



**SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS COUNCIL**  
**The American Legion, Disabled American Veterans,**  
**Veterans of Foreign Wars,**  
**Paralyzed Veterans of America,**  
**1054 & 959 Vietnam Veterans of America**  
**Military Order of the Purple Heart**



**Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1273**  
**420 Main St., Rapid City, SD**  
**17 April 2024 - 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM MT**  
 Microsoft Teams Meeting Information  
 Meeting ID: 288 940 176 479 Passcode: uJBn7Z  
 Dial-in by phone+1 872-239-6022, Passcode 922961611#

**Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting of the South Dakota Veterans Council (SDVC) was called to order by at 9:00 a.m. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance by President Connie Johnson.

**Prayer & Roll Call**

Vice President Anna Arnold led the Council in opening prayer and conducted roll call of the Council showing the following members present and a Quorum was met. A current list of Council Members was provided. Handout Provided dated January 29, 2024.

**American Legion (TAL):** C.P. Van DeList (TAL) and Fred Nelson (TAL)

**Disabled American Veterans (DAV):** Christine Speirs (DAV), Marty Pennock (DAV), and Gene Murphy (DAV)

**Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW):** Anna Arnold (VFW), Derek Besler (VFW), and Dan Klimisch(VFW)

**Vietnam Veterans of America Chapters 1054 and 959 (VVA):** Bob Frink (1054) Phil Braeger (1054) and Terry “Hawk” Mayer (959)

**Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH):** Connie Johnson, (MOPH) and Buck Underwood (MOPH)

**North Central Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA):** Mike Olson (PVA)

**Official Officers Excused:** Courtney Steefen (TAL), Bill Flippo (MOPH), Lisa Cummings (PVA)  
 There was a total of 26 present by head count for the meeting (attached sign in roster reflects less).

**Officers That Attended VIA Online and Remotely:** Terry Paulsen (PVA)

**Welcome Distinguished Guests and Visitors**

President Connie Johnson

### **Minutes of Last Meeting**

President Johnson called on Secretary-Treasurer Pennock to read the minutes from the January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, SDVC meeting.

On a motion by Terry Mayer and seconded by Gene Murphy to waive the reading of the minutes from the January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, SDVC meeting, and approved them as written as they were posted on the Council website and provided to members prior to the April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, SDVC meeting. Discussion that attendance for Fed Nelson and Courtney Steffen be listed as present via online, and Bill Flippo had to drop off online after one hour. In addition, make corrections to CP Van Delist comments to the Unfinished Legislation discussion as to an email that was sent to the Secretary after the meeting. Those comments would be referred to and corrected to the email sent to the Secretary/Treasurer. Motion carried.

### **Treasurer's Report**

President Johnson called on Secretary-Treasurer Pennock for a Treasurer's Report.

Beginning Balance as of January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, was \$8,783.61, with \$400.00 deposits and \$913.05 of expenses leaving a balance, as of April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, of \$8,270.56.

The February and March 2024 First Interstate Bank Statements were provided.

Expenses need to be paid after and approval of the Council.

- \$52.95 for dry cleaning of the Council tablecloths
  - \$53.10 for Maintenance of the Council website
  - \$40.00 for payment of Lobbyist Registration for the 2024 Legislative Session
- \$146.05 Total**

South Dakota Department of Revenue Expense Reports have been filed.

Reminder that organizational membership dues of \$250.00 are due July 2024 for 2024-2025.

Shirts were handed out to Aaron Pollard, Phil Braeger, Terry Mayer, Gene Murphy, and Christine Speirs. Everyone has been notified to pay what is owed to the Council. Gene Murphy, and Terry Mayer have paid for their shirt. A shirt is still to be handed to Courtney Steffen.

Form 1024 was filed on behalf of the South Dakota Veterans Council after the motion from the August 11th, 2023 SDVC meeting motion to approve the council to seek a tax-exempt status. The SDVC new EIN is 37-2103133 and the SD Business ID is NS256444. The Council received its 501-C19 status and the 990 has been submitted for 2023 and accepted by the IRS.

