

January 15, 2019 MACV Meeting Minutes

The January meeting of the Mayors' Advisory Council for Veterans was held at the Marriott-East in Indianapolis. The meeting began with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Don Hawkins called the meeting to order. Forty-one (41) were in attendance.

Don announced that Dave Sassman was taking over the role of Committee Coordinator. Dave will be trying to assist all committees in getting their committees to be more active. Dave stated there are six (6) committees of the MAVC, which function on their own. Each has their own chair and decide when they meet. The Committees are Homeless & Faith Based, Health & Wellness, Education & Employment, Legislative & Policy, Planning & Fund-Raising. There are two (2) present vacancies for committee chairs on the Public Relations Committee and the Planning & Fundraising Committee. If you have any interest in being a committee chair or being on any committee, please contact Dave.

Don stated that he has two (2) dates being held for the Mayors' Veteran's Appreciation Day Picnic at Garfield Park ---- June 8 and October 5, 2018. However, there is also the possibility of changing the site to the Marion County Fairgrounds. This site was suggested by Charlie Russell after seeing the larger facilities and improvements made there at the Helping Our Heroes of America Ride last summer. Don, Dave and Charlie went to the Fairgrounds and reviewed the facilities and suggested the move to the Fairgrounds due to indoor facility use with cooling system, six (6) indoor bathroom access, plenty of parking and also outdoor use of a paved area for the Car Show. Don also had to admit that Charlie was right!

Having a general consensus from the MACV participants, Don, Dave and Charlie will be going back to the Fairgrounds to look into dates and cost of use for a date sometime from mid-July to September. Don also stated his belief that the cost of using the Fairgrounds would most likely be less due to not having to rent the tents and the cost of tables is also less. Let Don know if you have other suggestions for a venue. They may also look at Stout Field. A signup sheet was passed around for those interested in assisting with the planning of this event. It is estimated a need for about \$2,00.00 to rent the Fairgrounds, have tables and chairs for vendors and use of ¼ of the Fairgrounds.

Don also relayed that the Mayor's office had asked the MACV to formalize the organization. Indiana Legal Organization did the legal paperwork for the organization. Due to the formalization of the group, there will be a need and cost for Director's Insurance. Seven (7) of the original organizers of the group signed the documents. The MACV has been criticized in the past, because the organizers are now all in their 70s. The need for younger people to bring fresh ideas and new input is requested. A request for those who want to be on a Steering Committee to assist in future plans was made and a signup sheet was sent around.

Next month's speaker will be Rachel Samples from CHIP. Other speakers are needed for future meetings. Several members volunteered and will get with Don: They were Better Business Bureau, Building Health Military, Brian Wilson, Marion County Veteran's Court, Indiana Metropolitan Military Honor Guard and Vocational Rehab.

Don urged all members to take a look at the new website. He believes it is more user friendly. It can be accessed by www.Veterans.ooo or www.VSC.ooo. **(NOTE: THE EXTENSIONS ARE LOWER CASE LETTER O AND NOT ZERO)**. The new website you will be able to send a contact form that will go to Don, Dave and Charlie. There will be a resource page for vendors for the picnic and they will be able to fill out the forms and pay on the website. Visitors to the website will also be able to click on different entities; go to their websites, have phone numbers and addresses, along with Google maps. When the dates of MACV events are confirmed, the dates and all information will be on the website.

Bonnie Wooten will be acting secretary. The minutes and a newsletter will soon be posted on the website. Our newsletter needs a name, so if you have suggestions, send them to Hawkins@vsc.ooo.

Jeff Piper of Veteran's Industry and Art (veteransindyart.com) brought "the Cool Bus" for tours. The bus is a mobile grocery whose target market is those on food stamps and those who reside in "food deserts". The bus is now serving the Riverside neighborhood and is sponsored by the City of Indianapolis and American Legion Post 34. It makes over 40 stops a month and provides healthy food choices with local sourcing. He is promoting "dirt therapy" through gardening for some of the veterans who find it difficult to work for someone and are homeless. Thus far, they have employed 2 veterans out of homelessness. He also has had an ad on the back of "Nuovo" for the past 7 years to provide help for those contemplating suicide. His organization is also interested in additional sponsors.

Mike Hamm of the Indiana Department of Veteran's Affairs (also VVA) spoke about the allegations about the Department recently in the news. The Director, Jim Brown, resigned effective December 28, 2018 because he felt he was being a distraction. Although Mike could not make any official statement, he relayed that the agency was operating "as close to normal as possible". As for the Military Family Relief Fund, Mike stated he did not believe there was anything criminal going on. No successor has been named and Matt Vincent is the Acting Director.

Mike Clark of Rolling Thunder No. 1 informed the group that 2019 will be the final national Ride for Freedom and demonstration in Washington, D.C. He stated that beginning in 2020, each individual state will have their own ride to honor and remember their POWs/MIAs.

Jill Fewell of veteranevents.org relayed that the MACV can still share events on her webpage. Jill announced that a design has been approved the Indiana Gold

Star Family Monument. It is hoped groundbreaking can begin in April or May. Jill also stated that Dr. Doty Simpson-Taylor of the Sister Soldier Network was recently given the Jefferson Award for her work with female veterans.

Ron Sukenick of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) announced that the Vet Center building, in which they meet, along with several other organizations, is in need of repairs to the roofing and HVAC system. They are looking for someone who would do the repairs at cost. Anyone interested should contact Ron. (Ron is also one of 25 national speakers approved by the DOD)

Reese Morgan of the American Legion announced that William Harvey was recently laid to rest. It is the belief that that he was the last surviving Indiana Veteran who served in Pearl Harbor.

Mike Stephens from the Veteran's Benefits Administration brought in several out of state partners who were in town for a meeting. He also announced that the Regional Office is still hiring.

Hal Johnson of the Veteran's Court announced that they have officially moved to the 4th floor of the East Wing of the City County building.

Charlie Russell, Chair of Committee of Employment & Education wants to provide materials for a Vet Resource Center and is requesting members of the MACV to give him materials and phone numbers. He also indicated that there are 17 agencies in Marion County that claim to place veterans for employment. He also wants to find out who does the better job. The Morales Group was suggested.

Additionally, Charlie had insisted on doing computer sign-in to better keep track of members coming to the meetings and their contact information. Since he started keeping track in October of 2016, 212 different people have come to the meetings, of that number 52 come 33% of the time, and 20 come 66% of the time.

Cathy Lee-Sellers, Asst. Director of VA Roudebush Medical Center announced that VA is fully funded for 2019. She also indicated that VA ranked 6 out of 16 Federal agencies as the best place to work for 2018.

As the meeting is fast paced, my apologies if I have omitted anyone or something important.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Wooten, Acting Secretary