



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA MICHIGAN STATE COUNCIL

December 8, 2019
General Membership Meeting

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by President John Riling in Howell, MI at 10:00 AM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, a moment of silence for the POW-MIAs and those serving in harm's way with the opening prayer by Tom Meinhardt.

Approval of the Agenda: Motion by 267/175 to accept the agenda as printed, motion passed.

Approval of the minutes: Motion by 313/175 to approve the minutes of the meeting dated October 20, 2019, motion passed.

Introduction of guests: Darcy Andrews, VVA VSO, gave a brief report about her plans to organize a National Vietnam Veteran's Day event at the Arenac Community Center in Standish, MI following our March 29th meeting at that location. A free meal will be provided to all Vietnam era veterans and a pinning ceremony is planned. Darcy will be working with Chapter 390 members and other area groups.

Roll Call of Officers:

President John Riling - Present

Vice-President Ken Rogge – Present

2nd Vice President Tom Meinhardt – Present

Secretary Gary Estermyer - Present

Treasurer Floyd Carmichael – Present

Roll Call of Chapters: 9 Jack Devine P, 18 A, 31 William Collins P, 73 Bob Elliot A, 109 John Gibbs P, 110 Ralph Sharp P, 133 Tom Romein P, 142 Michael Goode A, 154 Mike 'Mouse' Gardner P, 175 Joe Mishler P, 180 Thomas Brown E, 237 Jerry Cummings A, 259 Mike Goodpaster P, 264 Ronald Schrieber A, 267 Phil Smith P, 274 Duke Mayo A, 284 Louis LaParl A, 287 David Huffman A, 310 Jon Luker P, 313 Phil Savage P, 345 Ray Phillips A, 380 Vic Rombach A, 387 A, 390 Charlie Marton P, 494 R Essenmacher A, 528 Dennis Bielskis P, 571 Dennis Peterson A, 583 Wayne Trapp A, 730 S, 882 Terry Frank A, 1047 Joe Prato A and 1083 Tom Meinhardt P.

Present – 14 Absent – 16 Excused – 1 Suspended – 1 A quorum is present.

1st Vice President's Report: Ken Rogge reported that the MSC website; www.VVAMSC.org continues to be a work in progress and chapter input is always requested. The Vietnam Veterans of Michigan Foundation, Inc. (VVMFI) is also open for business with small, sporadic donations coming in. The Foundation benefits (1/2%) from those who sign up for Smile.Amazon for their Amazon purchases.

2nd Vice-President's report: Tom Meinhardt reported that in November there were 309 burial/funeral services at Great Lakes National Cemetery. So far this FY there have been 750 and since GLNC opened in 2005 the number is 44,795. The 'Wreaths Across America' program will be held on December 14th.

Secretary's Report: Gary Estermyer again invited the delegates to verify their chapter meeting locations/dates and times on his chapter contact list. Gary discussed the upcoming 2020 meetings for the months of August, October and December. The delegates were encouraged to talk it up with their membership to consider hosting one of those meetings. Gary reported that two donation requests were received; Wreaths Across America and Habitat For Humanity.

Treasurer's Report: Floyd Carmichael passed out copies and reviewed the general account. Regular transfers are made to the service office account for salaries and expenses while the grant monies and charitable income funds generally remain level. Floyd reported that the Christmas luncheon will begin at noon. Floyd explained the 'Wreaths' donation of \$300.00 for 20 wreaths (10 for GLNC & 10 for Fort Custer National Cemetery) which was approved 175/1083. The Habitat donation request of \$200.00 will help offset expenses by VVA Chapter 380 member Vic Romback who will be traveling to My Tho, Vietnam to help with a build in March 2020. Thru a motion 313/9 this request was also approved.

Floyd reported that a Fort Custer 2 year expansion/improvement project will begin soon to provide for an additional 3,000 casket burials and 3,500 cremains. The committal shelter is to be torn down and rebuilt. A shuttle bus system is being considered. Many cemeteries are considering a latitude/longitude chip burial locator system.

President's Report: John Riling reported that he and Gary Estermyer will be attending the Commander's Group meeting on Dec. 10 in Lansing. John spoke about attending a Flint Chapter 175 awards meeting. He will present VVA achievement medals to some of their members. He is looking forward to the March 29th meeting in Standish where products will be available. John spoke about the MSC Annual/Election meeting to be held the weekend of May 29-31 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Detroit/Dearborn, 5801 Southfield Road, Detroit, MI 48228, (313) 336-3340. The room rate will be \$115.00 + tax and will include a free breakfast. May 15, 2020 is the deadline to reserve a room. He would like to invite younger veterans to attend and offer workshops such as; veteran benefits, PTSD, cemetery/funeral benefits.

As Region 5 Director John will be attending the Ohio VVA Directors meeting this weekend. Tentatively he will be traveling to Boston with some National VSO staff, as National Veteran's Benefit Chairman, in January to review their operation. That same National staff will be visiting Michigan from Feb. 12-14, 2020 to review/train/observe our program.

John also will be in Silver Spring, MD for the National BOD/CSCP meetings from Jan. 16-18.

Announcements:

Chapter 154 had their Christmas party last night and their annual Christmas project will help 275 families.

Flint Chapter 175 food bank distribution is scheduled for Dec. 22, 2019.

HR 2200 – Keeping Our Promises Act, to amend Title 38 to allow for additional SC presumptive diseases; bladder cancer, hypertension, hypothyroidism, Parkinson's like symptoms.

