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LASALLE COUNTY VETERANS
ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

MONTHLY REPORT

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2022
PREPARED BY CHRISTA HAMMERS

MEETING

1/25/2023

- 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. Todd Volker Habitat for Humanity (Speaker)
- VI. Reading & Approval of the Meeting Minutes
- VII. Public Comment
- VIII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Office Activity
 - b. Annual Report
 - c. Conference Room Update
 - d. MVAA Trailer Bill Update
- IX. Old Business
- X. New Business
 - a. New Employee Welcome (Emily/Kelli)
- XI. For the Good of the Commission
- XII. Closing Prayer
- XIII. Adjournment

AGENDA

Meeting

MINUTES

11/16/2022

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

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

Delegates & Alternates Present

Greg Stock - Am Legion- Marseilles /Tom Troutman - VFW - Mendota / Lance Sires - Am Legion - Marseilles / Elton Murphy- VFW - LaSalle / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Other: Andy Ruggerio- Peru Memorial Group

Officers Present

President – Chuck Erb
Vice President – Harold Olsen
Guard – Bill Paterson - Excused
Chaplin – Jim Ebner - Excused

Employees Present

Christa Hammers – Superintendent
Lissa Olson - Assistant Superintendent
James Sturtevant- VSO- In-Training
Beth Caldera- Receptionist- Excused

Meeting MINUTES

Meeting started at 5:00pm. Approval of Meeting minutes as presented:
Motion by Harold Olsen and seconded by Elton Murphy. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report

Christa discussed Events coming up:

Operation Green Light- a nationwide event for bringing awareness and support to our Veterans- Green lights are available for any Veterans that stop in. Display the Green light the week of Veterans day- November 7-13.

Christa also discussed the Christmas for VA Home Event. We are planning on getting needs/wish lists for each resident and putting them on tags on our office Christmas Tree. Week of November 14th stop in and pick one up. Bring back by December 12th so we can take them to the home by December 16th.

Christa let the Commission know about the Christmas window painting. We do this every year and the residents and staff at the home appreciate it. We are planning the afternoon of November 30th.

Lastly, the Christmas for Kids event- We have scheduled a meet and greet with a Veteran Santa that would be a gift giving/photo opportunity for our Veterans with little ones. Kids/Grandkids- anyone that would like to bring their kids in to meet Santa. Parents encouraged to bring a small gift in so Santa can present it to the child. December 17th from 9am- Noon.

Christa then let the Commission know that we exceeded \$5 million in backpay/payment to our Veterans/Families as of this time. Exceeding goals exponentially. By the end of the year we will surpass that and couldn't be prouder of all the work we have done.

Christa discussed we are currently booking into January, James taking his Basic Course this week and tests on Friday and Emily coming on December 1st will help bring those appt wait times down.

Christa made everyone aware that Lissa had taken her Advanced Appeals course and that she had her CVA courses coming up on December 8-9.

Christa then discussed that we don't have everyone's OMA Certificate yet- please make sure these get to the office ASAP. Also, if anyone has any Veterans Day events that you would like the office to share- please send us the information.

Board then went over the upcoming monthly meeting calendar for 2023. Motion for approval of dates made by Elton Murphy, Seconded by Harold Olsen- Motion passed unanimously.

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

Meeting MINUTES

Old Business

There will be **NO December VAC Meeting.**

New Business -

NONE.

For the Good of the Commission -

Harold Olsen stated that Saturday, December 3rd was Pearl Harbor Day- 11AM at Boat Club.
Laurie Emmer, former state commander, will be in attendance.

Andy Ruggerio stated that the Traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall will be in Peru (Veterans Park) from August 24-28. They are looking for volunteers for guards. Andy also stated that their Honor Guard was in need of help for funerals still. Peru Memorial Group needs members- get in contact with him to sign-up.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Elton Murphy and seconded by John Duback.
Motion passed unanimously at 5:15pm.

Giving Tree Event:

We had our Christmas Tree up and with our communities support were able to gift ALL Veterans at the LaSalle VA home at least two things off of their "wish list". It was a fantastic event and we plan on continuing this.

Christmas Windows for VA Home:

We decorated the windows at the VA home for the 3rd year in a row and although cold, it was a great event again and we love being able to do this for our Veterans.

Vets Visit with Santa:

We had Santa come to the office for some photos with the little ones. Santa was a Vietnam Veteran that was so kind to bring little toys for every kid he saw. It was a fun time to let the kids enjoy the spirit of Christmas, we do need to get this event out there more and bring in some of our younger clients.

We have received donations from Bill Walsh, a Veteran and a family in memory of a Veteran. These are for our Programs/Events.

Veterans Expo 2023:

We received word on Friday that we are going to partner with the TBM Avenger Air Show and be located at the Peru Airport on Thursday (May 18) this year. This is the day that all the planes begin to arrive and the foot traffic is always high. We look forward to working with them and making both events successful.

Training:

James passed his basic benefits course in November, Lissa took and completed Advanced Appeals in November and Christa passed her CVA course in December. Lissa and Christa have State Meeting in February (Peoria).

Office Updates:

Conference Room has a new TV/Camera system graciously installed by Christa's dad. We received a few quotes from outside providers- but all were way out of budget. This is for our Meetings and Appeals hearings. It is a welcome update!

Our Office
EVENTS

November Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2022 Amount	Monthly Amount
10%	5/13/2022	Dec-22	\$ 2,906.88	\$165.92
CRDP Backpay	11/18/2022	Dec-22	\$ 6,376.00	\$1,594.00
100%	8/9/2022	Dec-22	\$ 67,181.46	\$3,952.51
20%	2/23/2020	Dec-22	\$ 8,715.27	\$327.99
DIC Grant	8/23/2022	Dec-22	\$ 31,691.82	\$1,562.74
90%	7/15/2022	Dec-22	\$ 27,942.96	\$2,172.39
10%	9/2/2022	Dec-22	\$ 2,296.32	\$165.92
100% SMC	8/15/2022	Dec-22	\$ 72,543.97	\$5,859.96
50% BVA	3/25/2016	Dec-22	\$ 44,424.41	\$528.05
10%	3/30/2022	Dec-22	\$ 2,900.16	\$152.64
20%	7/24/2021	Dec-22	\$ 8,079.74	\$301.74
10%	8/23/2022	Dec-22	\$ 2,448.96	\$165.92
40%	7/6/2022	Dec-22	\$ 9,605.88	\$731.86
70%	3/20/2022	Dec-22	\$ 38,276.32	\$1,977.06
100% PT	8/2/2022	Dec-22	\$ 55,376.46	\$3,621.95
10%	8/18/2022	Dec-22	\$ 2,448.96	\$165.92
100% P&T/SMC	11/11/2021	Dec-22	\$ 54,173.41	\$3,328.70
10%	3/19/2021	Dec-22	\$ 4,053.28	\$152.64
10%	1/1/2021	Dec-22	\$ 1,831.68	\$152.64
80%	2/24/2022	Dec-22	\$ 23,801.13	\$1,778.43
50%	5/3/2022	Dec-22	\$ 14,376.60	\$958.44
80% IU	7/12/2021	Dec-22	\$ 70,924.27	\$3,825.75
10%	4/20/2022	Dec-22	\$ 1,831.68	\$152.64
40%	7/10/2013	Dec-22	\$ 8,079.36	\$673.28
		Total	\$554,207.62	\$33,795.81
		Year to Date Total	\$5,824,918.45	\$350,054.92

December Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2022 Amount	Monthly Amount
70%	5/16/2022	Dec-22	\$30,520.52	\$2,037.06
DIC	10/31/2022	Dec-22	\$33,129.48	\$1,562.74
90%	8/9/2022	Dec-22	\$28,957.95	\$2,353.39
10%	8/22/2022	Dec-22	\$2,614.88	\$165.92
Spouse award	9/27/2022	Dec-22	\$454.00	\$0.00
80%	9/27/2022	Dec-22	\$26,986.10	\$2,094.15
Burial	12/20/2022	Dec-22	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
90% Overall	12/1/2022	Dec-22	\$ 30,916.68	\$ 2,576.39
		Total	\$155,579.61	\$12,789.65
		Year to Date Total	\$155,579.61	\$12,789.65

Our Office
OVERVIEW

Group Numbers:
PTSD: 18 Flutes for Vets: 8

November Office Activity			
Office Visits	126	Initial Claims	50
Phone	706	Appeals	15
Outstation	17	Board Appeals	0
Mendota	9	VA Healthcare	10
Streator	8	VA Pension	3
Intent to File	29	Other	405

2022 Office Activity			
Office Visits	843	Initial Claims	273
Phone	5203	Appeals	168
Ottawa	48	Board Appeals	7
Mendota	71	VA Healthcare	9
Streator	106	VA Pension	39
Sandwich	10	Other	4829

Group Numbers:
PTSD: 11 Flutes for Vets: 7

December Office Activity			
Office Visits	68	Initial Claims	35
Phone	604	Appeals	8
Outstation	17	Board Appeals	3
Mendota	9	VA Healthcare	5
Streator	8	VA Pension	5
Intent to File	15	Other	200

OFFICE OVERALL TOTALS:

We have surpassed all goals and almost reached \$6 million in Compensation for our Veterans and Families. We are elated to bring that much to our Veterans and community.

We have Emily here with us now and have hired a new Administrative Assistant- Kelli. We are excited to have a full team ready to take on the new year!

Update On
OFFICE NTK

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

MONTHLY REPORT

January 2023



Prepared By:
Christa Hammers
Superintendent

AGENDA

MEETING

2/22/2023

- 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 the Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Office Activity
 - b. MVAA Trailer Bill Update
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting

MINUTES

1/23/2022

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

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

Delegates & Alternates Present

Greg Stock - Am Legion- Marseilles / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / Paul Siembab - MC League - Oglesby / Lance Sires - Am Legion - Marseilles / Mike Mallie - MC League - Oglesby / Elton Murphy- VFW - LaSalle/ Mike Harden - Am Legion - Ottawa / Ron Sisco - VFW - Mendota / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Other: Andy Ruggerio- Peru Memorial Group / Todd Volker- Habitat for Humanity

Officers Present

President – Chuck Erb

Vice President – Harold Olsen

Guard – Bill Paterson - Excused

Chaplin – Jim Ebner

Employees Present

Christa Hammers – Superintendent

Lissa Olson - Assistant Superintendent

James Sturtevant- VSO- In-Training

Emily Hackler- VSO - In-Training

Kelli Rietgraf - Administrative Assistant

Meeting MINUTES

Meeting started at 5:00pm. Followed by a brief presentation from Todd Volker from Habitat for Humanity. Todd discussed upcoming projects and wanted to share that he is looking for a team of volunteers to put together a home for a Veteran. Todd shared a bit about their processes and asked if anyone had any Veterans looking for a home or would like to volunteer, to reach out to him or Lissa Olson as she sits on the Veterans portion of their board.

Approval of Meeting minutes as presented:
Motion by Elton Murphy and seconded by Harold Olsen. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report

Christa discussed Events that we did the past few months:
Operation Green Light- a nationwide event for bringing awareness and support to our Veterans- Green lights were given to our Veterans/Families and we gifted about 150 total. Hoping to make this an annual event.

Christa also discussed the Christmas for VA Home Event. With the help of the community- our office made sure every Veteran at the LaSalle VA Home had a present this year. We also had decorated the windows for the holidays for the 3rd year in a row and plan on doing both again this coming year.

Lastly, the Christmas for Kids event- We had a few kids turn out, but hopefully we can have more next year as our Veterans are getting younger and hopefully will want to partake in this event.

