

PREPARED BY: :
CHRISTA HAMMERS
SUPERINTENDENT



MAY 2025

Monthly Report

Fiscal Year 2025

MEETING AGENDA

5-28-2025

- I. Call to Order & Salute to the Colors
- II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Chaplain's Prayer
- IV. Roll Call of Officers
- V. Reading & Approval of Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Office Activity - APRIL
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
 - a. Resolutions to be passed
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting MINUTES

4/23/2025

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

President Andy Ruggerio called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Lance Sires - AmLeg - Marseilles / Greg Stock - AmLeg - Marseilles /
Roscoe Mazur - AmLeg - Oglesby / Ron Sisco - AmLeg - Mendota / Louis
Sekula - AmLeg - LaSalle / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Gary Graffis -
AmVets - Ottawa / Harold Olsen - AmVets - Mendota / Phil Harth - AmVets -
Mendota / Mike Mallie - Marine CorLeg - Post 078 / Tom Troutman - VFW -
Mendota / Chuck Erb - VFW - Marseilles

Officers Present

President – Andy Ruggerio
Vice President – Dennis Znaniecki
Guard – Elton Murphy
Chaplain – Ken Troyan

Employees Present

Christa Hammers – Superintendent
Lissa Olson - Assistant Superintendent -EXCUSED
James Sturtevant- VSO
Emily Hackler- VSO - EXCUSED
Kelli Rietgraf - Administrative Assistant

Meeting MINUTES

Approval of previous meeting minutes as presented:

Motion by Ken Troyan and seconded by Roscoe Mazur. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Superintendent's Report

Christa told the Commission that the office was able to complete the grant application for funding a renovation to our current space. We won't know anything for a few months.

Christa also discussed that the office has been getting vendors and sponsors for our Expo on May 15- if you haven't signed up yet, please get with us.

Christa informed the Commission that Lissa attended the Legislative Summit in Washington DC April 7-10. This was to talk to higher leadership about legislation and the effects it has on our Veterans and families.

Christa then told the Commission that we continue to work with IDVA and as such, attend some trainings with them - Lissa and Emily will be in Oakbrook April 21-24.

Christa then stated that the office has aquired an AED machine for our space - it is located in the front lobby. Our office signed up through OSF to get CPR/AED certified and we are going through the LaSalle County Health Dept to get NARCAN training (May 21st).

Christa discussed that Emily will be taking Advanced Appeals this year - another step to understanding how to appeal our Veterans claims.

Lissa and Kelli will be attending a Caregiver and Family Resource Fair on June 11 at Hines.

The office has been getting more BVA Hearings and the process is that we bring our clients in a week prior to go over how it works, refresh on the claim and answer any questions. Our system seems to work and the judges appreciate that we have everything put together.

Meeting MINUTES

Continued:

The VAC continues to see new clients and the amount of phone calls and walk ins is steady. The VAC has brought in over \$3.5 Million of NEW benefit payouts to Veterans and families through the end of December - over \$440 Thousand from where we were this time FY24.

Superintendent's report was motioned for approval by Dennis Znaniecki and seconded by Elton Murphy. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

NONE.

New Business

Christa stated we needed to decide on what we wanted to do in regard to the land that we currently have a earnest check holding.

Discussion

The Board decided to move forward with getting money returned that was dropped from FY25 budget/purchase of land.

Christa then asked for a roll call vote. Dennis Znaniecki motioned for roll call vote, seconded by Chuck Erb. Roll call vote is as follows:

Ken Troyan - "yay"
Lance Sires - "yay"
Roscoe Mazur - "yay"
Ron Sisco - "yay"
Dennis Znaniecki - "yay"
Louis Sekula - "yay"
Gary Graffis - "yay"
Harold Olsen - "yay"
Mike Mallie - "yay"
Elton Murphy - "yay"
Chuck Erb - "nay"

Stands that we move forward with retrieving finances/land.

Meeting MINUTES

For the Good of the Commission

Dennis stated at the Airshow on the 17th if anyone has a deceased Veterans flag they wish to be flown over, please have that to them no later than 11:30 at the Airport. The presentations start at noon.

Louis stated that while the Airshow is free, they do have a GoFundMe account and there will be donation jars throughout the event.

Ken requested - Monday, Memorial Day - 3PM if all posts can play TAPS that would be appreciated.

Elton asked if anyone had someone that could help a Veteran build a ramp to a home. He was given information regarding Hines Prosthetics Dept and a individual who does it as well.

