



VIETNAM VETERANS of AMERICA WISCONSIN STATE COUNCIL

Convention Center Par4 Comfort Suites
Waupaca, WI
March 19, 2022

UNAPPROVED MINUTES



President Demske called the Wisconsin State Council (WSC) Meeting to order at 10:00 am on March 19, 2022, at the Foxfire Convention Center in Waupaca, WI. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was offered to our POW/MIAs and military. VVA WSC Chaplain Duane Canon offered a prayer for VVA and AVVA members and guests in attendance, those unable to attend, those who departed, and all Veterans and military.

The **Toxic Exposure Committee** was not held at the March 2022 meeting.

Guest Speaker

President Demske welcomed Zach Zdorik, Executive Director of [Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin, Inc.](#), and the staff who were present at the VVA WSC Quarterly meeting. Mr. Demske shared that what we are about to learn is helping veterans in Racine, southeastern Wisconsin, and soon elsewhere in Wisconsin. Please welcome VOW to our meeting.

[Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin, Inc.](#) (VOW) hosts homeless veterans' Tiny Houses Villages with activities to grow 42 more tiny houses, Veterans Food Market in Milwaukee, and a Veterans Food Market on Wheels. To explain [Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin, Inc.'s](#) present services and plans is Zach Zdroik, Executive Director, and his staff.

Starting in 2013, [Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin, Inc.](#) grew to 15 tiny homes by 2017 called The James A. Paterson Veteran Village and the SC Johnson Community Center. VOW is in the process of raising the funds for the Gary G. Wetzel Veteran Village in Milwaukee to be located on Green Treen Road and North 60th Street. Tiny homes can range from \$15,000 (w/o bathroom facilities) to \$25,000 (w/ bathrooms).

VOW recognizes that homeless veterans and families often do not have access to Racine's Food Market and is in the process of developing the first mobile grocery store. The mobile store will

be equipped with dry goods, beverages, and products and produce requiring refrigeration. VOW is getting the information out to CVSOs throughout Wisconsin and using their contacts with local food banks to replenish the mobile grocery store as it travels from location to location.

As Zach shared VOW is more than tiny homes for homeless veterans. The program provides:

- Homeless Assistance – 15 tiny homes do not meet the needs of Racine or the surrounding area
- Food and security a warm and welcoming environment
- Mental health services (i.e., group therapy focusing on PTSD or PTS and AODA, work search, Veterans benefits, financial advice, and housing placement) and experiential classes. From cooking and yoga to art therapy.

Zach and the VOW staff who accompanied him, specifically Staffane Timm, Business Coordinator, and Michael Rembalski, Director of Program Services shared their enthusiasm for today and their plans for VOWs growth. If you would like to contact VOW call (262) 221-8350 or email VOW at info@vovvillages.com or check their website at <https://vovvillages.com>.

The presentation closed with Zach reiterating VOW's mission statement, *"To assist homeless and at-risk Veterans strive for normalcy in life by providing food, clothing, shelter, and other human needs."*

Roll Call

The President requested the VVA WSC Secretary to call the roll: Executive Officers present President Demske (731), Vice-President Sciuti (425), Secretary Mullarkey (425), Treasurer Craney (425), Directors Region 2 Mike Johnson (236), Region 3 Tom Hoffman (731), Joe Heil (005) [appointed on this day to serve out Bob Morzenti's term], and At-Large Director Greg Foye. VVA Chapters present 0005, 0092, 0101, 0206, 0221, 0224, 0236, 0256, 0324, 0351, 0425, 0437, 0448, 0479, 0635, 0729, 0731, 0921, and 1130. This VVA Chapter count represents 20 chapters out of 25 or 80 percent – well beyond a quorum. Ten AVVA members were present including the AVVA Region 6 Director, AVVA State Representative, and AVVA At-Large [Rep for WI].

President Demske directed Secretary Mullarkey to write a letter on behalf of the WSC on the President's signature to recall the Charters for chapters 618 and 1141.

Both the Parliamentarian and timekeeper were appointed by President Demske.

Approval of Minutes – December's Quarterly meeting for 2021 did not have a quorum – a combination of the lingering effects of COVID and an unforeseen snowstorm. Although those who were present met and discussed certain issues/concerns, under the VVA Constitution this was not an official meeting or recorded meeting.

Presidents' Report – Mike Demske

There was training at the January VVA National Board of Directors Meeting, specifically for BOD and State Council Presidents.

