Illinois Veterans Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 8, 2021– 10:00am

Illinois Department of Affairs

WebEx

Attendance:

NAME	APPOINTED BY	PRESENT
Stanley Olenjack	Marine Corps League	X
Anthony Ortiz	IDVA Director	X
Al Reynolds	Disabled American Veterans	X
Senator Tony Munoz	President of Senate	X
Senator Sue Rezin	Minority Leader of Senate	
Rep. Lance Yednock	Speaker of the House	X
Rep. Dan Swanson	Minority Leader of the House	X
Bill Wolff	IDVA Director	X
	IDVA Director	
Megan Everett	IDVA Director	X
Quinn Triplett	IDVA Director	X
Command Sgt. Maj. Dena Ballowe	National Guard	
Tom Banning	Attorney General	X
Greg Curran	IL Secretary of State	X
Jorge Bermudez/Rich Wuthrich	IL Department of Securities	X
Myron Kirby	The American Legion	X
Keith Wetherell	AMVETS	X
Peggy Arick	Blue Star Mothers of America	X
Pat Noel	Catholic War Veterans	X
Dr. Jerry Field	Jewish War Veterans	X
Joe Schaler	Military Order of the Purple Heart	X
Michael Peck	Military Order of the World Wars	X
Lou Myers	Reserve Officers' Association	X
John Murray	IACVAC	X
Justin Miller	Veterans of Foreign Wars	X
Roy Dolgos	Vietnam Veterans of America	
	IDVA Director	
Bob Tyler	MOAA	X
Bill Browne	Cook County VAC	
Senator Craig Wilcox	DSTF Position	

New Members: Justin Miller, Senator Tony Munoz

Guests: Steve Fixler, Vince Long

Call to Order 10:00am

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence

Introductions:

IDVA Staff:

Terry Prince, Acting Director
Anthony Vaughn, Acting Assistant Director
Melissa Black, Chief of Staff
Kourtney Hopkins, Senior Programs Manager / Women Vet's Coordinator
Maureen Hartigan, Public Information Officer
Crystal Womack, Senior Programs Manager
Gwen Diehl, Homes/Projects Manager
Amy Brennan, Legislative Liaison
Jenny Franklin – Director's Assistant
Mark Patterson – Field Supervisor
Connie Watson – Grants

Approval of March 10th, 2021 minutes
Motion to approve the Minutes by Stanley Olenjack
Bob Tyler seconded the motion

Chairman Mike Peck:
Everyone should have received a copy of the Annual Report as it was distributed. If you did not it is available on the IDVA website.

At this time, after having a discussion with the Director regarding the Secretary Position of IVAC, Crystal can only provide support. As an IDVA employee she is not able to serve as Secretary. I would like to nominate Keith Wetherell as the IVAC Secretary.
Is there a motion to approve my appointment?

Motion to approve by Stanley Olenjack
Bob Tyler seconded the motion
Motion Approved

Thank you Keith for accepting the position.

At this time I would like to ask the Acting Director Prince to give his report.

Acting Director Prince:
Good morning everybody. Thank you for joining us today with your busy schedules. I'm joined by a number of new teammates here, which I'll go through as well. Anthony Vaughn, who I just wanted to give a shout out actually graduated with his master's degree this past weekend and walked the stage with his daughter who graduated with her bachelor's degree. So, we're very proud of him, and even more excited to have him back in the central office where he's helping us out with filling the shoes of the Senior Administrator position until we get that filled. We're also joined by our brand new Chief of Staff. She might be on your screen and is waving. Melissa Black who has just been a rock star and awesome coming in and really helping me track with our 6 point plan, policies and all the things that we've talked about over the 6 months. We're lucky to have her. You might see a young lady named Kourtney Hopkins as well. Kourtney Hopkins is a US Army veteran where she served for eight years as a “68-Whiskey” Combat Medic and deployed to Iraq for 12 months helping injured and wounded service members during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Kourtney joins us from the Army Reserve Center in Deering, Illinois and is currently serving as the Women Veterans Programming Coordinator for IDVA. On the right side of the screen you will also see Maureen Hartigan who is serving as our Public Information Officer.

As you can plainly see, we have added some real fire power to the already pretty awesome team!