Christa discussed the New Event: Veterans Expo 2023 and partnership with TBM Avengers. Lissa informed the Board that it will be the Thursday before the airshow and hoping that due to being during the week- we will have better opportunities for vendors since some can't do any overtime. Thursday, May 18th from 11AM-3PM. Flyer attached to packet and found on the office website.

Christa discussed James passed his Basic Benefits course and now waiting for PIV Card access. Emily is next in April and Kelli will be taking pre-benefits course to help understand what Veterans are referring to when they call.

Christa made everyone aware that she had passed her CVA course and will be getting her certificate at National Conference in Wisconsin in June.

Christa then went over the update to the conference room and shared the quotes they received for doing it through a vendor and how much the office paid by doing it ourselves.

Meeting MINUTES

The numbers for just December are putting us on track for having another fantastic year for our Veterans and Families. We are over \$100,000 in payouts for our Veterans so far.

Emily and Kelli were introduced officially and both gave a bit of background- Emily, Husband is currently in the Army Reserves, she serves as their Soldier and Family Readiness Group Leader for his unit. Kelli, lots of family that are Veterans, her uncle was a VNM Veteran that unfortunately did not make it back. Her step-dad was also in the Navy.

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

Old Business

OMA Certificate Reminder: Need to be a copy in office by March 1st.

New Business

President Chuck Erb stated he will not be running again. Chaplain Jim Ebner stated the same.

For the Good of the Commission

Jim Ebner stated that he filled out the AARP funding request even though he's not expecting anything. Told Commission to take the lead if there is ever a next time- do the application yourselves.

New members who will be attending meetings introduced themselves.

Ron Sisco- Mendota VFW

Mike Harden- Ottawa VFW

Roscoe Mazur- Oglesby AmLeg

Paul Siembab- Jonesville Marine Corps League

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Elton Murphy and seconded by Harold Olsen.

Motion passed unanimously at 5:32pm.

JANUARY:

Veterans Expo 2023:

We received some vendors and sponsors for our event and are excited to try and make this the largest one so far.

Training:

James received his PIV card today and we are looking forward to finishing up training with him and getting him going with clients. Emily will be taking Basic courses in April and Kelli will be taking the intro course in March.

Office Updates:

Christa is working on the updated General Assistance Program. Looking into how we can help more Veterans/Families in their time of need.

We did use the Our Patriots group for any needs of our Veterans we did not cover as an office. Due to issues, we are looking elsewhere and other counties have invited us to instead use PHAT (Project Headspace and Timing). They would essentially be doing the same thing as Our Patriots (grants of up to \$1000/one time)- the Superintendents will be in charge of approvals still so there is no PI being passed to someone that doesn't hold our credentials.

OMA Certificates need to be in our office no later than March 1st. This is an ABSOLUTE need. Posts need to get with us if they don't have the means to achieve the certificate from a personal computer- we can help.

January Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2023 Amount	Monthly Amount
90%	12/1/2022	Dec-23	\$ 30,916.68	\$ 2,576.39
100% PT	7/15/2022	Dec-23	\$ 57,041.16	\$ 3,823.89
70%	8/25/2022	Dec-23	\$ 26,209.63	\$ 1,663.06
70%	9/7/2022	Dec-23	\$ 26,772.68	\$ 1,804.06
A&A Grant	11/1/2022	Dec-23	\$ 18,616.00	\$ 1,432.00
60%	10/24/2022	Dec-23	\$ 16,964.34	\$ 1,319.65
20%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 6,309.52	\$ 2,373.64
100% PT SMC	11/16/2022	Dec-23	\$ 50,821.74	\$ 4,200.74
100%PT	10/20/2022	Dec-23	\$ 47,224.40	\$ 3,621.95
90%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 38,564.69	\$ 2,301.01
100 P&T	10/13/2022	Dec-23	\$ 54,039.36	\$ 3,621.95
100% P&T	12/27/2022	Dec-23	\$ 48,898.71	\$ 3,823.89
80%	8/4/2022	Dec-23	\$ 28,052.86	\$ 2,222.77
30%	4/27/2022	Dec-23	\$ 7,266.60	\$ 568.05
90%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 38,896.42	\$ 2,482.01
10%	10/24/2022	Dec-23	\$ 2,309.60	\$ 165.92
10%	5/25/2022	Dec-23	\$ 1,991.04	\$ 165.92
0%	11/28/2022	Dec-23	\$ 442.66	\$ -
70%	5/16/2022	Dec-23	\$ 30,520.52	\$ 2,037.06
DIC	10/31/2022	Dec-23	\$ 33,129.48	\$ 1,562.74
90%	8/9/2022	Dec-23	\$ 28,957.95	\$ 2,353.39
10%	8/22/2022	Dec-23	\$ 2,614.88	\$ 165.92
Spouse award	9/27/2022	Dec-23	\$ 454.00	\$ -
Burial	12/20/2022	Dec-23	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
MOD	12/15/2022	Dec-23	\$ 3,952.51	\$ 3,952.51
Burial	12/15/2022	Dec-23	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
70%	10/13/2021	Dec-23	\$ 26,346.49	\$ 1,804.06
10%	6/16/2022	Dec-23	\$ 2,920.16	\$ 165.92
90%	9/14/2022	Dec-23	\$ 26,832.10	\$ 2,172.39
DIC	9/16/2021	Dec-23	\$ 39,525.66	\$ 1,562.74
70%	1/5/2022	Dec-23	\$ 31,737.33	\$ 1,663.06
60%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 22,824.59	\$ 1,448.27
40%	7/22/2022	Dec-23	\$ 12,207.30	\$ 731.86
80%	9/27/2022	Dec-23	\$ 29,784.12	\$ 2,482.01
60%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 24,272.86	\$ 1,448.27
20%	10/11/2022	Dec-23	\$ 4,409.12	\$ 327.99
10%	10/11/2022	Dec-23	\$ 2,309.60	\$ 165.92
80%	4/29/2022	Dec-23	\$ 35,945.28	\$ 1,933.15
		Total	\$864,082.04	\$68,144.16
		Year to Date Total	\$1,019,661.65	\$80,933.81



Our Office
OVERVIEW

Group Numbers:

PTSD: 23 Flutes for Vets: 10 Senior Resource Group: 13

January Office Activity			
Office Visits	103	Initial Claims	45
Phone	869	Appeals	27
Outstation	28	Board Appeals	1
Mendota	11	VA Healthcare	7
Streator	17	VA Pension	5
Intent to File	6	Other	117

OFFICE OVERALL TOTALS:

We have made an amazing leap in just one month- we are over \$1million for total compensation through the end of 2023. With James going to be taking clients soon and Emily close second- we are hoping for another record year.

We continue to strive to do all that we can for our Veterans & Families.

Chuck/Jim last meeting as their positions. We appreciate their service and wish them all the best. Thank you for all you have done for our office and our Veterans.

Elections are being held next meeting. Please make sure everyone has turned in certificates/DD214's and is in attendance to be elected.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

MONTHLY REPORT

February 2023



Prepared By:
Christa Hammers
Superintendent

AGENDA

MEETING 3/22/2023

- 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 the Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Office Activity
 - b. Office Events
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
 - a. Nominations/Elections of Officers
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting MINUTES

2/22/2022

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

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

Delegates & Alternates Present

Greg Stock - Am Legion- Marseilles / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / Paul Siembab - MC League - Oglesby / Lance Sires - Am Legion - Marseilles / Elton Murphy- VFW - LaSalle/ Kenneth Harden - Am Legion - Ottawa / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Jack Leininger - Am Legion - Marseilles / Roscoe Mazur - Am Legion - Oglesby / John Koehler- Am Legion - Oglesby / Dennis Znaniecki - Am Legion - Peru / Other: Andy Ruggerio- Peru Memorial Group

Officers Present

President – Chuck Erb
Vice President – Harold Olsen- Excused
Guard – Bill Paterson
Chaplin – Jim Ebner

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

Meeting started at 5:00pm.

Approval of Meeting minutes as presented:

Motion by Bill Luther and seconded by Lance Sires. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report

Christa discussed Events that the office has coming up. The Veterans Expo 2023- held on May 18th from 11-3 out at the IL Valley Regional Airport. Partnered with TBM this year and hoping to have a great turn out. Hines is coming out for a Registry Exam for Burn Pit Veterans. Also, Caregiver support is putting on a knitting class in April. Both flyers attached.

Christa also discussed training coming up. James went and received his PIV Card. (excused today due to this) Emily is to take basic benefits in April and Kelli will take the intro course in March.

Christa then discussed the update to the General Assistance program. Working with Project Headspace and Timing for additional monies for our Veterans to cover "extras" our assistance does not.

Christa then went over that we have to have the OMA Certificates for each Del/Alt by March 1st. Along with the paperwork for who is each posts representatives. Please make sure these are timely.

Christa discussed the January claims summary. We have already hit over \$1 million in benefits for our Veterans and Families. We continue to see new Veterans daily and hoping to get James & Emily up to speed so we can lessen wait times for appointments.

Christa made everyone aware that this is Chuck and Jim's last meeting in their official capacity. They have both done wonders for our office and we are grateful for their time that they have given to our Veterans & Families.

Christa then went over the fact that elections will be held at the next meeting- make sure you are present if wanting a position.

Meeting

MINUTES

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

Old Business

OMA Certificate Reminder: Need to be a copy in office by March 1st.

New Business- None.

For the Good of the Commission

Dennis Znaniacki brought up that the Vietnam/Desert Storm/9.11 Wall will be in Peru August 24-28, Asked VAC to set up a table. - Christa Agreed that would be a great idea and the office would be in touch.

Elton Murphy stated that LaSalle VFW is hosting burger night on 2/23 and they are having a car show for Memorial Day.

Jim Ebner shared that there is a wild game feed at the Oglesby Legion on Sunday Feb 26 and the doors open at 11. Also that the VA Home is preparing poppies and they need volunteers to make about 17,000 more.

Bill Luther shared that the Ottawa VFW is hosting a fish fry every Friday through lent. Lissa shared that on April 18th her and Emily will be in Sandwich for a outreach event. Also, Todd Volker from Habitat is still looking for volunteers to help build.

Jim Ebner introduced John Koehler as the new alternate for the Oglesby Am. Legion.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Elton Murphy and seconded by Bill Luther.
Motion passed unanimously at 5:37pm.

FEBRUARY:

Veterans Expo 2023:

Update on Vendors/Sponsors from Lissa.

Training:

James received his PIV card and although there were some issues, he finally is able to take some clients. We will have him solo starting May 1st.

Christa and Lissa went to Peoria for the IACVAC winter meeting. We learned about a company that is charging our Veterans for their DD214's. While not illegal- their process is not great. Let your fellow Veterans know that our office can assist them in getting their documents- free.

Office Updates:

Christa is working on getting some quotes for the half wall removal/glass door inserts or door replacements and walling off the employee kitchen area. Waiting on one more before making any decisions on what we can accomplish this year.

We were able to get some swag purchased for our outreach events, coozies, fridge magnets, small flags and small notepads. We refreshed our pens and also ordered some new table covers for our outreach tables. Thankfully, all came in under budget and will last us a long time.

Our office will be attending the Studstill Home, Lawn and Lifestyle Event at the Peru Mall this Saturday- March 25th from 11-4.

Christa and Lissa had a meeting with T-Mobile for a "phone" for Veterans to connect with resources they may need. Mental health, healthcare, transportation- completely customizable. In discussion with how that would work for our office as that was not something we had in budget.



