

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA
NEW HAMPSHIRE CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
8 February 2024

Call to Order: The BOD Zoom meeting was called to order by President Larry Miller at 1900 hours. The invocation was led by Gary Terhune and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Larry Miller and recited by those assembled.

Attending: Balcolm, Boyle, Breuder, Burdett, Day, Dunn, Frost, Goff, LeFebvre, Luti, McLean, Miller (Larry & Pat), Rowan, Siemens, Terhune. A quorum of members was officially present.

President's Opening Remarks: Larry stated that his comments would be laced throughout the meeting, so all he did was welcome everybody.

Immediate Past President Remarks: Jim said that he is filling in for the Personal Affairs rep. If anyone has an issue with this area, please contact Jim and let him know what your issues are. He would like to provide any advice or support as needed, but he needs to know about the need first.

Vice President Remarks: Peter stated that he wanted everyone to know that his wife Susan "ended her tour of duty" last Saturday night and passed away. Peter was by her side when she died at the lake house, plans for a funeral have been made, an obituary has been posted by the funeral home (see Pete's Facebook page). There will probably be a "celebration of life" sometime in July.

Secretary's Report: Michael said he received a couple of comments on the minutes of the January BOD meeting. Roby was not disoriented in time, only confused over Larry's pronunciation of his name. The amount we received from national should have been \$1300, not \$1500. A motion to approve those minutes was made, seconded, and approved by all present. Michael also stated that both the Communications and LOE packages have been sent to national ahead of schedule. He stated that we answered all of the LOE questions, but don't know how national will interpret them. Gary asked at what point do we become a "small" chapter? Michael hasn't seen anything recently that indicates that there is a large distinction between a "large" or "medium" chapter. In the past, they used to list the five and four stars awards by "large", "medium", or "small" chapters, but now it's simply a list of five- and four-stars awards, and a new three-star category has been started. Gary stated that in relative terms, we're still a fairly large chapter. Michael said that there are many 20 or 30 member chapters in MOAA. Jim Lefebvre asked why the three-star chapter designation was created. Michael responded that all they did was show what that new logo would look like. Larry said he received a call from Frank Michael regarding the status of the Vermont Chapter issue which has still not been resolved. Gary asked what the issue is? It seems to be very straight forward. Larry didn't press him for an explanation. Peter suggested that the next time he speaks with Frank to give him an April deadline for a decision on Vermont, otherwise there won't be sufficient time to make the appropriate notifications about the annual Clambake in August as we would like to include the Vermont members, if possible. Jim thinks that there may still be some desire at National to resurrect the Vermont chapter based on Jim's last discussion with Frank Michael in November. Larry wanted to know if we enrolled the Vermont members in our chapter, would we become a "council". Michael said probably not as we already have members from Maine, Massachusetts, and a few in Vermont already. Again, Michael agreed with Jim's comments that National may still want to resurrect that chapter to keep the total number of chapters up. Peter feels that if we were given the Vermont Zip codes so we could do a mailing for the clambake, this would give those chapter members a sense of

inclusion. We have invited Vermont chapter members to the clambake in the past. Jim mentioned again that that whole issue arose last year when we were contacted to make the ROTC awards at Norwich because the Vermont chapter could no longer support doing this. This is another issue that should be presented to Frank Michael and find out if he wants us to do this again this year in June.

Bookkeeper's Report: Roby only had two things to discuss. He has sent out the January financial status and has received \$523 in dues payments so far, all of which we received in credit card payments. We won't see these funds until MOAA National forwards them to us. As a result, we're back in the "black". The second matter concerns his successor as treasurer. Due to health issues, we need to find someone to assume this position without Roby having to provide guidance and assistance for any period of time. This needs to be accomplished prior to this November. A previous treasurer died while performing this role. The responsibility is on the BOD to find someone who can step right into this job. We also have needs for a clambake coordinator and relief for our Secretary. Jim suggested that a blast email go out to the membership regarding this critical position. A question was asked if any of our members is an accountant or CPA? Michael said that a member, Bill Bizer, had done our last audit and was a CPA. We had previously spent \$4,000 for a CPA to get our books in order in the past, and we should try to avoid doing that again. It was recommended that the initial blast email focus on the Treasurer's position. A motion to approve the Treasurer's report was made, seconded, and approved by all present.

