



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA MICHIGAN STATE COUNCIL

October 14, 2018
General Membership Meeting

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by President John Riling in Harrison, MI at 10:02 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 & Chaplain Bob.

Approval of the Agenda: Motion by 267/154 to accept the agenda as changed, motion passed.

Approval of the minutes: Motion by 267/310 to approve the minutes of the meeting dated August 26, 2018, motion passed.

Introduction of guests: Chapter 1047 President Joe Prato introduced; VP Ken Spiegel, Secretary Pat Loafman, Treasurer Paul Bailey, Chaplain Bob, Director Ron and other chapter members.

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 A, 18 Jim Pike A, 31 William Collins P, 73 Bob Elliot A, 109 John Gibbs A, 110 Ralph Sharp A, 133 Richard Lash E, 142 Michael Goode A, 154 Mike Schneider P, 175 Joe Mishler E, 180 Thomas Brown A, 237 Jerry Cummings A, 259 Mike Goodpaster P, 264 Ronald Schrieber A, 267 Phil Smith P, 274 Duke Mayo E, 284 Louis LaParl A, 287 David Huffman A, 310 Tim Driscoll P, 313 Floyd Carmichael P, 345 Ray Phillips A, 380 Vic Rombach A, 387 A, 390 Charlie Marton A, 494 R Essenmacher E, 528 John Spencer P, 571 Dennis Peterson A, 583 Wayne Trapp P, 730 George Fincham S, 882 Terry Frank A, 1047 Joe Prato P and 1083 Tom Meinhardt P.

Present – 10 Absent – 17 Excused – 4 Suspended – 1 A quorum is present.

President's Report: (Given after treasurer's report) John Riling welcomed everyone and thanked Chapter 1047 for hosting this meeting. John reported (VVA National news) that he and Phil Smith (benefits) attended a recent Monroe Chapter 142 meeting and he plans to attend other chapter meetings in the coming months. John plans to have a power point presentation available during those visits. The future of VVA will be his main talking point and the importance of attending the next National VVA convention in July in Spokane, WA. John will be working with Jack Devine in promoting our Funding Resolution which if passed would finance all the VSO service programs in the state. John and Phil will be attending the upcoming CSCP & National VVA BOD meeting in Silver Spring, MD where they will be voting on \$50.00 life membership. This action if approved would eliminate annual dues membership and save on processing costs. John also announced that he is running for chair of the CSCP. Coldwater Chapter 730 has voluntarily dropped their charter.

SB1042 – Introduced by State Senator Goeff Hansen (R) seeks to eliminate the property tax waiver for 100% disabled veterans. The veteran community vehemently opposes this legislation and we are encouraged to call Jack Brandenburg (R) Finance Committee chair at 517-373-7670 to voice our opposition to this bill. You may call his secretary at 517-373-5312 to relay the same message.

1st Vice-President's Report: Ken Rogge reported that the MSC website; www.VVAMSC.org is coming along slowly. Chapter input is requested. AVVA has submitted a lot of information. The Vietnam Veterans of Michigan Foundation, Inc. (VVMFI) is now up and running and open for business. Ken also spoke about Working Group 1 (steps to consider if VVA shuts down) and Working Group 2 (transition to the future, mentor younger veterans, keep the door open). Regardless of the outcome, Region 5 (Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin) could continue in some form.

2nd Vice-President's report: Tom Meinhardt reported he planned to attend the next MVAA meeting later this week.

Secretary's Report: Gary Estermyer reported he now only needs two chapter (264 & 571) election reports. Gary is considering mailing / emailing current chapter election and finance reports to all Michigan chapters prior to their April 2019 elections. Delegates were encouraged to give him additional emails for the chapter contact list. Please notify Gary if your chapter is named in memory of anyone. Gary would also like to verify all chapter meeting locations/dates and times.

Treasurer's Report: Floyd Carmichael passed out copies and reviewed the general account. A significant transfer was made to the service office account for salaries and expenses. Now that MSC is back in the Coalition we are entitled to state funding which means increased reporting. Eight chapters still have not turned in their finance report to Floyd, they include; 109, 264, 284, 287, 390, 399, 494 & 571. Floyd has completed and submitted the Home Goods grant and the VVA service office grant in a timely fashion. It was noted that Michigan is #1 of the grant recipients in VVA relating to recoveries.

Donation Requests:

154/274 – Motion to donate \$500.00 to Detroit Metro Airport “Freedom Center”.

