

# **MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA**

## **SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER**

### **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**21February 2019**

#### **Call to Order**

A meeting of the Board of Directors of The Southwest Virginia Chapter, Military Officers Association was held on 21 February 2019 at 1000 hours Eastern Standard Time at the Hidden Valley Country Club, Salem Virginia.

#### **Directors and Chapter Officers Present**

President David Gilleran, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Lee Ensley, Secretary Steve Jamison, Treasurer Scott Van Cleef, Chaplain Roger Talmadge, Personal Affairs Officer and Legislative Affairs Representative Jim Flynn, VCOC Representative and Public Relations Representative and Newsletter Editor Gary Powers, Awards Chair Robert Habermann Sergeant At Arms Michael Kasnick, Smith Mountain Lake Satellite Representative Rick Cocrane; Past President Dan Karnes, Director Larry Johnson, Director John Miller, Director Emeritus Tom Dalzell.

#### **Directors and Chapter Officers Absent**

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and Membership Chair Donna Fore, Surviving Spouse Liaison Mary Lou Summers, Director Michael Leigh.

#### **Call to Order**

President David Gilleran called the meeting to order at 1005 hours. A quorum of directors was present, and the meeting was convened.

#### **Opening Prayer**

Chaplain Roger Talmadge led the Directors in prayer.

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Lee Ensley led The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag recited by all present.

#### **Approval of Board of Directors Meeting Minutes:**

- Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting of 13 December 2018 were approved as submitted.

#### **President's Report**

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### **Secretary's Report:**

- Secretary Steve Jamison reported on the Chapter membership, Chapter roster, membership dues update, new members, members dropped.
- Proposed logistic plans for the VT membership trip for the 18 April meeting.
- Chapter member name tags with MOAA Logo – cost \$10 each. No minimum number. Approved by the Board. Secretary will print order forms for membership.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

- Checking account balance - \$7560.44,
- The Profit and Loss statement, Budget vs. Actual 1 January through 21 February 2019 was presented.
- Leadership and savings fund balance - \$7,428.39, of which \$2,250 is in savings, \$3,750 from the VFW gift and \$1,428.39 in the Leadership Awards fund.
- A question was brought about an audit. Discussion ensued and Chaplain Roger Talmadge volunteered to take for action.

### **Chaplains Report**

- Chaplain Talmadge discussed the process of keeping in touch with Chapter members hospitalized..

### **1<sup>st</sup> Vice President's Report:**

- No report. Colonel Fore, due to her Desert Storm service and deployment to Saudi Arabia, was in Richmond for an interview on a documentary sponsored by the Virginia War Memorial involving "The US Military After Vietnam."

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President's Report:**

- New and prospective members Lt Perry Downey, USN; Capt Rich Davis, USN; and LT John Schand, USN.

### **Program Directors Report**

- 21 February 2019 - Mr. Keith Wilson, Chief of the Center of Excellence, VA Regional Office, Department of Veterans Services. This State agency processes claims with the VA and provides other services for veterans in the State of Virginia.
- 21 March 2019 – Major General John M. Epperly, USA, Commander, 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Light), Fort Belvoir, VA. Topic: Renaissance of America's Armed Forces.
- 18 April 2019 – - MGEN Randy Fullhart, USAF (Ret) Commandant of Cadets. Topic: Status of the Corps of Cadets and a tour of the new Corps of Cadets facilities on the upper quad. This meeting will be held at the Inn at Virginia Tech.
- 16 May 2019 - TBD

### **Auxiliary Liaison Report**

- No report.

### **Surviving Spouse Representative Report:**

- Ms. Mary Lou Summers submitted her report by e-mail as follows due to adverse weather conditions.
- Contacted all active surviving spouses and gave them the dates, times, and speakers for the February, March and April meetings. I think two spouses are interested in going to VA Tech. I told them to contact Steve about fees and transportation.
- One of our spouses, Ila Eubank, broke her ankle in early February getting into her daughter's SUV. I sent her a "Get Well" card from all our chapter members. Will also call and check on her during her recovery.