On a motion by Gene Murphy (DAV) and seconded by Anna Arnold (VFW) to approve the Treasurer's Report. Discussion. Motion carried.

**Endowment Fund Report**

President Johnson provided the endowment fund report. Total Net Assets March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, \$3,231,120.05.

**Recognition of Individuals****Updates from Each Veterans Service Organization- Nov Notes Listed****VFW: Anna Arnold reported**

- Discussed Claim Sharks and the Dangers of Them
- Discussion with the SDDVAS about Accreditation of CVSOs – 50% in the State
- June 7-9 State Convention in Spearfish

**VVA: 959 – Terry Mayer reported**

- Described March 29 Activities – National Vietnam War Veterans Day
- Election of Officers in May 2024

**1054 – Phil Braeger reported**

- Approximately 600 in the Post with 480 as Members
- Election in April
- Described March 29 Activities – National Vietnam War Veterans Day

**TAL:** C.P. Van DeList reported

- “Be the One” Campaign
- Resolution Reviewed for 2024-2025
- Provided a List of Ramkota Hotels in South Dakota
- Membership Option for a 3 Year Membership

**DAV:** Christine Speirs reported

- Beginning of March, SD Department Officers and Chapter #1 Officers traveled to Washington, D.C., for the National Midwinter Conference. We went to Capitol Hill to witness our National Commander, Nancy Espinoza, testify before the Congressional Veterans Committee. After the National Commander’s testimony, the South Dakota delegation went to Senator Thune, Senator Rounds, and Representative Johnson’s offices. We each spoke about one of the 6 Critical Policy Goals National Commander Espinoza testified to the Congressional Veterans Committee about.

Theresa Critical Policy Goals are:

- Correct inequities for veterans receiving compensation benefits and provide parity in benefits for survivors.
  - Ensure the faithful implementation of the PACT Act and address gaps in toxic-exposure benefits.
  - Establish equity in VA care, services and benefits for women, LGBTQ+ and minority veterans.
  - Provide a full spectrum of long-term care options for service-disabled and aging veterans.
  - Bolster mental health resources to ensure reduction of veteran suicides.
  - Expand the VA’s capacity to deliver timely, high-quality care to veterans.
- Now it is up to Congress to make these critical policy goals into Resolutions and Bills. Watch your DAV CAN notices and let our Senators and Representative know you support these policy goals.
  - Anyone can sign up DAV CAN notices.
  - We will be having service officer training in Deadwood April 24 and 25 before our Department Convention.
  - Our Department Convention will be in Deadwood April 26 and 27.
  - August 2-7 will be our National Convention in Phoenix, AZ.

**MOPH:** Buck Underwood reported

- Proud of MOPH for Supporting NAIV Charter
- Working with County, City, and Businesses on MOPH Naming

**PVA:** Mike Olson reported

- Working on May fishing event – May 23-24
- Government Relations in Washington D.C. – June 11-13
- National Convention May 14

**Guest Speakers**

**Dakotas Regional Office: Director Shawn Bohn of the Dakotas Regional Office**

**PACT Act**

Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (PACT) has been signed by the President adding 20 toxic exposure related condition to the presumptive list of Veterans and Survivors.

- Empower VA to deliver benefits to Veterans living with more than 20 toxic exposure-related conditions and to their survivors;
- Make generations of Veterans eligible for VA health care, while increasing care for many more;
- Ensure that every enrolled Veteran receives an initial toxic exposure screening at VA and follow-up screening at least every 5 years;
- Increase VA research on toxic exposure; and
- Give VA tools to hire and retain employees and modernize over 30 facilities.

VBA has received over 1226775 claims since the passage of the law. Decisions are being made as of January 1, 2023. VBA has already processed over 1572880 PACT related claims.

Cancer claims are being prioritized for processing due to the potential for terminal illness.

Conditions included as presumptive for PACT for toxic airborne exposures:

**These types of cancers:**

- Brain cancer
- Glioblastoma
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Head cancer of any type
- Lymphoma of any type
- Lymphatic cancer of any type
- Neck cancer

- Pancreatic cancer
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Kidney cancer
- Melanoma

**These illnesses:**

- Asthma that was diagnosed after service
- Chronic rhinitis
- Chronic sinusitis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis
- Emphysema
- Granulomatous disease
- Interstitial lung disease (ILD)
- Pleuritis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Sarcoidosis
- Chronic bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

Veterans and survivors are encouraged to submit claims.

