



Monthly Report

APRIL 2026

PREPARED BY :

CHRISTA HAMMERS
SUPERINTENDENT

MEETING AGENDA

4-15-2026

- 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. Office Activity - March
 - b. New VSO- Intro
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
 - a. Approval of Standard Operating Procedures Manual
 - b. Approval of new lease agreement
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting MINUTES

3/25/26

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

Vice President, Dennis Znaniiecki called the meeting to order at 5:03pm and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Mike Harden - AmLeg - Ottawa / Greg Stock - AmLeg - Marseilles / Roscoe Mazur - AmLeg - Oglesby / Louis Sekula - AmLeg - LaSalle / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Harold Olsen - AmVets - Mendota / Bill Bradford - MarineCorpsLeg - Post 078 / John Clark - MarineCorpsLeg - Post 078 / Kevin Swierkowz - VFW - LaSalle / Tom Troutman - VFW - Mendota / Kevin Danekas - VFW - Marseilles
Other: James Sandberg - Earlville

Officers Present

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

Employees Present

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

Meeting MINUTES

Approval of February meeting minutes as presented:
Motion by Harold Olsen and seconded by Roscoe Mazur. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Superintendent's Report

Christa told the Commission that they were able to get 8 candidates scheduled for interviews. Out of the 8, Christa and Lissa chose 3 for peer interviews with Kelli and Emily on March 27.

We are happy with applicants and know we will have a great staff member to come.

Christa then discussed that her and Lissa were able to attend the IACVAC Division 1 meeting in Will County on March 20. This brought together many VAC offices and we discussed things like General Assistance Programs and legislation updates.

Christa then told the Commission that Lissa was in Washington DC for the week talking with Federal Representatives regarding legislative issues that affect our Veterans and Families.

Christa stated that the office is currently working on SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) and we are discussing them when there is time. We are hoping to have those to present at next meeting.

Christa then told the Commission that the staff is allotted the opportunity for growth with office-based interests. Emily was presented an opportunity to take credit hours to obtain a certificate in Veteran Mental Health. This would allow her to be able to assist us in learning more about what to do in crisis situations and ultimately assist our local first responders and caregivers with more insight on the topic.

Christa then stated that the office would be closed April 3rd for Spring Holiday.

Christa discussed that we continue to watch HB1352 for multicounty VACs.

Christa then stated that Property Tax Season is just about over, make sure you come in for letters. The office always has a few Veterans that were unsure on benefits and were happy they came in to talk about things and check in. Word of mouth helps!

Meeting MINUTES CONTINUED

Christa then stated the office will be closed on Thursday April 23rd - We are touring the National Personnel Records Center. It affords the opportunity to see how records are handled and stored so we can better explain to our clients what to expect.

Christa then reported that we have been able to assist Veterans and Families receive over \$2.9 Million in NEW benefits so far this year. Over \$387 Thousand where we were at this time last year.

Superintendent's report was motioned for approval by Roscoe Mazur and seconded by Kevin Danekas. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Christa discussed the fact that we need to elect new position members for the VAC Board. Asked if anyone would like to nominate for President. Ken Troyan nominated Harold Olsen to the position. Andy had previously stated he would like to stay on. - Harold accepted the nomination. Motion seconded by Roscoe Mazur. All in favor, motion to elect Harold Olsen as President is unanimous.

Asked if anyone would like to nominate for Vice-President. Ken Troyan nominated Dennis Znaniiecki to maintain the position. Dennis agreed. Motion seconded by Harold Olsen. All in favor, motion to elect Dennis Znaniiecki as Vice- President is unanimous.

Asked if anyone would like to nominate for Guard. Ken Troyan nominated Bill Bradford. Bill accepted. Motion seconded by Dennis Znaniiecki. All in favor, motion to elect Bill Bradford as Guard is unanimous.

Asked if anyone would like to nominate for Chaplin. Ken Troyan stated he would like to remain. Motion for Ken to remain Chaplin made by Roscoe Mazur and seconded by Dennis Znaniiecki. All in favor, motion to elect Ken Troyan as Chaplin is unanimous.

Christa stated we had resolutions to go over for IVCC Scholarship and Pay Error for two employees. Louis Sekula asked a few questions regarding IVCC Scholarship. Resolution 26-002 was put to motion for approval by Dennis Znaniiecki and seconded by Roscoe Mazur. Motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 26-001 - regarding pay error for two employees was discussed and a motion for approval was made by Bill Bradford, seconded by Dennis Znaniiecki. Motion passed unanimously.

For the Good of the Commission

Dennis discussed the Peru Honor Flight Meeting. Stated there was a good turn out and many were interested. Stated he wanted to thank the Ottawa Legion for help and they look forward to doing another event in the future.

Kevin Danekas stated on May 16 - there is a Motorcycle get together at the Middle East Conflict Wall in Marseilles. Handed out a flyer.

Mike Harden asked about DEERS and being able to update online. No clear answer but Commission members were going to look into it.

Harold Olsen stated that the VA Home meeting would be Friday at 10:30. The VA Home is undergoing remodeling still, East wing now. Dennis Znaniiecki stated that he found out the icecream machine they are requesting is about \$20,000.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Dennis Znaniiecki and seconded by Roscoe Mazur.
Motion passed unanimously at 5:36pm.

MARCH**Office Activity:**

The VAC office will be closed on April 23rd so staff can attend a tour of National Personnel Records Center.

May 15th is our Annual Veterans Expo. We still have time to take your information to be a vendor. Come out and support the office 10-2 on Friday.

Lissa was able to attend Springfield and Washington DC trips these past few weeks to discuss legislation with our representatives.

The office has a quarterly enewsletter completed by Emily, that offers information regarding office ongoings and news/updates. If you do not get this and would like to - please let us know.

We officially hired a new VSO. Jordan Sigulas - started April 13th and has passed background screenings, employee onboarding and will be taking state association Basic to the Basic Benefits courses on May 1 and May 8.

The office will be attending the Women's Health Fair Event on Saturday May 9th at the Ottawa American Legion from 10-2.

The office will be closed May 25 for Memorial Day.

This is the 5th year in our office here in Peru and we are looking at doing an event for our Veterans and Families. A thank you of sorts. It will be in August. Details to come.

Lissa/Emily/Jordan will be attending the NACVSO conference in Reno on May 29-Jun 5. Lissa will be taking CVA courses and Jordan will be taking accreditation courses.

Office Claims/Program DATA

MARCH Office Activity			
Office Visits	143	Intent to File	14
Phone	618	Intital Claims	37
Outstation	28	Appeals	16
Mendota	N/A	VA Healthcare	11
Streator	14	Pension/DIC	1
Marseilles	14	Other	202

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.

MARCH OTHER OFFICE ACTIVITY			
PTSD GROUP	38		
Flutes	2	APPT MADE:	26
Vet Center	2	QUESTIONS:	45
VA Health	3	TOTAL:	116

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 **\$3.4 Million** in **NEW** benefits for our Veterans/Families. These numbers are NOT CUMULATIVE and start new each FY. We are over \$107 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.

