

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA
NEW HAMPSHIRE CHAPTER ZOOM MEETING MINUTES
9 February 2023

Call to Order: President Jim Lefebvre called the meeting to order at 1831 hours during a Zoom meeting. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those assembled followed by the invocation delivered by Gary Terhune.

Attending: Boyle, Breuder, Coulter, J. Day, S. Day, D'Amante, Erickson, Goff, Jaffin, LeFebvre, Lovgren, McLean, Miller, Terhune, Wright. A quorum of members was present.

Opening Remarks: President LeFebvre had some excellent news from MOAA National. He spoke to the Deputy Director of Chapters today and will brief that discussion later in the meeting.

Immediate Past President Remarks: Bob Jaffin had no comments at this time.

Vice President Remarks: Larry had no comments at this time.

Secretary's Report: Michael received one correction to the January minutes regarding the spelling of Peter Burdett's name. There were no other comments. A motion to accept the corrected minutes of the January meeting was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Finance/Treasurer's Report: Roby stated that the annual IRS report has been completed electronically. The question of an unfunded mandate, previously discussed, remains. Jim mentioned that he had a chance to chat with Frank Michaels, Deputy Director of MOAA Chapters, today. MOAA has agreed to fund us for \$180 to cover Zoom meeting costs, just like the Councils. Jim stated that we should be considered the equivalent of a Council since we are the only Chapter in NH. MOAA National agreed. MOAA National also mentioned that they were giving Councils \$1250 to cover official travel, and that too has been approved for our Chapter. We should be seeing a check for \$1430 to cover those two items. Jim also asked about the IRS Form 990 question regarding accounts exceeding \$50,000, but Mr. Michaels said this would need to be discussed at the national level. Michael **McLean** also mentioned that our Zoom meeting costs had actually declined to \$104.93 this year. A motion to accept the emailed financial reports was made and approved by all present.

Trustee of the Trust Fund: The January report looks good as all the individual investments showed an improvement over the previous report. However, the Dow Jones trading numbers continue to fluctuate moderately daily with no definite trend apparent. So, the Trustees recommend no changes to our current portfolio.

OLD BUSINESS:

Granite Slate Update: There are no significant changes. Drew has been working to finish the newsletter template and learn more about the software. There is one input for the next issue from the Hanscom AFB Retirees Office which will probably be included in the next two editions. He was also asked to include a "Mark your calendar" for an upcoming event for this summer for a family event to be held in North Conway. Drew also mentioned the invitation from David West to the NH ARNG Association 2023 combined Officer/Enlisted State Conference for VSO's on 15 April at the Puritan Conference room in Manchester, 1000-1500 hours. The email distribution only included Drew, Jim, Larry, and Michael received it. It was intended for military association and VSO's to meet some of the senior NH Guard leadership, hear about legislative initiatives, etc. There was a flyer attached to the email invitation. Larry has already signed up to attend. Jim had not received that email, then went on to discuss an issue mentioned by Fox News regarding emails that seem to "disappear" from your "IN" box. This is a result of setting up your email account to "thread" emails under a single topic heading. Any email related to that topic gets included under that one thread. If you want to see all the individual emails, you need to change the email account setting to remove the "threading" option. Finally, Jim mentioned that his phone discussions with Mr. Michaels at National confirmed to Jim that our Chapter will indeed be awarded last year's LOE 5 Star rating. Special thanks go to Michael McLean for putting that all together again. Michael stated that he has already gone through the inputs for this year's LOE award. A few are over the 2000-character limit but that can be addressed. Michael will send them out again for a final review. The final submission must be done through a portal on the National website and it's too early to submit now. Michael had previously sent out a document with tips on how to write these submissions. He will include that as an enclosure to his mailing.

