

**WISCONSIN STATE COUNCIL
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA**

**STATE COUNCIL MEETING
Best Western Grand Seasons
Waupaca, WI**

MINUTES

December 5, 2009

**Vietnam Veterans of America
Wisconsin State Council
Fall Convention Planning Committee**

Saturday, December 5, 2009

Karen Seipel, Convention Chair, **called the meeting** of the Fall Convention Planning committee to order at 10:05 a.m. on Saturday, December 5, 2009.

The attendees made comments about last fall's Convention. Possibly having a State convention during the off years from the National convention and having it located at a location in SE Wisconsin were some suggestions. We need more statewide media coverage of the event and making sure that there is a person who is on top of it. We need more purpose and expertise. Discussion and sharing of ideas followed.

The Convention location is possibly Pewaukee Radisson. We can negotiate costs per Karen. The Olympia Resort in Oconomowoc is a possibility

The dates, September 10, 11, 12 availability is being checked out.

Motion to bring these ideas to the floor. We recommend the Pewaukee Radisson as the location for the Fall Convention. Mike/Kent/Passed (John abstained on voting).

Theme: ***Thirty Five Years of Remembrance 1975-2010 – What We Have Done For The Nation And The Community.***

We need to invite outside people. It's suggested we utilize things such as a Flashing Billboard.

Further suggestions were made: HighGround; Dryhooch; Panels; Pictures/videos; inviting Senator Kohl, Paul Ryan, Gwen Moore; Agent Orange; Service Officer Panel; Veterans' needs; Support services; Veterans Health Council; National VVA; National health/VA health care how do they work together?; Dr. Whittle – Agent Orange; blood pressure; diabetes; Evening ceremony with guns and possibly a parade of honor guards; Human static display; Bagpipes

Jim Mullarkey volunteered to be fall **Convention PR Chair**.

The meeting **adjourned** at 11:15 a.m.

**Vietnam Veterans of America
Wisconsin State Council
Meeting**

Saturday, December 5, 2009

President Demske **called the meeting to order** on Saturday, December 5th at 12:10 p.m.

All recited the **Pledge of Allegiance** and observed a **Moment of Silence**.

Secretary Sorenson took the **Roll Call** of Officers: All present except Region 1, Region 2 and At-Large Directors. Secretary Sorenson took the **Roll Call** of Chapters: Chapter 5, Chapter 206, Chapter 220, Chapter 331, Chapter 351, Chapter 425, Chapter 437, Chapter 448, Chapter 479, Chapter 529, Chapter 635, Chapter 731, Chapter 767. The President clarified there was a quorum, since there was a majority of those non-suspended chapters present.

The President appointed John as **Parliamentarian** and Dick as **Timekeeper**.

The President requested an addition to the Agenda – Scott Walker will address us. The **Agenda was approved** without objection. Chapter 5/2nd/Passed

The **Minutes** from the meeting of September 19, 2009 were approved as received from Secretary Sorenson without objection.

The **President's Report** was brief.

John Margowski gave an update on the WDVA situation. There was discussion by the WDVA Board of concerns by the Audit Bureau. There are serious communication and management problems at both veterans' homes. They got into various issues. Questions by the Board were addressed to Secretary Scocos and Commandant Crowley and there were no satisfactory answers.

Discussion centered around the \$770,000 that was spent over-budget. There is a report from the Audit Bureau that needs to be read to better understand all issues:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/23229956/State-of-Wis-DOJ-Report-to-Secretary-John-A-Scocos-Wis-Dept-of-Veterans-Affairs-WDVA>

Secretary Scocos did not do corrective action after his return from Iraq. Commandant Crowley did not make comments. Homes Administrator Nitschke made some comments. Executive Assistant Mike Trepanier made comments.

Secretary Scocos, Executive Assistant Mike Trepanier and King Commandant Bill Crowley have been let go from the Department.