Motion was approved by the BOD and passed unanimously by the delegates.

313/310 – Motion to donate \$500.00 to Project Healing Waters (disabled veteran fly fishing).

Motion was approved by the BOD and passed unanimously by the delegates.

Announcements:

There will be Veteran's Day events throughout the state to include; the Detroit Veterans Day parade, Dearborn Allied War Veterans Council and ceremonies at both Fort Custer and Great Lakes National Cemetery.

Gary and Phil will be attending the groundbreaking event for the Southeast Michigan Veterans Home in Macomb County just north of Selfridge ANG base on October 29, 2018.

Thanksgiving Brunch, Dearborn DoubleTree, Wednesday, Nov. 14th, 11am – 2pm
RSVP by Nov. 10 to Mimi at (313) 982-3983 or mimi.sion@hilton.com.

John and Phil will be at Selfridge ANG on Nov. 14th for the official Eisenhower Project (Veterans Care Initiative) groundbreaking event. This PTSD/TBI project will also provide care for NFL personnel. Zero Day will also participate. Former base officer housing is being renovated to allow family members to stay near their veteran patients while getting treatment. Steve Bago announced that Chapter 154 will be holding a Veteran's Day event at Kent Grove Cemetery and then they will have an open house (with snacks) at their Vet Center. Chapter 1047 will have their 11/11 ceremony at the local park with a VFW luncheon following. Chapter 528 will have an 11 AM ceremony in Plymouth with SOS following at the VFW hall and a 1 PM ceremony in Canton. Later that evening "Salute To Service" program takes place.

Ambassador: Tim Driscoll reported that the main entrance construction at the Ann Arbor VA hospital is now almost complete with new easily accessible offices located there. The hospital hosted a POW-MIA brunch that was well attended and they are planning a Veteran's Day event. Tim spoke about "Project Pay Back" which repairs cars and trucks for donation to veterans. They have donated over 40 vehicles to veterans so far.

Committee Reports:

Agent Orange Riders: Mike Goodpaster gave a brief history (they donate money for A.O. research) of the Riders and announced he had some products available including short and long sleeve shirts. It was noted that not only bikers were invited to participate.

Constitution/Bylaws: Gary Estermyer explained the bylaw proposal and the need to adopt this new language which will be added to Article VI-Meetings. Motion by 528/1047 to approve: "The quorum for all regular scheduled meetings of the Council shall be ten (10) delegates." Motion passed.

After this meeting Gary learned that proposed constitution amendments and resolutions can now be submitted to National for consideration at the 2019 national VVA convention in Spokane.

Finance: Floyd Carmichael reported that the MSC travel policy has been revised with BOD approval on Oct. 11, 2018. These revisions include; meals, other, the reimbursement form. Copies of the revised form were available to the delegates at this meeting. Floyd also announced that all committee chairs have until Dec. 31, 2018 to submit their FY 2019 budget requests.

Government Affairs: Funding Resolution

Grant Writing: A grant request will be submitted to Detroit Chapter 9.

Membership: Ken Rogge reported that the recent VVA membership is now at 83,693 with 4,712 in Michigan. AVVA has 9,886 nationally and 762 in Michigan. Michigan currently has 3 chapters in the top 25 of membership totals; 154, 267 & 528.

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 health dangers of smoking. Chris also wants to meet with the Baraga County, Keweenaw Tribe to ask them to reconsider cigarette sales. He will be traveling to Waffle Island, Canada for Remembrance Day on Nov. 8th.

Missing In America Project: Phil Smith suggested the delegates check with their local funeral homes to ask if they have unclaimed veteran remains.

National Cemetery: Tom Meinhardt reported there are now 39,203 buried or interred at GLNC. There were 356 burials in September and 4,170 burials YTD. GLNC is now the 8th busiest among national cemeteries.

VA Form 40-10007 is used to establish eligibility for burial in a VA national cemetery. Floyd Carmichael reported that Ft. Custer National Cemetery is working to expand their burial area by 73 acres. This will allow for an additional 3,000 casket burials and 3,500 in-ground cremation sites. There are currently 37,000+ buried or interred at Fort Custer. Their honor guard building renovation is now complete and Floyd mentioned that Ft. Custer is one of the few national cemeteries to have a dedicated honor guard detail. Ft. Custer now has a new director. They also have one unknown veteran burial from the Civil War. If cremation is chosen the cemetery has a cremains scatter area. The family may opt for a marker placed in the memorial area. The marker would read 'In Memory Of ...' to indicate no body or cremains are interred. Floyd also spoke about this year's Veteran's Day ceremony which marks the 100th anniversary of the end of WWI. At 11:00 AM on the 11th the bells will toll 21 times.

