

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER

MINUTES - BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

21 November 2024

Call to Order

President Gary Powers called the meeting of the Board of Directors of The Southwest Virginia Chapter, Military Officers Association to order at 1000 hours Eastern Standard Time on 21 November 2024.

Chapter Officers and Directors Present

President Gary Powers; 1st Vice President, Director and News Letter Editor Tom Dalzell; Treasurer and Membership Chair Robert Brown; Secretary and Personal Affairs Representative Steve Jamison; Chaplain and Bereavement Committee Officer David Gilleran; Legislative Affairs Representative and Awards Chair Robert Habermann; Sergeant-At-Arms Larry Johnson; Facebook Editor Lee Ensley; Director John Miller; Director David MacNamee; Director David King; Director Evelyn Cox.

Chapter Officers and Directors Absent

VCOG Representative and Past President Matt Haag; Public Affairs Officer Gary Sayre; Webmaster Klaus (Ted) Lonitz; Surviving Spouse Representative Mary Lou Summers; Director Roger Burnett; Director Don Sowder.

Opening Prayer

Chaplain David Gilleran led the Board of Directors in prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance

Tom Dalzell led The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag recited by all present

Approval of Board of Directors Meetings Minutes

Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting of 19 September 2024 were approved as submitted.

Presidents Report –

- Welcomed new chapter board members LTC David MacNamee, USAF (Ret) and LTC David King, USA (Ret).
- Still working to fill the vacant SWVC Chapter Officer Positions. 1st VP; 2nd VP; Transition Team Representative; Community Services Volunteer Representative.

- Mentioned chapter member's participation in the Virginia Veterans Parade on Saturday 8 November 2024.
- Asked those Chapter Officers and Board of Directors present if they agreed to serve for another year, 2025. All agreed.
- Participated in a Veterans Day "Flag Retirement Ceremony" with the Navy JROTC cadets of William Byrd High School on 11 November 2024.
- Participated in a MOAA "ZOOM" meeting on the issue of the MOAA membership portal.
- Spoke with Damon Daniels, Military Support and Recruitment Coordinator, Roanoke, Roanoke College concerning a stand up of a ROTC program at Roanoke College.
- Mentioned three guests being sponsored at this meeting.

Secretary's Report -

- Chapter roster, membership dues update, new members, members dropped.
- New member COL Dave Lofgren USA (Ret), LT Gary Sayre and Dr. George D Henning, MD, CPT, USA (former).

Treasurers Report –

- Income and Expenses Budget vs. Actual – 1 January – 15 November 2024
Income - \$11,121.00 Expenses - \$11,770.88 (Note: Primarily due to advance purchase of award plaques)
- Prime Checking Account balance 11 November 2024 - \$8,856.12 compared to \$9,109.77 on 10 September 2024.
- Savings Account balance – \$3,397.47 as of 11 November 2024
- \$100 donation made to St. Johns Church in memory of LTC Dan Karnes
- 2025 Draft Budget – Attached page 13 approved as submitted.

1st Vice Presidents Report

- No report.

Membership Chair Report

- Still no access to National MOAA database listing change of addresses for members moving into our catchment area. For now we are relying on current members to identify potential new members.
- An information booth was set up at the Veterans parade. Several people picked up information papers but did not identify any potential chapter members.
- One new member to join today – George Henning, recruited by Mike Sexton.

