today is Harry Stewart's last meeting with us. We appreciate Harry. He is always friendly and very nice to all of us, always here for the residents and all the events that we have. We will miss you Harry and we hope that you will still come around.

Mr. Stewart responded I'll be around because I have to make one last statement, "The veterans' organization built the pavilion and paid for it. We need to have some type of situation where if donations are accepted, they should be permanent and not temporary when thousands of dollars are at their disposal.

Mrs. Raymond responded to Mr. Stewart, "One of the things that we are going to be doing with the pavilion that Cheri was talking about is that we will be making a dedication to the American Legion in commemoration of the prior pavilion. She continued, "The Department of General Services wouldn't allow us to put something in writing that says we won't remove any type of structure. However, when putting that new pavilion in, we will make sure that there is

acknowledgement of the previous pavilion. I am glad you brought this up because in each of the state veterans' homes welfare funds are restricted very specifically for what the organization or individual donates the funds for.

Mr. Stewart stated, thank you and it's always been a pleasure working with you all.

Mrs. Raymond asked if Mr. Stewart would still be on the Sharing and Caring boat in September?

Mr. Stewart answered, "He doesn't know, maybe if he gets invited."

Mrs. Spacht concluded her report after Mr. Stewart replied to Mrs. Raymond.

Any questions?

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY COMMANDANT

Mrs. Seibert provided update:

Mrs. Seibert started by welcoming everyone. She first mentioned the welfare fund, stating that there are 3 of us here today that participate in the monthly welfare fund meeting, the president of our Personal Care Unit (Mr. Eller), and Ken Vybiral, and myself. Mrs. Seibert continued, one of the things that we do is to make sure the money is coming in, because they are restricted just like Barb said. Sometimes, we encourage monies to be in the unrestricted funds so that the veterans can decide if they want any current things. We are diligent with dotting those i's and crossing our t's and are very transparent with where the money is coming from. Ken does a fabulous job sending thank you notes. If there are any questions about that please let us know.

Mrs. Seibert articulated that she would like to go back to the compliance report to share on behalf of Beth Werner, who is our regional compliance officer. The report that Mrs. Werner shares on a regional level states that the Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home second quarterly compliance meeting was held on June 4th. The compliance department does not have any open investigations for Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home currently. Once the Delaware Valley facility's mock survey is completed at the end of June, all 6 of the skilled nursing facilities, and 3 personal care units will have had their facility appraisals for 2024. The FPA comes to PSSH to the personal care and nursing skill units at the end of July and the first week of August this year, we will be preparing for our 2025 licensure survey. If you have any questions about the compliance, please let me know.

Mrs. Seibert concluded her report.

Any questions?

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mr. Fry stated that for the Employee Recognition portion of the meeting, he would like to recognize Mr. Ken Vybiral for the Memorial Day service. Mr. Fry continued, any event I have ever attended, he does a very good job and I think it's time we throw an "atta boy" at you and thank you for the amazing job you do.

Cheers and applause from all attendees.

Mr. Eller announced that he didn't have much for report, other than asking everyone to stop at the reception area and check out the silent auction, 50/50 raffle tickets, and candy bars that are being sold.

Thank you.



Mrs. Seibert commented that this is something that the residents work on and manage independently of the staff. The residents have done a beautiful job this year, and the prizes are phenomenal.

Mrs. Megat expressed that she does not have anything to update, but whatever you all need to please reach out to our office. Thank you.

Mrs. Foust stated that she didn't have any updates, except that she is glad to be here for some more years.

Mr. Stewart mentioned, one last thing before I go, the American Legion Auxiliary is waiting for the about for the new bingo machine. They have funds collected, and they want to know how much, and we could probably get that into action pretty fast if we need to. I do feel \$10,000 is too much for a bingo machine. Other than that, it's always been an honor and I'll continue to go to bingo and helping anytime asked and thank you for everything.

Mrs. Raymond responded to Mr. Stewart saying that amount will go all the way up to the Adjutant General for approval, before it gets to me and before I send it to Travis, we will make sure that there are quotes. Because you're right about that amount of money, and I've never purchased a bingo machine, so I don't know how much they are. But Ken will make sure that we've got everything in order from them.

Mr. Vybiral wanted to recap our last meeting in March. We celebrated Congressional Medal of Honor Day with our inaugural commemoration and ceremony on that day. We acknowledged 3 members that are Medal of Honor recipients that are closely assimilated with us. There was two members that are in our Hall of Fame are John Gersh and Raus McGinnis. We were honored to have the McGinnis family here with us that day. Also, a former commandant of ours, one of the earliest commandants of the home, Sylvester Martin was named a Medal of Honor recipient. That's another proud tradition that we will continue to grow over the years and engage the community with. Mrs. Heubel and I attended a Veteran's Resource Fair at the Erie Institute of Technology. Also, in April we attended Senator Dan Laughlin's Veteran's Breakfast, which was well received. Our veterans always appreciate that event. April is also Volunteer Recognition Month, so we held a reception at the Plymouth restaurant here in Erie, which was well attended. All the volunteers were appreciative of the evening and recognition. I also attended a Service Fair at Iroquois High School. As we turn the calendar to May, R.O.T.C. commissioning ceremonies at both Gannon and Edinboro Universities. I was a proud presenter at McDowell High School Superintendent's Review. We had our Memorial Day Ceremony, which our President mentioned. Now we are into June and our State Veterans' Homes Week is this week, which we have our carnival and cook out today. We've mentioned the Silent Auction which is also going on today and thank you in advance for your support. We are proud to welcome the first of its kind performance tomorrow as a grand finale to State Veterans' Homes Week. The Erie Philharmonic will be performing tomorrow at 10am. As Emily mentioned the upcoming Stand Down event this Saturday that we will be attending. In August we've got the Crawford County Resource Fair, and the VA Welcome Home event at the Erie Zoo, which leads me into welcoming the new Public Affairs Officer at the Erie Va, Kim Hackbarth, seated right behind me. Mrs. Hackbarth has returned to Erie, she previously worked at the Erie Va, and we have worked together in other capacities. In her new role, she has decided to make some new connections, so I invited her here today to be my guest. I'd just like to say Harry, thank you so much, it's been great working with you over the years, and I know that you will stay active and involved with bingo and volunteering. I really appreciate all the years of support that you've dedicated to the home, and your support of our residents and veterans. Thank you so much. That concludes my report, Mr. President.

Any Questions?

OLD BUSINESS



No old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business to discuss.

GOOD OF THE COUNCIL

Mr. Fry thanked everyone for attending and invited Mr. Harry Stewart to come back and see us.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 am.

The next Advisory Council Meeting is scheduled for Thursday September 12, 2024, at 9:00 am.

Approved:

DRAFT