



Monthly Report

JANUARY 2026

PREPARED BY :

CHRISTA HAMMERS
SUPERINTENDENT

MEETING AGENDA

1-28-2026

- 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. Annual Report
 - b. Office Activity - DECEMBER
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
 - a. Statement of Economic Interest - Posts
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting MINUTES

11/19/2025

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

Mike Harden - AmLeg - Ottawa / Lance Sires - AmLeg - Marseilles / Greg Stock - AmLeg - Marseilles / Louis Sekula - AmLeg - LaSalle / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Harold Olsen - AmVets - Mendota / Phil Harth - AmVets - Mendota / Paul Siembab - MarCorpsLeg - Post 078 / Mike Mallie - MarCorpsLeg - Post 078 / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / Kevin Swierkowz - VFW - LaSalle / Chuck Erb - VFW - Marseilles

Officers Present

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

Employees Present

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

Meeting MINUTES

Approval of October meeting minutes as presented:
Motion by Harold Olsen and seconded by Phil Harth. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

NONE.

Superintendent's Report

Christa told the Commission that the Veterans Home giving tree was up in the office and that gifts were due back by Dec 5th.

Christa then also informed the Commission that she was out of the office for a couple of weeks due to a surgery- the staff was available and handled her absence wonderfully.

Christa also discussed that the DCEO grant that was applied for back in April was unfortunately not given to the office. We will try for more grants as they become available.

Christa informed the Commission that the office was able to give away 10+ more green lights for the week of Veterans Day - November 4-11.

Christa then told the Commission that the office was able to attend the Veterans Day Parade in Utica on November 2nd. Kelli was kind enough to let the office use her side-by-side to advertise and ride in the parade.

Christa then stated that Emily was training for Advanced Appeals on November 13-14 and that Lissa will be completing her second round of CVA courses December 11-12.

Christa discussed that Lissa and herself have attended a meeting along with VAC's from Will/Grundy/Kankakee/Kendall to build a system like Project Headspace and Timing has in Kankakee County - in regards to mental health crisis response.

Christa further discussed that Lissa attended IACO on behalf of the state association and our office. She gave a brief about what was discussed in those trainings.

Christa then stated that the office will be closed Nov 27-28 for Thanksgiving and November will be our last meeting of this year. No meeting in December.

Meeting
MINUTES CONTINUED

Christa stated that we are going to mail out the Post Delegate/Alternate forms come Jan 1st. Be on the look out and be sure to verify post addresses with Lissa. They need to be in-hand no later than March 1st.

Christa then reported that we have been able to assist Veterans and Families receive over \$10 Million in NEW benefits so far this year. Over \$545 Thousand where we were at this time last year.

Superintendent's report was motioned for approval by Lance Sires and seconded by John Duback. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Christa went over the calendars for the FY26 meetings and the staff holidays/office closures. Lissa read the Superintendent Evaluation. Christa went over the Governor's Report and stated that the annual report would be given at the January Meeting, but would be available online.

Andy called for a motion to approve the Meeting Dates for FY26:

Motion made by Dennis Znaniacki, seconded by Harold Olsen.

Motion passed unanimously.

Andy called for a motion to approve the Staff Holidays for FY 26.

Motion made by John Duback, seconded by Harold Olsen.

Motion passed unanimously.

Andy called for a motion to approve the Superintendents Evaluation:

Motion made by Dennis Znaniacki, seconded by Chuck Erb.

Motion passed unanimously.

For the Good of the Commission

None.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Harold Olsen and seconded by Mike Harden.

Motion passed unanimously at 5:43pm.

DECEMBER**Office Activity:**

Kelli was able to wrap over 400 gifts for our Veterans at the LaSalle Veterans Home. The office was able to bring them over and the residents/staff of the VA Home were again, in awe and very grateful for the outpouring of generosity shown by our community.

Christa was able to get the annual report online and we can go over a few key points.

FY25: we brought in over \$10.7Million in new benefit compensation

We handled 376 Compensation claims, 24 Pension claims, 37 DIC claims, 34 Burial claims, 97 Healthcare applications, and submitted 388 Appeals. We paid out \$8,725 in General Assistance benefits and completed over 2,200 forms to go along with each claim. We were able to assist

It is property tax season and always busy in our office. We do make sure that claims/priority appointments come first, but we caution that there is a wait for appointments right now.

Lissa and Christa attended the State Associations Annual winter meeting in Peoria. Lissa was again elected as the State Associations Secretary. We congratulate her on another term.

The office is currently working on summaries of each position (SOP) held. This will make training for the new staff member easier and more fluid. We are hoping to have these done soon and looking to put out the job posting by Feb 1st.

The office is currently working on our Veterans Expo Vendor list. We have had many past vendors inquire and ask for registration papers. If your post, or someone you know is interested - please have them contact our office. It will be Friday, May 15 from 10-2.

Emily is now attending the Goodwill Veteran Resource Group Meetings- Lissa and her will switch off on who is going. Lissa has joined a group called Connect 4 Alliance for mental health care organizations. These being added brings our office to being involved in 17 different area organizations. We appreciate being able to bring to light Veteran and Family struggles and assist our community with helping them more effectively.

We are still watching a few legislative bills - particularly HB1352 for the multicounty VACs. We don't have an update on this just yet, but we will hopefully know something in the next coming months.

The office will be closed February 12 for Lincoln's Birthday and February 16 for President's Day.

We have worked well with Ottawa Food Pantry, but since IV Food Pantry has moved a few doors down, we no longer stock dry food at our location. We still do receive commissary bags of household items/cleansers from MidWest Shelter for our Veterans.

We mailed out the post delegate/alternate sheets after Jan 1st. Please be on the look out for those and make sure we get them back by March 1st.