### **Legislative Liaison Report:**

- COL John Miller represented the Chapter at "Storming the Hill" during JLC day at the General Assembly on 16 January 2019. MOAA joined JLC instead of hosting its own Storming session. Eight MOAA reps attended with about 30 others. The following issues were discussed:
  - Attended the Military and Veterans Caucus under co-chairs Senator Reeves and Delegate Freitas. Caucus meets every Wednesday at 0800 when General Assembly is in session. TAG was principal speaker; see below for summary.
  - Open time meetings were held with legislators to promote JLC initiatives.
  - General Assembly was in and out of session which impacted scheduled appointments; however, met with seven of our local legislators or their legislative assistants: Senator Edward and Legislative Assistant Luke Priddy, Senator Suetterlein, Delegate Austin and Legislative Assistants Matt Miller and Thomas Wagner, Delegate Head, Del Hurst Legislative Assistant Sadie Gary, Delegate McNamara and Legislative Assistant Archer McGiffin, Delegate Rasoul and Legislative Assistant Lilly Franklin. All indicated support for the JLC initiatives, but with the caveat that budget would be the biggest hurdle, especially this year with much General Assembly time devoted to "tax conformity" with federal legislation, broadband access, redistricting, I-81, Etc. They all expressed support for our local legislative update.
  - The afternoon session devoted to briefings from Commonwealth Executive and Legislative branches: Lt Governor Jackson, Secretary Hopkins, MG Williams, Speaker Cox and rep from Senator Kaine, Debby Burroughs and Senator Warner, Katie Pillis.
  - The day concluded with Virginia National Guard Reception in the Library of Virginia at which Secretary Hopkins and Governor Northam spoke, more "rah rah" than substantive.
  - At the Caucus at the afternoon session and at the reception, the TAG was focused on three legislative initiatives. (1) Pathway to free tuition for the Guard (JLC initiative 5): recruiting incentive. (2) State Active Duty Pay (JLC 1): comparability to counter loss of recruits to neighboring states. (3) Aviation Support Facilities and F-22 initiatives: alternative to Tyndall at Langley.
  - All are requested to support these initiatives in conversation with legislators.
  - A short discussion was held relating to the movement of an F-22 squadron from Tyndall AFB to Langley AFB due to the damage from hurricane Michael.

- LTC Bob Habermann compiled a detailed report on the JLC day from information found on three websites: The Joint Leadership Council (JLC), The Military Coalition (TMC), and MOAA. I also included a brief summary of John Miller's report. That report is attached.

### **VCOC Representative Report**

- COL John Miler represented the Chapter at the VCOC meeting on 15 January 2019 in Richmond. The following issues were discussed:
  - No dues will be collected for 2019; expect dues again in 2020.
  - \$11,542.34 in treasury, of which \$2728.00 is earmarked for another MOAA Mobile; following consultation with DVS to verify need, will look to buying another mobile for Amelia at next meeting.
  - VCOC wants to do a chapter leader training program either 1 or 8 May at American Legion HQ in Richmond. Probable cost to VCOC of \$350.00—will discuss and vote at next meeting.
  - Membership - continues to fall; Virginia now at 2,752 members. National expected to publish new potential members list in April; 85% of MOAA members are NOT affiliated with a Chapter. Much discussion of giving grants to chapters, say \$250 to support recruiting, e.g., to cover cost of lunch for prospective members. Tabled until next meeting when treasurer reports on recommendation of ad hoc committee.
  - No date yet for Spring Congressional luncheon.
  - Future meetings all starting 1000 at American Legion, 1708 Commonwealth Ave, Richmond: 3 April 2019; 17 July 2019 and 9 October 2019.

### **Public Affairs Report**

- Public Affairs representative Gary Powers provided the following items:
  - Communiqué Newsletter – 1st quarter (JAN-FEB-MAR) distributed. 115 copies each mailed out.
  - Chapter Website & Face book - Updates continue.
  - Public Affairs/Media - Three press releases: Meeting dates. Appearing on VCOC website and acknowledgement from MOAA HQ
  - VCOC website: <http://www.virginiamoaa.com>
  - Sponsorships – Sponsors: Anderson, Desimone & Green, P.C., Ann McGee Green, Esq. and New York Life, Donna L. Fore, Agent.
  - Upcoming PR opportunities - Military Family Support Center grant, Bernard Marie 75th D-Day Anniversary Dinner, Renovation Alliance Roanoke Community Renovation Day 27 April 2019.
  - Gary Powers proposed that the SWVC Chapter sponsor a table for the Bernard Marie 75th D-Day Anniversary Dinner. Sponsorship cost is \$500. Includes two tickets to the affair. After discussion the measure was not approved by voice and hand count.

### **Sergeant At Arms Report**

- No report.

### **Past President's Report:**

- No report.

## Director Reports

- No reports.