Our Office
EVENTS

February Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2023 Amount	Monthly Amount
10%	10/13/2022	Dec-23	\$2,475.52	\$165.92
DIC/A&A	4/19/2022	Dec-23	\$26,666.10	\$1,949.89
DIC	6/7/2022	Dec-23	\$29,066.66	\$1,562.74
80%	9/6/2022	Dec-23	\$30,205.60	\$2,292.15
10%	7/29/2022	Dec-23	\$2,933.44	\$165.92
60%	10/25/2022	Dec-23	\$21,009.65	\$1,440.65
20%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$4,707.32	\$327.99
40%	11/1/2022	Dec-23	\$10,608.32	\$825.86
10%	12/28/2021	Dec-23	\$4,001.92	\$165.92
90%	3/9/2022	Dec-23	\$32,450.56	\$2,482.01
70%	8/3/2022	Dec-23	\$ 32,040.75	\$ 1,804.06
Burial	2/2/2023	Dec-23	\$780.00	\$780.00
30%	2/4/2023	Dec-23	\$8,514.87	\$508.05
20%	2/5/2023	Dec-23	\$4,591.86	\$327.99
DIC	2/7/2023	Dec-23	\$20,315.62	\$1,562.74
70%	2/3/2023	Dec-23	\$29,020.74	\$2,047.06
80%	2/9/2023	Dec-23	\$37,658.29	\$2,094.15
DIC	2/14/2023	Dec-23	\$26,516.33	\$1,894.58
MOD	2/14/2023	Dec-23	\$9,687.67	\$9,687.67
10%	2/10/2023	Dec-23	\$2,322.88	\$165.92
40%	2/24/2023	Dec-23	\$11,149.62	\$811.96
50%	2/26/2023	Dec-23	\$14,031.80	\$1,141.82
70%	2/23/2023	Dec-23	\$54,284.72	\$1,977.06
		Total	\$415,040.24	\$36,182.11
		Year to Date Total	\$1,434,701.89	\$117,115.92

Group Numbers:

PTSD: 23 Flutes for Vets: 14 Senior Resource Group: 15

February Office Activity			
Office Visits	80	Initial Claims	29
Phone	667	Appeals	8
Outstation	31	Board Appeals	1
Mendota	9	VA Healthcare	6
Streator	12	Pension/DIC	3
Intent to File	11	Other	101

OFFICE OVERALL TOTALS:

We have continued getting grants for submitted claims, bringing our total for FY23 to just under \$1.5 million so far.

We continue to strive to do all that we can for our Veterans & Families.

Our Office

OVERVIEW

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

MONTHLY REPORT

APRIL 2023



Prepared By:
Christa Hammers
Superintendent

AGENDA

MEETING 5/24/2023

- 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 the Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Office Activity
 - b. Office Events
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting MINUTES

4/26/2023

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

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

Delegates & Alternates Present

Greg Stock - Am Legion- Marseilles / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / Paul Siembab - MC League- Oglesby / Lance Sires - Am Legion - Marseilles / Mike Harden - Am Legion - Ottawa / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Roscoe Mazur - Am Legion - Oglesby / Chuck Erb - VFW - Marseilles / Tom Shea - Am Legion - Ottawa / Tom Troutman - VFW- Mendota / Mike Mallie - MC League - Oglesby / Elton Murphy - VFW - LaSalle

Officers Present

President – Harold Olsen

Vice President – Dennis Znaniiecki

Guard – Bill Paterson

Chaplin – Andy Ruggerio

Employees Present

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

Meeting MINUTES

Meeting started at 5:00pm.

Approval of Meeting minutes as presented:

Motion by Bill Luther and seconded by Harold Olsen. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report

Christa discussed Events that the office has coming up. The Veterans Expo 2023- held on May 18th from 11-3 out at the IL Valley Regional Airport. Lissa went over that we had approximately 45+ Vendors now signed up. Should be a great event!

Christa also discussed that James is now seeing clients for Hunt/Fish licenses and PTAX exemptions. Lissa and Christa have sat in with a few clients and he should be good to go by May 1 for solo appointments. Lissa and Christa will be gone in Springfield May 9-12 for IACO Conferences.

Christa then discussed that Emily is now fully accredited and we need to wait on her PIV card. Until then, she will be assisting with inputting awards, helping Lissa with the Expo and answering questions/phone calls.

Christa then went over that we finally got the 1/2 wall removed. No quote yet on glass for the doors, but maybe when we slow down a bit we can get those done.

Christa then discussed that we went to the Lawn and Garden show in March, and that Lissa and Emily went to Sandwich for a resource fair in April. Both were great events that we were able to connect with other Veterans/Families at.

Christa then informed the Commission that Lissa attended the IL Joining Forces conference in Northbrook in April and heard from many legislative leaders and it was directed training for Veteran Suicide Awareness. Also, on April 28, the office plans to meet with the PTSD Group to answer pointed Q&A and offered to be open to anyone/post that would like the same.

Christa discussed the March claims summary. We have already are over \$2 million in benefits for our Veterans and Families. We continue to see new Veterans daily and hoping to get James & Emily up to speed so we can lessen wait times for appointments.

Meeting

MINUTES

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

Old Business- None.

New Business

Harold told the Commission that Sue Sculley from the VA Home did retire and Bailey took over. Also that Jerry Bacidore from the home would like to somehow get the Veterans to a baseball game (Pistol Shrimp).

Andy Ruggerio asked about beds available. Harold told the Commission that they still have WWII Veterans coming in and are about 1/2 full. VA Home is possibly going to no masks required soon.

For the Good of the Commission

Elton Murphy discussed that the Flutes for Veterans would be having their recital at the VFW in Peoria Heights and Saturday 6th at the 1st Congressional Church by old IVCH. He also stated that the VFW would be having burger night and Monday the 29th is the Car Show.

Harold stated that they would like some sort of Memorial Day event for the VA Home, but everyone is busy with other locations. Looking for volunteers.

Roscoe stated that the Oglesby Legion would be having their steak fry tomorrow and Fish Frys starting Friday.

Dennis is asking that posts help to donate or turn some sort of fundraiser for help to get VA Home a new Van. Possibly put out donation jar at wall event. "Donated from Veterans and Citizens of the IL Valley" would be on the back.

Andy stated that Peru Memorial Group had a couple more sign up to be apart of it. Harold stated he would help with whatever was needed with them as well.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Elton Murphy and seconded by Bill Luther.
Motion passed unanimously at 5:31pm.

APRIL:

Veterans Expo 2023:

We had a fantastic turnout - 62 Vendors signed up (61 at event- 1 family emergency)
Had about 200+ Attendees and all that were talked to stated they would love to see it back.

Training:

Christa and Lissa attended IACO- learned about CMS and how to apply online now, National Cemetery rules and preneed certificates, mapping for plots, homeless Veterans reintegration programs, DMV spoke of License plates and how to get stickers paid for, Emergency Program Alerts for Drivers Licenses, and heard from Major General Rich Neely on how the ILNG is doing with Suicide/Sexual Assault training and differences in training vs federal duty.

Christa, Lissa and James will be out of office the week of June 5th for Nationals in Madison, WI. Christa will be out from June 3-9th due to CVA classes.

Our office will be hosting a IACVAC Division II (North East Corner of the state) SAVE Training here on June 30th for all new VSOs and those who have never had the training before.

Informative :

The IL State Library has been doing a project called: "The Illinois Veterans History Project"
The Illinois Veterans History Project was launched by the Illinois Secretary of State to create a permanent record of the names and stories of Illinois war veterans and civilians who served our state and country during war, so that their contributions will not be forgotten.

Participate with telling your story- contact your local library or the information on the flyer attached.



Our Office
EVENTS

April Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2023 Amount	Monthly Amount
20%	12/14/2022	Dec-23	\$ 4,263.02	\$ 327.99
60%	12/19/2022	Dec-23	\$ 19,727.73	\$ 1,569.27
20%	1/23/2023	Dec-23	\$ 4,591.86	\$ 327.99
20%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 7,182.30	\$ 456.61
60%	1/13/2023	Dec-23	\$ 20,161.80	\$ 1,319.65
100% SMC	1/28/2022	Dec-23	\$ 52,089.36	\$ 3,621.95
10%	10/18/2022	Dec-23	\$ 2,807.36	\$ 165.92
20%	3/9/2023	Dec-23	\$ 3,935.88	\$ 327.99
90%	1/23/2023	Dec-23	\$ 26,068.68	\$ 2,172.39
100%	1/17/2023	Dec-23	\$ 51,072.72	\$ 4,256.06
100% SMC	1/28/2022	Dec-23	\$ 21,362.58	\$ -
80%	12/19/2022	Dec-23	\$ 10,456.00	\$ 2,222.77
60%	1/11/2023	Dec-23	\$ 3,056.04	\$ 121.00
40%	10/17/2022	Dec-23	\$ 13,114.90	\$ 731.86
60%	2/14/2023	Dec-23	\$ 17,819.12	\$ 1,319.65
100%	2/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 11,323.71	\$ -
10%	1/12/2023	Dec-23	\$ 2,488.80	\$ 165.92
70%	2/7/2023	Dec-23	\$ 23,633.12	\$ 1,804.06
10%	4/29/2023	Dec-23	\$ 7,878.41	\$ -
DIC	3/23/2023	Dec-23	\$20,315.62	\$1,562.74
10%	2/18/2023	Dec-23	\$4,028.48	\$2,037.44
80%	2/8/2013	Dec-23	\$191,964.08	\$164,458.28
30%	2/14/2022	Dec-23	\$8,313.09	\$2,211.09
100 P&T%	9/13/2022	Dec-23	\$59,220.54	\$4,829.70
dependent	1/1/2021	Dec-23	\$2,938.00	\$1,978.00
dependent	1/1/2023	Dec-23	\$1,200.00	\$240.00
10%	12/29/2022	Dec-23	\$2,488.80	\$497.76
40%	7/20/2022	Dec-23	\$14,402.88	\$5,620.56
10%	12/15/2022	Dec-23	\$2,488.80	\$497.76
40%	12/20/2022	Dec-23	\$13,767.68	\$3,441.92
dependent	7/20/2022	Dec-23	\$1,426.00	\$466.00
MOD		Dec-23	\$1,440.65	\$0.00
		Total	\$627,028.01	\$208,752.33
		Year to Date Total	\$2,684,586.67	\$377,180.58

April Office Activity			
Office Visits	106	Initial Claims	30
Phone	664	Appeals	25
Outstation	20	Board Appeals	1
Mendota	7	VA Healthcare	12
Streator	13	Pension/DIC	7
Intent to File	8	Other	125

Group Numbers:
PTSD: 18 No Flutes this month.

OFFICE OVERALL TOTALS:

We have continued getting grants for submitted claims, bringing our total for FY23 to just over \$2.6 million so far. We have had many phone calls for new clients, which is great that our Veterans & Families are hearing of our services! We are currently booking into August with the hope of shortening wait times soon.

We continue to strive to do all that we can for our Veterans & Families.

Our Office
OVERVIEW

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

MONTHLY REPORT

MAY 2023



Prepared By:
Christa Hammers
Superintendent

AGENDA

MEETING

6/28/2023

- 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 the Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Office Activity
 - b. Office Events/Training- Madison, WI
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting MINUTES

5/24/2023

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

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

Delegates & Alternates Present

Greg Stock - Am Legion- Marseilles / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / Paul Siembab - MC League- Oglesby / Mike Harden - Am Legion - Ottawa / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Roscoe Mazur - Am Legion - Oglesby / Chuck Erb - VFW - Marseilles / Mike Mallie - MC League - Oglesby / Elton Murphy - VFW - LaSalle / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa

Officers Present

President – Harold Olsen
Vice President – Dennis Znaniiecki
Guard – Bill Paterson
Chaplin – Andy Ruggerio

Employees Present

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

Meeting MINUTES

Meeting started at 5:00pm.

