

UNITED VETERANS COUNCIL OF NEW MEXICO
PO Box 8034, Albuquerque, NM 87198
MINUTES - APRIL14, 2011 @ VFW POST 401

The meeting was called to order by President Ken O'Keefe @ 1:10 pm. Thirteen (13) representatives in attendance and two visitors, Alan Martinez, Deputy Director NM Dept of Veterans' Services and Marsha Garcia from Congressman Heinrick office (list on file). Pledge of Allegiance followed with lighting of POW/MIA candle and a moment of silence for all POW/MIAs.

Minutes of previous meeting.

Treasurer's report: Treasurer absent however he sent a current report - copy of attached . Report accepted subject to audit.

Alan Martinez spoke on the veterans issues from the recently complete 2011 Legislative Session. Fifty six (56) "veterans" legislative issues were introduced during the session. Eight bills came from the Interim Committee for Veterans affairs. All bills that reached the governor's desk were signed. Key legislation that passed follows.

Priority placement of deployed active duty/nation guard/reserve members in schools - this issue was pushed by DOD . NM was one of only a few states that did not have this provision.

In past, disposition of remains of members MIA was not spelled out - up for grabs among family members. Now the desires to the deceased must be honored.

Mandatory training for police on how to deal with mentally ill subjects. Started as a PTSD issue; however, other mental health offices joined in supporting the legislation. There is to be 32 hours of crisis intervention training and 8 hours of de-escalation training. Noted that PTSD is misunderstood by the general population. Combat trauma is a term that is better understood. Also noted the 60% of APD officers are veterans and a majority of these officers have seen combat.

Veterans Enterprise fund established for donations to the DVS. The fund is a 501(c)3. The fund will funnel funds to needy vets. Where possible funds will be sent to Veterans organizations for distribution; however, when the need is urgent quick turnaround for approval can be accomplished through this fund.

Items concerning resident hunting and fishing licenses for veterans stationed in the close proximity for NM will be granted resident rates.

Action to be taken to purge court records for POW/MIA members from jury pools.

Santa Fe National cemetery has acquired an addition 8 acres. This should provided space until 2051.

Tax exemption for veterans service organizations.

Veteran canteens will be allowed to have pull tabs and bingo in their facility even though they serve alcohol. In the past it was a \$1,000 fine for each individual observed doing pull tabs or participating in bingo games.

DV license plates. Requirement lower to 50% service connected disability from current 100% requirement.

Fort Bayard hospital is vacant. feasibility study to turn facility into a treatment center for females with PTSD. Renovation would possibly be done by veterans green job teams.

Alan noted the following:

The exemption of military retirement pay from state income tax DID NOT PASS. However, after the session off the record support was expressed by numerous legislators. They encouraged the bill be reintroduced at next session.

The state has just completed a major remodel of some of the facilities at Angle Fire Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. Sixteen couples just completed a week long PTSD conference. The focus was on family interactions with a veteran with PTSD issues. Eight more sessions are planned.

Committee Reports

New Mexico Veterans Memorial Foundation Nothing to report. Next meeting of the Foundation is next Wed, April 20. Items pending are an ATT cell phone tower @ the Memorial; however, proceeds will probably go to the city, not the Memorial. An addition to the Vietnam Memorial area has been approved. "Holes in our Hearts" will be a place for people to leave notes about KIA/MIA vets from the Vietnam era.

Mayor's Veterans' and Military Affairs Advisory Board held first meeting on 22 March. No information available concerning issues/actions from this meeting.

Memorial Day - Planning meeting tomorrow, April 15, 1:00pm @ Memorial. A band, Dukes of Albuquerque, composed of veterans will provide the music. Tim Hale, newly confirmed Secretary of NM Department of Veterans Services will be

Key note speaker. Other DV attendees, other than Mayor Berry is unknown at this time. Ed Holbrook will be contacted reference providing water as his organization has in the past.

Old Business

Marsha Garcia will e-mail the application for Congressman Heinrick's Veteran(s) of the Quarter. Copy to the application was received and is attached.

New Business - none

Good of the Order

American Veterans for Equal Rights will hold the national convention in Albuquerque 6-9 Oct.

Mary Cox reported there seemed to a lack of support by base officials for the March 4, Tribute to Women in the Military.

No 50/50 Drawing

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM

Next meeting: 1:00pm, May 12, 2011 @ VFW Post 401

Charles "Russ" Spicher,
Secretary