



Sullivan County Veterans Committee Meeting Agenda - Final

100 North Street
Monticello, NY 12701

Chairman Luis Alvarez
Vice Chairman Nicholas Salomone Jr.
Committee Member Terry Blosser-Bernardo
Committee Member Catherine Scott
Committee Member Matt McPhillips

Thursday, August 1, 2024

11:00 AM

Government Center

Call To Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Comments:

Opening Remarks - Luis Alvarez

- 1. Commander's Reports - Veterans Service Organizations**
- 2. Veterans Service Agency - Director's Report**

[ID-6626](#)

Discussion:

Public Comment

Resolutions: None

Adjourn



Sullivan County

Legislative Memorandum

100 North Street
Monticello, NY 12701

File #: ID-6626

Agenda Date: 8/1/2024

Agenda #: 2.

August 1, 2024 - 11:00 AM

Director's Report

▪ *Local Activities*

- On Sunday June 9th, I attended the Liberty Elks Flag Day ceremony at Lodge 1545. The event was attended by color guards from Liberty PD, Sullivan County Sheriffs Dept, NY State Police, AMVETS Post 50, and American Legion Post 109.
- On Thursday June 27th, our Clerk Sheldon Dillon, visited the Care Center at Sunset lake and Achieve Rehab to investigate the total number of veterans and surviving spouses currently receiving care. A total of 19 individuals have been identified, and we are currently investigating eligibility for pension benefits.
- On July 16th, I attended the Veterans Pillar Meeting at ATI, to address the veterans' suicide and overdose epidemic. The meeting was attended by Carl Lafaro of the Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Deborah Worden and Matt Kleiman of ATI, Melissa Stickle Deputy Commissioner Dept. of Health and Human Services. Also, in attendance was NYS Senator Pete Oberacker and Camille Obrien. Topics such as accessibility to care and appointment wait times were discussed, as well as clarification regarding statistics recording accidental overdoses in the veterans' community.
- We are working with the Liberty Cemetery Association to replace 21 broken grave markers in the St Peter's Veterans' Cemetery. We have located files in our office for 20 of the 21 Veterans, and more than half of the applications have been submitted to the VA National Cemetery Association.

▪ *PACT Act Updates*

- Myself and office staff have been working diligently to acquire proper ratings and effective dates of claims for our clients, as these two issues comprise the majority of the errors received in a VA rating decision. Inadequate C&P exams and unlawful denials caused by a flawed electronic processing system, continue to add to our workload and increase costs to our taxpayers.
- Although veteran suicide and overdose rates continue to climb, Senior VA Officials decided to award themselves 10.8 million dollars in bonuses. After a Congressional Oversight Committee investigated, it was found that between \$39,000 to \$90,000 was given to VA

employees with no market analysis, or the following of any established guidelines to award the bonuses for performance measures.

- The Congressional Committee and the Office of VA Inspector General ordered the monies to be returned, and to date, 95% has been recovered.

- *The Good News*

- Our scanning project to digitize and safely store over 8,000 deceased veterans’ files is well underway.
- Our office staff were successful in winning disability and service connected death claims for 11 more Sullivan County veterans.
- One case, ending a decade long legal battle for a local firefighter and Army Persian Gulf War veteran stricken with cancer and other severe injuries. This veteran is now in receipt of full medical and dental coverage for himself and spouse for life and VA educational benefits that will allow his child to attend college.
- Assisted DAV service officers in filing an appeal for AID and ATTENDANCE benefit for a 103-year-old WWII flight nurse that was DENIED help from the VA.
- Our office staff continues to pursue VA adjudicative staff to discuss claims processing accuracy.
- On March 5th, the VA enacted SECTION 103, which expand healthcare eligibility for toxic exposed vets. The rules under Section 103 remove income limits and service connected requirements to receive VA healthcare.
- This directive has resulted in mass enrollment for toxic exposed and PACT eligible veterans.
- On May 28th, our new automated phone system went live, which has increased efficiency and improved office processes. May resulted in 836 phone calls and June 665, with most still being PACT related issues.
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VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY REPORT

August 1, 2024 - 11:00 AM

1. Veterans referred to Sullivan County Transportation for VA Medical Appointments:

	<u>Albany</u>	<u>Castle Point</u>	<u>Local</u>
May	9	46	34
June	7	33	20

2. Veterans/Dependents buried in Sullivan County Veterans Cemetery through July 19, 2024:

Veterans Buried Alone 1,163

Dependents 143

Veterans/Spouses 642

Total Burials in Veterans Cemetery - 1,948 (+34 since Dec. 2023)

3. Contacts:

May 90

June 89

4. Applications:

May 20

June 38

5. Homeless Veterans:

May 7

June 7

6. New Veterans

May 2

June 5