Program Directors Report

- Meeting programs scheduled for 2024.
 - **21 November 2024** Mr. Clint Wattenberg, Associate Athletic Director / Sports Nutrition and Ms. Savannah Gustafson, Olympic Sports Nutrition Fellow, on the "**Sports Nutrition Program For Athletes At Virginia Tech**".
 - **19 December 2024**. Mr. Martin Leamy, President and CEO, Central and Southwest Virginia Honor Flight on the Virginia "**Honor Flight Program**". Their mission is one of gratitude for their service, sacrifice and selflessness by proudly celebrating our veterans with a day of honor in our nation's capital.
 - **16 January 2025**. Ms. Natalie Elliott Handy, CEO and Co-Founder CareForward, Inc. Their mission is the harnessing the power of technology as "**CareForward**" connects those in need with community members who donate time, talent, or resources because every act of generosity becomes a lifeline, making a positive impact in the lives of others.
 - **20 February 2025**. Dr. Brian K. Unwin, MD, Chief of Geriatrics & Palliative Medicine, Carilion on "**The Cost of Aging**". The cost of aging can be significant, including the cost of long-term care, basic expenses, and healthcare in retirement. **Long-term care**: The HHS estimates that Americans turning 65 in 2022 will incur an average of \$120,900 in long-term care costs. Families are expected to pay nearly 40% of these costs out-of-pocket. **Basic expenses**: The Elder Index estimates that a single older adult in good health needed \$27,096 for basic expenses in 2021, which is \$14,100 more than the federal poverty threshold. Healthcare in retirement. Fidelity Investments estimates that a 65-year-old retiring in 2023 should expect to spend an average of \$157,500 for health and medical expenses throughout retirement. **Support services**. The median monthly cost of adult day services is \$1,690, while a home health aide costs \$5,148 per month.
 - **20 March 2025**. COL Claude Schmid, USA (Ret) on the "**Last Patrol**". The Last Patrol connects veteran volunteers to veterans in hospice. They cooperate with medical providers of hospice care to connect volunteers to the patients so that their last patrol isn't alone. It's hard to overestimate the importance of friendship during end-of-life care. Last Patrol brings new friendships when friendship matters most. When America's veterans go into hospice care they often lose contact with family, friends, and with the military community. Some are alone. Some sit quietly in nursing homes. Many families are loving and attentive to their hospice patient, but appreciate getting the support, connection, and information that a friend from the military community can provide. Last Patrol helps provide that support.

At one time there was a similar program here in Roanoke, Affinity Care of

Virginia, a hospice organization operating out of the Roanoke area. The Southwest Virginia Chapter was requested to participate in the “We Honor Veterans Program”, a partnership between the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The program offers care for veteran-specific physical or emotional issues that may arise near the end of life. In January 2023 Affinity Care of Virginia approached the Southwest Virginia Chapter to participate in a large “Pinning Ceremony” at Richfield Living-The Health Center-Salem Campus. They had 7 veterans who they were honoring, representing the Air Force, Army, and National Guard. I do not know if that program is still in existence.

- **17 April 2025**. TBD
- **15 May 2025**. BBQ lunch meeting the American Legion Post 3 picnic shelter on Apperson Drive in Salem, VA.
- Other Programs Being Considered:
 - Mr. Larry Johnson, CAPT USA (former), Vietnam veteran helicopter pilot on “**Helicopters In The Vietnam War—A Personal Perspective**”.
 - CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) on “**The Role of Naval Intelligence During the Cold War**”.

Surviving Spouse Representative Report

- The Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia is scheduled for 1300 hours on Saturday 14 December 2024. Again this year representatives of the US Military Services are required for the special wreath placements during the ceremony.
- The following participants have been contacted and will be the special wreath placement persons as indicated:
 - Master of Ceremonies - CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret)
 - United States Army - COL John Miller, USA (Ret)
 - United States Navy - CDR Lee Ensley, USN (Ret)
 - United States Marine Corps - COL Thomas Dalzell, USMC (Ret)
 - United States Air Force - LTC David MacNamee, USAF (Ret)
 - United States Coast Guard - CDR Richard At Lee, USCG (Ret)
 - United States Space Force - LTC Robert Habermann, USA (Ret)
 - POW/MIA - LTC David Gilleran, USA (Ret)
 - Commonwealth of Virginia Flag - Mr. Joseph Obenshain, 1st LT USA, Former.
- Chapter President Gary Powers and Surviving Spouse Representative Mary Lou Summers have been discussing the issue of establishing a Sub-Chapter for

spouses. Members would be able to fill Board positions. President Gary Powers will have an article in the upcoming newsletter.

Public Relations Report

- Chapter Newsletter “The Communiqué” – 3rd quarter (JULY-AUG-SEPT 2024) published on 2 October 2024.
- Chapter Newsletter “The Communiqué” – 4th quarter (OCT-NOV-DEC 2024) a work in progress to be published NLT 1 January 2025.
- MOAA Chapter Level of Excellence Awards and Col. Marvin J. Harris Communications Awards due 5 May 2025.
- Chapter Website & Face book – Up and running. According to WIX Traffic Overview, there have been 222 site sessions and 598 page reviews so far this year. This is a significant increase for the same period last year. About 3/4 of the visits were from people directly accessing the site (i.e. most likely had the website bookmarked), with the remainder getting there via a search engine (i.e. Google, etc.).
- CAPT Powers to explore migration of Chapter website to a new provider.
- Gary Sayre to become the Chapter Public Affairs Officer. Status of an article for local publication to highlight chapter and member’s service.

