

**Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)
National Advisory Committee (NAC) Executive Committee (EC) Meeting
Tuesday, September 22, 2020 – 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Call to Order: John Kleindienst, National Representative for the Disabled American Veterans and Executive Committee (EC) Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Mr. Kleindienst shared the “housekeeping rules” for the committee first-ever virtual meeting.

Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance: Charles Gallina, National Representative for the Knights of Columbus, gave the invocation, and EC Chairperson Kleindienst led participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Opening Remarks & Agenda Review/Calls for Revisions: There were no proposed revisions to the agenda.

Roll Call: Executive Committee attendance was duly recorded as follows, with 60 individuals for total attendance:

Present (P)/ Absent (A)

Service Member Organizations

American Gold Star Mothers	P	
The American Legion	P	
American Legion Auxiliary	P	
American Red Cross	P	
AMVETS	P	
AMVETS Auxiliary	P	
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks	P	
Blinded Veterans Association		A
Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.	P	
Disabled American Veterans	P	
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary		A
Forty & Eight	P	
Jewish War Veterans of the USA		A
Knights of Columbus	P	
Korean War Veterans Association		A
Marine Corps League		A
Marine Corps League Auxiliary	P	
Masonic Service Association of North America		A
Military Order of the Cootie		A
Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary		A
Military Order of the Purple Heart Auxiliary		A
Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.		A
Military Women Across the Nation	P	
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution	P	
National Society Sons of the American Revolution		A
Paralyzed Veterans of America	P	
Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.		A

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Soldiers' Angels	P	
Sons of the American Legion	P	
The Salvation Army	P	
United Daughters of the Confederacy		A
United Veterans Services	P	
Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary	P	
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P	
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.		A

Associate Service Member Organizations

Corporation for National and Community Service		A
Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, (1861-1865)		A
Fleet Reserve Association	P	
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.		A
I.B.P.O.E. of the World, Inc.		A
Ladies Auxiliary, Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.		A
National Society U.S. Daughters of 1812		A
Women's Army Corps Veterans' Association	P	

Donor Member Organizations

The Bowlers to Veterans Link (BVL), Inc.		A
Veterans Voices Writing Project, Inc.	P	

Strategic Engagement Members

Home of the Brave	P	
Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.	P	
YMCA of the USA		A

Honorary Members

Ladies Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association		A
National Ladies Auxiliary, Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A., Inc.		A
Sons of AMVETS		A
The Silver Star Families of America		A
Women Marines Association	P	

VA and Other Staff Present:

- Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D. Director/NAC Designated Federal Officer, VA Voluntary Service, VA Central Office
- Jeffrey Moragne, Director, VA Advisory Committee Management Office, VA Central Office
- Mary Barcikowski, Administrative Officer/NAC Meeting Planner, VA Voluntary Service, VA Central Office
- Tony Burtley, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA Voluntary Service, VA Central Office
- Tyrone Green, Program Specialist, VA Voluntary Service, VA Central Office
- Virginia Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA Voluntary Service, VA Central Office

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- CarolAnn Miragliuolo, Senior Advisor, VA Voluntary Service, VA Central Office
- Prince Taylor, Deputy Director, VA Voluntary Service, VA Central Office
- Elizabeth Cazares, Voluntary Service Specialist/NAC Meeting Planner, South Texas Veterans Health Care System
- Christopher Slawinski, Treasurer, James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board
- Lawrence Kelly, Treasurer, VAVS Partners, Inc.
- Karen O'Neal, Chief, Voluntary Service, Erie VA Medical Center, and Co-Chair, Partnership Subcommittee
- Karinne Davidson, Chief, Voluntary Service, Fargo VA Health Care System
- William Ball, Chief, Voluntary Service & Hospitality, Palo Alto VA Healthcare System
- Indira Subramanian, MD, Southwest Parkinson Disease Research, Education and Clinical Care Director (PADRECC) Parkinson Center of Excellence, Clinical Professor, UCLA, Department of Neurology