So, with that being said, I'm going to kind of go through a few things that I've been working on with over the last 6 months that I think might be of interest to you in no particular order. We are upgrading our website. We have a targeted date to open our new website October 1st, you'll be pleased to see our new splash page and the way it looks. Maureen has been hard working with our DoIT folks and teammates to get our website upgraded. And then, of course, for this particular group, we want to make it much more forward facing. So someone can click and see the IVAC minutes. We'll try to get a photograph of the IVAC at some point if we ever get back together. In fact, I may just take 1 of the screen, and we'll just put that on there, but really want to let everybody know how they can access the IVAC through the IDVA website. And I think you'll be pleased with what you what you'll see on the website, making it much easier here for our veterans to connect and really not just connect with us, but also, how they connect with their VAC and how they connect with other organizations as we continue to work together to partner and work as a coalition of forces across all of the enterprises to serve veterans and their families.

Suicide prevention month began on September 1st, and we've been very active posting messages on a consistent basis, both on on our Facebook and also some personal things on our LinkedIn. We're sending out messages to staff, but we're also working closely with the Governor's Challenge. Staff has really reinvigorated our efforts to get back in our work and work closely with staff from the Governor’s Challenge. We are learning how do we get more of those resources into our state utilizing some of the things that the VA is offering in addition to a number of financial incentives.

But at the end of the day, how do we produce the number down to 0 and the things that we talk about and these efforts that we've taken on are just to say, hey, we want to be reactive to suicide. And if you heard my speech yesterday, it's really reaching out and

establishing relationships and connecting with veterans at the, at the truth level. Literally. A small unit leadership that we all know, and love that works so well is exactly the kind of direction that DVA working with all of our partners is going in the future.

Chicago veteran's home continues to provide us with lots of work. We've literally marched the ball down to the 1 yard line. For those of you that are looking forward to the football season beginning tomorrow. I have asked the Assistant Director to go to the Chicago home twice a week to help us carry the ball across the line. So we've just got a couple little things that came up in regards to some safety snafus that were not regulations but now they are and believe it or not not pots and pans to make meals. As crazy as that sounds. The supply chain has been significantly interrupted in some cases. And it's and you would think that it would be easier to just get some. The Assistant Director is working on that, and we expect to announce the opening date very soon to all of you.

We talked about outreach over the last 3 months since we last met. I probably been to the veterans homes, 3 or 4 times each. We've done a great number of outreach videos, including up to yesterday's visit out to AAR an organization that employs about 25% of its workforce are former active duty, reserve and veterans as it were. And so keeping our message of working together out there in the public and making sure that they understand that we don't really care where they go for the resources as long as they go and I don't want them to think that DVA is the only thing in the world. We are all working together and there’s a lot of organizations doing some awesome things.

I went to Dubuque and met a few of our colleagues in Dubuque, Iowa. Amy Brennan, and I braved the 99 degree heat and the 1 veteran who passed out but then jumped right back up to get the Medal of Honor Flag as we work towards hopefully getting that bill signed so that Illinois can be a part of Medal of Honor Highway, which is Highway 20 and cuts across 12 states of our nation. And as as we were reminded of the significance in Afghanistan, how important it is to honor our heroes that have earned the Medal of Honor. And Illinois, we want to be a part of that.

We do have some things that are out there in the news and then I'll close for any questions cause I could literally go all day. I'm sure you're all very interested in vaccination. It’s a big thing going on obviously for sometime since the Corona Virus. I'm happy to report that IDVA kind of leads the way for state agencies. We are at a 69% overall vaccination rate throughout our homes. It does differ in other areas in the northern parts of the state the percentage is high for example as well at LaSalle percentage of vaccinated employees is 79%.

Adding to the list of new people, we've added a new nursing home administrator in LaSalle and a new adjutant who's a former Army Major. The LaSalle home was just inspected by the VA for their annual inspection. LaSalle continues to receive extra attention from all agencies and we welcome any and all inspections because we want to be fully transparent on the efforts of what's going on. The governor is requiring the vaccination for employees in the homes as of October 4th. We will be meeting with the unions as to what that looks like. The Administrators are planning for those days and hopefully this doesn't come to fruition to where employees leave the organization, because they just need to get vaccinated. Our teams are working with contingency

plans on everything from nursing all the way to how do we provide food in all of our facilities to ensure that our veterans received the very best care that they have become accustomed to.

And so with that said assistant director, and or Melissa, please, please feel free to jump in if I missed anything. As those are some the big rocks we are working on.

Thank you Chairman

Chairman Mike Peck:
Director, is it possible for the council to receive a synopsis of the VA inspection in LaSalle?

Acting Director Prince:
When we get the report from the VA I'll run it through our through our channels and I'll touch base with you and if we can't give you the whole report, we can certainly give you an overview. It's my understanding that that's not private information from my previous experience. So, let me get back to you on that one just to make sure.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Assistant Director Vaughn, do you have anything sir?