Elton also stated it is the VFW burger night tomorrow night.

Harold stated that at the Veterans Advisory meeting they have East and West sides done with new floors and everything. Still have about 100 Veterans only in house during renovations.

Andy offered to have Board members attend county meetings with Christa. Just to show support.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Elton Murphy and seconded by Roscoe Mazur.

Motion passed unanimously at 5:45pm.

Special Meeting MINUTES

5/08/2025

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

Guard Elton Murphy called the meeting to order at 3:00pm and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Mike Harden - AmLeg - Ottawa / Greg Stock - AmLeg - Marseilles / Roscoe Mazur - AmLeg - Oglesby / John Koehler - AmLeg - Oglesby / Ron Sisco - AmLeg - Mendota / Louis Sekula - AmLeg - LaSalle / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa / Phil Harth - AmVets - Mendota / Mike Mallie - MarCorLeg - Post 078 / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / Tom Troutman - VFW - Mendota / Chuck Erb - VFW - Marseilles

Officers Present

President – Andy Ruggerio- EXCUSED
Vice President – Dennis Znaniecki - EXCUSED
Guard – Elton Murphy
Chaplain – Ken Troyan - EXCUSED

Employees Present

Christa Hammers – Superintendent
Lissa Olson - Assistant Superintendent
James Sturtevant- VSO
Emily Hackler- VSO
Kelli Rietgraf - Administrative Assistant

Special Meeting

NEW BUISNESS

Christa stated that we needed to look into starting salary for staff to be adjusted. As we have done a bit of research on comps for counties with around our size for Veteran population, we are low on starting salary.

Salary amounts were given for counties within Illinois that are the general starting point for many VAC's. Discussion was had. Board agreed that salaries needed to be adjusted. Agreed that Bonus system would go away starting FY26 in return.

New Baseline salaries for Employees were discussed and are as follows:

Administrative Assistant - \$52,000 start
Veterans Service Officer - \$60,000 start - \$65,000 after first year (accreditation)
Assistant Superintendent - \$80,000 start
Superintendent - \$95,000 start

Time served in office will still be counted as it was with annual increases. Staff on hand will have that factored into new salary come FY26 Budget.

Elton Murphy made a motion to accept salaries starting as stated, removal of bonus system FY26 and annual increases staying the same. Seconded by Ron Sisco - a roll call vote was carried out and is as follows:

Mike Harden - "yay"
Greg Stock - "yay"
Roscoe Mazur - "yay"
Ron Sisco - "yay"
Louis Sekula - "yay"
Gary Graffis - "yay"
Phil Harth - "yay"
Mike Mallie - "yay"
Bill Luther - "yay"
Elton Murphy - "yay"
Tom Troutman - "yay"
Chuck Erb - "yay"

Decision to make changes to starting salary/removal of bonus system starting FY26 and keeping the annual increases is unanimous. Motion approved.

The closing prayer was given.

Motion to adjourn made by Roscoe Mazur, seconded by Bill Luther. Motion passed.
Meeting ended at 3:43

APRIL**Office Activity:**

The office was able to put on the Veterans Expo May 15 - and had 47 Vendors available for our Veterans and Families to meet. Some were new, others have been with us from the start. While it was hot/windy we still had a decent turn out and look forward to being on Friday morning next year. We came out of it with more knowledge of what works/what we need to work on and a lot of good feedback.

Lissa attended the IACO conference in Springfield and represented our office at the IACVAC meetings.

The entire staff was able to be all certified in CPR/AED and NARCAN- with an AED and NARCAN in office for use.

Emily will start a training for better understanding social media and making it work for our office in June. It is a self-paced 14 hour course to allow us to use today's technology for our advantage.

June 11 - Lissa and Kelli will be attending a VA Caregiver and Family Resource Fair at Hines.

June 14 - The Jeep Wave Ride will be donating the proceeds to our office. This is the second year they have donated to us.

The office has been trying to make more use of programs and funding we have acquired through donations and the EXPO. We have a few things that we are learning more about and some possible programs that we are getting more information in order to enact.

Our Office
EVENTS

Office Claims DATA

APRIL Office Activity				
Office Visits	107		Intent to File	18
Phone	574		Intital Claims	37
Outstation	19		Appeals	16
Mendota	3		VA Healthcare	14
Streator	11		Pension/DIC	6
Marseilles	5		Other	156

The VAC tracks things like forms submitted, outreach clients and office visits. The “other” is things such as faxes, emails, mailings, other forms not listed etc. This is done to see where the bulk of our work and effort is done and to show that the claims processes often times take muliple forms to complete correctly.