Our Office
EVENTS

Office Claims/Program DATA

DECEMBER Office Activity			
Office Visits	76	Intent to File	17
Phone	355	Intital Claims	27
Outstation	12	Appeals	23
Mendota	1	VA Healthcare	5
Streator	10	Pension/DIC	2
Marseilles	1	Other	139

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.

DECEMBER OTHER OFFICE ACTIVITY			
PTSD GROUP	35	WALK-INS:	37
Flutes	4	APPT MADE:	11
VA Outreach	2	QUESTIONS:	26
Vet Center	3	TOTAL:	81

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.

Currently we have brought in over **\$1.33 Million** in **NEW** benefits for our Veterans/Families. These numbers are NOT CUMULATIVE and start new each FY. We are over \$391 Thousand above where we were this time in FY25. We continue to see new clients daily and thank all our Veterans and Families for trusting us with their claims process.

DECEMBER Claims Summary					
Total Percentage	Date Submitted	Through	MONTHLY	BACKPAY	ANNUAL
Dependent	11/30/2023	Dec-26	\$ 192.00	\$ 4,356.00	\$ 6,660.00
100% P&T	3/18/2025	Dec-26	\$ 4,537.21	\$ 12,741.36	\$ 67,187.88
70%	5/13/2025	Dec-26	\$ 675.55	\$ 3,942.90	\$ 12,049.50
70%	2/10/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,808.45	\$ 15,832.71	\$ 37,534.11
Burial	5/13/2025	Dec-26	\$ -	\$ 2,900.00	\$ 2,900.00
MOD	5/13/2025	Dec-26	\$ -	\$ 346.95	\$ 346.95
DIC	5/13/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,699.36	\$ 10,265.37	\$ 30,657.69
100% P&T HB	1/10/2025	Dec-26	\$ 3,745.28	\$ 36,429.00	\$ 81,372.36
IU	9/11/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,576.28	\$ 3,066.68	\$ 21,982.04
100% P&T	6/10/2025	Dec-26	\$ 3,938.58	\$ 19,156.50	\$ 66,419.46
100% P&T	10/1/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,046.23	\$ 1,990.49	\$ 26,545.25
70%	11/7/2024	Dec-26	\$ 2,518.32	\$ 29,403.00	\$ 59,622.84
100%	1/2/2024	Dec-26	\$ 3,062.10	\$ 8,943.39	\$ 45,688.59
Burial	11/9/2025	Dec-26	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
MOD	11/9/2025	Dec-26	\$ -	\$ 774.16	\$ 774.16
DIC	11/9/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,699.36	\$ 774.16	\$ 21,116.48
100% P&T	8/14/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,270.00	\$ 6,624.51	\$ 33,864.51
Burial	11/2/2025	Dec-26	\$ -	\$ 2,350.00	\$ 2,350.00
DIC	11/2/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,699.36	\$ 4,794.56	\$ 25,186.88
MOD	11/2/2025	Dec-26	\$ -	\$ 4,794.56	\$ 4,794.56
80%	6/24/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,277.15	\$ 11,074.45	\$ 38,400.25
20%	9/24/2025	Dec-26	\$ 176.24	\$ 2,391.80	\$ 4,506.68
60%	11/3/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,254.60	\$ -	\$ 15,055.20
Dependent	11/1/2025	Dec-26	\$ 42.00	\$ 42.00	\$ 546.00
100% P&T	8/9/2025	Dec-26	\$ 4,078.45	\$ 11,902.08	\$ 60,843.48
100% P&T	12/2/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,130.13	\$ -	\$ 25,561.56
40%	7/9/2025	Dec-26	\$ 795.84	\$ 1,744.46	\$ 11,294.54
30%	11/6/2025	Dec-26	\$ 372.05	\$ -	\$ 4,464.60
50%	5/1/2025	Dec-26	\$ 337.06	\$ 2,304.34	\$ 6,349.06
50%	7/3/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,272.77	\$ 16,897.76	\$ 32,171.00
90%	6/25/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,699.17	\$ 29,073.84	\$ 61,463.88
70%	7/3/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,948.32	\$ 10,450.28	\$ 33,830.12
10%	10/29/2024	Dec-26	\$ 320.29	\$ 1,765.46	\$ 5,608.94
80%	10/6/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,277.15	\$ -	\$ 27,325.80
100%	10/29/2025	Dec-26	\$ 4,408.53	\$ 1,990.49	\$ 54,892.85
100%	3/7/2025	Dec-26	\$ 4,408.53	\$ 42,884.50	\$ 95,786.86
10%	7/22/2025	Dec-26	\$ 180.42	\$ 1,408.99	\$ 3,574.03
80%	9/8/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,277.15	\$ 26,609.20	\$ 53,935.00
40%	10/27/2025	Dec-26	\$ 935.71	\$ 1,190.33	\$ 12,418.85
80%	11/4/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,102.15	\$ 8,454.65	\$ 33,680.45
30%	12/3/2025	Dec-26	\$ 552.47	\$ 576.75	\$ 7,206.39
Dependent	12/26/2025	Dec-26	\$ 96.50	\$ 193.00	\$ 1,351.00
80%	8/21/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,277.15	\$ 17,306.82	\$ 44,632.62
IU & Housebound	11/14/2024	Dec-26	\$ 4,307.49	\$ 9,489.18	\$ 61,179.06
CUE - Housebound	8/22/2025	Dec-26	\$ 457.15	\$ 4,114.35	\$ 9,600.15
80%	10/14/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,277.15	\$ 51,066.45	\$ 78,392.25
	Total		\$ 75,729.70	\$ 424,417.48	\$ 1,333,123.88
	Year to Date Total		\$ 75,729.70	\$ 424,417.48	\$ 1,333,123.88