Trustee of the Trust Fund: Drew said that all the investments seem to advance a little except for the American Funds scholarship investments which lost about \$100 in January. Otherwise, we appear to be in good shape with our investments.

DISCUSSION

Clambake Discussion: Gary stated that he had sent out an email on this topic to the BOD, but several people were not on the distribution list as he didn't have an updated email list of all the BOD members. Gary was looking for any comments or suggestions to improve it. A committee of Larry, Jim, Gary, and Tom is looking at this issue. The chapter is now 45 years old, but we've been doing the clambake for 40 years Michael said. The blast email should be forwarded to Geoff Corson who sends these out to the membership, of which only about 1/3 have email addresses. Michael updates Geoff's list as members come and go as needed. We could also place a notification in the next issue of the Granite Slate which goes to the entire membership. Gary asked about additional "special guests" to be included outside those that we normally invite. Suggestions included Kelly Ayotte or the TAG. The Congressional delegation is normally invited. Larry asked if we could invite some of the representative from the local Maine area and get the details from Brenda Pennells. Others to consider might be the Pease ANGB commander and the NE Army Recruiting Commander. Pease doesn't have their own PAO but uses the one at the Joint Forces Command. We should also consider the UNH ROTC commanders as invitees as well. Larry asked Gary to send him a consolidated "invite list" in the near future. These invitations will also need to have a personal touch on letterhead stationery. Gary asked if anyone from National will attend again this year? Peter told Jim O'Brien and Frank Michael last August that we'd like to see the MOAA President to attend in the future. Of note, there was a shipyard change-of-command shortly after the last clambake, so we need to get the info for the new CO.

OLD BUSINESS:

Granite State Warrior's Award: Larry went down to the company that creates the plaque and meet a man that does the engraving. He gave him the citation and is waiting to get the cost estimate back but has not received it so far. If we don't receive an estimate soon, we may need to go elsewhere. The last one was acrylic and done in Concord. We need this for the April presentation.

NEW BUSINESS:

By-Laws: Michael said we're at a standstill until there is another meeting of the ad hoc committee outside of the regular BOD meeting. Larry asked about the state legislative advocacy position and that he needed to provide a job description. Michael said that that was related to the handbook, not the bylaws. The current bylaws only mention a legislative committee along with personal affairs, membership, and scholarship committees as standing committees. The surviving spouse is now included in the bylaws because National MOAA has included it, and Michael has added it to the list of chapter officers.

Chapter Operations Handbook 2015: Michael is done to the point of looking for how to word the state AIA person but doesn't think that this should be a separate position and should be rolled into the responsibilities of the state legislative person. On Monday, Michael sent out the latest revisions to the handbook and has converted all of the previous comments to black to make it easier to read. He has also moved the "Preamble" (the first five pages) and made it an annex at the end of the document. Gary asked if we are a corporation. Roby responded that we are incorporated in the state of New Hampshire, first as a volunteer corporation. Then we went to the IRS and obtained our EI number designating us as a 501(c)(19). The state and IRS numbers are different, but as long as we pay our dues every five years it's not a problem. Roby and Michael have copies of these documents. Michael will send Larry an info copies as well. Peter said that the Secretary of State also has their own copies, and these can also be found online as well.

Event/Activity Guide: The next event is our April luncheon at the Common Man in Plymouth on Saturday, 27 April. We will have the same menu and price as last year. This is the most price friendly venue we have each year as we get both a military discount and a "friends of Alex Ray" discount. This date was the only date available due to prior wedding commitments. Gerry estimates we'll have 70-100 attendees. This will be the Granite State award presentation, so we will not have a separate speaker. We should consider inviting the Vermont members since this event is close to them. Gerry is also working on trying to get General (Ret) Dunford, former Chairman of the JCS, to be our speaker at our November annual meeting. Jim asked about the event for North Conway. Presently it is scheduled for 15 June. Jim will be the POC for that event. Peter asked about the dates for the AIA in Washington, DC this year. It will be 15-18 April this year, and the visit to the Hill will be on the 17th.