Assistant Director Vaughn:
Good morning everyone, I don't have anything in particular. However, I would like to say, as the Director said the Administrator and Adjutant have hit the ground and are doing an excellent job taking care of everything that needs to be taken care of. The preliminary reports of the VA inspection are well and there are no major concerns that were brought up. I am very proud of the work that they did and I'm also proud of our vaccination rate.

As the Director said we are building a great team here with all of our new additions and look forward to continuing to work with the IVAC. We really enjoy the support and thank you all for everything that you do for our veterans.

Chariman Mike Peck:
On behalf of IVAC we would like to thank you for your efforts at LaSalle we really appreciate you stepping in like you did.

Chief Black do you have anything?

Chief of Staff Melissa Black:
Good morning thank you for the opportunity and I definitely echo that the Assistant Director did great work in that period of time. As the Director mentioned, I am relatively new, I haven't been here quite 2 months, but I really enjoy working with team IDVA, working with the Director and the Assistant Director, welcoming Kourtney and working. with Maureen and Amy and Connie, and so many of the folks you see on here. The commitment by the team here to the veterans and the mission, and Mark Patterson and his team in the field, just coming in and seeing this, this passion and this commitment I

can't speak more to the great team that we have here. So I look forward to continuing to work with you all and stand ready for any questions that you have. Also I dropped a note in the chat, I apologize. I have a commitment at 1030. I'm going to have to drop off no later than 1030 but your left in great hands with everybody else from team.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Thank you.

Gwen would you please give the homes report.

Gwen Diehl:

The Department has completed several capital projects and received some additional projects. While the COVID threat halted some, the Architect/Engineer Teams and Contractors have accepted our mitigation strategies and most have resumed.

Ongoing Capital Projects

(Estimated costs)

- **Illinois Veterans' Home at Anna**
  - General Building Repairs and Improvements
    (Design Development underway.) 2,166,700

- **Illinois Veterans' Home at Chicago (No Change)**
  - 200 Bed NHC Building
  - We still need:
    - Licensure by IDPH
    - Inspection by USDVA
    - Continued recruitment and hiring of staff; provide staff orientation
    - Accepting waiting list applications. Will have to undergo review and approval to ensure we can meet the needs of the applicants.
    - Will begin admitting veterans after licensure by IDPH and certification by USDVA and sufficient staffing. $ 175,150,000

- **Illinois Veterans' Home at LaSalle**
  - Replace Wander Guard and Nurse Call System (Original Building)
    (Project out for Re-Bid and bids were opened. There was a protest on the project and we are awaiting a decision on the protest from CDB and authorization to proceed) $ 583,100
  - Replace Original Generator, Chiller and Mechanical Systems
    (Bids were opened we are awaiting authorization to proceed.) 2,203,600
  - Replace Resident Room Doors (27 each) in NW Isolation Wing
    The doors will be replaced with doors that have windows and shades to allow for safety and privacy 200,000
  - Renovate Veterans Home
    Project will renovate the center core, east and west wings of the building. 4,194,400

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- **Illinois Veterans' Home at Manteno**
  - EMERGENCY Automatic Flush Valves, Mixing Valves & Water Filtration
    (The Emergency Automatic Flush Valves and Mixing Valves is still underway.) $ 9,934,118
  - Replace Air Handling Units in residential buildings
    (Two separate projects: one for R1 & R2 and one for R3, R4, S1 & S2: IDVA requested scope revision to provide HEPA Filters (MERV-13) and UV-C lights.) 6,369,100
  - Replace Various Roofing Systems
    (Flat Roofing System replacement is complete; Shingle Roofing Replacement bids were opened and CDB will issue Authorization-to-Proceed.) 5,683,200
  - Replace Water Mains on campus
    (Still in Design and cost estimating. Separating Domestic and Fire Mains) 2,038,000
  - Central Kitchen Renovation
    (Still in design and cost estimating. Project will renovate the Kitchen and Dish Machine Room) 750,700
  - Renovate Restrooms
    (Still in design and cost estimating. Project will renovate and update 120 Resident Restrooms plus Nurse Station and public rest rooms. Undergoing Code Analysis and design development. Due to ADA requirements, additional architectural changes may be needed, requiring additional funding.) 3,187,300
  - Upgrade HVAC /Replace Air Handling Units
    (Project is to provide work in the Interconnects, Admin 1 and Admin-2) 4,313,900