Approval of Meeting minutes as presented:

Motion by Elton Murphy and seconded by Andy Ruggerio. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report

Christa discussed the Veterans Expo 2023: Had a fantastic turnout. 61 Vendors at event, about 200 attendees and praises from anyone in attendance. Look forward to continuing to partner with TBM Avengers and the Airshow.

Christa also discussed IACO Conferences that she and Lissa attended in Springfield. Talked about CMS applications online, National Cemetery updates, DMV License Plates and what the ILNG is doing to prevent Sexual Assaults within their ranks.

Christa then discussed that Lissa, James and herself will be out of office the week of June 5th for Nationals in Madison, WI. Christa will be attending CVA Course refresher June 3-4.

Christa then went over that the office is hosting a IACVAC Division II SAVE Training on June 30. If this is something that posts are interested in having, we can be the location. It is excellent training for those who make contact with Veterans suffering from suicidal thoughts.

Christa then discussed that the IL State Library is doing a "Illinois Veterans History Project" and it's in place to preserve the history of the Veterans of Illinois - names and stories on record so their contributions will not be forgotten. Get in touch with us if you want to learn more. Or contact your local library.

Christa also informed the commission that on Saturday, May 27- Lissa and herself will be at the LaSalle VFW for the Town Hall with Lauren Underwood and Mark Takano of California. Invited to come meet and greet and host a table.

Christa discussed the April claims summary. We have already are over \$2.6 million in benefits for our Veterans and Families. We continue to see new Veterans daily and hoping to get Emily her PIV Card soon so she can start taking clients and bring wait times down even more. Currently out about 2 months, even with James taking on clients.

Meeting MINUTES

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

Old Business-

The commission brought up what was going on with the doors/glass inserts for the offices. Christa informed them that she has had Kelli make a few phone calls, but nothing yet on where Dr. Garg had stated that he originally got the doors from. The person who placed the bid has not returned a call yet.

New Business- NONE.

For the Good of the Commission

Elton Murphy discussed that Burger night at the VFW is tomorrow. 5-8pm in LaSalle. Also, Lauren Underwood will be at a Town Hall from 12-3 on Saturday the 27th. Monday, Memorial Day there will be a car show from 9am-3pm.

Harold stated that they would be having a Memorial Day event on Monday (Memorial Day) at 10:30am at the Mendota Cemetery. Friday they will be placing flags.

Chuck stated that the Marseilles post is hosing Sue Rezin at 10am at the post for Memorial Day.

John Duback inquired about hunting/fishing licenses- Christa informed the commission that we can assist with these, but we are not the direct-givers of these licenses. Veteran needs to bring their DD214, drivers license, SOB letter and indicate which license they would like.

Dennis stated their Memorial Day event would be at 11:00am at Washington Park and they are assisting with one at the VA Home at 1:45. Roscoe stated that theirs was at 10am in Oglesby-Veterans Park.

Harold stated that the VA Home would like to have Veterans take outings- possibly to Bakers Lake for fishing? They aren't sure on details, but they wish to get Veterans out and about. Also, Bailey took over as Activity director. No replacement for her old position yet.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Elton Murphy and seconded by Andy Ruggiero. Motion passed unanimously at 5:35pm.

MAY:

Training:

Christa, Lissa and James attended NACVSO National Training in Madison, WI- learned about the Camp Lejeune Justice Act/PACT Act, TERA (Toxic Exposure Risk Activity), VBMS updates, Electronic Health Records, ProBono Legal (Veterans Consortium), heard from the C&P exam contracted companies (VES and QTC). Lissa and Christa attended a wonderful Women's Veterans lunch with Brigadier General Joane Mathews as the speaker. We also heard from VA leadership- VA Secretary Denis McDonough, NCA Under Secretary - Matthew Quinn and VBA Under Secretary- Josh Jacobs as well as BVA Chairman Jaime Areizaga-Soto. All of which were informative on what the VA is doing to make the claims go faster, smoother and how the VA can help our Veterans/Families more and what they are trying to do better.

Christa attended CVA Courses June 3-4. These were refreshers and continuing education classes about how secondary conditions, best appeals processes and how to determine dates of claims. Always informative, great refresh and continue to learn more each time Katrina and Jim host classes.

Our office will be hosting a IACVAC Division II (North East Corner of the state) SAVE Training here on June 30th for all new VSOs and those who have never had the training before.

Our office will also be having a safety plan put into place with Peru Police Department coming June 30th to go over scenario training and protocols. Christa will put this into a procedure manual and we can look back in case an event arises.

Humana Insurance will be at our office for our Veterans to ask questions about Medicare/VA Health care and Humana working together. Fridays from 10-3.

PACT Act:

Veterans who may qualify for any compensation under the new PACT Act should see one of us before August 10, 2023. That is the last day for filing a claim and having it backdate to August 10, 2022- when the Act was signed. After that date, it will be from date of claim.

OUR OFFICE IS HOLDING INTENT DAY- August 5 from 9-1pm. Walk-ins welcome. Please bring your DD214. We will set you up with follow-up appointment. Hold your date, come see us!



Our Office
EVENTS

Christa was chosen to be on Congresswoman Lauren Underwoods Veteran Advisory Council, this is great for our office and Veterans throughout the state. She is also taking over as the liaison between IDVA and the state VSO's.

The LaSalle County VAC and AllenForce are partnering with Cedar Creek Ranch for a Veterans Event. This event will be September 15 from 10am-4pm. Registration opens online August 5. Access registration by going to our website via computer (found on homepage) or cell (found under event flyers tab). Event is for Veterans only. MUST be able to mount/ride horse without assistance. Any questions- please contact our office.

CORRECTION:

DMV License Plates: In order to get them at no cost and use the letter- the Veteran HAS to be 50% or more Service-Connected. We apologize for any confusion.

May Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2023 Amount	Monthly Amount
Granted DIC	3/28/2023	Dec-23	\$ 23,319.01	\$ 1,562.74
50%	10/17/2022	Dec-23	\$ 8,157.99	\$ 226.58
100% IU P&T	7/15/2022	Dec-23	\$ 64,046.60	\$ 3,621.95
Pension Grant A&A	8/31/2022	Dec-23	\$ 54,816.00	\$ 2,642.00
80%	9/14/2022	Dec-23	\$ 29,600.10	\$ 2,094.15
10%	1/26/2023	Dec-23	\$ 2,488.80	\$ 165.92
70%	5/25/2022	Dec-23	\$ 32,085.74	\$ 1,804.06
50%	8/25/2022	Dec-23	\$ 13,701.84	\$ 1,141.82
80%	5/25/2022	Dec-23	\$ 6,820.05	\$ 290.09
90%	11/1/2022	Dec-23	\$ 34,584.37	\$ 2,172.39
40%	6/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 11,849.91	\$ 811.86
70%	5/5/2023	Dec-23	\$ 21,924.72	\$ 1,827.06
80%	5/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 25,419.89	\$ 2,094.15
Granted Dep	3/2/2023	Dec-23	\$ 50,831.41	\$ 4,072.12
40%	1/27/2023	Dec-23	\$ 9,742.32	\$ 811.86
100% P&T	11/17/2022	Dec-23	\$49,409.12	\$3,952.51
10%	9/30/2022	Dec-23	\$1,991.04	\$165.92
90%	9/22/2022	Dec-23	\$26,068.68	\$2,172.39
100% P&T	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$51,072.72	\$4,256.06
MOD		Dec-23	\$0.00	\$3,517.84
50%	2/23/2022	Dec-23	\$12,501.84	\$1,041.82
10%	2/16/2023	Dec-23	\$1,991.04	\$165.92
100% P&T	2/14/2023	Dec-23	\$43,463.40	\$3,621.95
		Total	\$575,886.59	\$44,233.16
		Year to Date Total	\$3,260,473.26	\$421,413.74

Our Office

OVERVIEW

May Office Activity			
Office Visits	94	Initial Claims	40
Phone	892	Appeals	25
Outstation	9	Board Appeals	0
Mendota	3	VA Healthcare	8
Streator	6	Pension/DIC	2
Intent to File	36	Other	137

Group Numbers:
PTSD: 16 Flutes for Vets: 11

OFFICE OVERALL TOTALS:

We have continued getting grants for submitted claims, bringing our total for FY23 to just over \$3.2 million so far. We have had many phone calls for questions regarding PACT Act. We are currently booking into late August with the hope of shortening wait times soon- Emily is just waiting on access.

We continue to strive to do all that we can for our Veterans & Families.

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

MONTHLY REPORT

J U N E 2 0 2 3



Prepared By:
Christa Hammers
Superintendent

AGENDA

MEETING

7/26/2023

- 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 the Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Office Activity
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
 - a. Presentations by Staff
 - b. ****Closed Session for Discussion****
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting MINUTES

6/28/2023

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

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

Delegates & Alternates Present

Greg Stock - Am Legion- Marseilles / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / Paul Siembab - MC League- Oglesby / Mike Harden - Am Legion - Ottawa / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Roscoe Mazur - Am Legion - Oglesby / Chuck Erb - VFW - Marseilles / Mike Mallie - MC League - Oglesby / Elton Murphy - VFW - LaSalle / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa / Tom Troutman - VFW - Mendota / Tom Shea - Am Legion - Ottawa / Lance Sires - Am Legion - Marseilles

Officers Present

President – Harold Olsen

Vice President – Dennis Znaniiecki

Guard – Bill Paterson

Chaplin – Andy Ruggerio

Employees Present

Christa Hammers – Superintendent - EXCUSED

Lissa Olson - Assistant Superintendent

James Sturtevant- VSO- In-Training

Emily Hackler- VSO - In-Training

Kelli Rietgraf - Administrative Assistant

Meeting MINUTES

Meeting started at 5:00pm.

Approval of Meeting minutes as presented:

Motion by Harold Olsen and seconded by Elton Murphy. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report

Lissa discussed NACVSO (National Association of County Veterans Service Officers) Training in Madison. She went over briefly the topics discussed- TERA (toxic exposure risk activity), VBMS Updates, Electronic Health Records, Camp Lejeune Justice Act/PACT to name a few. Also discussed the leadership we had the honor of hearing from, VA Secretary Denis McDonough, NCA Under Secretary, Matthew Quinn and VBA Under Secretary, Josh Jacobs. Also discussed that we had a wonderful women's Veterans lunch with Brigadier General Joane Mathews.

Lissa then discussed how Christa attended CVA courses June 3-4 and that they were refresher classes, always able to learn something from the great advocates and teachers we have.

Lissa then talked about how our office would be hosting the IACVAC Division II SAVE Training on June 30th. Training for New VSO's and others who have never been through the program.

Lissa then discussed how the Peru PD would be coming to our office to put together a safety plan on June 30th. Lissa stated that Christa would put this in a procedure manual so everyone is aware.

Lissa also talked about Humana Insurance coming to the office for our Veterans to be able to ask questions about Medicare/VA Healthcare and Humana working together. Fridays from 10-3.

Lissa also stated that our office was holding a PACT Act day for Intent filing. August 5th from 9am-1pm. Stop on in and we can help you out!

Lissa then told the board that Christa was chosen for Congresswoman Underwoods Veteran Advisory Council, also that Christa would be taking over as the liaison between IDVA and the county VSO's throughout the state.

There was a correction to the DMV License Plates: Veterans HAVE to be Service-Connected at 50% or more to receive no cost plates/stickers.

Meeting

MINUTES

Lissa then discussed the office brought in over \$3.2 Million in payouts to our Veterans and Families through May 2023. We look forward to surpassing our last years total.

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

Old Business- NONE.

New Business- NONE.