## Committee Chairperson's Report

- SWVC Chapter, Smith Mountain Lake Satellite. Rick Cocrane represented the Smith Mountain Lake Satellite in lieu of Art Sommers. Rick Cocrane reported on upcoming speakers and programs of the Smith Mountain Lake Satellite. Tom Dalzell will initiate an appropriate recognition for Art Sommers from MOAA
- Awards Chair.
  - JROTC and ROTC Medal Awards coming up this spring. Bob Habermann sent out nomination requests to 16 high schools. Two high schools have dropped the JROTC program – Patrick County High School and William Byrd High School. Wythe County High School holding their final award ceremony on 26 April 2019. Volunteers will be requested to make presentations of all the ROTC and JROTC awards.
  - Chapter Leadership Awards 2019 will be received in the spring. An awards board will be convened to select the two Leadership Awards from the eight nominations submitted.
  - A discussion was held to offering a cash award to all cadet Leadership Award nominees. It was recommended to present the non-winners with an appropriate letter of recognition. Tom Dalzell will propose an appropriate letter of recognition.
- Military Family Support Center expended the remaining funds from the MOAA Military Family Initiative (MFI) Community Outreach Charitable Grant.

## Old Business

- MOAA Military Family Initiative Community Grant Campaign 2018.
  - Final Report due by 31 May 2019.
  - MOAA requesting e-mails briefly (4-6 sentences) describing the SWVC MOAA Military Family Initiative 2018 Community Grant including several pictures. Due COB 31 January 2019.
  - John Miller presented a check for \$1,500 from the Stonewall Jackson Chapter of AUSA to sponsor a Food Day at the Military Family Support Center.

## New Business

- Program for 16 May 2019 membership meeting. Possibilities: "Ghost Army" - POC Steve Jamison, James Baum; Author of "Code Girls" Liza Mundy – Donna Fore; Purple Heart Association - POC Gary Powers; New PMS's at VT - POC Jim Flynn.
- Pantry Dates for the Military Family Support Center. (2/21; 3/21; 4/18; 5/16; 6/18; 7/18; 8/15; 9/19)
- MOAA Military Family Initiative Community Grant Campaign – mid February to 31 March 2019.
- National Vietnam Veterans Memorial Day 29 March 2019 at the Vinton War Memorial. Hosted by the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) - T.J. Stonewall Jackson Chapter.
- **1000 – 1900 hours** - Exhibit and silent auction of high resolution images from Vietnam Combat art collection of the US Army Center of Military History

(proceeds to Military Family Support Center.

- **1900 -2200 hours** - Program with 29th Division Band, speaker from Office of Secretary of Defense, wreath laying at High Ground, refreshments, presentation of Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin, and more.
- Renovation Alliance Community Renovation Day Saturday 27 April 2019.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board of Directors, the meeting was adjourned at 1134 hours. The next Board of Directors meeting will be at 1000 hours on Thursday, 21 March 2019, at Hidden Valley Country Club.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen L. Jamison

## Legislative Matters

### Commonwealth of Virginia Level

#### Summary of 2019 JLC Policy Initiatives

The Virginia General Assembly convened on January 9th for the 2019 Session. The 2019 Joint Leadership Council (JLC) Policy Initiatives for the collective military and veteran community include its status in the following in priority order:

#### 1. JLC 2019-01 - Increased State Active Duty (SAD) Pay.

**Recommendation** - That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate \$50,000 to ensure that all Virginia National Guardsmen are paid at least at the E6 rate.

**Status:** January 25, it passed the Senate (40-0) and referred to House Appropriations Committee

#### 2. JLC 2019-02 - Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income 100% Disabled Veterans.

**Recommendation** - That the Governor and General Assembly approve an individual income tax subtraction for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federally adjusted gross income, not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household, who have not already claimed another exemption.

**Status:** January 30, the Senate Finance Committee referred it to the House Appropriations Committee where it died.

#### 3. JLC 2019-03 - Electronic Ballot Return.

**Recommendation** - That the Governor and General Assembly enact legislation and provide budget support of a pilot program at the Virginia State Board of Elections for \$100,000 and funding for one FTE, for a limited pilot program for the electronic return of absentee ballots by Virginia's deployed military service members.

**Status:** the Senate failed to report it out of committee, and it died.

#### 4. JLC 2019-04 - Personal Property Tax Relief for Certain Disabled Veterans.

**Recommendation** - That the Governor and General Assembly approve legislation creating a standardized, statewide personal property tax exemption for one vehicle for 100% service-connected, total and permanent disabled veterans.

**Status:** It passed the House with substitute language creating a local option (92-4) and sent to the Senate which agreed to the modification (38-0) and referred back to the House for legislative action.

**5. JLC 2019-05 - Free Tuition for Virginia National Guardsmen.**

**Recommendation** - That the Governor and General Assembly provide budget support of approximately a \$1 million increase in the annual State Tuition Assistance program for a pilot program to cover the estimated 3.5% of Guardsmen seeking a degree who are not currently entirely covered by federal and state tuition assistance.