Please remember to report deceased member information to the WSC and VVA National noted. To find the correct forms, go to VVA.ORG – Scroll down the Home page and click on Resources > Click on Membership Information, Guides, and Forms > Click on Deceased Member Notification (PDF). This form can be completed online by scrolling to each of the areas – a blue box will appear and you can type in the information. Use the tab button to move to the next request line. When you complete the form you can save it to your computer. When ready you can click on print, and save it as a PDF. Send the PDF via email to PWiley@vva.org and Secretary@vvawi.org. This is the duty of the VVA Chapters to complete, with the membership chair responsible for completing this task. The VVA WSC Secretary will forward forms to the VVA WSC Membership Chair.

Just a reminder at Camp Victory on June 25, 2022, we are having our WSC Elections. For more information read **Elections** by Pat Furno's AVVA State Representative Report below.

The second Quarter meeting will be at [Camp Victory in Willard, WI](#) is approximately 18 miles or 30 minutes outside of Neillsville.

Guest Coming

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Mary M. Kolar. She serves as the chief advocate for the more than 350,000 veterans of Wisconsin and their families. As Secretary, she is responsible for the leadership and management of the WDVA, including strategic and long-range planning initiatives that align with the department's vision.

Growing up in Wilton, Wisconsin, Secretary Kolar was commissioned in the United States Navy in 1980, [served on active duty for 28 years](#), and retired as a Captain (O-6). During her military career, Secretary Kolar served in various command and staff positions across the nation, spending much of her time recruiting, training, educating, and leading Sailors. Her experience within the Navy through her nearly three decades of service enabled her to work with diverse groups of people and large organizations with multi-million-dollar budgets.

Although her military service in uniform concluded in 2008, Secretary Kolar continued to serve Wisconsin's veterans community through membership and leadership of various veteran-focused organizations. She represented downtown Madison on the Dane County Board of Supervisors for six years (2013-2019) and worked extensively with the Dane County Veterans Service Office to ensure that veterans and their families received whatever assistance they may need. In addition to serving 14,000 constituents in downtown Madison as a Dane County Supervisor, Secretary Kolar oversaw multiple community-based organizations and was the vice president of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation's Board of Directors.

If you have questions please get them ready?

Due to the nature of this talk, your questions ***should not*** be personal issues, but rather issues that are impacting Wisconsin Veterans in your locale, the State, or the Veteran population as a whole.

Legislative Update – Dan Sciuti, WSC Vice President

The 70% tax return for those 70% disabled did “NOT” pass, due to the fact it never came out of committee, yet had 100% backing. There is a need for WSC officers, delegates, and VVA Chapter members to contact legislators asking them, “WHY?”. There have been statements about COVID and the fiscal impact on claims as well. House Bill 243 had attendance from the VFW, DAV, and VVA while the committee voted unanimously in support of the bill. Wisconsin is behind other States with their property tax relief. The other States have 100% returns on disability ratings over 50%.

Sciuti spoke of the March 2022 Veteran magazine and an article in which they are applauding the VA for the addition of 9 respiratory illnesses to the presumptive list. The Press Release can be found at VVA.ORG. Joe Graff (Chapter 5) asked if there is a plan on providing updated Agent Orange Books any time soon, as we are currently still using 2017-produced books. It was started a new committee has been formed and they will meet at the April Board of Directors meeting in Silver Springs, MD. There is a proposal to add more illnesses to the presumptive listing. A discussion then ensued on the need for contacting local representatives in Wisconsin, due to the voting against toxic exposure bills. The House voted and passed the bill, yet WI Representatives voted “NO”. There need to be clear answers to this vote. There are several more bills to be reviewed and they can be found at the VVA.ORG site.

President Demske appointed Dan Sciuti as Chair of the Legislative Committee. Keep in mind there is much to do on this Committee in identifying, following, and discussing State legislation. There is an equal amount to work in getting this information out to our VVA WSC members, Veteran's families, adult children, and advocates for grandchildren. Please the more that step up to assist on this committee the more VVA in Wisconsin can become, once again, a force to be recognized.

VVA Region Six Director John Margowski has an article planned for the Veterans magazine on recruiting members. “We are considered a wartime organization, and younger vets are not joining”. The Region Six Director was asked to become more active with the VVA National Board of Directors on this cause. Margowski is also looking at having a Region Six meeting possibly in Iowa or Minnesota as the location. Do not hesitate to share your thoughts with [John](#) as a Delegate to the VVA WSC.

Officer Reports

Vice-President – Dan Sciuti, WSC Vice-President

See Legislative Report, above.

Treasurer Report – Patrick J. Craney, WSC Treasurer – The report was provided.

