

Utah Veterans Advisory Council
Minutes of Monthly Meeting
August 20th, 2025

Place: Zoom online meeting

Members Present: Marti Bigbie, Laurie Charry, Gary Harter, Dave Phillips, Steve Prestwich, John Robertson, Paula Stephenson, Angela Williams

Excused: Chris Holly, Bob Pagnani

Secretary: Alan Ferner

Guests: Nina Alvarez, Nancy Espinosa, Jennica Gruver, Jeff Hanson, Cory Pearson, Laurie Wynn

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:02 PM by Paula Stephenson. Paula introduced and welcomed those in attendance. This was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. The minutes of our 16 July meeting were reviewed and approved by the members of the Council.
3. VA Regional Office: No report.
4. VA Medical Center: Angela Williams advised that a recent visit from the Joint Accreditation Committee resulted in an “excellent” report. Angela then reported on the status of several construction projects. She added that the new Elko clinic will be opening soon. Angela announced several Town Halls that are planned for September. Flu shots will be available starting on 17 September.
5. Utah Dept. Veterans & Military Affairs: Gary Harter provided a summary of the 18 August Veterans and Military Affairs Commission meeting. Gary also advised that Laurie Wynn will be the new Communication and Marketing Director for the Dept.

Jeff Hanson summarized the status of the four Utah Veteran Nursing Homes. The four Homes are at 96% occupancy. He then reported that the grant application to expand the cemetery columbarium has been approved and expects funding in fy26 or fy27. The National Cemetery Administration will be visiting for an inspection in September. Federal funding for the new SLC Home is probably a few years out.

Cory Pearson updated us on the Governor’s Suicide Prevention Program. The first “Mission Ready” event took place on 18 July. September is Suicide Prevention Month. VSOs continue to be very busy with 584 claims processed in July. Cory advised that Sept 11th will be Patriot’s Day at the State Fair – free admission for Veterans on that day.

Laurie Wynn announced that there will be a recognition event on 6 November for centenarian Veterans. To be held at the Capitol Rotunda, this will be for Veterans that are 99 and above.

6. Steve Prestwich reported on the DAV National Convention.
7. John Robertson had very favorable comments about the 18 July “Mission Ready” event.
8. Paula Stephenson advised of progress on developing an Honor Guard contact list. She asked that the DAV, VFW, and American Legion send Honor Guard contact info to Bob Pagnani’s email, providing name, cell phone, email, and city/area they cover.
9. The meeting was adjourned at 4:43 PM by Paula Stephenson. Our next monthly meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 17th at 4:00 PM, via Zoom online.