

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

# MONTHLY REPORT

September 2023



Prepared By:  
Christa Hammers  
Superintendent

## AGENDA

# MEETING

## 10/25/2023

---

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

# Meeting MINUTES

**9/27/2023**

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

President Harold Olsen called the meeting to order at 5:01pm and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## Delegates & Alternates Present

Greg Stock - Am Legion- Marseilles / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Chuck Erb - VFW - Marseilles / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa / Tom Troutman - VFW - Mendota / Lance Sires - Am Legion - Marseilles / Kevin Swierkosz - VFW - LaSalle / John Koehler - Am Legion - Oglesby

## Officers Present

President – Harold Olsen  
Vice President – Dennis Znaniecki  
Guard – Bill Paterson  
Chaplin – Andy Ruggerio- **EXCUSED**

## Employees Present

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

# Meeting MINUTES

Approval of Meeting minutes as presented:  
Motion by John Koehler and seconded by Chuck Erb. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report

Christa discussed that the office took a day and went to Cedar Creek Ranch- partnering with AllenForce for a Veterans event. There were roughly 20 Veterans that showed up and participated in horseback riding, yoga, games and more. It was a great day to spend out at the ranch and we hope to get some feedback from the Veterans that attended in what we could do to build a program.

Christa, Lissa and Emily attended IACVAC (state) training for VSO's in Peoria. We heard from IDVA, a BVA Law Judge, the Social Security Administration, VA Medical Exams (C&P Exam) Offices, Pension and Fiduciary Groups, CHAMPVA and more. It was, as always, a great learning week.

Christa informed the board about partnering with Ottawa Food Pantry to help supply our Veterans that are on our GA Program with food cost.

Christa then discussed that we are having a school event- hoping to bring in area/state schools to discuss scholarships/processes directed towards Veterans and their families.

Lissa brought up that the office is also now assisting the State's Attorney office with a Veteran's Treatment Court. (VDPP)- This program is aimed at Veterans that may have done something that is chargeable due to underlying service issues. Veterans can attend treatment, follow up with our office for benefits and show change. We are happy to have this in our area and assist in any way.

Christa then discussed the office brought in over \$5.1 Million in payouts to our Veterans and Families through September 2023. We started tracking walk-ins/appts made/questions to show that even though appointments are needed- we still get heavy foot traffic daily.

Superintendent's report was motioned for approval by Chuck Erb and seconded by Dennis Znaneicki. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business- NONE.

# Meeting

# MINUTES

## New Business

The Board continued in open session and the budget for FY24 was presented again: Christa went over all of the numbers, with the salary adjustments approved in the previous meeting. The Board was informed that again, these were rough numbers due to not having solid ones yet from auditor. The board did not have any questions at this time.

Motion made for approval of FY24 Budget made by Dennis Znaneicki, seconded by Chuck Erb.  
Motion passed unanimously.

## For the Good of the Commission

Harold stated that the Veterans Advisory Committee for the Nursing Home was again Zoom- stated not much was discussed. John Duback stated that they did have 2 units down for repairs.

Harold asked about the Christmas tree/Window Painting our office participates in. Lissa told him we would get solid dates to them next meeting, but we are going to do the events again.

John Duback stated that there is a group out of Dixon that is doing Honor Flights. Stated they would be out next month to talk with the group.

Dennis Znaneicki wanted to thank the VAC employees for coming out to the Moving Wall and tell everyone that with the donations made from the event- they would be able to purchase a second van for the nursing home. Dedicated to the area supporters and Veterans.

Christa asked the Board when their events were at their posts so we can help spread the word:  
John Duback stated that the Ottawa Am Legion has Fish Fry- 1st Friday of the month, Tacos 2nd Wednesday of the month, Steak 4th Thursday of the month.

Kevin stated the LaSalle VFW has Brats on the 2nd Thursday of the month and Burgets the 4th Thursday of the month.

## Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by John Duback and seconded by Dennis Znaneicki.  
Motion passed unanimously at 5:29pm.

SEPTEMBER**Office Activity:**

The LaSalle VAC has again created the event for Operation Green Light. In support of Veterans- the week of Veterans Day (Nov 6-12) please shine a green light outside your home/business. Our office has limited number of green lights, but Veterans are welcome to come take one. Help spread the word!