Veteran Cemetery Project: Larry said he needs to do more follow up, but the engraver he spoke to about the Granite State engraving had pictures on his website of benches and such. The awards engraving was costing \$120-150 apiece, so the granite engraving will probably be significantly more.

NH HB 1283, End of Life Options: Larry presented testimony at 1645 after having waited since 0945 in the morning. The SVAC has testified and there were no questions for either of them. One person stated that Oregon and California had a lot of misconduct over this issue with no oversight to what was happening. There has been a similar issue in Canada since implementing this option. Someone also commented that if using drugs to cause death, sometimes one dose isn't effective, and the use of a second dose could be considered murder. Initially the room for testimony, only two of the

twenty representative seats were vacant, but by the time Larry gave his testimony, about ½ of the representatives had left and gone home. Peter asked if everyone understood the issues surrounding this bill. The last BOD meeting had voted to oppose this bill as did the SVAC. Larry will include comments on this bill in the upcoming Granite Slate. Bill Luti is putting together an article for the Granite Slate and will send it to Drew in a few days. Bill stated that our opposition to the bill was coming from the veterans perspective and that passing such a bill would be a slippery slope for veterans when suicide is such a major concern in this community. Passage by the state would send the wrong message to veterans in crisis and open them up to coercion, normalization of suicide, or make some veterans feel that they were a burden on their families. Since veterans are the highest risk category in the US for suicide, bill passage would send a terrible message to them. Kevin Grady also showed up at the hearing as well as Armand Soucy from the Catholic War Veterans. Kevin stated that the SVAC had discussed the bill for 30 minutes the night before the testimony and stated that this bill “shook all the members of the committee to their socks”. Peter said that if this bill gets passed, it would be the “nose of the camel under the tent” and could lead to abuses. This has been the situation in all ten states that have passed similar legislation. Every year the conditions allowed under these bills expands, and a year ago Oregon expanded their medical conditions to include arthritis, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease. At both the SVAC meeting and hearing, we had an Air Force veteran who is a quasi-quadruplegic, and she was very powerful in her testimony at both events. Only one representative attending the hearing appeared to support the bill. Bill has spoken to several other state reps earlier today, and it appears that the vote on this bill will be very close, but if it passes in the House, it will be overwhelmingly defeated in the Senate. Jim reminded members to be aware of what is going on in your local area regarding this issue and has recently responded to an “Opinion” piece in the Conway area. Bill Luti said that proponents introduced this bill five years ago and it was resoundingly defeated and are trying again. If it is again defeated, they might not try again for a few more years. This bill would also severely undermine all of the current suicide prevention efforts and NH established a state suicide prevention council five years ago. Peter also mentioned that Medicare, Medicaid, and VA programs or other federal assistance programs will not cover assisted suicide under federal statutes. Federal funds cannot be used to carry out assisted suicide or to provide counseling for assisted suicide and the statute specifically lists all of the federal programs that are prohibited from participating in assisted suicide. It also prohibits funds going to any advocacy groups. Since the federal government has never passed a law regarding assisted suicide, the states may do as they please, but Congress has denied funds to any state proposing to do this.

Outings: 1) MT Washington 2) Train Ride: No report. Bob Jaffin has not responded yet to Larry’s previous response.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Government Relations (National/State/SVAC/MLT/Vets Count): Peter Burdett said that the SVAC meeting was well attended. A young man, Corey, wanted support to run in the Boston Marathon in support of veterans and was running a raffle. He was the guest speaker. Kevin Forest, the Director of the Manchester VAMC, gave an update including the installation of a new MRI, a new wellness center at the Brady-Sullivan building as well as HUD-VASH and mental health work going on there. If veterans are going for an appointment at the VA, they should check-in at the kiosk and also claim travel mileage. There is also a new pain medicine service and upgrading the telehealth programs. On the VA webpage, you can also use the “Chat” function in the lower right-hand corner of the screen. They have also developed a 20–30-minute briefing on benefits and we should look into seeing if we could have that at a future BOD meeting. The NH Veteran’s Home has 125 residents including 11