Secretary – James Mullarkey, WSC Secretary

Mullarkey spoke of the “NEW” website coming [as of this writing it is up and running, but still under construction/development]. A contract with Godaddy.com has been completed to provide the WSC with a new site, with the same address VVAWI.ORG, and higher security – all for a much lower price. PDF reports will be available, as well as listings of the officers and delegates for the State. The roll-out of the site is expected to be in March 2022. There is a good chance that meetings will be linked to the site for Zoom use. Also, even though the site is supposed to be easier to use there is a slight learning curve. Mullarkey will be providing an introduction in June and a possible webinar accessible on any device.

Also, the WSC received a LED projector as a donation from WSC At-Large Director Greg Foye and his wife Joy Foye our AVVA At-Large member. Thank you, Greg and Joy.

Government Affairs – VVA Region Six Director John Margowski

Margowski explained a few areas of information to the members. New President Jack McManus has spoken of combining committees to assist with information transfer and time-saving. This needs to be committee tasks performed, with reports being sent to the Government Affairs Committee on the National level. “Feel Good Resolutions” don’t help anymore. There is a need for legislative agendas to ensure help needed, gets to those in need. John spoke of Working Group 1 (dissolve VVA) and Working Group 2 (expand/merge organization). Working Group 2 never met in person and did not provide any useful data. Working Group 1 created a 72-page report. This began back in 2017. In 2019, at the National Convention, the Board did “NOT” even acknowledge the work done. There will be an article in the Veteran magazine, explaining the work and results of Working Group 1. Era-Veterans are to be invited to join the organization was added.

Richard Linbeck – VVA At-Large Director / WSC Executive Director

Linbeck spoke of Jack McManus setting a fire in the bellies of those in attendance. Complacency has set in, and it is time to change. It is time to speak with State Representatives and Legislatures in Madison. Combining committees will assist in time-saving communications.

There have been some changes at the National Office, in which it will take a little time for everything to get rolling again. New people are being hired, with hopes of a strong future. Linbeck added, “Become dual members with the AVVA”. Rick A. Talford, AVVA Region 6 Director, spoke of the 500 plus dual memberships Nationally at this time. Next summer, there will be “Constitutional Updates” made in Greensboro, SC at the National Convention. The

Leadership Conference will be held this summer in Greensboro, SC also. We will be visiting Orlando, FL, and New Orleans, LA in the up and coming years ahead.

AVVA – Pat Furno, AVVA State Representative

Furno provided membership information. The AVVA is open to anyone that would like to serve our veterans. An Auxiliary is only for spouses, whereas the Associated organization is for everyone. To open a new chapter, a group needs to have at least 10 members. To become incorporated, the chapter must also have all the officers to be placed. Minimal activity by a group will not succeed in this matter.

At the Convention, the Caregivers Act is one of the topics – only 15% of those who apply to get benefits. We need to ask legislatively, “WHY?” such a low percentage.

Elections of Officers and five Region Directors at the June 25, 2022 Meeting being held at Camp Victory in Willard, WI. The Election Committee is comprised of [John Margowski](#) (425), [Greg Foye](#) (At-Large), and [Tom Hoffman](#) (731). If you are seeking a position your name must be placed on the ballot even if running unopposed. So please contact one or more of the Election Committee to submit your name for President, Vice-President, Secretary, or Treasurer. At Large is an appointed position. Directors of Regions 1 – 4 are selected by their respective VVA Chapters. As a reminder of Wisconsin’s Region 1: 324, 425, 448, 479, 635, 767, and 921; Region 2: 101, 220, 221, 236, and 729; Region 3: 115, 206, 224, 352, 437, and 731; Region 4: 005, 092, 256, 331, 479, and 529. Voting is allowed by only credentialed (i.e., elected delegates not to exceed the authorized number of delegates in the [WSC By-Laws](#)). For allowable delegates per VVA Chapter click [here](#).

Richard Linbeck was asked to preside over the election. He accepted the position.

WSC Region Director Reports

At-Large Director, Greg Foye – it was noted that an email was being received by members from Richard Linbeck, asking for money. This was due to a hacked email account. This was a fraud.

[Committee Reports](#)

[Scholarships](#), Virginia Nuske, Chair –

There are three scholarships planned for 2022-23 of \$1,500.00 each planned. This year, there were eleven applicants after the Feb. 19, 2022 deadline. On March 8th, 2022, the winners were selected by the points earned from their submissions. The scholarship application [packet for 2023-2024](#) is on the WSC website.

All Richard T. Nuske Memorial Scholarship winners have been placed on the WSC website. There is a need for improvement, specifically the year awarded. Anyone can assist me, just email the [Secretary](#).