For the Good of the Commission

Dennis Znaniacki discussed that July 3rd the Pistol Shrimp are hosting a Vets night. Memorial Group will be there- arrive about 5:30pm. Also, if you haven't used them (Vettix.org) is great for getting tickets for concerts and games.

Harold stated that they are trying to get the Veterans from the VA Home to one of the Pistol Shrimp games. They are currently on lockdown again due to upper respiratory. 84 beds currently occupied.

Elton Murphy stated that he got an email from Todd Volker from Habitat for Humanity. Needing help with build. If interested his number is 815-434-2041. Also, the VFW has karaoke from 7p-11p in LaSalle on June 30th.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Elton Murphy and seconded by Dennis Znaniacki. Motion passed unanimously at 5:30pm.

JUNE:

Training:

Emily has her accreditation number and is now waiting on her PIV card. She is working with both Christa and Lissa to take on some claim work and is doing well.

PACT Act:

Veterans who may qualify for any compensation under the new PACT Act should see one of us before August 10, 2023. That is the last day for filing a claim and having it backdate to August 10, 2022- when the Act was signed. After that date, it will be from date of claim.

OUR OFFICE IS HOLDING INTENT DAY- August 5 from 9-1pm. Walk-ins welcome. Please bring your DD214. We will set you up with follow-up appointment. Hold your date, come see us!

**PACT Act is Liberalizing Law... meaning if the Veteran has the diagnosed PRESUMED condition BEFORE the PACT Act passed (August 10, 2022)- NO MATTER the time the Veteran files, they will get a year of backpay. No intent truly needed unless other conditions apply or if the Veteran was diagnosed AFTER the PACT Act passed. **

Our office hosted the VA SAVE Training for Division II IACVAC- it was a great event, great turn out and everyone thought it was excellent training.

Peru PD stopped out and created a plan, ran through scenarios and did "what if" Q&A with the VAC staff on June 30. We thank Peru PD Chief, Sarah Raymond for her help on setting us up for success should the worst happen.

Christa had to take some time off for a week due to surgery and she thanks the staff at the VAC for covering and making sure the office ran smoothly in her absence. It was nice to know all was well when in recovery.

Christa had her first meeting with the Advisory Council for Congresswoman Lauren Underwood- it was a basic, who is who and what do we do for the community meeting. What her office is currently working on and what has passed. Congresswoman Underwood has secured over \$20 million in Community Project Funding for Illinois' 14th district - for projects that may otherwise not have money to be done. Whether that is daycare, libraries, parks or otherwise, she is looking for ideas to best spend that money. Also, her Inflation Reduction Act has passed. Meaning people that need the medication and are on Medicare will pay no more than \$35/mo for it.

Also, Congresswoman Underwood will be hosting a series of Town Halls coming up. August 7th will be one in LaSalle County and August 28th will be Bureau County. Her office is looking for a moderator for the Bureau County event. If anyone knows someone who may be interested- please have them contact us or her office.



Our Office
EVENTS

Also, Congresswoman Underwood will be hosting a series of TownHalls coming up. August 7th will be one in LaSalle County and August 28th will be Bureau County. Her office is looking for a moderator for the Bureau County event. If anyone knows someone who may be interested- please have them contact us or her office.

The moderator is charged with welcoming the audience, sharing the rules of the event (and holding constituents accountable to those rules!), and calling on constituents to ask questions. In very rare circumstances, the moderator may need to keep the discussion on track by asking constituents who are preventing other constituents from asking questions to not interrupt and let them know that additional follow up can be provided after the town hall if they have more questions.

REMINDER:

The LaSalle County VAC and AllenForce are partnering with Cedar Creek Ranch for a Veterans Event. This event will be September 15 from 10am-4pm. Registration opens online August 5. Access registration by going to our website via computer (found on homepage) or cell (found under event flyers tab). Event is for Veterans only. MUST be able to mount/ride horse without assistance. Any questions- please contact our office.

JUNE Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2023 Amount	Monthly Amount
70%	5/26/2022	Dec-23	\$ 34,417.15	\$ 1,663.06
Granted	1/4/2023	Dec-23	\$ 28,566.58	\$ 1,562.74
40%	1/26/2023	Dec-23	\$ 16,657.04	\$ 731.86
10%	3/30/2023	Dec-23	\$ 3,610.40	\$ 165.92
10%	4/27/2023	Dec-23	\$ 2,488.80	\$ 165.92
10% Legacy	10/2/2019	Dec-23	\$12,047.42	\$811.86
10%	5/10/2022	Dec-23	\$3,736.48	\$165.92
DIC	4/20/2023	Dec-23	\$23,441.10	\$1,562.74
20%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$4,584.16	\$327.99
40%	4/3/2023	Dec-23	\$9,006.13	\$731.86
10%	1/20/2023	Dec-23	\$2,156.96	\$165.92
100% P&T	6/7/2023	Dec-23	\$25,946.10	\$1,729.74
10%	2/9/2023	Dec-23	\$2,488.80	\$165.92
50%	11/19/2022	Dec-23	\$18,752.76	\$1,041.82
60%	10/24/2022	Dec-23	\$27,256.73	\$1,440.65
90%	1/19/2023	Dec-23	\$39,782.24	\$2,486.39
80%	10/19/2021	Dec-23	\$26,337.10	\$1,791.68
70%	12/22/2022	Dec-23	\$16,867.40	\$992.20
90%	11/28/2022	Dec-23	\$42,361.02	\$2,353.39
70%	5/10/2022	Dec-23	\$46,123.52	\$1,881.14
		Total	\$386,627.89	\$21,938.72
		Year to Date Total	\$3,647,101.15	\$443,352.46

Our Office

OVERVIEW

JUNE Office Activity			
Office Visits	84	Initial Claims	41
Phone	151**	Appeals	4
Outstation	15	Board Appeals	18
Mendota	7	VA Healthcare	5
Streator	8	Pension/DIC	4
Intent to File	33	Other	160

**Updated Number will be provided next month

Group Numbers:
PTSD: 16 Flutes for Vets: 11 SAVE: 10

OFFICE OVERALL TOTALS:

We have continued getting grants for submitted claims, bringing our total for FY23 to just over \$3.6 million so far. We have had many phone calls for questions regarding PACT Act still. We are currently booking into September with the hope of shortening wait times soon- Emily is just waiting on PIV and attending outreach locations with Lissa.

We continue to strive to do all that we can for our Veterans & Families.



LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

MONTHLY REPORT

JULY 2023



Prepared By:
Christa Hammers
Superintendent

AGENDA

MEETING

8/30/2023

- 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 the Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Office Activity
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
 - a. Hiring of Josh Herman, Miller, Hall & Triggs, LLC
 - b. Bonus Program/Budget Review
 - c. Budget Approval - Special Meeting (9/06/23)
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting MINUTES

7/25/2023

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

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

Delegates & Alternates Present

Greg Stock - Am Legion- Marseilles / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / Paul Siembab - MC League- Oglesby / Mike Harden - Am Legion - Ottawa / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Roscoe Mazur - Am Legion - Oglesby / Chuck Erb - VFW - Marseilles / Mike Mallie - MC League - Oglesby / Elton Murphy - VFW - LaSalle / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa / Tom Troutman - VFW - Mendota / Tom Shea - Am Legion - Ottawa / Lance Sires - Am Legion - Marseilles / Bill Jones - VFW- Ottawa / John Koehler - Am Legion - Oglesby

Officers Present

President – Harold Olsen

Vice President – Dennis Znaniiecki

Guard – Bill Paterson

Chaplin – Andy Ruggerio

Employees Present

Christa Hammers – Superintendent

Lissa Olson - Assistant Superintendent

James Sturtevant- VSO- In-Training

Emily Hackler- VSO - In-Training

Kelli Rietgraf - Administrative Assistant

Meeting MINUTES

Meeting started at 5:00pm.

Approval of Meeting minutes as presented:

Motion by Harold Olsen and seconded by Elton Murphy. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report

Christa discussed that Emily is now just waiting on her PIV access card and has been shadowing Lissa at outreach locations for a smooth transition once she receives it.

Christa then discussed that the office is holding a PACT Act intent day-August 5th for those who think they qualify, or just want to check on issues. We will discuss briefly at the meeting what next steps are and schedule an appointment for follow-up.

Office also hosted a SAVE training and Peru PD stopped out to give the staff options on how to handle scenarios with clients that may be combative and give a safety plan.

Christa was off for a week due to a surgery and thanked the staff for handling things so she could recover without worry.

Christa then discussed that she had her first meeting with Congresswoman Lauren Underwood's Advisory Council regarding the 14th District plans for fund usage and how to better our communities. At that time, she was able to bring up the PACT Act and that Veterans need to be aware of the benefits now offered to them.

The Congresswoman will also be hosting a series of townhalls and those dates/locations are TBD but once known, Christa will let the Board know as well. The staff for the Congresswoman is looking for a moderator for the Bureau county Town Hall, so if anyone is interested, please get in touch with her office.

Christa then discussed that the VAC office and AllenForce are partnering with Cedar Creek Ranch for a day for Veterans. Horseback riding, lunch and more. This is to get Veterans aware of what they have to offer and the office to know what we can do to make a program that would benefit Veterans that may enjoy these events.

Christa then discussed the office brought in over \$3.6 Million in payouts to our Veterans and Families through June 2023. We look forward to surpassing our last years total.

The phone call numbers will be updated at next meeting.

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

Meeting

MINUTES

Old Business- NONE.

New Business

Presentations by staff given for raise/bonuses.

Christa, Lissa and Kelli all discussed why they should be considered. James/Emily not eligible at this time.

Christa- Updated policies, procedures (compliant with standards for VAC's statewide) Designed/implemented signage for doorway for Veterans to know where we are located Created Employee Handbook, dicipline policy, liability policy, updated job descriptions to make staff all salaried, purchase/finance policies, counseling forms, new employee checklists, evaluations and informed LC Board about MVAA updates, attended monthly meetings, Created/ordered new "swag" for give-aways at events, hired and trained 3 new employees, assisted 3 Veterans to recieve benefits to the point they no longer qualify for GA program, create, maintain and manage flyers/website/brochures (cost savings on not having to out-source is astronomical), member of Congresswoman Lauren Underwoods Adviosory Committee and the liason between IDVA and County VSO's, all while still keeping up with Veterans and receiving my Certified Veterans Advocate certificate and having the highest year for benefits to our Veterans/Families to date.

Lissa- Part of IL education team (helped train over 45 VSO's throughout the state so far), Voted VP of teh IVAC Ambassador group and co-chair of teh PR committee, Represent VAC office in 4 different area Chambers, Majority organizer of the Veterans Expo adn had the biggest one to date this year, able to be committtee member for TBM Avengers event, First civilian to sit on State Association Board as the Secretary, Co-chair in education team, legilative and by-laws committee for State association, Run the hospitality room for all state events, co-chair jand responsibe for the re-start of the Senior Resource Group (meetings quarterly), Part of Habitat for Humanity selection committee for Peru build, Liason for Veterans to Habitatat for Humanity, Help grow our office through attending numerous outreach events: such as attending over 6 different organizations (including posts) and Peru City Council to tell them of our office and what we do. Invited/attended a monthly radio spot with WPSL to discuss our office and events. Also a part of NCAT Adviosory Committee, HSTP Transportation Group, Targeted Population Group, Buisness Services Team Group, LaSalle County Healthy Resources Group, attended and certified in many Veteran based mental health and first aid trainings. Sucessfully built up our office outreach locations, Brought in many different Veteran benefitting agencies to our office (VA Outreach, Humana, VA VR&E), Organized differrent trainings for our office, serve as office FOIA officer and assisted in the hiring/training of our 3 new employees.