Our office will also be painting the windows for the LaSalle Veterans Home- December 5th at 1pm

Santa is scheduled to come to our office again this year- perfect for anyone with little kids that want a more intimate interation! Saturday, December 16th from 9am-Noon.

Our office will be setting up our Christmas Tree on November 1st for our gift tags for our Veterans in the LaSalle VA Home. Tags will be available starting Nov 1, until gone. We hope to have as great of a turn out as we did last year!

Unfortunately, there was not enough interest from area schools to host our Schools event. We will continue our communication with them and hope to bring something in the coming year.

The VAC staff met with the Ottawa Food Pantry and saw the process for getting/donating food items. We have a few Veterans that have already benefitted from the proxy forms and are grateful to offset the cost of other means with the boxes we received. Our office will continue to pick up once a month for our GA Veterans and partner with the pantry.

Christa and Lissa met with Triple Service out of Mendota about their Comfort a Hero campaign. This is to honor a Veteran and nominate them to get the gift of a new heating/cooling system. Nominations open November 1st online. See attached flyer. Our office will be in attendance at their after hours to help support/answer any questions that Veterans may have.

Per the MVAA- The Board needs to annually write a review of the Superintendent.

(330 ILCS 45/9) (from Ch. 23, par. 3089)

Sec. 9. (b) Veterans Assistance Commission.

(d) The superintendent shall be evaluated annually and a written report shall be generated. A copy of the report from the evaluation shall be provided to the entire Commission membership.

Our Office  
**EVENTS**

SEPTEMBER Office Activity			
Office Visits	91	Initial Claims	36
Phone	711	Appeals	9
Outstation	15	Board Appeals	0
Mendota	7	VA Healthcare	6
Streator	8	Pension/DIC	7
Intent to File	21	Other	120

Group Numbers:

PTSD: 20 Flutes for Vets: 5

WALK-INS:

Appts Made: 14 Questions Only: 63 TOTAL: 77

SEPTEMBER Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2023 Amount	Monthly Amount
20%	7/20/2023	Dec-23	\$ 4,260.02	\$ 327.99
50%	7/6/2023	Dec-23	\$ 25,795.36	\$ 1,041.82
50%	11/1/2021	Dec-23	\$ 14,793.84	\$ 1,141.82
100% P&T	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 94,939.17	\$ 4,708.78
40%	9/1/2022	Dec-23	\$ 7,874.72	N/A
30%	1/30/2023	Dec-23	\$ 11,361.00	\$ 568.05
80%	7/6/2023	Dec-23	\$ 34,070.40	\$ 2,094.15
10%	10/19/2022	Dec-23	\$ 3,968.80	\$ 165.92
70%	2/22/2023	Dec-23	\$ 26,886.78	\$ 1,663.06
70%	1/6/2022	Dec-23	\$ 33,703.98	\$ 1,804.06
20%	5/18/2023	Dec-23	\$ 4,263.87	\$ 327.99
100% P&T	3/2/2022	Dec-23	\$ 3,636.00	\$ 133.00
70%	5/18/2023	Dec-23	\$ 25,846.44	\$ 1,977.06
dependent	9/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 14,889.84	\$ 1,215.82
Pension	2/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 11,324.00	\$ 596.00
80%	1/18/2023	Dec-23	\$ 26,766.52	\$ 2,041.15
80%	6/22/2022	Dec-23	\$ 55,708.45	\$ 2,094.15
80%	4/21/2023	Dec-23	\$ 27,654.45	\$ 1,933.15
80%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 26,015.70	\$ 1,933.15
90%	9/22/2023	Dec-23	\$ 31,830.80	\$ 2,172.39
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$485,590.14</b>	<b>\$27,939.51</b>
		<b>Year to Date Total</b>	<b>\$5,587,855.33</b>	<b>\$542,469.71</b>

OFFICE OVERALL TOTALS:

We have continued getting grants for submitted claims, bringing our total for FY23 to just over \$5.5 million so far. We have continue to have new claims put in every month and are working diligently to get our Veterans/Families the benefits they deserve. We continue to strive to do all that we can for our Veterans & Families.

Our Office  
**OVERVIEW**



Our Office  
**OVERVIEW**