[POW/MIA](#), Duane Canon, Chair –

Jan. 1- Mar. 18, 2022 – 24 recoveries of WWII veterans. WI still has the following missing; 1316 WWII, 162 Korea, and 26 Vietnam. Nationally, the numbers are as follows; 72,349 WWII, 7544 Korea, 1584 Vietnam, 126 Cold War, and 5 Persian Gulf.

Chapter Reports are filed and can be found on the [WSC website](#). You can submit your report on the Contact Us form – just click on Drop Us a Line! If you do not have the technology you can give the Secretary your report at the WSC Meeting or mail it to the Secretary – see the [Home page below Contact Us!](#)

Old Business:

Action to be taken on Dr. Whittle's Research – Requested September 25, 2021

The *need* for assistance from VVA, WSCVVA, VVA Chapters, and their members and AVVA members to seek:

1. input from Veterans on how to deliver PTS care more generally
 - a. especially interested in how to reach and serve rural Veterans
 - b. interested in individuals willing to meet repeatedly over time
2. ways to refer eligible Veterans for care or benefits
3. support to get Veterans to join the Million Veteran Program & All of Us

The presentation began with an overview of Veterans and Research, specifically

- Military service causes unique problems
- Veterans involved in research can ...
 - Identify important questions
 - Advice about how to conduct a study
 - Help interpret results and get the word out
- Veterans can advocate for change

He moved into peer support for health and PTS symptoms, and available treatments.

His research is questioning what people (Veterans, families, and others) think works – information from providers, clinicians, other researchers, etc. Next, he sought information on “What do Veterans with PTS.” Data suggests that “about 20% of [Iraq] Veterans sought help, most Veterans decline therapy and of those who start therapy most do not complete. Whittle is trying to find out why this is.

Dr. Whittle's VA and MCW research program is seeking assistance from VVA, specifically the WSC primarily in three areas:

1. Education about PTS(D) and its treatment from and to VVA members
2. Veterans experienced PTS(D) either personally or as a fellow Veterans to
 - a. Develop and deliver educational materials
 - b. Be available to support treatment choices
3. VVA members can support any aspect of identifying Veterans who may need it. Support, are receiving support, need to continue support, etc.

Dr. Whittle concluded by asking for a little more from VVA members, specifically,

1. input from Veterans on how to deliver PTS care more generally
 - a. especially interested in how to reach and serve rural Veterans
 - b. interested in individuals willing to meet repeatedly over time
2. ways to refer eligible Veterans for care or benefits
3. support to get Veterans to join the Million Veteran Program & All of Us

NOTE TO WSC DELEGATES:

At the December meeting we will raise the following questions:

1. How does the WSC want to reply to Dr. Whittle's research program? Are we going to proceed and how?
2. If we respond by assisting will this come in the form of a committee? If so, who elects to take the lead, and which members want to follow?
3. Will this committee report back to the body on what is requested, how are we going to proceed, and is there a timeline – the timeline should be gathered from Dr. Whittle before Christmas 2021?

New Business – This section is reserved for actionable items from passed Motions.

- A nomination committee will be formed with Greg Foye, John Margowski, and Tom Hoffman
- State members, Joe Campbell and Bruce Witt both passed in the week before the meeting. Please see In Memoriam on the website.

Respectfully submitted,

James E. Mullarkey

James E. Mullarkey (425)
Secretary
VVA Wisconsin State Council

AVVA Meeting
State Representative Pat Furno
Region 6 Director Rick A. Talford
1 pm

Topics of discussion:

- Elections will be held on June 25, 2022, at the State meeting being held at Camp Victory in Willard, WI
- Rose presentations at funerals for our veterans, and AVVA members.
- National budget use – (R. Talford) this year’s budget is an issue, as the revenue is at approx. \$90K, and the travel expenses are approx. \$97K. This is not a responsible use of the funds to our membership or donors to the organization. (note- all present agreed that this is not good, and the Regional Director should stand against this, with the BOD)
- National use of the AVVA Motto “Together Always”. (R. Talford) Nationally, the use of the motto has already been getting removed from use. This began without any formal actions by the BOD or communications with the membership. It was agreed upon by the State Representative and Chapter Representatives present, that the user should continue if the membership was/is not allowed any choice. Furno thought the use of “never again will one generation abandon another”.
- Incarcerated Veterans program on the National level. (R. Talford) An explanation of the program change was provided. The word “Veteran” has been removed from the title to allow any incarcerated individual the ability to join the organization. There is a great need to provide programs to these current and future members. At this time, there is absolute “NO” funding going into the program. They are simply a number on the paper. It was agreed by those present that this needs to be changed at the National level.