Kelli- Daily print outs of all Veterans to call/remind them of appointments and reminders of documents that they need to bring in. Keeping track of if I talked with them or left VMs. If they don't have VM, or if phone number is no longer in service, so we can get a correct number when they arrive. Made a "What to Bring" checklist to hand to veterans/families when they schedule in office. Attach those to appointment cards. Return phone calls to Veterans for the VSO's with any information they may need. Kepp spreadsheets up to date with any program numbers. Fill out intent reminders and mail to Veterans for VSO's. Organized Expo items and assembled name tags, transported everything with my vehicle. Created "stay in the know" email sign-up to be able to send Veterans upcoming event information. Pulling weeds around building, Keep office stocked on supplies, clean regularly and take the dish rags home and make sure they are washed/returned. Print, fold, stock brochures in lobby. Set up and clean conference room area for any events scheduled and send Emily job postings to help with Career Corner.

Board then voted to go into closed session for discussion of Bonus Awards. Motioned for approval by Elton Murphy, seconded by John Duback. Motion passed Unanimously.

Board voted to come out of closed session. Motioned for approval by Elton Murphy, seconded by Dennis Znanecki.

Board agreed to have Christa have a attorney look at verbiage of Bonus system and re-visit at next meeting.

Motion to approve decsion to table made by Dennis Znaneicki, seconded by Chuck Erb. Motion passed unanimously.

For the Good of the Commission

Dennis Znanecki discussed that he had posters for the Vietnam Wall coming to Peru and would give anyone some if they needed them.

Harold told the board that the VA Home went out to a Pistol Shrimp game and enjoyed themselves.

John Koehler stated Oglesby had a steak fry tomorrow and it would be \$35/plate.

Lissa discussed that the office attended Central States Tournament and it was a great thing for the office to be a part of. Each team had a Veteran walking out with them and were named/honored.

Elton Murphy discussed that VA Home was looking for fishing gear for the Veterans and that the LaSalle VFW has burger night tomorrow 5-8p.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Elton Murphy and seconded by Lance Sires.

Motion passed unanimously at 6:05pm.

Our Office
EVENTS

Training:

Emily is still waiting on PIV access card. She is still shadowing Lissa at outreach locations.

PACT Act:

We had a PACT Act intent day on August 5. Lissa and Christa saw a total of 15 Veterans in 4 hours. It was a great day to help Veterans who may otherwise not know of our services.

**PACT Act is Liberalizing Law... meaning if the Veteran has the diagnosed PRESUMED condition BEFORE the PACT Act passed (August 10, 2022)- NO MATTER the time the Veteran files, they will get a year of backpay. No intent truly needed unless other conditions apply or if the Veteran was diagnosed AFTER the PACT Act passed. **

We were able to attend the Moving Wall in Peru from August 24-27. It was an amazing tribute to those who paid the ultimate price. We were happy to help and Lissa was happy to assist with getting Hines VA to come out and have supportive personnel there for anyone needing someone to talk to.

LCVAC and AllenForce are holding an event at Cedar Creek Ranch Sept 15 - sign up online via our website. This event is for Veterans only.

Peru Public Library is looking for a Veteran to speak at their Veterans Day event. This would just be to speak about your personal story and time in service. If interested, please let us know. November 8th 6p-7:30p.

Also, the second thursday of the month from 1p-4p, Hines Vocational will be in the office to assist anyone that may need resume/interview/job search assistance. Emily has been working hard on our "Career Corner" and we hope to see it used.

JULY Office Activity			
Office Visits	106	Initial Claims	55
Phone	630	Appeals	15
Outstation	24	Board Appeals	0
Mendota	11	VA Healthcare	13
Streator	13	Pension/DIC	2
Intent to File	42	Other	197

**Updated Number June Phone Calls: 758

Our Office

OVERVIEW

JULY Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2023 Amount	Monthly Amount
100% P&T	6/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 47,906.51	\$ 3,823.89
40%	11/7/2022	Dec-23	\$ 27,758.31	\$ 731.86
90% Overall	8/8/2023	Dec-23	\$ 109,839.60	\$ 2,520.39
30%	4/13/2023	Dec-23	\$ 9,994.14	\$ 508.05
10%	4/25/2023	Dec-23	\$ 2,488.80	\$ 165.92
40%	7/27/2023	Dec-23	\$ 1,822.00	\$ 811.86
10%	1/5/2023	Dec-23	\$ 1,991.04	\$ 165.92
100% PT	3/23/2023	Dec-23	\$ 55,985.32	\$ 4,072.12
80%	5/3/2023	Dec-23	\$ 4,117.26	\$ 2,121.15
100%	4/18/2023	Dec-23	\$ 30,001.24	\$ 1,894.74
100% P&T	6/30/2023	Dec-23	\$30,383.28	\$1,559.12
20%	5/16/2023	Dec-23	\$2,109.91	\$162.07
100% P&T	3/2/2022	Dec-23	\$62,038.57	\$2,353.39
40%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$9,559.59	\$403.87
20%	3/1/2023	Dec-23	\$5,247.84	\$327.99
Survivors pension	7/7/2022	Dec-23	\$11,965.00	\$471.00
60%	1/29/2016	Dec-23	\$85,995.80	\$1,319.65
Burial	3/14/2023	Dec-23	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
Spouse award	1/6/2006	Dec-23	\$21,819.09	\$0.00
Accrued	6/28/2022	Dec-23	\$21,413.09	\$0.00
40%	4/12/2023		\$9,229.94	\$731.86
20%	1/23/2023		\$4,908.30	\$327.99
dependent	4/18/2023		\$25,612.80	\$2,094.15
		Total	\$584,187.43	\$28,566.99
		Year to Date Total	\$4,231,288.58	\$471,919.45

Group Numbers:

PTSD: 10 Flutes for Vets: 10 VA Outreach: 1 Central States: 14

OFFICE OVERALL TOTALS:

We have continued getting grants for submitted claims, bringing our total for FY23 to just over \$4.2 million so far. We have had many phone calls for questions regarding PACT Act still. We are currently booking into late September/October with the hope of shortening wait times soon- Emily is just waiting on

PIV and continues to attend outreach locations with Lissa.

We continue to strive to do all that we can for our Veterans & Families.





Miller,
Hall &
Triggs, LLC

Writer's Direct Email:
joshua.berman@mhlaw.com

August 15, 2023

416 MAIN STREET
SUITE 1125
PEORIA, IL 61602

PHONE: (309) 671-9600
FAX: (309) 671-9616

www.mhlaw.com

Christa Hammers
Veterans Assistance Commission of LaSalle County
4231 Progress Blvd, Unit #4
Peru, IL 61354
Via email to chammers@lasallecountyil.gov

Re: Engagement Agreement

Dear Ms. Hammers:

Thank you for choosing Miller, Hall & Triggs, LLC, to represent the Veterans Assistance Commission of LaSalle County with general legal advice and services. Because our representation ultimately depends upon a high degree of trust, we find that the attorney-client relationship works best when the scope of our representation, legal fees, and payment terms are clearly articulated and understood.

The work we do is generally billed at our regular hourly rate in effect at the time the work is done. Each attorney is assigned an hourly rate that reflects that person's experience, skill, area of expertise and demand in the marketplace. For certain lawyers, different rates may apply depending upon the nature of the services required. Currently, my hourly rate is \$275.00. Other attorneys in the firm may assist me, and their hourly rates range from \$110.00 to \$325.00 per hour. Hourly rates are adjusted from time to time (generally once a calendar year) and may change during the course of our representation. On occasion, work may be completed expediently due to the experience and skill of the attorney, in which case you may be charged for the value of such services rather than by the hour. In all cases, our principal philosophy is to provide excellent legal work at a fair and reasonable cost to you.

In discharging our responsibilities, it may be necessary for us to incur costs and expenses for various items such as photocopying (at \$0.20 per page), delivery services, court or other governmental filing fees or charges, court reporter fees, and mileage (billed at current IRS rates). We will separately itemize these charges on our statements.

Please note that our ability to represent you effectively will depend on the extent to which you (1) disclose to us, fully and accurately and on a timely basis, all facts that are or might be material, (2) keep us apprised on a timely basis of all developments relating to the matters for which you have hired us, and (3) otherwise cooperate fully with us. The outcome and costs of litigation are subject to a wide range of unknowns and risks inherent in the litigation process; therefore, nothing in this agreement will be construed as a guarantee or promise about the outcome of any litigation with which we assist you. No one can make such a guarantee.

Each of us reserves the right to terminate our representation at any time by delivering written notice of termination to the other. For example, we may withdraw if you do not honor the terms of this letter or fail or refuse to either cooperate with us

ROBERT C. HALL *

DENNIS R. TRIGGS **

WILLIAM R. KOHLHASE

RICHARD M. JOSEPH ***

NATHAN R. MILLER

JAY E. GREENING

SCOTT A. BRUNTON

MICHAEL A. KEETON

MARK D. WALTON

CHRISTOPHER D. OSWALD

ROBERT B. MCCOY

JOSHUA D. HERMAN

KATHERINE L. SWISE

KATHLEEN M. CARTER

JEFFREY J. GASTER

TIMM A. HIGUS

MEGAN E. BENNETT

ROBERT HOLLIS MILLER (1926-2022)

PATRICK A. MURPHEY (RET.)

MICHAEL J. TIBBS (RET.)

CHARLES H. YOUNG (RET.)

THOMAS R. DAVIS (1952-2005)

PAUL A. LEWIS (1949-2011)

ALSO LICENSED IN:

* FLORIDA

** DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

*** ARKANSAS AND WISCONSIN

or to follow our advice on a material matter, or if we become aware of any fact or circumstance that would, in our view, render our continuing representation of you unlawful or unethical. You may also terminate our services at any time. If our services are terminated for any reason, the balance of any retainer remaining in our firm's trust account will be applied to any outstanding charges, and any unused portion of the retainer will be promptly returned to you. If outstanding charges remain, payment on these will be due immediately. Although unlikely, should we find it necessary to pursue litigation to collect on any outstanding amounts due under this agreement, you agree that you shall be responsible for our reasonable costs and expenses, including attorney's fees, related to the collection.

Finally, I want you to know that we are very appreciative of the opportunity to serve you. I would be pleased to discuss the matters in this agreement, or any other questions that you may have, at any time during the course of our representation.

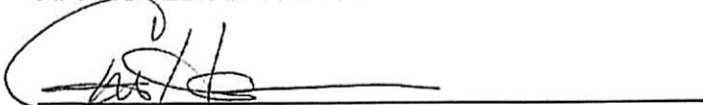
Please review this agreement carefully. If the foregoing terms of our engagement are agreeable, please date and sign the enclosed copy of this letter and return it to me.

Very truly yours,



Joshua D. Herman
For Miller, Hall & Triggs, LLC

APPROVED AND AGREED TO:



Christa Hammers
Superintendent, Veterans Assistance Commission of LaSalle County

Dated: August 15, 2023

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

Superintendent
Christa Hammers



Assistant Superintendent
Lissa Olson

Time in Service Raise:

<u>Time In:</u>	<u>Salary Increase:</u>
Years 1-4 (exception new VSO 1 st year)	\$1,500/yr
Years 5-9	\$2,000/yr
Years 10-14	\$2,500/yr
Years 15-19	\$3,000/yr
Years 20-24	\$4,000/yr
Years 25 and beyond	\$4,500/yr

An employee shall receive the foregoing salary increase based on their total number of years of employment with the VAC and such raises shall go into effect at the beginning of each fiscal year.

