

Utah Veterans Advisory Council
Minutes of Monthly Meeting
May 15th, 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: David Busk, Jennica Gruver, Jeff Hanson, Taylor Ricks

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:01 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 April meeting were reviewed and approved by the members of the Council.
3. VA Regional Office: Chris Holly reported that the Pact Act claims grant rate is running at about 75% Nationally and 77.6% for Utah. Also, Utah claims have averaged 164 days to completion, which is a 24% improvement over last year. Chris then explained the Home Loan Retention Program. He also advised that hiring continues.
4. VA Medical Center: Angela Williams summarized recent activities at the VAMC. She noted that the recent Town Hall in Price was well attended. Angela then provided information on the August 2024 National Veterans Golden Age Games and expressed the need for 2000 volunteers.
5. Utah Dept. Veterans & Military Affairs: Gary Harter introduced David Busk, who will be joining the Utah Veterans and Military Affairs Commission, representing DWS. Gary also advised of the Veterans Cemetery plans for Memorial Day. HAFB has an Air Show scheduled for 29-30 June. Gary discussed the recent Veterans and Military Affairs Commission meeting.

Jeff Hanson reported that the 4 Utah Veterans Nursing Homes are operating at a 97% occupancy, serving 403 residents. Memorial Day events are planned for all 4 Homes. 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 in great shape; more than 8,000 flags will be placed on Memorial Day. Construction on the National Cemetery in Cedar City should start this year.

Taylor Ricks reviewed the AMVETS visit to SLC on 8 May, as part of a Western Regional trip for Suicide Prevention. Taylor also reported on the recent Veterans Business Conference.

Taylor Ricks advised that planning is in progress for Memorial Day activities. The Governor will speak at the 27 May event at the State Capitol. Also, on 17 May there will be the “Service Member of the Year” award, and 18 May is Armed Forces Day.

6. Ninzel Rasmuson announced that the Utah Dept. American Legion Convention will be held on 21 thru 23 June.
7. Bob Pagnani reminded us that the Annual Golf Tournament will take place on 16 May (tomorrow.)
8. The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM by Bob Pagnani. Our next monthly meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 17th at 4:00 PM, via Zoom online. Note: The 19 June meeting was cancelled due to scheduling conflicts.