Goals and Objectives: EC Chairperson Kleindienst read the following goals and objectives for the 74th Annual VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) NAC Meeting and Conference to the participants:

- Provide the VAVS NAC an opportunity to conduct its business in a manner that assures achievement of all responsibilities mandated by its charter.
- Provide NAC orientation to new local and national VAVS Representatives and Deputies and VAVS staff.
- Present to all member organization representatives an overview of current and pending VAVS policies and procedures.
- Foster full and open communications among the member organizations, their representatives, and the Voluntary Service Central Office and field staff.
- Provide the NAC member organizations with the educational and training programs designed to share information geared towards improving volunteer programs with special emphasis on methods to recruit, retain, motivate, and recognize volunteers.
- Furnish the NAC member organizations the opportunity to hear from VA leadership concerning key issues within the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Arrange for the NAC review of, and action on, recommendations.
- Honor the national recipient of the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award, **Danielle Nam**, student volunteer, VA Palo Alto Health Care System, Palo Alto, California.
- Recognize **H. Lee Davis**, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, VA Maryland Health Care System as the NAC Male Volunteer of the Year and **Sandra Carter**, Soldiers' Angels, South Texas Veterans Health Care System, as the NAC Female Volunteer of the Year.
- Recognize **Tammy Finney**, Chief, Community Relations & Engagement, Columbia VA Health Care System, Columbia, South Carolina, as the recipient of the Voluntary Service Award for Excellence.
- Recognize the following award recipients of the American Spirit Awards: **Jennifer Conzemius**, Chief, Voluntary Service, Tomah VA Medical Center, for Civic Organization Recruitment; **Rachael Childress**, Voluntary Service

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Specialist, VA Maryland Health Care System, for Corporate Recruitment; **Craig Doane**, Chief, Voluntary Service, Charles George VA Medical Center, for Senior Recruitment; **Joyce Kuwae**, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA Maryland Health Care System, for Faith-Based Organization Recruitment; and **Nicole Ogburn**, Emergency Room Nurse Manager, Durham VA Health Care System, as Volunteer Supervisor of the Year.

Additions/Revisions to Minutes of the EC Meeting Held May 2019: There being no proposed additions or revisions, Ron Rolfes, Forty & Eight, moved to approve the May 2019 EC meeting minutes, as submitted. Pam Schweitzer, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Video Presentation: A video presentation from Robert Wilke, Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs was shown to the members. This Public Service Announcement to VA's Advisory Committees. Referenced the impact of COVID-19 globally, and how it transformed the way the VA (we) conduct business; however, with all the challenges, we have never lost sight of our commitment and service to our Veterans. Also, addressing the following topics: VA's Goals, Mission, and Top 5- Priorities: Customer Service, Implementation of the Mission Act, Electronic Health Record, Transforming our Business Systems, and Zero Suicide through proactive preventions. Also, spoke about Vets trust increase in the VA Health Care system to 90%, and improved quality healthcare in the areas of rural and women health, and the increase in telehealth services.

Advisory Committee Management Office Report: Jeffrey Moragne presented Federal Advisory Committee (FACA) Act 101. This included:

What is FACA? Is a Federal Statue that governs the establishment, termination and management of Federal Advisory Committees (FAC). Enacted to promote openness and transparency and accountability to regulate the number and duration of FACs.

When it applies? To all groups with at least one non-Federal employee established or utilized by an agency to obtain service or recommendations, unless an exception applies.

FAC Requirements:

- A signed and filed charter
- A designated federal officer (DFO)
- Public meetings announced in the Federal Register 15 days in advance with an agenda
- Balanced membership
- Records maintained and available for public inspection

Mr. Moragne highlighted the signed and filed charter and its importance. He asked each member to make sure that take time to review the charter and its contents.

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NAC was different from other VA FACs in that it had a unique charter. Its membership is composed of VSO representatives who could speak openly about the value of their organizations. The charter allowed VSOs to fund NAC events and activities during the Committee's meeting.

What constitutes a FAC meeting/closed meeting?