Past Presidents Report

- No report.

Directors Report’s

- CAPT Burnett - No report
- LTC Gilleran – Veterans Day program in Bassett Virginia town square. Names of fallen will be recognized on a wall and on a bench
- COL Miller – The 2024 Roanoke Valley Veterans Council Legislative Forum event is scheduled for Thursday, 5 December at 1900 hours at the American Legion Post 3. Back by popular demand is the delicious spaghetti dinner provided by the Legion beginning at 1800 hours for a \$10 donation. Please share with your Veterans. This is our chance to share our concerns or ideas with our local legislators.
- Capt Johnson – No report.

Legislative Liaison Report

- **MOAA's Key Advocacy Issues For FY-2025**
 - **Active Duty**
 - ✓For decades, military senior leaders have encouraged reform of the wasteful acquisition process, and have warned that targeting personnel costs will have negative effects on retention and talent management. Yet

pundits and some former Armed Services Committee members continue to make the case that personnel cost cuts must occur in order to preserve the size of the fighting force.

- ✓ Active Duty service members, and their families, are on the front lines fighting for our country to serve and protect whether they are stationed at home or abroad and the challenges and sacrifices they face during their time in uniform are unique: deployment, PCS moves, food insecurity, educational and professional development, transitioning, and more. MOAA's advocacy for the currently serving focuses on sustaining military pay comparability with the private sector, maintaining earned benefits, educating Congress of the importance of protecting and expanding benefits for those in service, and of avoiding incomplete data when rushing to cut costs.
- ✓ MOAA's advocacy priorities for Active Duty service members, and their families, in the 119th Congress include:
 - Ensuring pay at or above Employment Cost Index, allowances, and programs necessary to recruit and retain a quality force.
 - Ensuring pay continues for all eight uniformed services during government shutdown.
 - Restoring BAH at 100% of researched housing costs per Military Housing Area.
 - Ensuring barracks are a safe and healthy place to live, verified by the chain of command and government-owned work centers.
 - Codifying procedures and authorities to increase out-of-cycle housing allowances to address emergencies such as reduced availability of housing and rising utility costs.
 - Maintaining the hold on medical billet reductions until required reports clarify how any cuts will fully support both readiness and beneficiary access to care.
 - Reversing the degradation of the pharmacy benefit, specifically ensure access and achieve limits to copay increases.
 - Addressing TRICARE Young Adult parity issue by extending eligibility to dependents up to age 26 with no separate premium to bring TRICARE on par with commercial health plans.
 - Requiring DoD to establish a transparent and well-publicized problem reporting system for TRICARE beneficiaries experiencing access challenges within the direct care system of military hospitals and clinics, including an annual report to Congress on the number and types of beneficiary access problem reports by MTF and steps taken by DHA to address systemic access problems.
 - Improving congressional support for uniformed services families: enhancing programs to support spouse employment, ensuring implementation of an effective basic needs allowance, and providing accessible, affordable childcare options.

- Overcoming the lack of effective problem-reporting mechanisms and resolution systems in the Military Health System.

➤ **Retirees**

- ✓ With more than 350,000 members from every branch of service - including Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, former officers, and their families - MOAA is a powerful force speaking for a strong national defense and representing the interests of military officers at every stage of their careers. Retirees and their dependents deserve the full earned pay and benefits their decades of service and sacrifice entitle them to.
- ✓ For more than 90 years, MOAA has engaged with Congress to protect pay and benefits from budget-driven threats, continued access to quality medical care, and countless other areas of concern to retirees, those currently serving, and the wider uniformed services community. MOAA will also continue to inform Congress of the importance of protecting and expanding benefits for those who have served, and of preserving earned benefits such as COLA increases for retirees and survivors and the commissary benefit that frequently become targets for cost cutting.
- ✓ MOAA's advocacy priorities for retirees in the 119th Congress include:
 - Ensuring pay at or above Employment Cost Index, allowances, and programs necessary to recruit and retain a quality force.
 - Concurrent Receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability pay.
 - Maintaining the hold on medical billet reductions until required reports clarify how any cuts will fully support both readiness and beneficiary access to care.
 - Reversing the degradation of the pharmacy benefit, specifically ensure access and achieve limits to copay increases.
 - Requiring DoD to establish a transparent and well-publicized problem reporting system for TRICARE beneficiaries experiencing access challenges within the direct care system of military hospitals and clinics, including an annual report to Congress on the number and types of beneficiary access problem reports by MTF and steps taken by DHA to address systemic access problems.
 - Monitoring recent major legislation enacted such as the PACT Act in the areas of health care, compensation, and follow-on support for surviving spouses and families and seek statutory or policy changes as required.
 - Compelling Congress and VA to accelerate caregiving and whole health care services, and modernization of VHA workforce and facility infrastructure to improve veteran's access to high quality care.
 - Improving congressional support for uniformed services families: enhancing programs to support spouse employment, ensuring