women. They are still short on RN's so are capacity limited, but they are preparing for a substantial facility upgrade to improve the current rooms and make them more private with separate bathrooms. On 29 March, there will be a Vietnam Veteran's ceremony/recognition. Questions have again come up about the Manchester VAMC returning to a full-service hospital status. Peter believes this is never going to happen. Armand Soucy and Bill Luti believe that this is entirely possible in NH if we had a Congressional delegation that would fully support it and find the money to make it happen. Bill wanted to know why they couldn't carve out \$250M out of the \$1 trillion Covid-19 budget to make this a reality. He thinks that if the SVAC came up with a consolidated position on this, we might be able to reverse this situation. We are the only state in the lower 48 without a full-service hospital. He believes that a smaller hospital would overcome the argument that there aren't enough veterans here to support it (recall that Coos, Grafton, Sullivan, and Cheshire counties are in the WRJ catchment area). Peter said he was more interested in getting the Somersworth CBOC moved to the new Franklin veteran campus than a full-service hospital. He has seen this done in Claremont, FL. The key is numbers of veterans enrolled in Manchester. Rick Siemens mentioned that when he was Chief of Primary Care at the Manchester VAMC said a major issue is finding the people to staff such a facility. This goes back to the old (make/buy) decision both here and when he was in the USN. There are shortages of the nurses and critical care physicians. Bill agreed somewhat and countered that veteran's healthcare is different than that for civilians. It requires a different set of skills and culture. Rick agreed and said that private psychiatrists were not willing to take of the issues of veterans and were totally willing to let the VA deal with them. Much has been done to educate the civilian community on veteran issues like PTSD, which is also showing up in the civilian community. But Rick still thinks it will come down to dollars and cents. Larry suggested that those interested in this issue conduct another Zoom call at a later date. Larry doesn't think that the SVAC has been very proactive in this area. Peter continued with his SVAC report and said Brenda Pennells presented a nice paper on the summary of changes in TRICARE and the NDAA. Peter suggested that Michael post this summary on our webpage. Kevin Grady went over all of the pending legislative bills affecting veterans. Peter can discuss any of them with whoever is interested. The assisted suicide bill was added at the last meeting. They have not had a representative from the Governor's office attend the SVAC meetings for several months. It was suggested that the chair contact the usual representative and find out why they haven't been attending. There is a replacement for **Maura Smith (?)** who works for Representative Kuster's office as she is moving to Aviano, Italy. Bill Luti mentioned that there were some organizations that haven't attended the SVAC in a very long time and they were "The Order of the Purple Heart", the "Combat Motorcycle Vets", and the "Korean War Veterans". They may be removed from the SVAC membership. Currently the SVAC represents 20 organizations.

Personal Affairs: Jim had nothing for this meeting.

Membership: Since January, there were two new members, no deceased, two deceased spouses, and one dropped member who moved away, for a total of 547. Out of the 209 annual dues letters we received 80 responses with checks that need to go to Roby. This is a 38% return rate.

Recruiting: Jim, Tom, and Michael had a meeting last night. One of the two potential members, Brad Boisvert has completed his membership paperwork and should be on board by the next BOD meeting. Jim has not been able to locate General (Ret) Perkins in the Jackson area. He is unable to track him down. Tom said that they have been holding recruiting meetings on a regular basis to brainstorm. They are looking to shape our recruiting so it's more focused, looking at our recruiting goals, what we want to achieve over what periods of time. They're trying to get invited to various meetings and functions such as recruiting fairs, ROTC events, or any activity that has military officers

involved. We could send a team member to that specific event and try to talk up our local chapter activities and the program benefits for military officers. We need current members to try to recruit their friends and family members who are or were military officers. This is just a return to basic recruiting methods that have worked in the past. We also want to make sure that our chapter members get some recognition for all that they do for the organization. This could include recognition members for terms of service on the board using certificates or lapel pins. This would establish milestones of membership and recognizing members for achieving those milestones. The last item Tom wanted to mention was that anyone who puts out information to the public about the chapter should also include information of a recruiting message as well. Drew asked if there was anything specifically that should go in the GSNL? Jim said that anything that said that recruitment is an essential part of our mission as is retention. Jim said that he would put something together for a future issue of the GSNL. Drew said that there isn't a lot of material for the March issue so far, and that issue may only be four pages long instead of six. Any submissions should try to be made in early March for Drew to make a mid-month publication date.