- A Published Federal Register Notice of Meeting
- A Designated Federal Officer (DFO)
- Meets in-person, virtual or through tele- and video-conference, and provides advice or recommendations
- A Quorum
- An Approved Agenda

A question came up regarding what a quorum is. He let the group know that a quorum rules applies to the parent committee and that at else 50% plus one of the organizational memberships must be in attendance.

What constitutes a "closed" meeting?

May be closed in whole or part under limited circumstances to the public:

- Discussing Trade Secrets
- Personal Information
- Criminal Matters

Three Common Exemptions:

- Discussion of Classified Information
- Reviews of Proprietary Data – Federal Grant Applications
- Deliberations involving Personal Privacy

All requests to close a meeting must go through Mr. Moragne's office. He in turn with submit the request to the Office of General Counsel for approval to close the meeting.

Can FACs meet privately?

There are two types of work that can be performed without a public meeting.

- *Preparatory Work*: To gather information, conduct research, analyze relevant issues, facts in preparation for a FAC meeting or to draft papers for deliberation by FAC
- *Administrative Work*: To discuss administrative matters of the FAC

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What are “Administrative” Calls?

- Conduct FACA 101 Sessions
- Conduct Ethics Training Sessions
- Provide/Obtain the SGE Self-Certification Statements from Members
- Review, discuss, complete Financial Disclosures Form 450s
- Vendorize Committee Members in VA Systems
- Discuss Research
- Finalize Meeting Agenda
- Finalize Travel Plans
- Finalize Meeting Logistics

Can Committee Members testify/speak on Federal Advisory Committee matters?

Committee members could testify or speak on FAC matters only in their personal capacity. They were expected to clarify that they were providing their personal opinion and not speaking on behalf of VA or the FAC. If you do get an opportunity to speak officially in front of a legislative body or testimony, please contact your DFO, Sabrina Clark.

VA FAC Best Practices:

- Mastering the Committee Calendar
- Understanding the role of a Committee member
- More effective use of Subcommittees
- Dedicating meeting time for Committee discussion
- Cross-committee collaboration
- Using the SMART template to craft recommendations
- Using VA Library Services for data and information services
- Engaging subject matter experts
- Conducting annual field visits
- Consulting the DFO on FACA guidance

The Evolution of VAVS: Dr. Sabrina Clark outlined VAVS’ response to COVID-19 and how VAVS completely shifted/transformed in the way we are going about engaging with volunteers and community partners. This transformation happened quickly and has never been done before. We have engaged with different partners and many have come long and spun with us. Organizations steps in to support our frontline staff by providing meals that were never before allowed. Between March 2020 and now we have received over \$25 million in gifts and donations just for COVID-19. You never stopped doing the other things to support our Veterans. It has been amazing to watch field staff make that shift, as well. We have had our challenges with declining numbers but what does that really mean. More is not better, better is better. We are doing our best and better work that has never been done before. We created a “White Paper” from interviews with VA leadership, staff and volunteers. This is what best looks like

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despite the numbers. The impact out weights these numbers. You have never stopped showing up for our Veterans.

A Synergy of Pandemics: Suicide, Loneliness, Parkinson and COVID-19 in Veterans/Compassionate Contact Corps: Dr. Indira Subramanian discussed the synergy of pandemics and what we know about our Veterans. She provided statistic that have evolved during these pandemics. She defined each pandemic, the impact on Veterans health, the treatments available, and tips for clinicians. Prince Taylor discussed the VAVS Compassionate Contact Corps to include why it was created and how it works in relation to the pandemics that Dr. Subramanian discussed. Both offered their services to anyone interested in discussing further and/or assistance with writing articles or blogs for newsletters and websites to increase awareness. They shared the following resources of how they are getting the word out through VA resources.

