

Utah Veterans Advisory Council
Minutes of Monthly Meeting
March 20th, 2024

Place: Zoom online meeting

Members Present: Marti Bigbie, Gary Harter, Chris Holly, James Patten, Bob Pagnani, Dave Phillips, Ninzel Rasmuson, Paula Stephenson, Angela Williams

Excused: Heath Silcox

Secretary: Alan Ferner

Guests: Katie Fry, Jennica Gruver, Jeff Hanson, Cory Pearson, Taylor Ricks

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM by Bob Pagnani. Bob introduced and welcomed those in attendance. This was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. The minutes of our 17 January meeting were reviewed and approved by the members of the Council.
3. Katie Fry gave a presentation on “Warrior Revival,” an organization established to support and empower Veterans and their families transition from the military to civilian life through recreation, mentorship, wellness, and therapeutic retreats. The website is www.warrior-revival.org
4. VA Regional Office: Chris Holly summarized the status of claims this fiscal year. The VA is on track to completing 2.6 million claims, including 1.1 million Pact Act claims. Chris stated that hiring continues to be a challenge. The hiring process is taking a long time, partly because wages are falling behind other options for potential employees.
5. VA Medical Center: Angela Williams reported that the 8 March grand opening of the new St. George Clinic was highly successful. Angela also provided information on the August 2024 National Veterans Golden Age Games, adding that registration is now in progress.
6. Utah Dept. Veterans & Military Affairs: Gary Harter reminded us that the Utah legislative session ended on 1 March.

Jeff Hanson reported that the 4 Utah Veterans Nursing Homes are operating at a 95% occupancy. All 4 Homes are in good financial condition. They also all have 5-star ratings. The new SLC Home is in the design/development stage, which is near completion. Construction will begin upon federal funding, probably next year. The Veterans Cemetery is averaging approximately 40 internments per month: 73% Veterans and 27% spouses and dependent children. There are several ongoing projects. Construction on the National Cemetery in Cedar City should start this year.

Cory Pearson reviewed the “Honoring Women Veterans” event which took place on 15 March. Cory reminded us of “Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day” on 29 March. Cory then provided a summary of the recent legislative session results. Cory also updated us on the Governor’s Suicide Prevention Program.

Taylor Ricks advised that planning has started for Memorial Day activities.

Jennica Gruver stated that April is “Military Child Month.” (Wear purple on 19 April.)

7. Bob Pagnani announced that the Annual Golf Tournament is planned for 16 May. (more to come) Also, planning has begun for a softball game.
8. The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM by Bob Pagnani. Our next monthly meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 17th at 4:00 PM, via Zoom online.