Granite State Warrior Award: Gary said there are 59 reservations for this event. Senator Hassen will attend but will not be having a meal. Gary stated that we need more publicity for this event. We need contacts with the Union Leader, WMUR, etc. Gary has a guest coming to the luncheon who is very interested in helping veterans. Chad Chadwick had always mentioned the need for public affairs in the past. Gary mentioned that this generation are not joiners and included members of his own family. This makes it difficult to recruit if we don't have something tangible to offer potential members. Drew mentioned that he had contacted the Union Leader last fall before the annual meeting when we had the USS Constitution Commander attending and got no response from them. Senator Shaheen will not be attending due to other commitments. Neither Congressman Pappas nor Congresswoman Kuster have responded. Jim has the gifts for the speaker, but the plaque has not been produced yet. Shirley Avery has produced these plaques in the past, but Jim has not been able to contact her. Ray D'Amante has also had issues in getting materials/signs from that vendor. Bruce Avery had originally used the prison system to obtain these plaques in the past and had good success. A previous warden had assisted us in getting these produced there, but Michael said this stopped about 3-4 years ago and we went to the clear plexiglass trophy we've been using since then. The citation for the award was a separate document and still needs to be produced as well. Jim and Gary will discuss acquiring a glass trophy from a supplier off-line. Jennifer will post any

publicity on Facebook and Instagram. Michael suggested taking the write-up out of the flyer. Ray mentioned that this family has raised millions of dollars for veteran causes. Neither are veterans, but he suggested that he would like to see much more involvement with them in the future. He would like to see them become active in areas of our concern as well. Their latest adventure includes raffling off a Patriot's Super Bowl ring that was donated to them. Michael suggested that we make them honorary members of the chapter, and we could do that at the upcoming luncheon. The President made a formal motion to make the Taub's honorary members of the NH Chapter. This motion was seconded and approved by all present. Michael will prepare the appropriate certificates. This is a special recognition that is not offered to all recipients of the Granite State Warrior's Award. Jim was going to speak with the author of the article in the Manchester Union Leader regarding the raffling off the Super Bowl ring. They plan to sell 1,000 tickets at \$100/ticket which will yield a net of \$100,000 going to veteran causes. The Taub's had recently traveled to DC to make an award of \$2,000,000 to veterans.

2023 Events Discussion (Plymouth et al): The next event will be a luncheon at the Common Man Inn in Plymouth on 1 April. The Common Man was already booked for April 15th as well as the Italian Farmhouse down the road. There are three main entrées: New England style haddock, New England roast turkey, and roasted vegetable and three cheese manicotti. The average meal cost is \$20. We are getting a 20% veterans discount giving us a cost of about \$21/person. Gerry suggested we charge \$30/person for this event. There will be no room charge in addition to the discount. Room for overnight stays will also be available. Governor Sununu has been invited to be the keynote speaker and we are waiting to hear back from his scheduler as to whether he can make this or not. The President mentioned that Jeb Bradley is coming up to Conway on the 13th related to Jim's budget committee could mention to Jeb about our difficulty in getting through to the Governor's office. We could also invite Mr. Bradley to the luncheon as well. If we can get the Governor to attend, it should assist in attracting attendees to the luncheon. We are also looking towards a luncheon in North Conway for June. Gary Lovgren will be the POC for that luncheon. This luncheon will be at Tin Mountain Conservation Center in Albany, NH. They have a beautiful conference room in a location with gardens and nature trails. All are handicapped accessible. They will also open their natural history exhibit for us. The luncheon will be American picnic style catered by Sweet Maple Café. The speaker will be EMS personnel from the NH National Guard talking about rescue efforts in the White Mountains. This will tie into the military helping people out while we are in the White Mountains. This will be a great family event. They have agreed to do special family walks for children. This will be great for those not eating at the luncheon. Today, he also met with the General Manager of the new, yet unopened, Marriott at Cranmore in North Conway who offered attendees a special price for anyone wanting to spend that three-day weekend (Juneteenth holiday and Father's Day weekend). We're hoping to get a military rate of about \$110/night. Gary thinks the caterers will charge under \$30/person and less for children. We might be able to get additional benefits for new members, those still on active-duty, or serving reservists for things like chairlift rides, other attractions maybe even on a complimentary basis. Alcoholic or other beverages we will have to bring our own. The Chapter will serve beer and wine. This event would assist us in reaching out to younger people with families and hopefully attract them to join the chapter. The annual clambake will be on the 5th of August, and possibly