- VA TED Talk
- COVID-in-20
- <http://parkinsonsecrets.com/blog/2020/9/14/the-pandemic-of-loneliness-a-pandemic-within-pandemics>
- <https://www.pmdalliance.org/social-distancing-coronavirus/>
- <https://www.neurologylive.com/view/indu-subramanian-md-social-prescribing-for-patients-with-parkinson-disease>

VAVS Partners, Inc. Treasurer's Report: Lawrence Kelly reported the following balance sheet, as of September 17, 2020:

Income Statement as of 09/17/2020	
Income	\$33,181.67
Supplies	\$1,171.19
Fees	\$10.00
Travel	\$17,197.23
Bank Charges	\$714.04
Accounting Fees	\$250.00
Refunds	\$18,817.00
Total Expenses	\$38,159.46
Balance 10/01/2019	\$58,375.29
Income	\$33,181.67
Expenses	\$(38,159.46)
Balance 09/17/2020	\$53,397.50

Mr. Kelly shared with the group that VAVS Partners, Inc. and VAVS will be holding a meeting on September 30, 2020, with the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to discuss the confirmation or cancellation of the 74th Annual VAVS NAC Meeting & Conference.

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VAVS/VAVS Partners, Inc. Memorandum of Agreement (MOA): On behalf of Kevin Stanford, National Outreach Coordinator for VAVS/VA Central Office, Dr. Clark shared with the group that a MOA is currently being developed between VAVS and VAVS Partners, Inc. This is a result of the recent issues around the hotel contract, VAVS and VAVS Partners, Inc. for the 74th Annual VAVS NAC Meeting & Conference, which was to be held this past spring in San Antonio, Texas. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was cancelled. The hotel was reluctant to honor the Force Majeure clause in the contract. We found out that without the MOA in place, VA's Office of General Counsel was not able to offer legal support. In an effort to ensure that legal support is available, a MOA is being prepared to provide this support. A copy will be forwarded to VAVS Partners, Inc. for their review prior to moving forward for official signatures.

Parke Board Update: Chris Slawinski reported that the stock market has been up and down this year but fortunately the Parke scholarship funds are in a conservative growth portfolio with increased \$134,000 this year. The current balance is \$1,351,248. Donations are down this year with receiving \$11,195 from 6 donors, as compared to \$14,500 last year. Fifteen scholarships in the amount of \$39,000 were awarded, with 8 of those being for summer youth volunteers in the amount of \$500 each. This year \$22,500 has been paid out in scholarships. He congratulated Danielle Nam, Palo Alto VA Healthcare System, for being the top 2020 scholarship winner. Ms. Nam plans on attending Harvard University, but has chosen not to attend this fall due to COVID-19. John P. Brown, III, President, Parke Memorial Fund Board is working on a process for the chiefs to submit their applications/nominations on pdf fillable form to a designated email address, Parkescholarship@amvets.org. Donations are still being accepted throughout the year. You can mail them directly to:

Parke Board
c/o Chris Slawinski
125 N West Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dr. Clark asked a question on how the process works. Mr. Slawinski informed the group that after the selection is made, a form letter is sent to the awardee with a verification of enrollment form with instructions. This form is to be completed by the university/college and return to the AMVETS Headquarters in Maryland for processing. Once received, Mr. Slawinski or Mr. Brown will process the check and forward it on to the university/college on how the funds are to be used.

Voluntary Service System (VSS) Report 2020 & VSS Update: Virginia Hoover shared with the group the third quarter reports have been posted on the NAC website - <https://www.volunteer.va.gov/NAC.asp>. If anyone needs additional information, she asks that you either contact her or Tony Burtley. For fiscal year (FY) 2020 reports, the cycle ends on September 30, 2020, with a 14-day window (October 14th) to enter all additional information by FY 2020. If you have additional information that you believe

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needs to be entered, please check with your local facility's Voluntary Service office. All FY 2020 reports will be available on October 15th.

Annual Joint Reviews (AJR), by policy, are done by a schedule for each organization. The local VAVS Representative is responsible for scheduling their AJR meeting to review their statistics on their designated month. You cannot schedule your AJR on a date prior to your scheduled month.