APRIL OTHER OFFICE ACTIVITY				
PTSD GROUP	36	WALK-INS:	57	
FLUTES	7	APPT MADE:	18	
VHA	7	QUESTIONS:	39	
Computer Lab	8	TOTAL:	115	

The office is utilized by other entities to have services. Places such as Hines VA Healthcare, Flutes for Veterans, Peer-led PTSD groups and Senior Resource Meetings are just a few that use our spaces.

Meeting MINUTES

APRIL Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2025 Amount	Monthly Amount
70%	8/5/2024	Dec-25	\$ 34,750.04	\$ 1,998.19
60%	6/22/2024	Dec-25	\$ 2,536.00	\$ 157.00
30%	1/2/2024	Dec-25	\$ 9,069.12	\$ 537.42
80%	1/2/2025	Dec-25	\$ 4,293.80	\$ 306.70
30%	2/22/2022	Dec-25	\$ 25,193.55	\$ 537.42
30%	10/19/2022	Dec-25	\$ 14,790.42	\$ 346.92
80%	2/1/2025	Dec-25	\$ 1,054.32	\$ 66.86
100%	1/7/2025	Dec-25	\$ 24,751.20	\$ 2,062.60
BACKPAY - CRDP	2/26/2025	Dec-25	\$ 33,903.20	\$ -
100%	1/16/2025	Dec-25	\$ 24,796.05	\$ 1,653.07
90%	8/15/2022	Dec-25	\$ 38,769.93	\$ 2,489.96
Dependent	5/1/2024	Dec-25	\$ 7,596.00	\$ 333.00
90%	3/1/2025	Dec-25	\$ 37,394.87	\$ 2,294.96
90%	12/9/2024	Dec-25	\$ 36,822.87	\$ 2,489.96
50%	9/24/2024	Dec-25	\$ 18,536.34	\$ 1,032.53
10%	11/24/2024	Dec-25	\$ 4,862.92	\$ 175.51
Dependent	11/1/2024	Dec-25	\$ 1,269.76	\$ 70.98
20%	3/1/2025	Dec-25	\$ 8,011.14	\$ 346.95
70%	11/4/2024	Dec-25	\$ 26,759.24	\$ 1,759.19
40%	12/19/2023	Dec-25	\$ 20,694.64	\$ 774.16
40%	3/10/2025	Dec-25	\$ 11,569.92	\$ 964.16
70%	12/18/2024	Dec-25	\$ 24,051.06	\$ 1,908.19
90%	1/10/2025	Dec-25	\$ 8,726.55	\$ 581.77
Dependent	7/23/2024	Dec-25	\$ 5,330.00	\$ 282.00
backpay	7/25/2023	Dec-25	\$ 20,382.48	\$ -
IU/HB	11/21/2024	Dec-25	\$ 65,460.57	\$ 4,502.06
DIC	9/30/2024	Dec-25	\$ 39,351.12	\$ 1,635.07
Burial	9/30/2024	Dec-25	\$ 1,052.00	\$ -
70%	9/9/2024	Dec-25	\$ 30,535.10	\$ 1,759.19
10%	12/16/2024	Dec-25	\$ 3,154.90	\$ 175.51
10%	1/15/2025	Dec-25	\$ 2,632.65	\$ 175.51
Dependent	4/1/2025	Dec-25	\$ 4,072.00	\$ 285.00
Compensation	4/7/2025	Dec-25	\$ 3,632.36	\$ 175.51
Burial	4/10/2025	Dec-25	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -
DIC	4/10/2025	Dec-25	\$ 19,836.84	\$ 1,653.07
Dependent	12/20/23	Dec-25	\$ 10,575.52	\$ 396.96
100% P&T	10/11/23	Dec-25	\$ 92,110.19	\$ 4,502.06
DIC	06/26/24	Dec-25	\$ 198,005.12	\$ 1,653.07
20%	09/24/24	Dec-25	\$ 6,575.13	\$ 346.95
Total			\$924,908.92	\$40,429.46
Year to Date Total			\$4,466,515.51	\$221,174.48

Currently we are over \$550,000 over where we were this time in FY24. We continue to see new clients daily and thank all our Veterans and Families for trusting us with their claims process.