Bonus System:

Annually, employees will let the Superintendent know if they would like to be added to the Agenda for the July VAC Board Meeting for consideration. During the July VAC Board Meeting, any employee that feels he/she/they have excelled in their position may present to the Board any significant improvements for the livelihood of a Veteran, Spouse, Child or the VAC office. The VAC Board will hear the presentation and during the portion of Budget approval, will then decide if that employee is to be rewarded with an additional bonus, not to exceed \$5,000. The Bonus (if granted) may either be paid out to that employee in August of that same year or as soon thereafter as the VAC Board makes the decision to grant such a bonus, or VAC Board may choose to add the Bonus awarded to the total salary the employee will be paid, increasing the employee's base Annual Salary by the amount of the Bonus awarded beginning with the next fiscal year following the award of the Bonus. Employees may present every year, if warranted. The VAC Board may decline to gift any Bonus/Compensation increases presented for, with just cause.

Enacted: 8/30/23

Harold Olsen, President

Dennis Znaniecki, Vice President

BUDGET VAC

Account Format	Account Description	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
		Amount		Amount		Amount		BUDGET	ACTUAL	BUDGET	ACTUAL
404019	Legal Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00
460003	Contactual Labor	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 550.00	\$ -	\$ 12,000.00
490000-180	Transfer to 001 Gen Fd	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00
490000-242	Transfer to 098 Health I	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,101.00	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,101.00	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00
503001	Travel	\$ 2,804.00	\$ -	\$ 7,415.00	\$ -	\$ 10,466.00	\$ -	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 10,868.00	\$ -	\$ 15,000.00
503001-130	Mileage	\$ 438.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00
503001-134	Transportation	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,050.00	\$ 327.00	\$ -	\$ 2,500.00
510004	Telephone	\$ 2,646.00	\$ -	\$ 3,988.00	\$ -	\$ 5,492.00	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 1,422.00	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00
510005	Internet	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 320.00	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00
510010	Utilities- VAC	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,561.00	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,057.00	\$ -	\$ 6,000.00
511001	Rent	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 21,119.00	\$ -	\$ 50,400.00	\$ -	\$ 58,000.00	\$ 33,600.00	\$ -	\$ 58,000.00
538001	Emergency Relief	\$ 19,666.00	\$ -	\$ 10,870.00	\$ -	\$ 12,659.00	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 17,700.00	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00
538002	Donation Expense	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 250.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 250.00	\$ -	\$ 250.00
540001	Postage	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 89.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500.00
541001	Education	\$ 2,422.00	\$ -	\$ 2,677.00	\$ -	\$ 2,907.00	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 1,405.00	\$ -	\$ 4,000.00
541004	Dues & Subscriptions	\$ 770.00	\$ -	\$ 619.00	\$ -	\$ 2,609.00	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 2,109.00	\$ -	\$ 2,500.00
541006	Printing	\$ 160.00	\$ -	\$ 509.00	\$ -	\$ 252.00	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 274.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00
541007	Marketing	\$ 868.00	\$ -	\$ 2,181.00	\$ -	\$ 2,194.00	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 503.00	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00
581003	Expo Event Expense	\$ 1,158.00	\$ -	\$ 2,529.00	\$ -	\$ 1,529.00	\$ -	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 2,297.00	\$ -	\$ 1,500.00
596001	Programs	\$ 158.00	\$ -	\$ 469.00	\$ -	\$ 843.00	\$ -	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 1,742.00	\$ -	\$ 6,000.00
598001	Misc Expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 4,422.00	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00
599001	Contingency	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
601001	Office Supplies & Expenses	\$ 5,352.00	\$ -	\$ 9,495.00	\$ -	\$ 6,802.00	\$ -	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 7,790.00	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00
613004	Clothing/Uniforms/Logo	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 1,027.00	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00
704001	Software Purchase/Licenses	\$ 1,393.00	\$ -	\$ 1,147.00	\$ -	\$ 606.00	\$ -	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 638.00	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00
801001	Employee Dishonesty	\$ 111.00	\$ -	\$ 111.00	\$ -	\$ 111.00	\$ -	\$ 200.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 200.00
807001	Liability Insurance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,198.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00
810001	Health and Life Insurance	\$ 36,981.00	\$ -	\$ 37,156.00	\$ -	\$ 42,067.00	\$ -	\$ 48,000.00	\$ 41,732.00	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00
810002	Health and Life- Retire Insurance	\$ 26,943.00	\$ -	\$ 30,451.00	\$ -	\$ 15,540.00	\$ -	\$ 16,500.00	\$ 10,102.00	\$ -	\$ 17,000.00
810005	Umbrella Insurance	\$ 1,153.00	\$ -	\$ 35.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 325.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 350.00
811001	Workers Compensation	\$ 512.00	\$ -	\$ 545.00	\$ -	\$ 1,472.00	\$ -	\$ 850.00	\$ 272.00	\$ -	\$ 1,500.00
900000	Payroll	\$ 89,409.00	\$ -	\$ 107,370.00	\$ -	\$ 126,797.00	\$ -	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 111,461.00	\$ -	\$ 200,500.00
90000-999	Payroll-Elected Off	\$ 73,893.00	\$ -	\$ 75,410.00	\$ -	\$ 72,894.00	\$ -	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 72,894.00	\$ -	\$ 87,000.00
900106	Bonus	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 25,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 25,000.00

\$ 554,300.00

TOTALS:	\$ 266,837.00	\$ 319,484.00	\$ 362,451.00	\$ 538,425.00	\$ 336,863.00	\$ 554,557.00
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2020 2021 2022 2023 2024

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

MONTHLY REPORT

September 2023



Prepared By:
Christa Hammers
Superintendent

AGENDA

MEETING

9/27/2023

- 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
 - a. Budget Approval
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting MINUTES

8/30/2023

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

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

Delegates & Alternates Present

Greg Stock - Am Legion- Marseilles / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Roscoe Mazur - Am Legion - Oglesby / Chuck Erb - VFW - Marseilles / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa / Tom Troutman - VFW - Mendota / Tom Shea - Am Legion - Ottawa / Lance Sires - Am Legion - Marseilles

Officers Present

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

Employees Present

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

Meeting

MINUTES

Approval of Meeting minutes as presented:
Motion by Roscoe Mazur and seconded by Andy Ruggerio. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report

Christa discussed that Emily is now just waiting on her PIV access card and has been shadowing Lissa at outreach locations for a smooth transition once she receives it.

Christa then discussed that the office is held a PACT Act intent day and Lissa and Christa saw a total of 14 Veterans in a span of 4 hours. It was a great event that allowed us to touch base with Veterans to get services they were not aware of.

Office also attended the Peru Moving Wall event. We were there for all four days and it was a honor to be able to attend. We were able to tell people of our services and just see others that wanted to thank us for what we do for our Veterans and Families.

Christa informed the office that we are holding an event with AllenForce at Cedar Creek Ranch on September 15. This is for Veterans only. MUST be able to sign waiver and ride horse. Only 4 spots left.
Sign up online.

Christa then discussed that Peru Public Library is looking for a Veteran to tell their story to honor them for Veterans Day on November 8th from 6-7:30pm. Our office will be there beforehand to brief attendees of what we do. Anyone interested- please reach out.

Christa then discussed that Hines Vocational will be in office the second Thursday of every month to assist Veterans with resumes, interview skills and applications. Anyone interested, please stop by!

Christa then discussed the office brought in over \$4.2 Million in payouts to our Veterans and Families through July 2023 and that the phone call number for June is corrected to 758.

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

Old Business- NONE.

Meeting MINUTES

New Business

Christa informed the Commission Board that on August 15, she reached out to Josh Herman from Miller, Hall & Triggs, LLC out of Peoria. Lawyer that is well informed of MVAA rules and most IL County VAC's have him on "staff". Christa asked the Board if anyone had any objections after reading agreement- No objections were had.

Christa then went over the newly redone "Bonus Program" stating that the Board has always had the power to do what this states- but this way we have it in writing so the employees know what is expected and what is going to be recieved. Also so the Board knows when the employees present- what they have agreed to do for said employee. However, the Bonus is still not mandatory. It is the Boards decision.

Christa asked if anyone had any objections or questions to this.

Tom Shea had questions regarding the word choice of "Bonus"- upon clarifying that we can amend the word, and that the amount can be applied to yearly increase or given one time- he was ok with it.

No further questions.

Motion to accept the Bonus/Payraise Schedule as amended made by Chuck Erb, seconded by Bill Luther. Motion passed unanimously.

On to the Bonuses/Raises, Christa asked if the Board would like to go into closed session- Board stated no, keep it open. This again is regarding just Christa, Lissa and Kelli, as James and Emily both are on their one year and per job description will be raised \$5,000 for FY24 for passing testing and proving they are able to do the job with passion and commitment.

Board discussed again what they would like to do and Christa reminded them that not only did Lissa and herself learn new positions, excel at getting benefits for our Veterans and families by getting the highest this office ever had, but they hired and trained 3 new employees and created new opportunities for the office to expand for outreach, attended community events, held meetings, created needed documents and more. They not only "did the base line of the job", they worked many hours "after close" to make sure no claims suffered and the office continued forward. Christa stated how proud she was to be apart of this team and the team they have created- its a blessing to have so many people wanting to help and do everything to make things happen for our Veterans and Families.

The Board agreed and after debate stated that the staff would recieve their annual raise and in addition- Christa and Lissa would recieve \$5,000/ea on their annual salary and Kelli would recieve \$2,500. Board clarified that it was only due to Kelli's short time at the VAC that she did not recieve the full amount. They all are appreciative of her services.

Motion made for approval of annual increases for Christa, Lissa and Kelli made by Chuck Erb, seconded by Lance Sires. Motion passed unanimously.

On to budget:

Budget review for FY24 is done with “rough numbers”. Christa told the commission that the County Auditors office instructed that she should take last year and add 3% for her “this year” numbers. Going off of that and what we have now, we are still below our current budget and even with raises for next year-doing well for staying on target. Board instructed to look over budget and see if they had questions. None were had. Told that on 9/6/23 there would be a special meeting to go over it once more and accept it so Christa could stay on target with meetings to get it done through the County. Board understood.

For the Good of the Commission

John Duback stated that there is a group out of Dixon that is doing an Honor Flight on Sept 19 and they are having a “Welcome Home” in Springfield for anyone that wants to attend. Asked Christa to reach out to Pat and see what we could do for working together.

Andy Ruggiero wanted to thank the VAC employees for coming out to the Moving Wall and thank Lissa for getting Hines out there for those that may have struggled with the event.

Roscoe Mazur stated that Oglesby AmLegion was having a fish fry Sept 1st.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Andy Ruggiero and seconded by Roscoe Mazur.
Motion passed unanimously at 5:41pm.

AUGUST**Office Activity:**

The LaSalle VAC joined with AllenForce and held an event at Cedar Creek Ranch on 9/16/23 and the turnout was fantastic. We had roughly 20 Veterans come out to the event. They enjoyed a trailride, petting zoo, lunch and some yoga! We look forward to working more with both and seeing what we can put together for a program for our Veterans/Families.

Christa, Lissa and Emily had IACVAC (state) Training in Peoria. There we heard from IDVA, BVA Law Judge- Teresa Raymond, Social Security Administration, VA Medical Examination Office (C&P Exams), Pension Group, Fiduciary Group, CHAMPVA Benefits and more.

Our office has now partnered with Ottawa Food Pantry - ran by a Army Veteran- and now offers our Veterans on our assistance program the opportunity to pick up goods from our office when they come in to verify assistance needs. We are happy to not only partner with MidWest Shelter on providing home goods, but the pantry to provide some dry food goods as well.