- **Illinois Veterans' Home at Quincy** –
  - Construct Domestic Water Loop
    (Still moving forward, the design will accommodate the footprint of the new buildings. The project will also increase the size of the Water Treatment Plant and demo the water tower. The exact construction estimate is not available at this time) $ 3,000,000
  - Construct New Nursing Home and Domiciliary (less Asbestos Remediation)
    - Demolition has begun! Fletcher and the Guesthouse are down, and Elmore is underway. A little more work is required in Kent before it can begin.
    - Design documents are underway. 35% design for the DOM was released 9/03 and is being reviewed with the State's team and Veterans United Constructors. LTC will be released next for review.
    - Documentation is pending final approval by USDVA and we will be able to request reimbursement. $13,862,640 has been expended, and we will be able to request $9,010.716 so far.
    - Construction fences have been erected and the traffic pattern now takes visitors to the left at the old stone building and down past the powerplant to get to Fifer Building.
    - Substantial completion is anticipated in about September 2024 240,564,444
  - Projects to Expand and Restore Sunset Cemetery w/NCA Grant
    (Restoration phase of project to raise and realign the headstones and restore the turf was re-bid and again had only one bidder, that was significantly over the estimate and funding. Project will be put out for bid for a third time.)
    (The Expansion Phase of the project will construct a 1,025 sq ft committal shelter, a columbarium with 140 niches, and a 35'x15' open air shed for storing soil and gravel, etc. Bids on this phase are scheduled to be opened 6/11/2021.) 1,050,000

- Roof Replacement at Ehle Laundry and Tradesmen Buildings
  (Low Bidding Contractor has been identified and project will begin this fall.) 406,700
- Re-install Air Conditioning Units at Hammond
  Project is underway. (Units were installed at an incorrect angle and leak water into building instead of draining to the outside.) 200,000
- Upgrade Electrical at HQs Bldg & Generator at Water Treatment Facility
  Project design is beginning. 980,800
- Emergency Repairs to Storm Sewer Line
  Project is in design and is being closely coordinated with BNSF Engineers, IL EPA and IL DNR. (An old clay tile drainage pipe has collapsed under the BNSF railroad track and will be replaced. Will also install a conduit for future utilities to pass under the tracks. 988,000
- Install Fire Suppression System
  Complete installation of fire sprinklers in IT Room in the old Stone Building, Smith Hall and Reig Admin Building 1,156,500

VETERANS' HOMES CENSUS

Date: September 2, 2021

Home	Skilled Census	Budgeted Skilled Census	Skilled Vacancies	Admits This Week	Admits Next Week	Dom Census	Dom Vacancies
Anna	31	*49*	18	0	0	4	3
Chicago	0	*200*	200	0	0		
La Salle	90	*190*	100	0	0		
Manteno	1271	*294*	123	0	1		
Quincy	250	382	132	0	1	32	56
Prince	10	*15*	5	0	0		

Home	Short Waiting List (Waiting Time in Weeks)							Long Waiting List			
	Skilled	Wait Time	SNU	Wait Time	DOM	Wait Time	PTime	Skilled	SNU	PTime	DOM
Anna	5	0			1	0	5	22		6	12
Chicago	102	35	2				16				
La Salle	12	22	6	7			0	6	0	1	
Manteno	29	16	4	20			72	8	2	0	
Quincy	11	0	2	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
Prince	1	0									

Chairman Mike Peck:
Thank you, Gwen. Any questions for Gwen?

Stanley Olenjack:
Hi, Gwen, you just stated that the current census at the Manteno home is 123, is that correct?

Gwen Diehl:
It is 127 with 123 vacancies

Stanley Olenjack:
123 vacancies right. You know, looking at the May 27th census report it looks like it's the same. It has the same number of vacancies at 123. The thing that I brought to mind and I was thinking about was that we talked about admitting and I guess it's going pretty slow 2 or 3 and a week. I was thinking back, you know, sometimes like at Manteno which I am familiar with we sometimes have to deaths a week out at the home. I know every Memorial Day I read off the list of all the veterans that passed away from a previous year. The amount is averaging almost two a week veterans are dying and so if we're admitting two and two are dying come Monday we're at the same place we were. We're not gaining anything. We need to find a way or the department needs to find a way to be more speedier to get these veterans into our veterans homes. They need to be there and are really waiting a long time to get in there. I mean, they can get in a nursing home a lot quicker than a veterans home. They want to go to Illinois veterans home. Like I said, if you admit two and two die on Monday your back where we started, back at 0. So you are not picking up any ground.

Gwen Diehl:
Mr. Olenjack, we have to be respectful of the families, because it's a very difficult decision to make application at the veteran's homes and then to actually move your family member into the home. So we're trying to be respectful of them as well as the veterans who are already there and not introduce too many new people.