Things are still in the air. Other groups are raising issues about the new Secretary, Ken Black. We need to re-generate our interest on getting Trust Fund dollars and renew veterans' benefits. The Board was never made aware of anything (issues at King and Union Grove). The Board is trying to empower the committees. Discussion followed.

LZ Lambeau discussion followed. A replica of the Wall will be at the grounds in Green Bay on Thursday. Groups will lay a wreath at the wall. Sign up for laying a wreath. Each Chapter will get free tickets. Schools will be coming – the grounds are opening at 9:00 a.m.

Motion: \$3,000 out of CD money to pay for the Canadian Wall to come to LZ Lambeau (may have to be inside). John/Larry Walters/Passed

Hotel reservations are being limited. There are many participants at this time (Jim). Possibly a bike ride from HighGround to LZ Lambeau.

Secretary Sorenson read **correspondence**. Thank you's were received from The Neighbors' Place and The Salvation Army. An invitation was received to attend the **First Official Vietnam Day Celebration in Wisconsin to be held March 27, 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., at North High School in Eau Claire**. Refer to: <http://thuysmithinternationaloutreach.org>.

Clif Sorenson, Legislative Chair, gave the **Legislative Report**:

The current focus continues to be on the returning veterans and their families. We are experiencing many of our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, neighbors and fellows veterans returning from hostilities in Iraq and Afghanistan (Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom).

Service to our veterans is the most important item of concern to us at this time.

We are concerned a great deal about the mental health of those soldiers who are being re-deployed without adequate dwell time between deployments. We continue to monitor the promises made by DoD and the White House about increasing dwell time versus the needs of the military.

The returning veteran must be made aware of some of the benefits that are crucial to his/her transition to civilian life.

Benefits especially useful for the returning/new veteran include (but are not limited to):

- Re-employment Rights (USERRA)
- Employment Assistance (through Job Service)
- Unemployment Compensation
- Vocational Rehabilitation (for disabled vets)
- Educational Benefits and Grants (state and federal); including the Post 9/11 GI Bill; especially for free tuition and fees for Wisconsin veterans and families
- Compensation for Service Disabled Veterans (federal); there's a note of concern for the special mental and medical needs of our new returning veterans; i.e., Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), polytrauma victims, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Traumatic Blast Injury and Suicide Prevention
- Pension for Non-Service Disabled Needy Veterans (federal)
- Home Loans (state and federal)
- Personal Loans (state)
- Health Care and Readjustment Counseling (federal)
- Recording of Separation Papers (CVSO)
- Services for homeless veterans
- A variety of other programs and services provided through the assistance of your County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO)

I've testified, petitioned, called and written our legislators and aides to do the right thing for our veterans.

I had the honor to attend the National American Legion Conventions in Phoenix and Louisville and was presented the Homeless Veterans Advocacy award at Phoenix.

I've had the opportunity to accompany The American Legion's National Commander when he testified before the joint Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees in Washington D.C. in September for the past two years. I visited several of our Congressmen to express my interest in promoting veterans' issues again while there.

Of course, I reiterated to all of the Congressional offices, VVA's and my solid support for our fellow veterans who are homeless and of our efforts to eradicate the state of homelessness among our fellow veterans. VA Secretary Shinseki and President Obama have stated a plan to end homelessness among our fellow veterans within five years. I will continue to monitor that plan.

Agent Orange continues to be an issue. The VA Secretary has added three new medical conditions that can be presumptively linked to exposure to Agent Orange: B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia; Parkinson's disease; and ischemic heart disease.

Here is a listing of those presumptive illnesses related to exposure while in Vietnam:

- Acute and Sub acute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy
- AL Amyloidosis
- Chloracne
- Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia
- Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)
- Hodgkin's Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers, and
- Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)

The Blue Water Navy exposure issue remains unresolved.

I will be in Washington in February 2010 to again express our needs to our Congressional representatives.

Pat Furno gave the **AVVA Report**.

AVVA VSO Program will be up and running. Hope to send 10 AVVA members across the country for training in May or June. Attendees will pay 25% of cost of training and they have been members in good standing with AVVA for two years. The Chicago Tribune newspaper (health) is doing a 5 part series on Agent Orange and the dependents of those exposed. Please refer to: www.chicagotribune.com/health/agentorange.