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[VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry - Reports - Public Health](#)

Veterans and survivors are encouraged to submit claims.

PACT Registries: Below is a link to a PACT registries website.

- [VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry - Reports - Public Health](#)

***Blue Water Navy (Vietnam Agent Orange) Presumptives***

<i>Bladder cancer</i>	AL Amyloidosis	Diabetes Mellitus Type 2	Multiple
<i>Myeloma</i>			
<i>Hypothyroidism</i>	Chronic B Cell Leukemias	Hodgkin's Disease	Non-
<i>Hodgkin's Lymph.</i>			
<i>Parkinsonism</i>	Chloracne	Ischemic Heart Disease	Parkinson's
<i>Disease</i>			
<i>Peripheral Neuropathy</i>	Porphyria Cutanea Tarda	Prostate Cancer	Respiratory
<i>Cancers</i>			

## Soft Tissue Sarcomas

### **For Vietnam Agent Orange Exposure PACT Act new Presumptives:**

- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance
- High blood pressure

New areas: Any US or Royal Thai military based in Thailand from January 9, 1962 through June 30, 1976, Laos from December 1, 1965 through September 30, 1969, Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province from April 16, 1969 through April 30, 1969, Guam or American Samoa or in the territorial waters off of Guam or American Samoa from January 9, 1962 to July 30, 1980, Johnston Atoll or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll from January 1, 1972 through September 30, 1977.

### ***VBA Veteran Readiness and Employment Services***

Veterans may receive Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) (Formerly known as Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment) services to help with job training, employment accommodations, resume development, and job seeking skills coaching. Other services may be provided to assist Veterans and Servicemembers in starting their own businesses or independent living services for those who are severely disabled and unable to work in traditional employment. Veterans/Servicemembers can visit the Regional Office in Sioux Falls or visit the following website to learn more and apply for VR&E benefits: <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/>.

### ***Current Regional Office Public Contact/Veterans Readiness and Employment Hours***

Regional Office is opened from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding Federal Holidays. Masks are not required when entering the Regional Office at this time.

### **South Dakota Department of Veteran Affairs Overview: Deputy Secretary Pollard State Veterans Cemetery**

2,200 pre-applications approved for burial  
have interred over 725 veterans and eligible dependents.

Upcoming events at the cemetery include

Memorial Day program May 27 at noon

Midwest Honor Flight Honor Ride June 30

Wreaths Across America wreath laying ceremony December 14.

### **Outreach**

We are constantly looking for ways to grow our outreach programs. And in the spring of 2022, we launched the “What’s Brewing” programs. This program has been a great opportunity for our department to visit with veterans and hear first-hand about the issues they are experiencing, as well as allow us an opportunity to brief them on new benefits and services. As the advocate for South Dakota veterans, we need to know what challenges our veterans and their families are facing.

We have hosted 10 of these events and we have four more scheduled for April and May.

In November of 2023, SDDVA launched our new outreach program, Operation VNF (Veterans Never Forgotten). VNF affords us the opportunity to communicate with our veterans in long term care and assisted living facilities, provide them with information, and assist them with benefits. To date our team has visited 29 facilities.

South Dakota has dedicated 41 Fallen Hero Bridges honoring 44 veterans from all eras. This year we will be honoring 15 veterans on 12 bridges. There are currently 84 applications on file.

### **Veterans' benefits:**

Since January, we have processed over 3,000 claims.

The Military Funeral Honors program paid a total of \$96,100 in reimbursements in 2023.

The Headstone Setting Fee program is a service in which we currently pay \$200 towards the setting of a government headstone or marker at a veterans' final resting place. In 2023, we paid out \$34,200.

In 2023, a total of \$40,310 was paid to veterans for the South Dakota Bonus Program.

Our field service officers traveled 89,798 miles in 2023 and had over 3,683 contacts with county and tribal veterans service officers.

