



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

Friday, February 7, 2025

12:00 PM

Government Center

Call To Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Comments:

Reports:

Veterans Service Agency - Director's Report

[ID-7135](#)

Discussion:

Public Comment

Resolutions:

Adjourn

File #: ID-7135

Agenda Date: 2/6/2025

Agenda #:

VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY REPORT

February 6, 2025 - 12:00 PM

Director's Report

- *Local Activities*
 - From December 4th - 6th, VSOs Joseph Putnam, Zackary Jones, and I attended the NACVSO Advance Appeals Training, virtually, which was presented by Eagle Law. Topics included, strategies to overturn flawed decisions from the Regional Office, which was presented by Cheryl Mason, Chief Justice of the BVA.
 - On December 9th, I attended the annual AMVETS dinner with Legislator Alvarez and 21 local vets. We discussed resolutions for upcoming Legislative agenda for VFW, American Legion, DAV and AMVETS.
 - On December 14th, I attended the Wreathes Across America event at the Hortonville Firehouse. This event was well attended by many local veterans and family members, which gave me the opportunity to discuss VA Policy and Procedure, and address their concerns.
 - In December, I delivered holiday meals and Christmas trees, and conducted wellness checks for elderly veterans and those suffering from food insecurity within the community.
 - On six separate dates in December 2024 and January 2025, our Clerk Sheldon Dillon assisted Sharon Ferber at the Community Assistance Center to distribute pallets of food.
 - On January 18th, I attended the *Veteran and Youth Pheasant Hunt* at the Aden Hunting Club, where I made contact with more veterans in the community.
 - On January 22nd, I attended the Liberty Elks Lodge 1545 meeting and discussed annual programs for veterans to include the Honor Flight and the Camp Bristol retreat.

- *VA & PACT Act Updates*
 - The incoming Administration has appointed former US Representative Doug Collins (R-GA) as Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). So far, the hearings look positive but many of his plans to implement previously attempted VA projects do not contain

realistic timeframes.

- The Administration also has expressed the desire to streamline VA processes and services, which may lead to the privatization of VA medical care in the future. A recently signed Executive Order implementing a Federal hiring freeze has exemptions included that will permit hiring to replace retiring VA employees, and fill medical position vacancies, minimizing any negative effect with VA medical care.
- Our office has assisted the major veterans' organizations, VFW, American Legion, AMVETS, and DAV prepare and present resolutions to modify VA Policy and Procedures to improve service to our veterans. Every year testimony from National Commanders is presented to The Senate and House Committee on Veterans Affairs to clearly establish our legislative priorities.
 - Last year's Legislation resulted in successfully adding Acute and Chronic Leukemia, Multiple Myelomas, Myelodysplastic Syndromes, Myelofibrosis, Urinary Bladder, Ureter and related Genitourinary Cancers as presumptive to post 9/11 Southwest Asia veterans.
 - The Legislation has also drastically expanded eligibility to all veterans for VA medical services and mental health counselling.
- *The Good News*
 - I have contacted our newly elected State Assembly and Congressional Representatives to open lines of communication between VA liaisons, and assist our County veterans with more complicated needs.
 - Working with OFA to add a RSVP volunteer to aid our office in serving our residents more efficiently.
 - We have continued strong advocacy and success for surviving spouses and veterans within our County.
 - Our office has distributed the update Food Pantry Guide to veterans in need, and we have copies available in the office.
 - Our new phone system is working well, and has increased effectiveness of our staff. Some veterans become impatient with the listing of extensions, however all systems are operational and are checked frequently.

VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY REPORT

February 6, 2025 - 12:00 PM

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

	<u>Albany</u>	<u>Castle Point</u>	<u>Local</u>
November	3	32	25
December	2	20	29

2. Veterans/Dependents buried in Sullivan County Veterans Cemetery through Jan. 24, 2025:

Veterans Buried Alone	1,172	
Dependents	145	
Veterans/Spouses	668	
Total Burials in Veterans Cemetery -	1,985	(+9 since Dec. 2024)

3. Contacts:

November	100
December	137

4. Applications:

November	41
December	30

5. Homeless Veterans:

November	7
December	7

6. New Veterans

November	1
December	2

7. Phone Calls

November	488
December	531