Ms. Hoover provided an update on VSS. She continues to work with the Office of Information & Technology on the multi-year plan process for a 5-year span. Unfortunately, VSS is not getting prioritized for funding. So VAVS is looking down another path working with our Contact Center Product Line, which also includes the Veterans Crisis Line. We are looking to move into an application of "No Code Low Code," which is cloud based, easier to develop and maintain, and costs less. We will be combining VSS and VolunteerNow with the hopes of getting funded next fiscal year. This is part of the VA Secretary's Modernization priority, taking two legacy applications and combining them into one.

VAVS Position Description Modernization Project Update: CarolAnn Miragliuolo serves as the project lead for the VAVS Position Description Modernization Project, which includes eight Chiefs from the field who are subject matters experts. They are adopting a baseline organizational structure to include standardized position descriptions for the Chief, Assistant Chief, Voluntary Service Specialist, and Program Assistant/Assistant Specialist. These positions will represent our future state for the VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement. This is the new proposed title for Voluntary Service. The rollout of the new name and the Chief's position description will occur at the same time. The baseline Chief's position description has been classified at a baseline level GS-12. If a facility has additional responsibilities that need to be added to the position description, they will need to work with their local Human Resources Office to have this position description reclassified. The project team has been working diligently to ensure that this project gets to the completed stage. Unfortunately, the Office of Workforce Management and Consulting team has had staff turnover. We have been assured that a new team will be assigned to us in the near future. The project team is working towards a standardized profession with Voluntary Service, nationally. This will be good for the program overall.

Progress-to-Date:

- Position Description for GS-12 Voluntary Service Chief has been classified but will not be shared until the project is complete.
- Voluntary Service Specialist position description to be submitted for classified this week. Assistance Chief and Voluntary Service Specialist position descriptions may have some overlap responsibility.
- VACO VAVS team to meet with the Governor's Board and Field Leadership to discuss this project.

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Joseph Dooley, United Veterans Services, reported that the Recommendations Subcommittee put forth four Recommendations to bring forward to the Executive Committee, two from the Benevolent & Protective Order of the Elks, one from the Blue Star Mothers and one from United Veterans Services. These recommendations addressed enhanced communication, excused absences, position classification and onboarding processes. The Executive Committee concurred in principle with moving these Recommendations forward to the full Advisory Committee at their meeting scheduled for May 2020 in San Antonio.

The NAC Meeting scheduled for May 2020 was cancelled due to the COVID pandemic. The committee recommended that these four Recommendations be submitted at the NAC meeting scheduled for May 2021 in Michigan. We also recommend sending out a "Call for Recommendations" following this September 2020 NAC Conference call.

The Recommendations Subcommittee greatly appreciates the efforts of the Elks, Blue Star Mothers and United Veterans Services in submitting Recommendations. We remain committed to accepting, evaluating and enhancing potential Recommendations that are congruent with VA and VHA priorities. The SECVA's top 5 Priorities involve Customer Service, Implementation of the Mission Act, Electronic Health Record, Transforming our Business Systems and Getting to Zero regarding Suicide Prevention. The four Recommendations submitted so far this year would enhance customer service, transform an onboarding system and build trust between veterans, volunteers and staff.

We deferred on developing a Recommendation related to position classification as there is currently a VAVS staff group working with Workforce Management and Consulting to develop a standardized position description. This topic was identified as a concern to the Deputy Secretary during the fall EC meeting.

Mr. Dooley submitted his resignation as the Chair of the Recommendations Subcommittee. He has served in this capacity for more than three years and feel it is time for new chairmanship. It has been an extreme pleasure for him to serve as the Chair of the Recommendations Subcommittee for this time period. A recommendation was put forth to have Anne Parker, Blue Star Mothers, assume the responsibilities of the Chair for this subcommittee.

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Charles Gallina, Knights of Columbus, congratulated the 2020 Volunteers of the Year, H. Lee Davis, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, VA Maryland Health Care System as the NAC Male Volunteer of the Year & Sandra Carter, Soldiers' Angels, South Texas Veterans Health Care System, as the NAC Female Volunteer of the Year. He pointed out the getting complete packages lead to the making the final selections very close. The packages contained substantiating information which allowed the committee to select the individuals with ease. The 2021 Volunteer of the Year Call Letter went out this month, with a deadline of December 31, 2020, and will only be accepted electronically via email. Applications submitted after that date will not

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be considered. Mr. Gallina asked that you pay close attention to your submission forms. A better recommendation leads to a better chance of being selected. The committee looks forward to nominations for 2021.