**Status:** January 28, it passed the Senate (40-0) and referred to House Appropriations Committee

**6. JLC 2019-06 - VMSDEP.**

**Recommendation** - That the Governor and General Assembly remove the requirement that a veteran's disability rating be combat related. Instead, a permanent service-connected disability rating of at least 90%, plus the satisfaction of the other requirements currently in the Code, would qualify a veteran's spouse or child for VMSDEP benefits.

**Status:** January 30, it passed the Senate (40-0) and referred to House Appropriations Committee

**7. JLC 2019-07 - Phased-in System for Partial State Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Income.**

**Recommendation** - That the Governor and General Assembly support changes to the current Virginia tax laws for a phased-in system to reduce state tax on military retirement income up to \$40,000 for retirees 65 years of age or older.

**Status:** no movement recently.

**Other Commonwealth Legislative Initiatives**

Approximately thirty additional pieces of legislation involving issues of the military, members of the armed forces, and dependents are pending before the House and Senate. These run the full gambit of subjects, such as tax exemptions, drones, retirement benefits, tuition refunds, taxation matters, and duty pay. Should you wish to learn more about these matters, please contact me.

## **Storming the Hill Day**

On the Commonwealth level, the ongoing 4-year renovation of the original General Assembly and the move to Pocahontas Building has resulted in reduced space for conducting an annual 'Storming the Hill' Day as done in previous years. This year VCOC representatives were invited to join in several events on the JLC Day at the General Assembly on January 16. The day began with the Military, and Veteran Caucus mentioned above at 0800, followed by individually scheduled meetings with delegates, senators, and legislative aids from 0900 to 1115. Visits to either the House or Senate Galleries then followed before lunch.

COL John Miller represented our Chapter at 'Storming the Hill' during JLC day at the General Assembly. MOAA joined JLC instead of hosting its own 'Storming' session. Eight MOAA representatives attended the meeting with about 30 other individuals.

In an after-action message dated January 18, 2019, COL Miler reported on the events and noted that our representatives had the opportunity to meet personally with several of our local legislators to keep them fully informed on matters which impact the memberships of MOAA and the other military groups and organizations.

COL Miller also advised that all of our legislators indicated support for the JLC initiatives, but they caveated that budgetary constraints would be the biggest hurdle, especially this year with much General Assembly time devoted primarily to 'tax conformity' with federal legislation, broadband access, redistricting, expanding I-81, etc.

Finally, COL Miller noted that all of our legislators expressed support for our local agenda.

## **Federal Level**

The 2019 MOAA Initiatives for the collective military and veteran community include the following in priority order:

### **1) Ensure that any TRICARE reform sustains access to top-quality care.**

Recommendation – Strengthen our partnership with The Defense Health Agency (DHA) working groups and executive sessions. Engage The Military Coalition's Healthcare Committee. Continue to administer and drive the results of MOAA's healthcare surveys. Closely monitor the new role DHA has for oversight of The Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs).

**2) Prevent disproportional TRICARE fee increases.**

Recommendation – Reverse or significantly decrease the 2018 TRICARE Prime copayment for grandfathered/Group A beneficiaries to reduce out-of-pocket costs for successive specialty appointments, such as physical therapy or mental health care. Protect TRICARE For Life as a second payer to Medicare Part B.

**3) Sustain Military pay comparability with the private sector.**

Recommendation – Maintain continuous, unified messaging to legislators and service leadership, advising annual military pay raises approved by Congress correlate with the Employment Cost Index (ECI). Correlate with The Military Coalition to address this wide-reaching imperative of support to those in uniform, and seek closure of the 2.6 percent gap as soon as feasible.

**4) Stop erosion of compensation and non-pay quality-of-life benefits.**

Recommendation – Continue to oppose proposals to reduce compensation or undermine long-term retention. Assess the progress of The Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation and potential changes to a salary system.

**5) End financial penalties for military survivors.**

Recommendation - Ensure that legislation is introduced in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress to address survivor benefits. Educate legislators, staffers, and other stakeholders about the inequities. Mobilize the members of MOAA and The Military Coalition to engage and press for legislation to be included in The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

**6) End concurrent receipt penalties for military retirees.**

Recommendation – Ensure that legislation is introduced in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress to address Chapter 61 inequities. Educate legislators and congressional staffers about the impact these penalties have on some of our most vulnerable retirees. Mobilize our membership and The Military Coalition to engage Capitol Hill.