implementation of an effective basic needs allowance, and providing accessible, affordable childcare options.

- Overcoming the lack of effective problem-reporting mechanisms and resolution systems in the Military Health System.
- Repealing the recoupment of last month's paycheck after retiree's passing, and continue to improve SGLI/VGLI updates to match inflation.

➤ **Families**

- ✓ The sacrifices of service members and their families should never be understated. Military families face a myriad of challenges: career instability or dissatisfaction, food insecurity, frequent moves, saving (or not saving) for college and retirement, extended training or deployments that separate the family, and even the service member-spouse transitioning out of active duty to service in the National Guard or Reserves.
- ✓ Unfortunately, programs and services for military and veteran families are often the first to see cuts when government funding becomes tight. Routinely, such decrements hit staffing, which diminishes quality and availability of programs. These benefits are essential to ensure service members are squared away and able to focus on the mission.
- ✓ MOAA's advocacy priorities for military families in the 119th Congress include:
 - Ensuring pay at or above Employment Cost Index, allowances, and programs necessary to recruit and retain a quality force.
 - Ensuring pay continues for all eight uniformed services during government shutdown.
 - Restoring BAH at 100% of researched housing costs per Military Housing Area.
 - Codifying procedures and authorities to increase out-of-cycle housing allowances to address emergencies such as reduced availability of housing and rising utility costs.
 - Maintaining the hold on medical billet reductions until required reports clarify how any cuts will fully support both readiness and beneficiary access to care.
 - Reversing the degradation of the pharmacy benefit, specifically ensure access and achieve limits to copay increases.
 - Addressing TRICARE Young Adult parity issue by extending eligibility to dependents up to age 26 with no separate premium to bring TRICARE on par with commercial health plans.
 - Requiring DoD to establish a transparent and well-publicized problem reporting system for TRICARE beneficiaries experiencing access challenges within the direct care system of military hospitals and clinics, including an annual report to Congress on the number and types of beneficiary access problem reports by MTF and steps taken by DHA to address systemic access problems.

- Monitoring recent major legislation enacted such as the PACT Act in the areas of health care, compensation, and follow-on support for surviving spouses and families and seek statutory or policy changes as required.
- Improving congressional support for uniformed services families: enhancing programs to support spouse employment, ensuring implementation of an effective basic needs allowance, and providing accessible, affordable childcare options.
- Overcoming the lack of effective problem-reporting mechanisms and resolution systems in the Military Health System.
- Improving DIC baseline to align with other government entitlements' baseline of 55%.

➤ **Survivors**

- ✓ Surviving spouses and families often face a dwindling support system and are burdened or confused by tasks he or she has never had to deal with before, like financial matters. In essence, surviving spouses serve the military alongside their service members and want to be viewed and respected for their tremendous and selfless efforts.
- ✓ After the repeal of the widows' tax in 2019, with full effect in January 2023, there remain injustices to survivors on several other issues. MOAA's advocacy priorities for survivor benefits in the 119th Congress include:
 - Repealing the recoupment of last month's paycheck after retiree's passing, and continue to improve SGLI/VGLI updates to match inflation.
 - Improving DIC baseline to align with other government entitlements' baseline of 55%.
 - Ensuring pay at or above Employment Cost Index, allowances, and programs necessary to recruit and retain a quality force.

