



Monthly Report

MARCH 2026

PREPARED BY :

CHRISTA HAMMERS
SUPERINTENDENT

MEETING AGENDA

3-25-2026

- 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 - February
 - b. Hiring Process for New VSO- Update
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
 - a. VAC Board - Election of Officers
 - b. IVCC Scholarship - Approval of Resolution
 - c. Pay Error - Approval of Resolution
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting MINUTES

2/25/26

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

President Andy Ruggerio called the meeting to order at 5:02pm 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 / Phil Harth - AmVets - Mendota / Paul Siembab - MarCorpsLeg - Post 078 / Mike Mallie - MarCorpsLeg - Post 078 / Kevin Swierkowz - VFW - LaSalle / Tom Troutman - VFW - Mendota / Thaddous Downey - VFW - Marseilles / Kevin Danekas - VFW - Marseilles

Officers Present

President – Andy Ruggerio
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 January meeting minutes as presented:

Motion by Harold Olsen and seconded by Dennis Znaniecki. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Superintendent's Report

Christa told the Commission that the staff was able to attend a Zoom conference regarding a new program that assists Veterans with housing. Both for those in need of help for first/last months rent and also served evictions.

Christa then discussed that it is once again Property Tax season and our office is seeing an increase in clients due to letters being needed. However, we do meet with clients and often find more that they should file for and/or factors have changed with current dependents or contentions.

Christa also discussed that we recieved 63 applications, 21 that were complete and we are looking at filling the positon as soon as possible. Next step would be to schedule interviews.

Christa stated that the office is currently working on SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) and we are discussing them when there is time. It is a work in progress, but something that we need in the office.

Christa then told the Commission that Lissa was in Springfield discussing Veteran issues with legislators. Christa informed the Board that she was able to put together a tri-fold brochure for our state association to have them pass out as points and discussion starters.

Christa then stated that Lissa will be in Washington, DC March 23-26 as part of the National Association for a leadership conference, doing much the same thing, just at the Federal level.

Christa discussed that the VA attempted to impose a "interm final rule" on rating a Veterans service-connection based off of effects of medication. Due to a overwhelming opposition the VA has overturned this rule. We will keep up to date on any further changes.

Christa then discussed that Lissa and her would be out of office March 20 to be in Will County meeting with other counties in our Division of the state. We will be discussing General Assistance and legislation updates.

Meeting MINUTES CONTINUED

Christa then reported that we have been able to assist Veterans and Families receive over \$2.43 Million in NEW benefits so far this year. Over \$611 Thousand where we were at this time last year.

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

Old Business

Christa went over the Statement of Economic interest forms again. Please make sure you turn those into the office, any questions - please ask.

New Business

Christa discussed the possibility of using the outside funds made from donations/expo fees as a starter for two scholarships at IVCC. Informed the commission that we have discussed all details with IVCC Scholarship committee. It would be open to Veteran/Children of, in-district residents only, 2.5 GPA or higher, open to grandchildren of Veterans if needed. IVCC would handle the approval process, VAC would make sure they were Veteran status/proof of service in family.

Motion to roll call vote as to approve of resolution to put the scholarship into motion made by Dennis Znaniiecki, seconded by Mike Harden - roll call vote is as follows:

Mike Harden - yay
Greg Stock - yay
Roscoe Mazur - yay
Dennis Znaniiecki - yay
Louis Sekula - yay
Gary Graffis - yay
Harold Olsen - yay
Paul Siembab - yay
Kevin Swierkowz -yay
Thaddous Downey - yay

Motion approved unanimously. Christa to provide resolution at next meeting.

For the Good of the Commission

Harold discussed that the VA Home is in need of a icecream machine, roughly \$8,000 in cost and that the next meeting of their committee is 3/27 at 10:30.

Dennis discussed the honor flight meeting at Peru City Hall on March 21st at 11am.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Dennis Znaniiecki and seconded by Roscoe Mazur. Motion passed unanimously at 5:40pm.

February

Office Activity:

Christa/Lissa were able to get 8 candidates scheduled for interviews on March 13 & 19. Out of the 8, Lissa and Christa were able to choose 3 for peer interviews with Kelli and Emily on March 27. We are happy with the applicants and are hoping to choose our next staff member as soon as possible.

On March 20- Christa and Lissa attended the IACVAC Division 1 meeting with other county VAC offices to discuss General Assistance and legislation. It was a very productive conversation regarding what other counties provide and where we can improve.

Lissa is in Washington DC this week talking with our Federal representatives regarding the legislation that effects our Veterans and families. We are waiting to hear back on how it went and what the main topics of discussion were on the hill.

The office is currently working on Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). It is alot of information and is taking time, but is still a work in progress.