Product Sales: John reported that his busy season is now over. Kokomo sales were slow even though the event was well attended. Some changes at Kokomo (Howard County Veterans Association) were not received well by many of the vendors. John also spoke about the VVA Achievement and Commendation Medals that some members have earned. Chapters are encouraged to submit applications for their members who go above and beyond in their duties.

Sgt. At Arms: Steve Bago reported that there are now officer voting paddles.

VAVS: Tim Driscoll reported that some changes were being developed in the VAVS organization to include using the internet for exchange of information. VVA volunteers should always sign in when they make hospital visits. Ann Arbor VAMC is planning a 'Salute To Veterans' event on Nov. 1st. It was noted that some VA hospitals were getting better ratings.

Veteran's Benefits/Service Program: Phil Smith reported a steady number of claims are being submitted with an average of \$6 million monthly in recoveries lately. Three more service officers have been hired to cover; Ann Arbor, Saginaw, Lansing and SW Michigan. A.O. exposure at Fort Drum and Fort McClellan has been established. Renovations continue on the 13th and 14th floor of the McNamara Bldg. in Detroit. Many veterans in appeals have received letters inviting them to switch over to the RAMP program. If they do opt in they can never go back to the traditional appeal process. Phil, Gary Estermyer and Lee Bruner will be attending the VVA National service officer training in Silver Spring, MD from Jan. 13-15, 2019.

Veteran's Health Care / PTSD / Sub. Abuse: It was noted that Sandie Wilson was at the Chapter 133 Agent Orange Town Hall event today.

Veteran's Incarcerated and in the Justice System: Tom Meinhardt is waiting for approval from the activity directors of Freeland, St. Louis and Carson City facilities to visit.

MI AVVA President: Kathy Driscoll reported that Michigan has 760 members and 30 chapters. Within those 30 chapters there are 15 delegates. They had 80% representation at this meeting. Fisher House in Ann Arbor has scheduled its groundbreaking for spring of 2019. The Detroit Fisher House project has now expanded its property search to a ½ mile radius of the hospital.

New Business: Tom Meinhardt spoke about the “Wreaths Across America” program and made a suggestion to donate 10 wreaths for each Michigan national cemetery at a total cost of \$300.00. Motion 154/313 to approve, motion passed.

John presented Chapter 1047 President Joe Prato a certificate of appreciation and a 35th MSC anniversary challenge coin.

Joe Prato presented John with a 50th anniversary cane.

Upcoming meetings for VVA & AVVA:

Dec. 1, 2018 – 11:00 AM – BOD meeting @ Roy O’Brien VFW Post 8465, Port Huron, MI

Dec. 2, 2018 – 10:00 AM – General Membership/Christmas luncheon @ VFW 8465
3815 Knapp Avenue, Port Huron, MI 48060

March 14, 2019 – Legislative breakfast @ Lansing

March 15, 2019 – 10:00 AM – BOD meeting @ Plymouth VFW

March 17, 2019 – 10:00 AM – General Membership meeting @ Howell AL or Detroit ?

May 17, 2019 – 10:00 AM – BOD meeting @ Sault Ste. Marie

May 18, 2019 – time TBD – veterans benefits/A.O./workshops? @ Sault Ste. Marie

May 19, 2019 – 10:00 AM – General Membership meeting @ Sault Ste. Marie

June 7-9, 2019 – Region 5 pre-convention meeting @ Indianapolis, IN

July 16-21, 2019 – VVA & AVVA National Convention @ Spokane, WA

Meeting adjourned at 1:48 PM

Closing Prayer was said by Tom Meinhardt & Chaplain Bob

Minutes taken and transcribed by: Gary Estermyer

Lodging in the Port Huron area:

Comfort Inn
1700 Yeager Street
Port Huron, MI 48060
(855) 809-3507
(810) 982-5500

Baymont by Wyndham
1611 Range Road
Port Huron, MI 48074
(810) 364-8000
(855) 680-3239

Best Western Blue Water Bridge
2282 Water Street
Port Huron, MI
(866) 599-6674