### **Veterans Home**

To date we have had 4,567 admissions to the Home and currently have 70 residents. In May of 2023 we requested a bed capacity reduction with the VA and the Department of Health. Nursing care beds were reduced to 65. Staffing shortages and maintaining a veteran's census of 90% for VA per diem payments were the major contributing factors.

Staffing continues to be our biggest challenge and cost of care far exceeds the reimbursement rates received.

- We are partnering with Western Dakota Technical college to offer a satellite location for their licensed practical nurse (LPN) program to be offered on our campus.
- We are partnering with Hot Springs High School to offer certified nursing assistant (CNA) certification training to local students.
- We have taken the initial steps to become Medicare certified. This will enable us to accept a larger demographic of residents which will help drive census. We currently offer basic nursing services so when residents need a higher level of care they must seek those services



at other facilities. Becoming a skilled nursing facility will allow the SVH to accept residents with Medicare A for short term rehab stays and more clinically complex residents.

### **Legislative Update.**

SDDVA introduced two bills this session – HB 1007, which amends the requirement to employ a county veterans service officer and HB 1008, which modifies the eligibility for admission to the state veterans' home and repeal the residency requirement.

CVSO Training is set for September 3-5, 2024 in Sioux Falls.

### **Sioux Falls Veterans Administration Health Care System: Executive Director/CEO Sara Ackert**

#### **PACT ACT Updates:**

- Screened over 22,946 Veterans, 41% claiming at least one exposure.
- Veterans Outreach Event held on April 16, 2024, in collaboration with VBA and local VSOs.
- Section 103 Implementation:
  - As of March 5, 2024, millions of Veterans are now eligible for VA health care years earlier than called for by the PACT Act.
  - Specifically, all Veterans who meet the basic service and discharge requirements and who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving our country – at home or abroad – will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits.
  - That includes all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, and any other combat zone after 9/11.
  - It includes all Veterans who deployed in support of the Global War on Terror.
  - And it includes Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty here at home – by working with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays, and more.

**COMPACT ACT:**

COMPACT ACT stand for Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care and Treatment. It requires the (VA) to directly furnish, pay for, or reimburse for emergent suicide care (to include associated transportation costs) at VA and non-VA facilities for eligible individuals in acute suicide crisis.

This includes:

- Up to 30 days of inpatient or crisis residential care
- 90 days of outpatient care related to the acute suicide crisis (this period can be extended if deemed clinically necessary). This includes both medical care and mental health care.
- Prescription medications
- Emergency transportation (ambulance or air transport) that are related to the suicide crisis.

Held a community partner education event in conjunction with VA Black Hills on October 26<sup>th</sup>.

Sioux Falls has had a total of 191 Veterans covered under the COMPACT ACT since it was rolled out in January. There are currently 40 Veterans who have an active episode.

**Health Administration Service Update:**

- Bene Travel – SFVAHCS received national support to assist in working bene travel claims.
  - All staff are on board and are processing claims.
  - We currently have 4805 paper claims to process
  - As of 04/15/2024 the oldest claim is from 11/9/2023
- Scanning –the backlog continues to decrease. .
  - We have ended our scanning backlog project > 5 days old.
  - We are currently sitting with 494 scanning files.
- Release of Information
  - We currently do not have a backlog and are processing real-time requests.
- Eligibility
  - Enrollment Backlog = 1 - None over 5 days (oldest date – 4/10/24)
  - Have 3 staff on board processing enrollments.
- Veteran Transportation Services:
  - Rides – March 15, 2024, to April 15, 2024
    - Total Rides: 297
    - VTS Rides: 187
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Rides: 110
    - Denials: 7
      - No Denials Specifically from Grant County

### Care in the Community Update FY24 Notable Metrics:

- Days to schedule Appointment: 10.8 Days
  - Call Center Calls Handled: 98.2%
  - Call Center Calls Presented: 35,292
- Call center number for questions: 605-333-6800/1-800-316-8387

### Construction:

- Work is progressing on the 10-bed Hospice Cottage and we anticipate completion late Summer 2024.
- The construction of a new Pre-Op and Same Day Surgery is ongoing, expected completion February 2025.
- Work continues the EHRM infrastructure project despite the EHRM implementation rollout being put on pause.
- The project to update finishes in ICU and ENDO has begun and will be complete Mid-Summer.
- Prosthetics Open House on March 12, 2024
  - First patients were seen on March 18, 2024.
  - New facility is 5290 sq. ft. space where they previously in a 2000 sq. ft. space.
  - More than 50% of Veterans enrolled in VHA receive Prosthetic services.