Assistant Director Vaughn:
I'd like to also weigh in on on this, and thank you for your question Mr. Olenjack. But one of the things that we we battle with admissions is, and as you rightfully pointed out, we could have 2 veterans pass and while we're still trying to admit you know, 2 or 3 or 4 veterans each week, but one of the things we're also battling is every time we have a positive in a home we have to pause admissions because we go into outbreak status. So, it's not just that we've been able to just start admitting and keep going every time if we have a staff member positive, or if we have a resident positive that causes the home to pause admissions for a week to 2 weeks before we can determine as we go through our outbreak protocols to ensure there is no other spread within the building. Whatever building it is at say Manteno or Quincy or even in the whole buildings at Anna and LaSalle. Believe me we want to admit as quickly as possible because we know we have veterans on the list who've been waiting there a long time, but we also have to make sure that we do the admissions safely and in accordance with all of our protocols and IDPH protocols when it comes to mitigating when there's a positive resident or a staff member at any of the homes. So that's what slowing down the admissions. Covid is that is affecting that to a large degree.

Stanley Olenjack:
Because you never, you know. Before Covid started we had no problems with admissions.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Okay, well, thank you very much. I appreciate the question. I want to kind of get through the reports and then a lot of these questions they can pick up under a new and old business. Mark Patterson, are you on Mark?

Mark Patterson:
Sure, the mental health first aid training, we've had a couple of conversations about that and I'm not sure he may have just dropped off but Anthony Vaughn actually was able to perform that training at some time in the past, and was able to fill me in a little bit further on what that is all about. So I'm going to be looking into where that training is a offered and seeing how many people in different areas of the state we can enroll. The incarcerated veterans program, you know, obviously the different institutions that have communities like this are in a different status right now, but I will be working with IDOC the Illinois Department of Corrections and the online Department of Employment Securities to revive the incarcerated veterans transition program. It was a very successful program and I expect that it will be again. The other bullet on here annual training. We have that back. I reported on that last time, and I really don't have anything to add at this point. We will probably be conducting Annual training again in the May timeframe in 2022.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Just a quick question Mark on your Field Service Officers, your new hires they are certified by the VA General Counsel, correct?

Mark Patterson:
All accreditation comes from the General Counsel with the VA. The process for that is an internal training process. We have what's called IDVA University, which is a 12 module process that walks them right through. It also has a communication piece of it where they can bounce information off of each other. It used to be that we gave them the training book and they read the book and then they did a test. Well, now we're doing a lot more interactive. So, we have actually a team of people that are going through the training each time and what we've found in our 1st pilot program is we had 1 brand new employee and we had 2 employees that were already accredited because we wanted to be able to keep that conversation vibrant and have that extra expertise. When the program was concluded the new employee actually was the 2nd highest earner in the grading process and it was very inspirational for the 2 that saw that the program has transitioned to such an extent. And so we're still doing that today. We still have classes that are scheduled to start. All of our Veteran Service Officers are going to go through the IDVA University regardless of their accreditation status. So yes, we accreditate ourselves through the Chief Counsel's Office.

Chairman Mike Peck
Thank you very much Mark appreciate it.

Next we have the Vets Cash and lottery report. Connie.

Connie Watson:
Good morning everyone. We had our 4th quarter committee review on August 18th, and we have our final directors review tomorrow, so I don't have information to report on at this period but next review I should have this quarter's grantees.

Another thing that Vets Cash would like to present is a couple of changes in the Vets Cash statute. We are recommending that we make changes to the 6 funding categories. The 1st funding category is currently veterans, post traumatic stress disorder and TBI. We would like to suggest changing that to veterans, behavioral health services. This encompasses a much broader services for veterans, which also includes mental health.

The 2nd proposal would be to add a funding category and this funding category would be veteran's emergency financial assistance, including, but not limited to past utilities, housing and transportation costs. Let me explain how this setup would be, what we would do would would be an organization would submit under their veterans program, emergency financial assistance for veterans and what they would do is they would receive applications or they would receive notification from the veteran that they are getting ready to be evicted or other utilities are ready to be shut off. So that veteran meets with the veteran service organization and they verify that they are a veteran and then they verify that they owe these moneys as past due rent or utilities. The organization would evaluate if these charges are legit and the organization would also write a check to the utility company or the landlord for the emergency services assistance they would need. The service organization could write a budget, say for $2,000, they could ask that for each veteran. They could pay up $1,000 for rental assistance.

This is a possibility for a lacking and current funding, there's very, very, very few funds that allow for emergency financial assistance and this would take the ownership of the verification would be on the grantee that is providing the service to the veteran. So those are the 2 proposals we would like for you to review and if anyone has any questions, please, let me know.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Thank you ma'am for that report. Any Questions for Connie?