Dr Jeffery Whittle addressed the group. He has been doing research at Milwaukee VAMC. He studies chronic diseases in older patients. They need to develop and maintain better health habits.

The doctor gave a handout. He is interested in VVA and his research on behalf of veterans. He wants feedback from the veterans who use their facility. About 25 members attended the briefing.

Blood Pressure Project (Power). A preventative issue for strokes and heart attacks. Osteoarthritis of the knee has a website. Use Badger Veterans or other ways to get the word out. Need feedback from the users of the services.

Scott Walker, County Executive from Milwaukee, addressed the group.

Karen gave an update on the meeting of this morning. Location will be Pewaukee Sep 10, 11 and 12. The theme will be **Thirty-five Years of Remembrance ~ Still in Service to America ~ 1975-2010**. Past Presidents will be invited. Variety of what we are doing for the community will be presented.

Panels will be CVSOs and Agent Orange. We need to get the word out to the media. An outside ceremony will be made. Site and date recommendation by the committee. Motion Out of Committee/2nd/Passed. Jim Mullareky should be kept informed, as he is the PR Chair.

George Gottier, Bob Morzenti and John Margowski are the **Nominating Committee**.

George gave the **Membership Report**. Total Membership is: 1880 VVA; 261 AVVA (Region 1 - 492/88; Region 2 - 301/31; Region 3 - 597/88; Region 4 - 262/38; At Large - 228/16)

John Margowski gave the **Council on Veterans Programs Report**. He has been doing a lot of legislative issues.

The **Agenda** has been amended to skip the break and conclude today.
John/2nd/Passed

Treasurer's Report was given and handed out by Kent. Pat explained the cost of Convention (some money transferred). Reaching Out needs to give a report on the expenditures next time. FY ends Feb 28th.

John Margowski posed the question: why do we come to meetings? There were a lot of responses during the round table discussion:

“Camaraderie, panels, how to help our veterans, the people, what the members do, what we learn at the meetings, motto, don’t have to put on airs, once you are at a meeting, you come back, information you get, everyone makes me feel welcomed, energies, family, I feel needed, helpfulness of everyone, nice people from all around the state who I have never met before, you have to be asked and get information to bring back to non-represented veterans/friends, asked to join and do things, do things on a national level and need numbers, Re-energized, no royalty among the officers, serving America, proud Americans, To do something to give back, need to make a difference.

This is my Vocation and avocation; I believe in organized representation – I belong to any organization that will accept me as a member; Camaraderie; Helping Homeless veterans; National Conventions knocked my socks off; Always learn something more when I attend the meetings; hopefully I share information with veterans statewide; Love my veterans who are my living heroes and heroines; I love self-effacing humor; my heroes are Bob Piaro, Tom Davies and John Margowski.”

No **unfinished business** and **new business**.

Comment was made about acquiring property near HighGround.

Report by John Kusko regarding the Warrior Summit at War Memorial. Very successful. DryHooch will not go on VA grounds or West Milwaukee. NAMI will do training for our Peer Counselors. DryHooch may get a grant for \$700,000 for addiction problems. 9-40% of returnees may have MH problems. Working with Police Officers Stress Team (POST). See Dryhooch website. Working on Veterans Treatment Court. President of Allied Council of Milwaukee. Due to his health he has resigned his work with DryHooch.

Members of the Wisconsin State Council brought Walking Sticks out to Walter Reed for the patients.

Here is a listing of **future meetings** to mark your calendars:

March 6, 2010	Waupaca
June 19, 2010	HighGround
September 10, 11, 12, 2010	Pewaukee,
December 11, 2010	Waupaca

The President accepted a motion for **Adjournment** at 4:50 p.m.
John/2nd/Passed

Respectfully Submitted,

Clif

Clif Sorenson, Secretary
Vietnam Veterans of America
Wisconsin State Council