### Nurse Recruiting Efforts

- Our current (as of 4/12/24) RN Vacancy rate is **9.31%**, LPN vacancy rate is **12.9%**, and Nursing Assistant vacancy rate is **51.28%**.
- Slight decline in RN vacancy rates since were able to fill slightly more open positions than were added with the new Hospice cottage job announcements. The LPN and NA vacancy rates decreased slightly as a result of new hires.  
Several RN, LPN and NA positions have been selected, received tentative offers, and are pending final offer approval. IF final offers are approved, the rates stand to decrease to the following: **RN – 7.67%** **LPN – 9.44%** **NA – 46.62%**
- We are offering recruitment incentives, however, the amount of the incentive decreased for RNs (from \$15K to \$5K) and have remained the same (at \$10K) for LPNs and NAs.
- The 72/80 AWS for remaining Med/Surg RNs was submitted this week.
- Sioux Falls has initiated two different nurse residency programs:
  - The **RNTTP** Residency Program is a year long residency that any nurse within their first year of nursing is automatically enrolled in. They attend class 1 day a month and we review different topics in accordance with CCNE accreditation. These topics include: Change in patient condition, Veteran Centric Care, Safety, Ethics, End of Life Care, Stress Management and Professional Development. We incorporate simulations, guest speakers, case studies and lecture each month as well as provide a system of support for the new graduate learning their new roles in a new career.

- The **PBRNR** Residency Program is also a year long residency, but is only for BSN nurses who have just graduated nursing school. This program is funded by OAA (Office of Academic Affiliate). These residents will have 100% protected time and will meet weekly for didactic/simulations. These residents will rotate throughout the facility to all the different units and departments and will spend the final 4 months in the “immersion phase” where they will hope to see themselves working at the end of their residency.
- VA offers multiple scholarship programs and tuition reimbursement programs. Most important of these for nursing students is the HPSP which we highlight in our recruitment efforts since if an HPSP selectee, upon graduation and licensure, they can seamlessly move to the PBRNR program if they make that decision. The PBRNR allows us to have residents here to expand their knowledge and experience but does not effect our FTEEs and also to receive monies from OAA to cover the residents stipends (aka salary/benefits while in the program).
- Recruitment continues (in person) at multiple career / hiring events held at several nursing programs in the area (Southeast Tech: mainly LPNs and NAs but also RNs), Mitchel Tech: LPNs and NAs only since their RN program does not meet VA accreditation for hires), SD Student Nurses Association Convention (RN students from all schools of nursing within the State of SD).
- Recruitment (online) continues using multiple modalities (USA Jobs, Indeed.com – free account, university/college electronic posting boards).
- Recruitment (grassroots/referrals/networking) through past/present relationships with prospectives through professional organizations, past employment, social contacts, etc.

### **Home Health Program Update**

- Home Health provides skilled services such as medication set-up, health monitoring, wound care, routine catheter/ostomy changes, lab collection, etc. and non-skilled services which includes personal hygiene assistance such as bathing, dressing, range of motion exercises, light housekeeping, etc.
- As of Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup> this is the update on where we are sitting at:
  - We have 102 total Veterans and 126 total services enrolled with 6 pending admissions. (We have 24 Veterans receiving both skilled and non-skilled services, 11 non-skilled only, and 91 skilled only services .)
- As for staffing updates have 1 ANM, 5 RN’s, 2 LPN’s, and 4 NA’s all off orientation and able to take on more skilled and non-skilled services. We only have a few openings available for non-skilled slots at this time.
- PT’s and OT’s are on board and accepting consults.
  - OT has 4 active Veterans and assisting with in person OT home safety assessments. (Has 9 scheduled between 4/3/24-4/11/24)
  - PT has 5 active Veterans.
- Have 1 NA with a tentative start date of 5/20/24.