Recruitment: Vicki Sarracino, Soldiers' Angels, reported that a document was recreated in April 2020 to help with recruitment, which included how to revamp your approach with motivation, where are volunteers hiding, strategies, and creating visible opportunities. Volunteer recruitment initiatives are very important during this everchanging environment. We need to make sure that we are serving our Veterans and the VA. People asked how can we do this during the pandemic? She suggested that each organization gather information and welcome ideas from their volunteers, and have volunteers help with recruitment and research. Research out to your local VA to see what programs are opening up and what are their needs. Follow up with your local VA to make sure that your organization's hours are being recorded and are correct. We know the numbers are down and the reason why. Be creative! If you need assistance with recruitment, feel free to contact Ms. Sarracino.

Membership: Mary Morgan, Benevolent & Protective Orders of the Elks and EC Vice Chairperson, reported that the National Advisory Committee had seven categories of membership: Service Member, Associate Service Member, Donor Member, Associate Donor Member, Adjunct Member, Strategic Engagement Member and Honorary Member.

Team River Runner and Warrior Rising have committed to join the NAC. Due to the pandemic, these organizations have asked that their membership be postponed until they are able to make a full commitment.

The Mission Continues, Student Veterans of America and Mission BBQ are interested in joining the NAC but are not ready to commit to the invitation.

Updates to NAC Membership Listings: Tony Burtley welcomed all new NAC representatives and deputy representatives. He shared that there were no changes to support the 53 organizations within the NAC. He asked that everyone make sure that they review the monthly updated membership listing to ensure that your information is correct, especially email addresses.

Partnership: Karen O'Neil referred to the VAVS Position Description Modernization Project Update that Ms. Miragliuolo provided. A recommendation for a standardized in-kind donation value listing will move forward and submitted on the SMART Recommendations Template:

NAC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Revisions: Patricia Kranzow, American Legion Auxiliary, mentioned that the NAC meetings will be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order and a quorum to hold an EC and/or NAC meeting should be at least 50 percent of membership in attendance.

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She proposed revision the following revision to the SOP:

- Add a statement regarding electronic meetings with suggested verbiage – “When an emergency occurs as a pandemic, the EC and NAC Meetings may be held through electronic means.”

The EC passed a motion to recommend these changes to the NAC. Ms. Kranzow moved the adoption of the EC recommendation to make the proposed changes to the SOP. Benevolent & Protective Order of the Elks seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Clark shared with the group that she spoke with Mr. Moragne regarding the quorum. She verified with him that the meeting is actually a subcommittee meeting of the EC. We will share all notes and recordings with the full body of the NAC for their review and approval, giving them several days for questions and/or comments. We will then meet all the requirements of the meeting to accept or reject that the annual NAC meeting has occurred and carried out by the EC.

Unfinished Business: There was no unfinished business.

2021 NAC Considerations: Todd Desgrosseilliers, Project Healing Waters, recommended to the group that the 75th NAC Meeting & Conference be held virtually. His recommendation comes from the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the risks and expense, and the uncertainty of where we will be in May 2021. The EC passed a motion to hold a Virtual 75th NAC Meeting & Conference. Project Healing Waters seconded the motion. The motion passed with 17 Yes, 1 No, and 9 Abstained.

VAVS 75th Anniversary: Mary Barcikowski shared with the group that there has been a subcommittee created to work on the 75th VAVS Anniversary, in conjunction with VHA’s 75th Anniversary. This group consists of VA staff and VAVS Partners, Inc. The subcommittee has met and has been working on being creative to have an eventful virtual experience. More information will be sharing as they move forward with planning this virtual event. Dr. Clark provided an overview of the Good Listening Project that was initially intended for our VAVS Chiefs to put their stories in a book of poetry. The Good Listening Project group listens to your conversation for about 20 minutes and then creates a poem. Dr. Clark would like to capture the organizations stores. If you are interested, you may contact her at Sabrina.Clark@va.gov. EC Chair John Kleindienst shared his experience and the poem written from his conversation.