an event in the Concord area in September. The annual meeting will again be at the Nashua Country Club on 4 November. The President has received an email from one of our newest members who wants to volunteer to serve in a specific position on the BOD. She says she is not very tech savvy, and she has volunteered for the Personal Affairs position. Jim would like to hand this position over to someone else anyway and would sit down with her to accomplish a hand-off. This is Diane Hulseby, and she recently was added as a new member of the BOD. On a different note, several members have mentioned to Jim that they are concerned about the future of the clambake. So far, we have not had any success in finding anyone to replace the Bake Master position. A solution would be to proceed as a committee with Gary handling the administration side and 2-3 others handling the clambake side of the event. Roby has a \$175 deposit check sitting at the Naval Shipyard for the event. Jim considers this event an essential part of our operations, especially after we had three members from the MOAA National staff attend last year's event as well as Congressional delegation members. More members of the BOD need to become involved working this event. This will be discussed further at the March BOD meeting.

NEW BUSINESS: None

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Government Relations (National/State/SVAC/MLT/Vets Count): Peter Burdett was not present tonight.

Personal Affairs: See the previous discussion on this issue.

Membership: Since the January meeting, we have had three new members, four deceased members, plus two with spouses, and zero dropped members for a current total of 558 current members. Michael mailed out the annual dues letters in the middle of January. He has not had a chance to check the Post Office box yet, and suspects that there will be number of renewals there. He has received several responses from members who have renewed their memberships on-line, and routinely checks the spreadsheet to show who has paid, then updates our local files. Roby asked Michael if he's getting the same dues payment confirmation that he gets as accounts receivable. Michael said he is not getting these confirmations. Roby said that Michael should also be getting those confirmations, and something has stopped synching.

Recruiting: Tom Goff is still in the woods in Texas and will return here in April, and his Zoom connection tonight is a bit spotty. He has been working in developing programming to get membership energized to do some individual recruiting. This would be the best way to attract new members. He was looking at developing some type of reward system. Gary mentioned that we had used this same type of system when Jim Spotts was the recruiter. Either that or we develop a better system to get the message out to more people than we're reaching right now. Tom wanted to know why we've had such a downturn in recruitment. Jim asked Tom to see if we could come up with something for the next newsletter in March on this issue as this reaches most of our membership. Gary recently sent Jim a sample letter he used about 10 years ago to

try to recruit MOAA National members into the local Chapter. Jim will forward a copy of that letter to Tom. Michael stated that we get a list every month from National regarding members who might have moved into the state. This past month he has sent out two letters in January and eight in February. We no longer get the old data dump annually of 1600 members. So, we're using broadcast letters. Roby mentioned the recruitment program that was funded by Ray D'Amante, and we still have funds specifically reserved for recruiting efforts. It worked but required more involvement of the BOD members in events to bring prospective members to those events. Tom was aware of the funds availability. A potential member will look at us and ask, "What's in this for me"? So, Tom wants to know what our messaging is to these prospective members? He doesn't think it's that clear. He hasn't seen any messaging about what we're going to do or are doing. What can we do better to deliver our message to current and future members? Ray mentioned that at last year's clambake he had a young man, a former Blackhawk helicopter pilot, whom he invited both him and his wife to be his guest at the clambake. He also contacted Peter Burdett to let him know that this fellow was coming and see what we could do to entice him into joining. Peter decided to ask the General to talk to this young man, who spoke to this guy for over 30 minutes as well as the General's aides and other people. Unfortunately, he still hasn't joined and is "busy" growing his business, etc. Ray doesn't think there is anything else he could have done to persuade this guy to join. Situations like this are a factor; Covid has been a factor. Gerry Boyle agreed that reaching out to MOAA national members that live here in NH is a great idea and we should try to contact them individually, if possible, and invite them to our events for April and June. He mentioned the chapter statistics on the back of the luncheon invitation for this month that show that only five members of the chapter are under the age of 50. Maybe we should make a visit to the Londonderry Reserve Center, where there are at least a dozen officers, on a drill weekend. Also reaching out to the National Guard, especially in the April luncheon. Only 6% of our membership are less than 60 years old. The majority of our membership are in their 70's, 80's, and 90's. Tom asked the BOD not to get discouraged, and sometimes you have to make 100 "asks" to get one new member. Jim will call Tom in the next day or two to discuss this topic offline. Larry mentioned that during his USAF time, the Commanders always promoted the Air Force Association. The junior officers usually responded and joined at the commander's suggestion. Hopefully, if we get some senior officers to promote us, the junior officers might follow.

