



Sullivan County

Veterans Committee

Meeting Minutes - Final

Chairman Luis Alvarez
Vice Chairman George Conklin
Committee Member Nicholas Salomone Jr.
Committee Member Nadia Rajsz
Committee Member Ira Steingart

Thursday, August 3, 2023

11:00 AM

Government Center

Call To Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Alvarez called the Veterans Committee to order at 11:02AM.

Roll Call

Present: Chairman Luis Alvarez, Nicholas Salomone Jr., Nadia Rajsz and Ira Steingart

Absent: Vice Chairman George Conklin

1. Opening Remarks - Luis Alvarez, Chairman

Alan Sorensen, Michael Brooks, Robert Doherty

Joshua Potosek, Michelle Huck, Dan Hust, Michael McGuire, Tom Cawley, Stephen Walsh, Joseph Putnam, Zachary Jones

Joseph Putnam, VSO/AMVETS, Zachery Jones, VSO, Howie Goldsmith, VFW 5499, AMVET 50 and American Legion 73, Bob Owens Post 73, American Legion, Randy Peers, S/C, V/C, Paul Slavik, VFW, Veterans Coalition/Legion

Lauren Roman, VFW Post 7276/AMVETS/S.C. Veterans Coalition, Stephen Murphy, Vet2Vet, Matthew Kleman, Vet 2 Vet, Joy Sennet R.T. NY 4, Steve Walsh, SCVSA

Ken Walter, Martha Scoppa

3. Director's Report

VSA Director Stephen Walsh

4. Veterans Service Agency Report - August 3, 2023

[ID-5679](#)

5. SC VSA supports the resolution concerning Operation Green Light

6. Referred local veterans & families in crisis to the Community Assistance Center

7. Participated in Veteran Pillar Meeting, networking with multiple divisions to help veterans connect with providers and services within the County.
8. Over the last few months, we worked with local organizations, Vet 2 Vet (ATI) and local law enforcement to streamline mental health intake and transportation for VA inpatient treatment. In May and June, our office was able to expedite transfer of care for two (2) Sullivan County Veterans from Garnet Health to VA Montrose and Batavia, NY for inpatient treatment.
9. Established a Veteran written referral process with the Center for Workforce Development to increase the number of Veterans utilizing career training programs. Discussed additional vocational programs better aligned with the tremendous amount of construction taking place within the County.
10. We are participating in the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) again this year, which is offered through the Center for Workforce Development. Thank you to Krista Berger for her professional approach and placement of our fantastic student, Elizabeth Totten-Mitchell.
11. Our County Local Veterans Medical Transportation Program entered into service on May 8th, and it has Thank You to my Supervision, County Legislators, fellow Directors and the Sullivan County Veterans Coalition for implementing the NEW Local Veterans Medical Transportation Program that entered into service on May 8th.
12. As of May 2023, PACT Act claims are finally being adjudicated by the VA. As of April 2023, DOD estimates 3.5 million veterans are eligible for benefits, due to burn pit exposure. Processing began on January 1st, 2023 and the VA has received 186,000 new claims related to PACT Act, in 3 months' time. The current number of claims received by the VA has climbed to over 213,000 as of May 1st, and has now climbed to over 560,000 in July.
13. The PACT Act has increased the backlog of VA claims older than 125 days from 260,000 to nearly 400,000; drastically increasing the call volume to our Agency.
14. The PACT Act has brought more veterans into our office than any other legislation to date, and has allowed our staff to obtain ALL benefits the client is eligible to receive.
15. Our office staff participated in the required annual Federal training from June 4th – June 8th. The training covered multiple topics to include new legislation such as, TERA (Toxic Exposure Risk Activity) and the Camp Lejeune Justice Act. Our office staff were able to voice our concerns directly to the VA Secretary and adjudicative staff to discuss claims processing accuracy.
16. The next scheduled training for office staff will be Advanced Appeals, in September.

Public Comment

2. Commander's Reports -Veterans Service Organizations

Stephen Murphy, Vet 2 Vet gave a report.

Howie Goldsmith, VFW 5499 gave a report.

Resolutions:

1. Supporting Operation Green Light for Veterans[ID-5692](#)

A motion was made by Chairman Luis Alvarez, seconded by Committee Member Nadia Rajsz, that this Resolution be carried at Committee as Amended to the County Legislature meeting on 8/17/2023. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Chairman Alvarez, Committee Member Salomone, Committee Member Rajsz and Committee Member Steingart

Absent: Vice Chairman Conklin

Adjourn

There being no further business, Nadia Rajsz moved to adjourn, seconded by Nicholas Salomone. The Veteran's Committee was adjourned at 11:22AM.