Steve Fixler:
We talked about this with me, Connie and Representative Swanson. I think what we also discussed was this was just going to be a 1 time a year. This is not going to be monthly assistance or anything like that. Am I correct in saying that?

Connie Watson:
Yes that is correct

Steve Fixler:
Does it depend on how the grant is written up?

Connie Watson:
The grant time period is for 1 year and up to a 1 year extension.

Steve Fixler:
How many times can the grantee provide the financial assistance to the veteran. Did we talk about the veteran just receiveing 1 time a year? I don't think we talked about monthly assistance to the veteran I just don't remember.

Connie Watson:
No, it was not monthly assistance to the veteran, tt was a 1 time assistance for an emergency situation.

Steve Fixler:
That is what I wanted to confirm.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Alright, well Thank you very much. Connie go along with that. We have Amy Brennan for legislation

Amy Brennan:
Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you IVAC members. Good morning and thank you, Connie for going through that legislative proposal. So this would be what Connie just was talking through would be a 2022 legislative proposal. I want to thank Representative Swanson for bringing this to our attention and talking through. We did have a good conference call with Representative Swanson, Steve Fixler, Connie, and myself. And so at this time I'd like to just give Representative Swanson the opportunity to say a few words. We want to thank you again for bringing this idea to our attention, and it's been our pleasure to work through this to this point with you, and we wanted to present it to IVAC Representative Swanson and I wanted to give you the opportunity to say a few words.

Representative Swanson:
Thank you Amy and thank you to all the teammates we've got on the call today. I appreciate all you do for our Veterans on a day to day basis and our veterans are truly the heroes that we have the opportunity to serve every day.

The behavioral health services goes back to a previous discussion back last spring when we could not provide some financial assistance to a group of veterans because of mental health issues Because of that, we formed this committee and had a great discussion and appreciate everyone's input. Steve's background was very much helpful on this too. We felt it would be better to bring in a larger umbrella to provide the behavior health services. We all know PTS and TBI are very well defined, but it goes beyond that with some of the assistance that our veterans need and we hope to expand that even more. With the emergency financial assistance. If we can be that 1 touch 1 piece of assistance that a veteran just needs to help you to over that emergency, then it makes sense that we should be there to help them with with these funds.

So, I look forward to to helping carry this forward. I know we have other representatives and Senators on here that we can get a good cohesive team put together within the House and the Senate to help get these through legislation. And I think iit helps us bring together that umbrella. As I said with that behavioral health services, as opposed to just 2 specifically defined areas of potential assistance. So with that, thank you very much Amy.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Thank you Representative Swanson and Amy, you have another issue to want to bring up?

Amy Brennan:
Sure, yes, thank you. Mr. Chairman. I also just wanted to point out to folks, the IVAC members that there are 2 documents that are attached to the invitation. Thank you Crystal. One of them is the exact language that we were just talking through that Connie presented that representative Swanson mentioned and Steve assisted with as well. So if you wanted to take a look at that language, and then Mr. chairman, I'll defer to you, whether you want to do a formal recommendation, or that type of type of thing. I just wanted to close out that discussion on the discussion on this proposal that again to clarify would be for 2022. It would be introduced ideally in January of next year for the next legislative session so Mr Chairman, I defer to you on what how you'd like to handle that.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Okay, with that said, do we have a member who would like to make the motion to advise the council to support the change?

Motion to support made by Representative Dan Swanson
Seconded by Keith Wetherell

Motion Carried

Amy Brennan:
Mr. Chairman I just wanted to point out to folks I did also attach a longer kind of wrap up report legislative report from the session that goes through a number of bills, great bills, a lot of legislation that was introduced and worked on by a lot of the legislators here. So, I want to think Representative Swanson, Senator Rezin, Representative Yednock and Senator Munoz. All of you helped very much in this last session. Senator Munoz was critical in helping us work on legislation with CDB to continue our building projects at Quincy. So, thank you Senator Munoz. Senator Rezin introduced a number of pieces of legislation. One of them that passed will be helpful with transparency at the homes Senate Bill 2250 that provides reporting requirements on the homes funds. So I'll thank her for that. I also especially want to thank Representative Yednock for carrying legislation to help create some consistency in our VSO hirings with managers and veteran service officers. Please feel free to look through the 14 page report. Then just lastly, Mr. Chairman with your approval. I'd love to give I know we just heard from Representative Swanson I don't know if he wanted to add anything to talk about what's going on in session the legislature has been in session the last week or 2 talking about maps, redistricting maps and the energy bill but I just with your with your approval Mr. Chairman, I would like to give the 4 legislators who are on the calls to a minute to give an update and just shared their thoughts on this last session if that's okay with you.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Moving on, we had recommendations on the IG report. I discussed the 2 recommendations 1 was established in office of the IG in IDVA and we have enough oversight between the council and the VA and IDPH. I'd like to have some discussion because I don't think that the establishing office for the IG and IDVA is necessary. Anybody have a comment on that. No comments. Okay. Is there is there a motion that we not recommend the establishment of an IG office at IDVA?