T-Bones After Action Report: Jennifer stated that of the nine respondents to the Google survey, all were in favor of continuing this type of venue and there were no issues with the time of the meeting. There was one comment on the menu selection, but this is due to the limited menu that is available for these functions. The pay issue was a non-starter (?). Jennifer will be sending out the invitation tomorrow for the 9 March BOD meeting. Jennifer needs to know who is coming and your menu selection. The room charge is covered by the number meals ordered (room charge would be \$500), which we were able to make due to the orders, including beverages. All menu choices must be in to Jennifer and the restaurant at least 24 hours in advance. A couple of time/commitment conflicts were noted at the meeting.

Website: The web page had no hits in January. Michael says the coding he is using to check website hits is correct, and he'll check again in February. This may no longer be a useful

statistic, but he'll see what shows up this month. Roby thinks that there might be some connection between this issue and the issue of not getting confirmation of dues payments.

Travel Program: Tony Burdo sent the following information on the travel program. "Our 2024 travel program has been confirmed with Collette. We have four trips planned. Price, exact dates, and itinerary was available for one trip. Prices and firm dates for the remaining three trips will be provided at a later date; however, I do have the exact months and approximate costs for those trips. The 2024 plan includes emphasis on our World Connect program. The travel plan has been sent to Geoff for distribution through blast email. I will bring our updated posters, detailed information for one of our trips and copies of our 2024 travel plan to our luncheon on 18 February. The update travel plans will also be sent for publication in the next Granite Slate.

Scholarship Loan Program: Wayne Balcom is currently in Antarctica. There was no report.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Nominations – Directors: There are no nominations required at this time.

Nominations – Officers: No nominations currently required.

Web Communications: Jennifer said we have 72 followers on Facebook and 3 on Instagram. She will post information on the Granite State Warrior award on these platforms using information from the luncheon invitation. Sharon asked if Jennifer knows who is following us on these platforms, and she does. She doesn't know if these followers are currently members or not, but she will try to follow that up. Someone said they might possibly be "bots". Tom suggested that we should also post a membership application on these platforms to expedite the process for anyone interested in joining the Chapter. Jennifer can't upload the actual application but can provide a digital link to the application on the chapter website. Sharon asked this question with the idea of looking for potential chapter directors.

Blast Email: No report from Geoff Corson.

LIAISONS

ESGR: Peter Burdett said that there was nothing new to report.

Transition Assistance: Jim LeFebvre had nothing to report.