**7) Achieve equity of benefits for Guard and Reserve members with their active duty counterparts.**

Recommendation – Encourage Congress to advance equal pay and benefits for similar services performed by Guard and Reserve components relative to active duty troops. Build partnerships with Federal Agencies such as The Department of Labor, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves, and state governors to expand and strengthen

employer support for Guard and Reserve Members. Appeal to The Military Coalition to expand influence and reach in all areas affecting pay and benefits issues.

**8) Strengthen DoD-VA collaboration and services to support wounded warriors and expanding populations of women veterans.**

Recommendation – Monitor the FY-2019 NDAA requirement for a review and assessment of DoD and service wounded warrior programs. Seek legalization forcing the VA to address known gaps in benefits to veterans. Involve The Military Coalition’s Veterans’ Committee to expand influence and reach in all areas affecting veterans’ issues. Engage and advocate of the behalf of the VA – when needed – to ensure that the agency is adequately resourced and equipped to deliver benefits to the veterans without backlogs or delays. Preserve the integrity of and access to DoD and VA health systems for dually eligible beneficiaries.

**9) Ensure timely access to service-earned VA benefits.**

Recommendation - Oppose efforts to use veteran’ disability benefits compensation or other benefits to pay for VA system improvements and diminish or restrict access to service-earned benefits. Press DoD and the VA to improve true interoperability of electronic media, personnel, and benefits records to improve medical outcomes and delivery of benefits. Mandate DoD and the VA to develop protocols and establish a mechanism to address service-connected illnesses and environmental exposures and institute a framework for managing toxic exposures that might happen in the future.

**10) Protect military and veteran family support programs and policies.**

Recommendation – Educate Members of Congress and their staffers on the importance of military family readiness and issues affecting military and veteran families. Protect programming and subsidies essential to MWR and family readiness. Eliminate health and safety hazards in military based housing. Decrease military spouse unemployment and underemployment. Ensure their quality of life and health of military and veteran families.

**Recent Federal Legislative Gains**

Active / Reserve Force Issues – the principal legislative achievements are as follows:

- 2.4 percent active duty pay raise.
- Unchanged Basic Allowance for House (BAH) calculation.
- Increase in force end strength levels.
- Won increased travel reimbursement for Guard/Reserve training beyond commuting distance.
- Extended Post 9/11 GI Bill eligibility to Guard/Reserve serving on pre-planned missions and medical hold.

- Eliminated 15-year time limit thus making Post-9/11 GI bill permanent for service members entering the military beginning Jan 1, 2018, and other educational enhancements for families-survivors.

**Military Family / Survivors / Veterans / Other Issues** – the principal achievements are as follows:

- Protected individual unemployability/COLA benefits for disabled veterans.
- Permanently extended the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) and indexed future increases to COLA.
- Improved VA claims appeals to reduce long waits and complex decisions.
- Won legislation to provide VA additional authorities to hold employees accountable
- Extended VA Choice Program authority and funding to provide health care in the community.
- Ensured veterans affected by chemical testing attain presumptive status for claims.
- Actively engaged Commissary reform efforts.

**Matters that are still pending and which will need to be resolved in FY 2019:**

- Will Congress pass a full-year VA appropriation or adopt a 3-4 month short-term appropriations?
- Will VA replace the Choice Program and reform community care?
- Will Congress pass a full year appropriations bill for the FY 2018 NDAA?
- TRICARE: Despite yearlong efforts to prevent TRICARE fee increases, the final NDAA included progressive year-over-year increases in pharmacy copayments. Beneficiaries will see steady gains in their cost shares across all medication tiers, which will save DoD more than \$2.1 billion by 2022 and fund improvements in military readiness and SSIA. Most of the increases will be through the retail pharmacy sector, but beneficiaries still can obtain medications at military pharmacies free. The new fees will include mail-order generic prescriptions as well, and begin on Jan 1, 2018.

### **Storming the Hill in DC**

On the national level, MOAA will hold their Annual Storming in April on a date to be announced in Washington, D.C. Dates are also being discussed for the Annual Congressional Appreciation Luncheon and will be shared when available.

### **Several of Our Local Legislators**

- 1) John Edwards – [John@edwardsva.com](mailto:John@edwardsva.com) – Senator
- 2) Chris Head – [chris.head@homeinstead.com](mailto:chris.head@homeinstead.com) - Delegate
- 3) Sam Rasoul – [sam@envigor.net](mailto:sam@envigor.net) - Delegate
- 4) Chris Hurst – [Christlhurst@gmail.com](mailto:Christlhurst@gmail.com) - Delegate