➤ **Veterans**

- ✓ Veterans and transitioning service members face unique challenges once they have left the military: second and non-military careers, reinventing themselves, retirement concerns, navigating veteran benefits and health care, and access to support programs and networks. MOAA remains committed to service members, past and present, whether they be currently serving or those that have already transitioned to civilian life.
- ✓ In the last several years, Congress has enacted legislation that has monumentally impacted how the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) delivers health care and benefits to beneficiaries and how they determine eligibility. VA faces several challenges as it attempts to sustain and balance its four primary health care missions (clinical, research, education and training, and emergency management response) while also meeting the expectations of veterans seeking access to high quality health care and benefits when and where they need it.
- ✓ MOAA's advocacy priorities for veterans in the 119th Congress include:

- Monitoring recent major legislation enacted such as the PACT Act in the areas of health care, compensation, and follow-on support for surviving spouses and families and seek statutory or policy changes as required.
- Compelling Congress and VA to accelerate caregiving and whole health care services, and modernization of VHA workforce and facility infrastructure to improve veterans' access to high quality care.
- Concurrent Receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability pay.
- Improving survivors' benefits.

VCOC Report

1. JLC Policy Initiatives for 2025:

- **JLC Initiative 2025-01 - Verification of Veteran Status – Arrest, Jails, and Prisons. OBJECTIVE:** To identify arrested and incarcerated veterans in Virginia so to better connect them to U.S. Department of Veteran affairs (USDVA), Virginia Department of Veterans Services, and community employment, education, and other resources to help lower their recidivism rate and connect them with federal and local court and community resources.
- **JLC Initiative 2025-02 - Stop Unscrupulous Firms from Exploiting Veterans. OBJECTIVE:** Prohibit 'Claim Shark' companies from preying on veterans seeking to obtain or modify their VA entitlements.
- **JLC Initiative 2025-03 - Virginia National Guard Tuition. OBJECTIVE:** Transition the Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) from its current reimbursement model back to an upfront payment model.
- **JLC Initiative 2025-04 - Suffolk State Veterans Cemetery expansion. OBJECTIVE:** Secure the necessary funds to expand the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk, ensuring that it continues to meet the needs of our veterans and their families.
- **JLC Initiative 2025-05 - Women Veterans Day. OBJECTIVE:** to establish June 12th as Women Veterans Day in Virginia, recognizing the contributions and sacrifices of women veterans and commemorating the historic signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act.

Committee Chairperson's Report

- **Awards Chair Report** –
 - ✓ Notifications to the JROTC, ROTC, CAP units for the 2025 Chapter Leadership Awards, Archer Awards and MOAA ROTC and JROTC Medal Awards to be sent out on 3 February 2025. The chapter supports 15 JROTC units, 3 CAPS and 4 ROTC Units. All supplies have been ordered.

- **Community Services Volunteer Representative Report**

No Report.

Old Business

- Vittles For Vets – Chapter received a “Thank You” note for the MOAA Grant donation. Calendars are available for a VFV fundraiser.
- LTC David King sent an email to LTC Bob Habermann concerning the Bassett High School hosting a drill meet on 28 September. In the past, Carroll County High School as well as the ROTC programs in Pittsylvania County have participated in the meet.

We do a lot of things to recognize cadets including giving them money in addition to medals, certificates and even plaques. Unfortunately, because of the limited opportunities to interact with the cadets, they have no idea about who we are or what our organizations stand for. I don't know how much it will help, but I plan to set up a table at the meet with information and a display of the awards we provide. I still have a couple of MOAA medals and certificates on hand along with items from AUSA, MOWW, etc. and I have the support of 1SG Corely the Senior Army Instructor (SAI) to do this.

- One other consideration is this is an opportunity to distribute the items for the awards. If I get the approval of the AUSA EXCOM at the meeting next Thursday, I plan to distribute the AUSA medals and certificates to the instructors of the programs we support. We could do the same for MOAA. This would put the ball in the instructors' court, and all we would need would be the names for the checks and the plates that go on the plaques. I have two engravers in Collinsville and could handle that as well if it would help. I don't know how well this would work, but I don't think we have anything to lose.
- Inquiry from the Adult Care Center of Roanoke Valley on some form of working together. The Adult Care Center is a resource in the Roanoke Valley for families with dependent adults still living at home. They also work closely with the VA Medical Center across the street and as a result Veterans make up fully half of their participants there. They are looking for supporters as well as financial assistance. The point of contact is Mr. Guy Byrd director of Philanthropy.

New Business:

- Funding support for Franklin Hugh School AFJROTC program.
- Cost of WIX website builder (\$348) – switching issues in moving to another web site provider.
- ROTC Unit standup Roanoke College.

- **Army Navy Football Game Watch Party**, Saturday 14 December 2024 at 1500 hours at the restaurant 419 West, 3865 Electric Road, Roanoke, Virginia. Private room, large TV, order food and drink from full menu.

Adjourn - President