Bob Tyler:
I'd be curious about how the director feels about that. Does he feel the need for IG within IDVA or not?

Acting Director Prince:
Thank you Mr. Tyler for asking that question. I sent 1 of the earlier things I did was send there kind of a information sheet to certain individuals in regards to that. I will save the committee the boredom of reading the whole thing. But the reality is, is that we have so many layers of oversight in our facilities beginning obviously with the Illinois Department of Public Health who has really been a partner with us especially since I've arrived. Not to take credit for it but they have dispatched teams to our homes the same day as anything that occurs as far as positives go and things of that nature. Add to that the VA's annual inspections in every facility which occur at different times. We have facility ombudsmen, assigned to each of our veterans homes. And then, of course, we've got myself, the Senior Home Administrator, the Home Administrator, the Adjutant that is 7 or 8 cases of oversight. And then, of course, reporting to this group of individuals on a quarterly basis then every week with the Governor's office. We provided so many levels of oversight adding this position would just create another person that we'd have to report to and funnel things through.

Bob Tyler:
Thank you director I, I appreciate your insight on that being the case. Mr. Chairman I would move that we recommend not establishing the IG within the office of IDVA.

Motion to not recommend establishing IG office at IDVA by Bob Tyler
Seconded by Bill Wolff

Motion Carried

Chairman Mike Peck:
Okay, Amy want to discuss this briefly the Medal of Honor Highway since we did pass it through the Senate and we're waiting on the on the house.

Amy Brennan:
Following up on what Director Prince mentioned, the Medal of Honor Highway, the resolution has been making its way through recognizing Highway 20 across the nation as the Medal of Honor Highway has been making its way from the west coast to the east coast state by state. About a month and a half ago, Iowa handed over after they successfully passed the resolution in the Iowa legislature and so now Illinois with the help of Senator Cullerton in the Senate. And again this came about, I believe, from Mr. Tyler as a recommendation in the last year or 2 so we followed up on this recommendation from IVAC. We drafted the legislation and Senator Cullerton who's the chair of the Senate Veteran's Affairs Committee was our sponsor in the Senate. He was able to pass it in the last week or 2 of session and unfortunately the house ran out of time. Our sponsor Representative Anna Moeller from the Elgin area. She represents a large swath of Highway 20 in the Elgin area as to Senator Cullerton in the western suburbs, I think, in the roselle area. So, where it stands, right now, it has passed this joint resolution has passed the Senate and is now just waiting for house approval. It's expected that this will pass during the veto session, which takes place in October. So that's what we hope. We don't see any problems or issues with it. It seems like the legislature ran out of out of time. So that's the status of it. Mr. chairman.

Chairman Mike Peck:
And just so everybody knows the flag that was carried from Oregon to Iowa is with Marty of the American Legion, and we're going to have the Legion Riders take it from Iowa to Indiana. Once we get this passed and every veteran's organization will be notified by Marty.

Okay Lou Myers, you want to give us an update on the memorial?

Lou Myers:
It's been kind of a hard thing to do here with the funding of these projects. The Gold Star Mother's looks like it is getting close with Woody Williams support. The locals are also raising funds. The Freedom of Wars for Iraq, Afghanistan and all the others is hung up in Congress right now regarding Federal funding. As soon as I have further information I will get back to you.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Thank you very much Lou, I appreciate the update.

Representative Swanson, have you heard anything more about Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery?

Representative Dan Swanson:
No I have not Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Director, were you able to get an update?

Acting Director Prince:
I have no additional information. I will certainly look into it and see where we are.

Chariman Mike Peck:
Any new business for Council? Maureen did you want to talk just briefly about the new website?

Maureen Hartigan:
Absolutely, we have we spent a few weeks getting the content on the original website updated. So everything that is now on the website is current and accurate. So that was our 1st step. And in the interim, we've been working on a few different options for concepts for design and we are really, really close to getting there . So, we're doing some tweaks this week, and as the Director indicated we are looking to launch that new look October 1 and then we'll continue to work on content in terms of it's relevancy. And also obviously keeping it as up to date as possible.