Christa discussed with staff many times about the possibilities of opening up opportunities for growth with the office based on 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 be able to assist our local departments that respond to the calls as well. It maybe something that we can host classes on for our groups/caregivers as a program for better insight/information and what to do.

Our office will be closed April 3rd for the Spring Holiday.

We are still watchingn 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.

Property Tax season is just about over, but our office still is recieving new clients daily. We appreciate all of the word of mouth that allows people to know about our office and how we can assist them.

The office will be attending a tour of the National Personnel Records Center (and hopefully the caves) on April 23rd. It is a chance to better understand how our Veterans records are handled and how to obtain them faster.

Our Office
EVENTS

Office Claims/Program DATA

FEBRUARY Office Activity			
Office Visits	154	Intent to File	15
Phone	477	Intital Claims	31
Outstation	24	Appeals	17
Mendota	N/A	VA Healthcare	3
Streator	13	Pension/DIC	3
Marseilles	11	Other	162

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.

FEBRUARY OTHER OFFICE ACTIVITY			
PTSD GROUP	33	Senior Resource:	15
Flutes	3	APPT MADE:	27
Vet Center	2	QUESTIONS:	43
VA Health	1	TOTAL:	124

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 **\$2.9 Million** in **NEW** benefits for our Veterans/Families. These numbers are NOT CUMULATIVE and start new each FY. We are over \$387 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.

FEBRUARY Claims Summary

Total Percentage	Date Submitted	Through	MONTHLY	BACKPAY	ANNUAL
MOD	1/5/2026	Dec-26	\$ -	\$ 1,961.45	\$ 1,961.45
Burial	1/5/2026	Dec-26	\$ -	\$ 1,002.00	\$ 1,002.00
80%	12/23/2025	Dec-26	\$ 743.13	\$ 743.13	\$ 9,660.69
100% P&T	10/8/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,576.28	\$ 4,685.90	\$ 23,601.26
Dependent	3/3/2026	Dec-26	\$ 219.00	\$ 2,142.00	\$ 4,770.00
20%	10/7/2025	Dec-26	\$ 176.24	\$ 523.92	\$ 2,638.80
80%	7/16/2024	Dec-26	\$ 2,102.15	\$ 25,655.32	\$ 50,881.12
80%	2/4/2026	Dec-26	\$ 315.70	\$ -	\$ 3,788.40
40%	1/20/2026	Dec-26	\$ 243.37	\$ 243.37	\$ 3,163.81
100% P&T	2/8/2013	Dec-26	\$ 1,934.95	\$ 52,990.16	\$ 76,209.56
90%	7/16/2024	Dec-26	\$ 260.15	\$ 9,641.91	\$ 12,763.71
SMC	12/29/2025	Dec-26	\$ 139.87	\$ 1,669.21	\$ 3,347.65
80%	8/19/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,277.15	\$ 9,819.45	\$ 37,145.25
Dependent	11/4/2024	Dec-26	\$ 219.59	\$ 3,222.09	\$ 5,857.17
40%	12/3/2025	Dec-26	\$ 795.84	\$ 1,230.84	\$ 10,780.92
90%	8/6/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,802.30	\$ 16,299.78	\$ 49,927.38
DIC	7/31/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,699.36	\$ 10,011.00	\$ 30,403.32
20%	10/29/2025	Dec-26	\$ 356.66	\$ 1,060.27	\$ 5,340.19
10%	11/12/2025	Dec-26	\$ 180.42	\$ 360.84	\$ 252.88
40%	9/15/2025	Dec-26	\$ 795.84	\$ 9,377.12	\$ 18,927.20
70%	12/3/2025	Dec-26	\$ 1,808.45	\$ 1,808.45	\$ 23,509.85
10%	12/3/2025	Dec-26	\$ 552.47	\$ 195.81	\$ 6,825.45
90%	9/5/2025	Dec-26	\$ 2,559.30	\$ 3,027.96	\$ 33,739.56
30%	6/17/2025	Dec-26	\$ 552.47	\$ 4,344.51	\$ 10,974.15
10%	1/29/2026	Dec-26	\$ 180.42	\$ 180.42	\$ 180.42
Dependent	2/11/2026	Dec-26	\$ 102.00	\$ -	\$ 1,224.00
30%	9/16/2025	Dec-26	\$ 552.47	\$ 3,792.04	\$ 10,421.68
90%	12/2/2025	Dec-26	\$ 3,138.17	\$ 139.00	\$ 37,658.04
DIC/MOD	2/26/2026	Dec-26	\$ 2,060.21	\$ 6,218.38	\$ 30,940.90
SMC	10/17/2025	Dec-26	\$ 139.87	\$ 415.80	\$ 2,094.24
	Total		\$ 28,483.83	\$ 172,762.13	\$ 509,991.05
	Year to Date Total		\$ 169,995.18	\$ 905,869.32	\$ 2,946,584.21