Manchester VAMC: Bernie Satterfield sent a report that includes **two PDF documents** which are **attached to the minutes**. One details the upcoming Claims Clinic at the Somersworth CBOC, and the other is from the Manchester Union Leader regarding an article about Senator Hassen and the Buddy Check Bill and other activities going on at the Manchester VA. There is also a new PAO at the Manchester VA, Lori Flynn, 603-624-4366, Lori.Flynn@va.gov. Larry mentioned

that the SVAC representative was very proud that the VA was able to move all of the CLC patients to either Boston or White River Junction during the recent polar vortex weather event when the VA lost heat in the buildings. All of the residents were returned to the Manchester VA last Tuesday. Tom Goff also mentioned that he had sent Senator Hassen a letter regarding the medical billets that were being removed by DOD and received a response about two days ago. She stated that TRICARE is a high priority for her, and she will oppose any efforts to reduce any manning, facilities, or benefits. Jim mentioned that we have also relayed our concerns on that issue to MOAA National.

Martin's Point Liaison: No report from Bob Jaffin.

Surviving Spouse Liaison: Gwen sent the following report. "Since our last board meeting, I have recorded six deaths, sent out two condolence cards, and three condolence letters. I have made five telephone calls to the widows. One of the widows moved to Maine. I do not have her new telephone number. I had a nice conversation with all the ones that I was able to connect with. Diana Crowell, who lives in Florida right now, is moving to Eliot, Maine in a few months. She is hoping to eventually find a place to live, over the border, in New Hampshire".

Miscellaneous Item: Larry Miller mentioned that at the recent SVAC meeting a comment was made about the recent Chinese balloon shoot-down and the call signs of the two pairs of F-22's involved. The call sign of the first pair was "Frank 01" and the second was "Luke" in reference to Frank Luke, a WWI pilot who shot down 18 German balloons before being shot down and killed himself. Luke AFB is named after him.

Next Board Meeting: Tentatively scheduled for Thursday, 9 March 2023. This will be a face-to-face luncheon meeting at T-Bones in Concord at 1145 hours. Jennifer has a conflict and will need someone to coordinate this meeting. Jennifer has already booked the room and will send out notices for meal reservations soon.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting which was seconded and accepted by all members present.

Respectfully submitted

Michael A. McLean
CDR, USN (Ret.)
Secretary
New Hampshire Chapter



Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Claims Clinic for all Veterans and Survivors

Hosted by the Somersworth VA Clinic
Masks are required in medical facility

Date: Tuesday, February 21, 2023
Location: Somersworth VA Clinic, 5 Terrascope Parkway
Somersworth, NH
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
and
12:30 to 3:00 p.m.

9:00 to 11:00 a.m.: By Appointment
11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.: Walk-In Service Available
12:30 to 2:00 p.m.: By Appointment
2:00 to 3:00 p.m.: Walk-In Service Available

Please call Shelby Barron to book your appointment at 603-624-4366 x 5759.



To register for an appointment, please contact your
VA Social Worker at 603-624-4366 x5759

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

• Union Leader Article: Hassan huddles with vets over Buddy Check law

Hassan hosts vets roundtable over new Buddy Check law U.S. Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., hosted a virtual roundtable with leaders of veteran service organizations to discuss a bipartisan law she authored that requires there be a Buddy Check Week every year to conduct wellness checks on all veterans. Leaders of several veteran organizations predicted a new federal law to require a Buddy Check Week every year would be a lifesaver for soldiers dealing with mental health problems.

Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., who authored the law, hosted a roundtable via Zoom Monday to discuss how stakeholders can take advantage of this new mandate, modeled after the American Legion's own "Buddy Check Week of National Calling."

The law requires the **Veterans Administration** to make sure the Veterans Crisis Line has enough staffing during this week to deal with a surge of additional telephone calls to conduct wellness checks on veterans.

The measure was contained in the \$1.7 trillion federal spending bill Congress approved last month.

"All the vets I've spoken to are excited by this. It's going to take these guys a little while to get acclimated to it," said Seth Gahr, a peer-to-peer support specialist with the New Hampshire State Police. "This is a home run program; I just wish we had this 30 years ago in New York City."

Hassan had planned to host Monday's roundtable at the American Legion's Sweeney Post in Manchester, but decided to hold it remotely due to the winter storm.