Chairman Mike Peck:
Well, thank you very much. Is there any other business to come before the council?

Stanley Olenjack:
Just not too long ago the governor had mandated for all state employees to be vaccinated. My question is I don't know, we have anybody from HR committee. I don't think so, but maybe the Director can answer the question. When does the governor plan on sitting down with the state employees and work out something in the contractor side or a sidebar to make sure that this mandate filled out. A lot of these employees take care of our veterans and some of those employees are veterans too. So we have 2 concerns right there and he's talking, but I don't hear anything going on and sitting down at the bargaining table. With a union to discuss this matter.

Acting Director Prince:
Stan, thank you for that question. I appreciate you bringing that up. We do have and have had people they meet every Thursday since the Governor made the announcement. Our labor relations team is meeting with the heads of AFCME and INA and other organizations on a weekly basis to work out those details about what required looks like, what are going to be the exceptions what are going to be the testing strategies for those that can't get the vaccine and things of that nature. I think if it helps, you rest a little easier DVA has really led the way on testing as well. We test all of our employees once every week and twice a week if there's a positive on the campus We use a combination of that by next rapid testing. So, for example, like Quincy employees get tested in the parking lot, they don't even enter the facility. And then if it comes back positive, they do a PCR. So that's a partial answer to your question. So, the governor's team has been sitting down and working that on and we're all myself included eagerly awaiting the decision.

Chairman Mike Peck:
All right, any other questionsf for the Director or in new business, if not, I'll ask for a motion to adjourn.

Motion to Adjourn by Stanley Olenjack
Seconded by Quinn Triplett

Motion Carried

Next Meeting Date: December 8, 2021 – WebEx

Adjourn: Mike Peck, Chairman

****Due to technical difficulties, IVAC member John Murray was unable to speak during the meeting. I have attached his notes as an addendum to the minutes.**

All,

Great meeting! Chairman Peck, please add my comments as an addendum to the IVAC meeting minutes.

Sharing a few comments due to technical difficulties.

1. As you know, HB 1290 was signed by the Governor 8/16 and will be implemented 01/22. Newly released and an outstanding reference, Military Discharge Upgrade Legal Practice Manual (MDULPM) has also been released. Please disseminate throughout your networks. Superintendent Andrew Tangen purchased several hardcopies for the VACLC staff to reference as we attempt to correct some of the disparate and arbitrary discharge characterizations/bad paper discharges Veterans have received across the various service branches.

   - Military Discharge Upgrade, Legal Practice Manual (Authored by Margaret Kuzma, Dana Montalto, Betsy Gwin & Daniel Nagin)

     - Interesting Point - Approximately three million less-than-fully honorably discharges were issued from 1941 to today; MDULPM.

2. Illinois Association of County Veteran Assistance Commissions IACVAC is having annual CEU Training from 20 to 24 September in East Peoria. All VSO's from every service organization are welcome to attend. Please contact Nate Johnson (Assistant Superintendent Kane County/IACVAC Education Chair) for additional details, JohnsonNathaniel@co.kane.il.us or visit the IACVAC website.

3. Summer Padaoan (VSO/VACLC) and I are Mental Health First Aid Instructors (MHFA). We are teaching an eight hour class on Thursday, 23 September. Class fee = FREE / Book fee = FREE. You or your staff are welcome to attend, please let me know by COB on Monday, 13 September.

4. Mark Patterson, (IDVA Field Service Officer) reach out to me anytime on my work or personal cell. Summer and I can assist you get your staff & VSO's trained in MHFA.

5. Assistant Superintendent Sherry Kruse and I reviewed Kevin Hughes Audit Tool (IDVA Training); it's very good. We utilized what he created and personalized it for VACLC due to using VetraSpec. I'm sharing for all to review/edit/utilize. This is a great way to analyze, create conversation with staff, re-train as needed, and quantify performance. Speaking with Kevin (Navy Veteran) was great. He's transparent and very collaborative.

6. Melissa Black (IDVA COS) Congratulations on your new position! I look forward to meeting and working with you!

7. ** I heard a quote recently, that has stuck with me: **"In God we trust, all others must bring data"** ** Department of Veterans Affairs **openly shares data/metrics** about Veteran population, state summaries, maps, expenditures, demographics, County, and 116th Congressional Districts. There is a plethora of other reports as well on **National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS)** https://www.va.gov/vetdata/ - check it out.

Respectfully,

John

John Murray

Chief of Staff / SVSO

Veterans Assistance Commission of Lake County

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