Keith King, Detroit Chapter 9 recently received a diversity award.

Committee Reports:

Agent Orange: Joe Mishler, Flint Chapter 175 announced they are raising funds for an A.O. monument at Blue Bell Beach area.

Constitution/Bylaws: Gary Estermyer reported that the 2019 revised National constitution is now available online at; www.vva.org. Start at Resources > Org. Docs & Policies > Constitution

Elections Committee: Phil Smith opened the nomination process for the 2020 – 2022 term. All the incumbents were nominated.

Finance: Floyd will begin work on the FY 20 budgets for the MSC and VSO program.

Fundraising: Gary Estermyer spoke about a \$100.00 lottery ticket raffle to help offset expenses of the Standish “Welcome Home Vietnam Veteran Dinner” on March 29, 2020. Motion 313/175 to support this raffle, motion approved.

Government Affairs: Jack Devine reported the VSO funding resolution he worked two years ago needs to get re-visited on the hill. He will follow up on its status. Jack is aware of some veteran education related bills that were introduced however funding for any of these bills remains unknown as the state budget has still not been approved. There is also legislation for emotional support animals.

Membership: Ken Rogge reported that as of November 2019 VVA membership is now at 85,913 with 11,788 - Region 5 & 4,804 - Michigan. Two chapters from MI are among the top 25 of membership totals; 154 (4th - 799) and 267 (24th - 316). One new chapter was formed in VVA, Chapter 1141 of Marinette, WI.

Minority Affairs: Chris Franklin continues to meet with minority veterans and advocate for smoking cessation programs and raise the legal age to 21 to purchase tobacco. He is also very active in Macomb County spreading the word of health risks caused by smoking. Chris is active with the (American Indian Veterans of Michigan) (AIVOMI@yahoo.com) and has published a U.S. Military Veteran Commercial Tobacco Use brochure. The statistics and graphs included in the brochure will surely convince some to quit smoking. Chris plans to update this brochure in the near future.

National Cemetery: Floyd reported that he is aware some individuals and groups will provide wood or metal caskets for veteran funerals.

Outreach Coordinator: Joe Mishler again discussed the need to reach out and connect with younger veterans in area colleges and other veteran groups such as “Red – White – Blue”. He and John have made contact with veteran groups at Oakland U. and U. of M. Joe encourages all delegates to start a list of names of younger veterans they come in contact with. We should strive to set up meet and greet sessions with them so they can get to know about VVA and we can get to know them. We should try to attend some of their events and invite them to attend ours. Joe is aware of a Toy Soldiers program that provides toys for military families.

POW-MIA: 1,587 still remain missing or unaccounted for (BNR) from the Vietnam War; of which 48 are from Michigan. Marty Eddy sends out very important POW-MIA messages frequently.

Product Sales: John plans on setting up in Standish in March and Dayton, OH in July.

VAVS: Phil Savage reported that Battle Creek and Muskegon added 1,046 volunteer hours. There are Christmas caroling plans for Battle Creek patients.

It is noted that Kate Melcher is the executive director of Fisher House of Michigan. She can be reached at; kate@fisherhousemichigan.org or www.fisherhousemichigan.org, (518) 481-0552, 3250 Plymouth Road, Suite 103, Ann Arbor, MI 48105 for those who want information or want to make a donation.

Veteran's Benefits/Service Program:

John and Gary have been attending VA, Coalition & MVAA meetings.

Recoveries: \$1,004,118 (October) - \$822,072 (November) - \$11,496,853 - YTD

Mimi continues on a P.T. basis to scan files.

Veteran's Incarcerated and in the Justice System: Phil Smith continues to volunteer with the Dearborn veterans court system as a mentor/coordinator. Dearborn and Genessee County courts will have a graduating class soon.

MI AVVA President: Penny Meinhardt announced they will have to change their bylaws to allow their elections in May instead of June this year. Penny also announced that Kathy Driscoll recently resigned her position due to health issues. Penny thanked everyone for participating in their gift card fundraiser today. She hopes everyone also enjoys the luncheon today.

Upcoming meetings for VVA & AVVA:

Motion 1083/175 to hold the March 29th meeting @ Chapter 390, Standish, MI Motion passed.

January 16-18, 2020 – National BOD/CSCP meetings, Silver Spring, MD

March 2020 – MSC BOD @ TBD

March 29, 2020 – MSC General membership meeting @ Chapter 390, Arenac Comm. Center,
583 East Cedar Street, Standish, MI 48658 (989) 529-6513

April 9-11, 2020 – National BOD/CSCP meetings, Silver Spring, MD

May 2020 – MSC BOD – TBD

May 29-31, 2020 - MSC Annual/Election meeting @ DoubleTree by Hilton, Detroit/Dearborn

July 14-18, 2020 – National Leadership Conference @ Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dayton, OH

August, October, December 2020 – MSC General membership meetings - TBD

July 2021 – VVA National Convention, Greensboro, NC – details TBA

July 2022 – VVA Leadership Conference, Greenville, SC – details TBA

July 2023 – VVA National Convention, Orlando, FL – details TBA

Meeting adjourned at 11:53 AM

Closing Prayer was said by Tom Meinhardt

Minutes taken and transcribed by: Gary Estermyer

Lodging in the Standish area:

Saganing Eagles Landing Casino & Hotel
2690 Worth Road
Standish, MI 48568
(888) 7EAGLE7
SELCHotel-info@sagchip.org

Please google for other area hotels
maybe in the Bay City area?