The office is also putting together an event for State Education Resources, this will be any school that works with the GI Bill, offers scholarships or any benefits for Veterans/Families to come together. This will be set up as a booth/walk-through event in our office. The date we have set is Saturday, October 28th from 9am-Noon.

AUGUST Office Activity			
Office Visits	159	Initial Claims	52
Phone	745	Appeals	15
Outstation	27	Board Appeals	0
Mendota	9	VA Healthcare	12
Streator	18	Pension/DIC	11
Intent to File	67	Other	217

Group Numbers:

PTSD: 12 Flutes for Vets: 5 VA Outreach: 1 Senior Resource: 14

WALK-INS:

Appts Made: 25 Questions Only: 35 TOTAL: 60

Our Office

OVERVIEW

AUGUST Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2023 Amount	Monthly Amount
40%	5/16/2023	Dec-23	\$ 12,737.37	\$ 940.48
70%	1/11/2023	Dec-23	\$ 27,334.17	\$ 1,907.06
60%	4/25/2023	Dec-23	\$ 19,082.20	\$ 1,319.65
10%	5/5/2023	Dec-23	\$ 2,488.80	\$ 165.92
10%	5/25/2023	Dec-23	\$ 2,322.88	\$ 165.92
90%	12/27/2022	Dec-23	\$ 40,310.45	\$ 2,353.39
100%	2/28/2023	Dec-23	\$ 47,430.12	\$ 3,952.51
70%	9/11/2023	Dec-23	\$ 22,413.54	\$ 1,663.06
dependent	2/1/2022	Dec-23	\$ 1,380.00	\$ -
10%	9/30/2022	Dec-23	\$ 3,623.96	\$ 165.92
70%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 21,648.72	\$ 1,804.06
100%	3/29/2023	Dec-23	\$ 60,009.12	\$ 3,750.57
10%	4/26/2023	Dec-23	\$ 248,808.00	\$ 165.92
30%	9/6/2022	Dec-23	\$ 11,095.78	\$ 508.05
MOD	2/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 9,823.89	\$ 3,823.89
DIC	2/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 59,190.10	\$ 1,562.74
Sub.claimant	2/8/2023	Dec-23	\$ 6,420.90	\$ -
DIC	9/1/2022	Dec-23	\$ 37,005.44	\$ 1,562.74
60%	5/31/2023	Dec-23	\$ 17,885.46	\$ 1,440.65
clothing		Dec-23	\$ 968.52	\$ 968.52
80%	9/30/2022	Dec-23	\$ 46,234.68	\$ 3,823.89
60%	6/30/2023	Dec-23	\$ 17,287.80	\$ 1,440.65
40%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 11,285.76	\$ 940.48
40%	6/16/2023	Dec-23	\$ 10,229.94	\$ 811.86
30%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 15,254.22	\$ 642.05
80%	1/5/2022	Dec-23	\$ 8,156.81	\$ 270.10
Dependent	4/12/2023	Dec-23	\$ 9,430.32	\$ 785.86
80%	5/3/2023	Dec-23	\$ 50,022.06	\$ 2,061.77
Dependent	5/9/2023	Dec-23	\$ 19,264.80	\$ 1,440.65
90%	5/4/2023	Dec-23	\$ 31,830.80	\$ 2,172.39
		Total	\$870,976.61	\$42,610.75
		Year to Date Total	\$5,102,265.19	\$514,530.20

OFFICE OVERALL TOTALS:

We have continued getting grants for submitted claims, bringing our total for FY23 to just over \$5.1 million so far. We have had many intents put in this past month and are working diligently to get our Veterans/Families in to file claims. We are currently booking into late October with the hope of shortening wait times even more soon- Emily is still just waiting on PIV and continues to attend outreach locations with Lissa.

We continue to strive to do all that we can for our Veterans & Families.

Our Office
OVERVIEW

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
		Total	\$485,590.14	\$27,939.51
		Year to Date Total	\$5,587,855.33	\$542,469.71

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

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

MONTHLY REPORT

October 2023



Prepared By:
Christa Hammers
Superintendent

AGENDA

MEETING

11/22/2023

- 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

10/25/2023

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

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

Delegates & Alternates Present

John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Chuck Erb - VFW - Marseilles / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa / Tom Troutman - VFW - Mendota Kenneth Harden - AmLeg - Ottawa / Roscoe Mazur - AmLeg - Oglesby / Phil Harth - AmVets - Mendota / Paul Seimbab - Marine Corps League / Mike Mallie - Marine Corps League / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / Elton Murphy - VFW - LaSalle / Ron Sisco - VFW - Mendota

Others: Quad City Honor Flight Representatives: Jim Travi and Mike Thiem

Officers Present

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

Employees Present

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

Meeting MINUTES

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

Public Comment

Presentation by Quad City Honor Flight- Flyer Attached to Minutes

Superintendent's Report

Christa discussed that the office has again set up the Operation Green Light for Veterans Day- Green lights available at the office for any Veteran that may want one! Show support and shine your light from November 6-12. Help spread the word.

Christa then discussed that the office has a few Holiday events happening- Painting the windows at the LaSalle VA Home (Dec 5th at 1pm), Santa Visit (Dec 16 from 9-Noon), Giving Tree for Veterans at VA Home- Set up Nov 1st. Return gifts (unwrapped) by Dec 1st.

Christa told the commission that there was unfortunately not enough interest to do a "schools" event- stated we would try and push it next year with more notice.

Christa then discussed that the office met with Ottawa Food Pantry and saw their process. We are partnering with them to get food for our Veterans that are on our General Assistance Program.

Christa and Lissa met with Triple Service out of Mendota and are supporting their "Comfort a Hero" program. They have nominations open from Nov 1-16.

Christa then discussed that per the MVAA- the commission needs to do an evaluation of the Superintendent- this will be presented at the next meeting for all to review/sign.

Christa then told the Commission that we are now over \$5.5million in benefits payouts and had 77 walk-ins for the month of September.

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

Old Business- NONE.

Meeting

MINUTES

New Business

The Board was informed that we are seeking to know more information about possibly buying property/building- our lease is up July 31, 2026 and we need to think about the future. Chamblins gave us a quote for a draw up of what the building would look like- we are going to get another (per purchase policy) and report back with both to make a decision.

For the Good of the Commission

Harold stated that the VA Clinic was expanding - stated he didn't know of when, but there are plans in place. Also stated that Waltham School would have Veterans Day Event Friday, Nov 10. Utica was having their parade on Saturday the 5th

Dennis stated that he passed around flyers for the Pearl Harbor Day Vigil in Peru. December 2 - starts at 10:45AM.

John Duback gave out flyers for Ottawa's Veterans Day ceremony-looking for volunteers (15min time slots)

Elton stated that the LaSalle VFW cancelled burger night, but Brat night was the 2nd Thurs of the month.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Elton Murphy and seconded by Ron Sisco.

Motion passed unanimously at 6:02pm.

OCTOBER**Office Activity:**

Lissa attended IACO Fall Conference in Springfield- she learned more about AI and security measures- like getting rid of paper checks and integrating with new systems (more for clerks than our office). It was good to attend, there were a few take-aways.

Emily attended an Open House for Heritage Woods- it was nice to support businesses that attend our Expo and support our office.

All of our Tree Tags are taken and we are just waiting on a few to come back to be wrapped and we are set to deliver!

We have the window painting at the VA home coming up on December 5th at 1pm.

Santa is visiting on December 16th from 9-NOON. Bring the littles!

The team attended Triple Service After Hours out of Mendota to support 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.

Per the MVAA- The Board needs to annually write a review of the Superintendent. The letter of support was attached.

OCTOBER Office Activity			
Office Visits	102	Initial Claims	38
Phone	850	Appeals	6
Outstation	20	Board Appeals	0
Mendota	8	VA Healthcare	10
Streator	12	Pension/DIC	1
Intent to File	47	Other	132

PTSD: 13 Flutes: 8 VHA: 1
Walk ins- Appts Made: 10 Walk ins- Questions: 37

OCTOBER Claims Summary				
Total Percentage	Month Submitted	Through	2023 Amount	Monthly Amount
30%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 12,579.27	\$ 508.05
50%	7/11/2023	Dec-23	\$ 8,287.32	\$ 638.95
30%	3/30/2023	Dec-23	\$ 10,224.90	\$ 568.05
40%	10/5/2022	Dec-23	\$ 16,774.20	\$ 731.86
90%	6/21/2023	Dec-23	\$ 30,659.40	\$ 2,486.39
Pension	1/30/2023	Dec-23	\$ 41,600.00	\$ 2,229.00
Burial	7/27/2023	Dec-23	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -
Burial	7/9/2023	Dec-23	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -
DIC	7/9/2023	Dec-23	\$ 23,447.63	\$ 1,562.74
MOD	7/9/2023	Dec-23	\$ 1,569.27	\$ -
dependent	2/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 16,142.32	\$ 811.86
dependent	8/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 26,828.72	\$ 2,030.06
10%	3/6/2023	Dec-23	\$ 2,986.56	\$ 165.92
70%	7/13/2023	Dec-23	\$ 22,153.95	\$ 1,757.06
80%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 34,463.82	\$ 1,933.15
90%	1/18/2023	Dec-23	\$ 28,734.65	\$ 2,353.39
30%	4/26/2023	Dec-23	\$ 6,518.34	\$ 342.13
DIC	8/1/2023	Dec-23	\$ 23,441.10	\$ 1,562.74
20%	7/3/2022	Dec-23	\$ 6,849.15	\$ 456.61
10%	8/10/2022	Dec-23	\$ 4,274.08	\$ 165.92
100% SMC	7/15/2022	Dec-23	\$ 76,272.95	\$ 4,054.12
100%	9/28/2023	Dec-23	\$ 52,616.16	\$ 4,384.68
10%	10/24/2023	Dec-23	\$ 4,008.12	\$ 165.92
100%	7/26/2023	Dec-23	\$ 55,314.90	\$ 4,256.06
		Total	\$509,746.81	\$33,164.66
		Year to Date Total	\$6,097,602.14	\$575,634.37

The VAC is excited to see our benefit payout number grow to over \$6Million given for our Veterans/Families in 2023. We see our office visit numbers slowing a bit, but we remain busy with our phone calls and continued contact with our clients. We look forward to the holiday season and our giving tree, santa visit and window painting. Continuing to think of ways to better our services to best assist our Veterans and Families.

Our Office
OVERVIEW

2024 LASALLE COUNTY VAC OPEN MEETING SCHEDULE



January 24

February 28

March 27

April 24

May 22

June 26

July 24

August 28

September 25

October 23

November 27

NO DECEMBER MEETING

All Meetings Located:
4231 Progress Blvd, Unit 4-Peru
www.lasallecountyvac.com

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission
4231 Progress Blvd, Unit 4
Peru, IL 61354

Superintendent Evaluation 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

Christa has a vast knowledge of her job. This year she was able to obtain the highest level of education a VSO can make passing her CVA exam. The experience she has with claims coupled with her continued education makes her an amazing VSO and leader to her team. Christa is always available to help her team with their claims, whether it be bouncing thoughts off her or helping the person think outside the box when trying to get a Veteran service connected.

Since taking over as Superintendent, Christa has worked hard to rework every policy and procedure in the office as well as understanding why they are needed and how they fit the office needs. She has worked with other Superintendents and County officials to make sure we are in compliance with the Military Veterans Assistance Act (MVAA) and also making sure everyone has an understanding of what the MVAA is.

As a boss, Christa is always available for her team. She not only leads by example but with passion. She is a fierce supporter of her team and never hesitates to let them know they are appreciated.

Yours Truly on Behalf of the Commission,



Harold Olsen

VAC President