Programs: Gerry Boyle had nothing else to report.

Web page: In January we had 923 hits up from 786 in December. Michael again asked for someone to take over this function as he has been doing it for the last 23 years.

Travel Program: Tony Burdo sent a report saying that we have six travelers booked for 2024 and two considering booking. Four are booked for Spotlight on South Dakota, two for Memorials of WWII, and two seriously considering the America's National Parks and Denver trip. He will be meeting with our Collette District Manager later this month to plan our 2025 travel program.

Scholarship Loan Program: Wayne mentioned that he had volunteered to be on the recruiting committee but hadn't received an invite to the last meeting. Jim will take care of that. Second, he mentioned that there was a student who had previously received a scholarship but forgot to reapply for the last one. She contacted Wayne about a month ago asking if she could make a late submission for this semester. She hasn't sent all of the paperwork like her transcript and letter of recommendation to him yet, but she is a sophomore at UNH and is currently in Spain and sent the application by email. Her mother has also called about this. The other committee members agreed to approve it once everything has been submitted.

2024 Granite State Warrior Award: Larry said that he would ask to make two awards for this year in the "Military Capabilities" and "Services" area. He will be asking for members to submit candidates for each of these categories. Peter said that Ray D'Amante still wants to be involved in this activity and this isn't a problem.

LIAISONS

ESGR: Nothing has really changed since the last report.

Transition Assistance: Jim said that he will be working more closely with recruiting in the future. When he was in working in the recruiting area, they worked "hand and glove" to both recruit and retain personnel. He is also looking for someone to give him a POC at the state National Guard Bureau so that he can get into their Officer Professional Development program and development sessions.

Martin's Point Liaison: Bob Jaffin was not present, but Peter mentioned submitting a document presented at the SVAC meeting.

Manchester VAMC: Bernie Satterfield sent an email saying that the Manchester VAMC will recognize and honor veterans from February 12-16 during the National Salute to Veteran Patients by visiting with medical center patients, promoting volunteer opportunities, and accepting Valentine's Day cards to give to all veterans. To send a Valentine's Day card to Veterans, mail to: Veteran, Manchester VA Medical Center, ATTN: CDCE (135), 718 Smyth Road, Manchester, NH 03104. He asked that we send out a blast email to our members so that the cards would arrive in time for Valentine's Day, but this email was received on the 14th. The URL from the Manchester Union Leader link to the National Salute to Veteran Patients is as follows: https://www.unionleader.com/news/military/va-manchester-healthcare-system-recognizes-veterans-during-national-salute-to-veteran-patients-week/article_99e2adbc-c5e5-11ee-b51f-9b92d304a908.html.

Surviving Spouse Liaison: Pat Miller sent condolence cards to surviving spouses Laura Birkmaier and Terry Ward. She sent a welcome note to surviving spouse Deborah Davitt who joined as a new member as a result of a recruiting letter. She also made a phone call to Deborah and spoke about how she was acclimating to living in NH after having moved from Baton Rouge, LA. She attended a Virtual Surviving Spouse meeting which discussed two issues: a. Advocacy in Action scheduled for 17 April in Congressional offices, and b. TRICARE, Love Lives on Act, Respect for Grieving Military Families Act, and Caring for Survivors Act. She attended SVAC meetings and attended the HB1354 hearing. Honorable Tim McGough, representative from Merrimack spoke in support of the bill for surviving spouses to retain the veteran license plate until she remarries. The bill remains in the Transportation Committee.

Next Board Meeting: The next BOD meeting will be at the Concord T-Bones at 1200 hours on 14 March. Jennifer will be sending out the menu options within the next week.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 2040 hours which was seconded and accepted by all present.

Respectfully submitted

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