VAVS/NAC Awards Updates: Tyrone Green reported that the Volunteer of the Year and Parke Awards are now going to be submitted electronically and email communication on the receipt of these awards will be going back to the submitter. We are moving the Spirit and Excellence Award to an electronic platform, as well.

New Business:

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EC Committee Appointments: EC Chairperson Kleindienst made the following appointments to the EC Committee, with an extension of 1-year term for all members:

- Remove YMCA of the USA
- Add Knights of Columbus

Subcommittee Appointments:

Recommendations Subcommittee will consist Anne Parker, Blue Star Mothers, as Chair, with Joseph Dooley, Melvin Brown, and Amy Palmer as members.

Volunteer of the Year Subcommittee will retain Charles Gallina as the Chair, with John Kleindienst and Ron Rolfes serving as members.

Recruitment Subcommittee will retain Vicki Sarracino as Chair, with Katie Bowen, Julie Myers and Chris Slawinski serving as members.

Membership Subcommittee will retain Mary Morgan as chair, with Ruth Walters and Sandra Kriebel serving as members.

The Partnership Subcommittee will consist of Ron Rolfes and Karen O'Neal co-chairs, with Todd Desgrosseilliers, Melissa Heinlein, Charles Gallina, and Nathan Witt serving as members.

EC Quarterly Teleconference Schedule: Mr. Burtley will notify the group with the schedule and subsequent agenda prior to the new fiscal year's meetings, which will be held virtually. He mentioned education opportunities for committee members and asked the group to send him recommendations via email at Tony.Burtley@va.gov.

NAC Quarterly Educational Updates: Dr. Clark asked the group how we can stay engaged and bring some educational programs to you to keep you engaged. She mentioned the Whole Health Seminars, with little participation but those who participated got a lot out of it. She asked how we can ensure the information is getting passed along, ensuring the growth and development of the organizations Representatives and Deputy Representatives. You may forward any recommendations to Mr. Burtley.

VAVS: The Next Generation: Virtual Assignments: Karinne and William

Karinne Davidson was asked to discuss Voluntary Service's path forward, with the process in analyzing volunteer readiness as it pertains to returning to work and discuss some virtual, hybrid or even new COVID related volunteer positions. Ms. Davidson's station served as the VISN 23 pilot site for our "reopening," or return to in-person outpatient appointments. They needed to get a better idea of what her volunteers comfort levels with returning to work were. So, taking the pulse of our volunteers was a very important first step before they could even think about creating a volunteer

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reintegration plan and approach leadership for approval of that plan. It was very important for her to have a general idea of how many volunteers were even willing to return. The last thing they wanted to do was overpromise volunteer assistance to leadership or conversely, it would have been very detrimental to assume volunteers were not willing to assist.

Her facility put out a survey asking very simple questions.

- How comfortable are you with returning to your volunteer role immediately, within 6 months, after a vaccine, never, etc.?
- How comfortable are you with returning knowing the new Personal Protective Equipment, or PPE, that will be required within the medical center?
- How comfortable are you with working in a new or modified assignment based on COVID precautions? Things will look different in this new COVID world, right?
- Are you able to change your shift, increase the length of your shift to conserve PPE, rather than two volunteers working 4 hour shifts and using two sets of PPE, can one volunteer cover those duties? Can you be flexible with your availability?

