

Meeting MVCC Minutes

DECEMBER 7, 2015

The meeting of the MVCC was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by 1st Chairman Kelly Wynne n followed by prayer by Chaplain Ad-litem Jack Stearns at 1900.

Roll call: Of Officers, Member organizations.

All officers present, except Treasurer Kevin Woodward

Organization present: AMVETS 2; K WV 1; MCL 1; MCVV 3; MOAA 1; MOPH 1; VFW 3; VFWA 1; VVA1.

Secretary's Report:

Secretary report was accepted, with date change from Oct. to Nov.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer's report was excused due to his involvement with " Wreaths Across America".

- **Introduction of guests:** Mick Devin, State Rep, HD-90.

- Mick Devin was given the floor due to a scheduling issue and needed to depart after his comments. He discussed his legislation to streamline licensing for veterans organizations. This was a concept bill for the 1st session and was allowed it to carry over to the 2nd session. This allowed the bill to be appropriately staffed and create a new bill to be considered in the upcoming session. To make this happen, there will be a meeting held at Augusta A. L. Post 2 on December 19, 10 to 12. At this time, the problems will be identified and solutions discussed. The effort, in turn, will be turned into legislation and presented to the Veterans and Legislative Affairs Comm. in 2nd session. Rep Devin is the contact person and can be reached at mick@mickdevin.org.

- **VHA:** Jim Doherty presented for Ryan Lilly

- Statistics

- FY 15:

- 50,000 veterans enrolled
- 42,000 veterans actively using the VA, an increase of 2%
- 12% dropped from rolls due to deceased, moving to another state, or for other reasons.
- Since there was an actual 2% increase that means there was an additional 14% increase in enrollment.

- There was an 11% increase in women veterans' enrollment. This is largely due to the active outreach by the Women's Clinic Director, LA Ronda Harris
- There was an increase in staff from 1350 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) in FY14 to 1460 in FY15
- 98% of appointments were scheduled within 30 days,
- 99% of mental health appoints were achieved within 30 days
 - o 4 additional psychiatrists were hired
 - o 1 or 2 psychologists were hired
 - o 4 new neuro-psychologists were hired
- o Saturday, at 1030, the Wreath's Across America will place Wreaths in Augusta. Note; there will be wreaths placed at the Maine Veteran Cemeteries as well on Saturday.
- o VA eligibility was discussed. Some veterans have complained they are veterans but can't get the VA Card. It was explained that the VA Card is a VA Healthcare card and you have to be eligible for VA healthcare. That means you have to have a service connected health issue or fall below a specified income level. In the past, there was an opportunity for any veterans to get a VA Health card, but that was only available for a short time. It was also stated that the Federal Government has directed the VBA to issue Veteran Cards. These cards have nothing to do with the VA but just recognition that the person is a veteran. The VA was only directed to administer these cards. But, it isn't anticipated that these cards will be available until 2017.
- o The issue of the deferent definition of a Veteran was discussed with no particular solution provided. But, there is activity in the state to address this issue.
- o Jim pointed out that the VA is not an insurance agency but a health care delivery system, and the VA isn't a pharmacy, but has a pharmacy for use of veterans eligible for VA healthcare. To use the pharmacy, the veteran needs to see his primary care doctor at least once a year.
- o If a veteran has not been seen for 2 years, he is dropped from the system and has to be reinstated.
- o The Pharmacy does have Chronic Hepatitis (Hep C) treatment. This cost \$100,000 but an eligible veteran can get it for \$9. But, once started, you can't stop and if you do, you can't restart.
- The 1 Million Veteran program was discussed. This voluntary, anonymous program is designed to have 1,000,000 veterans provide their DNA so that their medical history can be followed and used for studies and research. The VA/Togus point of contract is Lu-Ann Cori. The office is next to the Emergency Room in building 200.
- **VBA:** Phil Black presented for EJ Ryan. EJ will return from his Philadelphia assignment in January. Acting Director, Julie Carey was introduced.
 - o Phil provided the usual VBA statistics.

- o The VA keeps adding ships to the list of those who exposed to Agent Orange. Veterans who serviced on ships during Vietnam should regularly check that list.
 - o The VA has added a new website (vets.gov) that is interactive and is question based. This should make it easier to navigate the VA system.
 - o C&P exams will require an RSVP. The veteran will get 2 phone calls first. If that fails, a letter will be sent out requiring an RSVP within 10 days. If no reply, the C&P exam will be cancelled.
- **MVS:** Lorna Hatch
 - o Wi-Fi access has become a priority
 - o iPads were donated, now they need iTunes cards
 - o The lighting display outside the Hospice/Nursing Home wing is awesome. Dave Patch commented that Lowes Brunswick donated the lights and the Boothbay Harbor American Legion Post 36 put up the lights and display.
 - o There will be family portraits taken over the next weeks.
 - o VBA is once again hosting the Annual Christmas Party.
 - o Every patient in the Hospital gets a present.
- **MVH:** Kelley Wynne reported no new news, all is going well.
- **MBSV:** Adria Horn
 - o Jim Doherty and Adria did an outreach event at Pen Bay.
 - o Volunteers of America (VOA)-Cabin in the Woods (veteran housing project) is moving forward.
 - There are 16 Vash Vouchers now available.
 - There is a need to raise \$4M for the project.
 - There is a \$400K tax credit
 - o There was a Veterans Day hosted lunch with post 9/11 veterans
 - o EJ, Ryan, and Adria will be meeting with the Governor 3 times between now and the end of January, once in December and twice in January (12 and 29).
 - o The VA has approved having the Veterans Portraits that are part of the Legacy Project hung on the VA walls.
 - o The Rural Veterans employment Pilot Program ends December 2016. This program is for veterans who were discharged on or after 26 August 2012 and need help getting a job. \$1200 to \$1500 is available per eligible veteran to be used to help getting a job. This could be getting an interview suite, pay for courses or training that might be required for a job, help with resumes, etc. Adria is the Point of Contact for this program.

o Mike Michaud, the new US Department of Labor Veterans Program director, will be visiting Maine for his first visit in this capacity.

- **Issue Papers:** David Patch

- o The Congressional delegation reported that their Principals (Senators Collins and King, and Representative Pingree) were aware of the issues and the staffs were working on them.

- o Dave urged the MVCC representatives to discuss these issue papers with their membership and provide any feedback that is appropriate.

- o MVCC representatives should continue to canvas their membership for new issues to bring forward.

- **Discussion:**

- o Peter Ogden suggested that the MVCC have "open houses" for all veterans to discuss issues. This idea was thought to be a good way to get more feedback from all veterans, but specifically the younger veterans. It was thought that the first Open House would be in the spring. It is likely they would be several Open Houses around the State to provide maximum opportunity for all veterans to be heard.

- o Kelley suggested having Gold Star families and WWII veterans actively participate in the Memorial Days activities.

- o David mentioned that the Moving Wall will be in Thomaston for Memorial Day as well.

- o Teague Morris suggested that the MVCC have a web site and/or use social media to get the word out. MVCC will take this for action to figure out how to make this happen.

The next meeting will be January 4, 2015

Salute to colors. Closing prayer given'

Meeting adjourned: 1835

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen M Jarrett Sr.

MVCC Secretary

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