Dr. Alicia Semiatin, chief of mental health with the **Manchester VA Medical Center**, said the program will help advocates get proactive care to vets.

"We don't see veterans with mental health issues until they are in crisis," Semiatin said. "The Buddy Check program really allows us to do more preventative care."

Reaching out to employers is key. Amy Cook, suicide prevention coordinator for the National Alliance for Mental Illness in the state, said her organization last year conducted 650 hours of military culture and suicide prevention training for private employers and health care providers. "The majority of vets are going to work every day. Employers need to know the warning signs," Cook said.

Commander Rick Borrazas of the Disabled American Veterans Department of New Hampshire said veterans who are struggling are more likely to accept help from a fellow veteran, ideally one with similar experiences in the military. "Many Vietnam vets had such a bad welcome home and a bad experience with VA way back then. The key is asking the right, probing questions," Borrazas said.

Denis Querrard, senior vice commander with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said many soldiers coming back after the withdrawal from Afghanistan a year and a half ago had difficulty with that transition. One of those New Hampshire veterans took his own life late last week, Querrard said. "He had a child on the way and a girlfriend. We thought we had solved some issues, but his demons caught up with him," Querrard said. "Communication is the most important thing."

Hassan said steps should be taken to ensure the mental health care workforce has "cultural competency" when it comes to assisting veterans who are in crisis. She also said Congress should consider ways to create more incentives for veterans to enter the field of mental health after their military service. "We don't wait for other people to solve problems; we just roll up our sleeves and get going," Hassan said.

There is a toll free suicide crisis hotline that can be reached anywhere by dialing 988 and at the prompt, hit 1, which will direct services for a veteran who is in need of help, she added.

Kevin Forrest, Manchester VA Medical Center director, and Wayne Perra, adjutant of the New Hampshire American Legion, also took part in Monday's forum.

• **VISION 2025:** As you read the below article take a look at the <https://www.newengland.va.gov/nhvision/index.asp>. Would a new medical facility have served us better? With 2025 is 2 years away how can this be reopened to better serve the veterans of New Hampshire before the next catastrophic failure?

• **MANCHESTER, NH — The Department of Veterans Affairs Manchester Healthcare System has cancelled in-person patient appointments at the Manchester VA Medical Center (VAMC) and Tilton Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) due to infrastructure issues related to recent frigid weather conditions consisting of water and heating concerns.**

"Patient safety is our number one concern at VA Manchester," said Director Kevin Forrest. "We will continue to monitor and evaluate our facility water and heat concerns. Our dedicated facilities team is proactively researching any contributing factors and all hands are on deck supporting this effort."

Patient face-to-face health care visits at both Manchester VAMC, including Urgent Care, and Tilton CBOC will be transitioned to virtual appointments or rescheduled until further notice.

The Manchester VAMC took immediate actions to ensure the health and safety of the 12 Community Living Center (CLC) patients, followed by efforts to troubleshoot the loss of water pressure. During facility inspections, the water pressure continued to lessen leading the steam-operated boiler system to be placed on pause to avoid additional infrastructure damage.

In the essence of caution and due to the ongoing water shortage, a decision was made early this morning to relocate our CLC patients to VA White River Junction, Vermont and VA Bedford, Massachusetts. All patients have safely arrived at their temporary VA destinations.

Please contact the VISN 1 Clinical Contact Center to verify the status of your appointment(s) at (603) 624-4366, ext. 3199. The Manchester VAMC is also proactively reaching out to patients and advising them on their appointment status.

VA Manchester Healthcare System is part of the VA New England Healthcare System which includes eight medical centers, located in the six New England states. Manchester VA is comprised of one main campus located in Manchester and four community-based outpatient clinics located in Conway, Portsmouth, Somersworth, and Tilton. The Portsmouth outpatient clinic is located at Pease Air National Guard Base.