It was important to think about how they could adjust important positions to still have an impact on Veterans, while simultaneously reducing face-to-face interactions. Some good examples of virtual volunteer positions include the Compassionate Contact Corps. Other examples of virtual volunteer programs could include appointment reminder calls, and not just normal reminder calls, this may be even more important in the era of COVID because PPE and precautions are continuously changing. Using volunteers to communicate those precautions to Veterans, allowing the Veteran to receive a personal phone call explaining the process. It can reduce any anxiety the Veteran may be feeling when preparing for their face-to-face appointment

Something think about, can volunteers help with the creation of promotional materials, brochures, pamphlets, articles that can be passed through public affairs for social media content? During our COVID outpatient/volunteer “shutdown,” they created interesting articles about high need volunteer assignments that could be used for recruitment via social media and our website. While at that time they were not recruiting for some of these positions due to COVID, they stood prepared with a substantial pool of stories to quickly pull from when they fully opened recruitment back up. Think about whether your service organization has talented volunteers who could help in a similar role.

PTSD Peer Mentor Volunteer positions can also be conducted virtually. These volunteers are successful Veteran graduates of the PTSD treatment program. They can make proactive support calls to Veterans who are struggling with the same issues they have successfully overcome.

Fundraising and solicitation are another way Volunteers and service organizations can virtually assist Veterans at the VA. These are all ways your volunteers can assist the medical center from a safe distance.

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They found that creating these virtual assignments was also a wonderful way to fully engage volunteers who were maybe only coming to the facility once or twice a month for recreation events and due to COVID precautions, could no longer be involved in their assignment. This group of volunteers really seemed to appreciate receiving a personal phone call from us.

As the facilities move through their new COVID world, the look and feel of Voluntary Service and how we utilize our volunteers within the medical center certainly looks different and may even continue to change. For those of you who are residing in lower risk areas, your facilities may already be bringing back a few essential volunteer positions or perhaps they have been asked to fill certain essential needs created by the pandemic. What they have found is that often these new and existing needs can be filled through the creation of new or hybrid positions. In other words, pulling the very essential duties from multiple positions and kind of rolling them into one.

Due to our advanced preparation and having those survey results at the ready, they were able to fill this critical position with 28 volunteers in less than a week, where sites who chose to hire employees for this role are working through an extensive temp. employee hiring process which can be lengthy and it can be expensive.

What works for one facility may not work for every facility. You, as a volunteer, need to consider the COVID activity in your area, your comfort level with returning and of course the advice and approval of your Chief of Voluntary Service and your facility's infection control and leadership teams.

Voluntary Service it is more important than ever to show our leadership just how agile and creative we are and how flexible and reliable our volunteers are. Now is the time to simply be ready, be prepared to anticipate the needs to your local facility and be ready and able to raise your hand when COVID heroes are called upon.

William Ball agreed with Ms. Davidson that there is no parity across the nation varying facilities and regions among executive leadership. There is caution among the team, as they feel volunteers are a very vulnerable group. Palo Alto VA Healthcare System was the first VA facility to see a positive COVID-19 case. They started a new visitor's policy that has been adapted throughout VA. As numbers decreased, reintegration plans started to be put in place. Medical care appointments increased as COVID-19 cases declines. Telehealth appointments have increased across VA. This is an opportunity for volunteers to assist Veterans with how to use this system. One thing we looked at, at a national level was how can we impact the facilities the best. We need to start looking at how we can start bringing back volunteers/programs to start with the Volunteer Transportation Network, shuttle car services and information desk volunteers. Mr. Ball worked with his leadership at his facility and throughout VISN 21 on a plan to make this happen.

This is an opportunity for Chiefs of Voluntary Service to shine and step up. Bringing in hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations to support this pandemic is being noticed.

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We have created new community partner opportunities that we may have never had before. We continue to maintain partnerships and relationships. Communication is the made value coming from this effort. We appreciate the efforts of all the organizations that have reached out to us asking how they can help and support us. This has been an opportunity for Voluntary Service to showcase what we bring to the health care of our Veterans. We hope to continue to thrive with our relationship with leadership post COVID-19 and be more efficient on the role that Voluntary Service bring to the health care system.

Closing Remarks: EC Chairperson Kleindienst adjourned the meeting at 3:57 p.m.

Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D.
Director, Voluntary Service Office
Designated Federal Officer, National Advisory Committee

Date