## Healthcare Heroes

- Shayla Jegtvig, NP, Aberdeen CBOC, nominated by a local Veteran for the award.
  - Serves over 100 veterans monthly in Aberdeen, S.D.
  - Assisted a veteran by insisting on a cardiologist evaluation before a minor wrist and elbow surgery. It was discovered that the Veteran had an Aortic Valve not operating properly and other areas around the heart were 70% clogged.
  - Quote from the Veteran:
    - I would not be here today. I owe her my life and utmost respect for a medical professional for what she did for me and the wonderful job she is doing for the VA in Aberdeen. I have heard nothing but praise from fellow Veterans who have been treated by her.

## Other Good News

- CLC Compare remained 5 stars overall with 5 stars in each of the 3 subcategories (unannounced survey, quality, and staffing).
- 84% of the facility's main measures in the Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) database were in the top 2 quintiles across VA

## **Black Hills Veterans Administration Health Care System: Interim Director/Spencer Mion**

### **PACT ACT Updates**

#### **The PACT Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances.**

The PACT Act adds to the list of health conditions that we assume (or “presume”) are caused by exposure to these substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve.

We can assist you in getting medical treatment and enhanced benefits by providing Toxic Exposure Screens with your Primary Care Team.

#### Toxic Exposure Screens (TES)

- Clinical reminders for Nurses and Providers are in place for the assessment of Veterans for their exposure to toxins. Toxic Exposure Screens are being offered through your Primary Care Team. TES is also being done in some Specialty Care areas as well and we continue to expand these screens into other areas of the healthcare delivery system.
- VABHHCS has screened over 15,454 Veterans with 39% endorsing at least 1 exposure concern.
- 0 Veterans waiting over 30 days for follow-on care.
- Future PACT Act enrollment events will be held in RC, Scottsbluff, Pine Ridge, and Fort Meade through Aug. 24.

## **COMPACT ACT**

### **What it is**

- Any Veteran – whether enrolled in VA or not – can go to a VA or non-VA emergency room for emergent suicidal care.
  - We strongly recommend Veterans in suicidal crisis call 911 or visit their nearest emergency room for expedited care.
- VA Black Hills has assisted 113 Veterans with coverage under the COMPACT Act since implementation.
  - New COMPACT ACT Coordinator Jessica Cornwell

### **Care In the Community**

**VA provides care to Veterans through community providers when VA cannot provide the care needed. Community care is based on specific eligibility requirements, availability of VA care, and the needs and circumstances of individual Veterans.**

- Black Hills has 1055 unscheduled consults.
- There are no unscheduled consults >30 days with no activity.
- No consults aged >180 days

### **Home Based Primary Care and Home Health**

**Home Based Primary Care is health care services provided to Veterans in their home. The program is for Veterans who need team based in-home support for ongoing diseases and illnesses that affect their health and daily activities.**

Veterans usually have difficulty making and keeping clinic visits because of the severity of their illness and are often homebound, but that is not required.

This program is also for Veterans who are isolated, or their caregiver is experiencing a burden. Home Based Primary Care can be used in combination with other Home and Community-Based Services.

- VA medical staff including Physician Assistants, Registered Nurses, Dietitians, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, and Pharmacists travel to the homes of Veterans in rural communities.
- 0% readmission rate for all veterans using home-based primary care at VA Black Hills.
- Reduced inpatient days by 84%.
- Reduced ER visits by 36.6%.
- Reduced ER readmissions by 44%.
- Currently serving over 218 Veterans in the Community. (Up from 183 in Jan. 24)

### **Travel Claims**

BTSSS Backlog is at ZERO. The oldest claim in review is less than 10 days from the date the claim was submitted.

### **UPDATES:**

- Pre Nurse and provider appointments were two scheduled appointments. Changing this to one (cut down on texts and letters).

### **Construction update – Hot Springs**

- PACT AREA UPGRADE- Renovate Bldg. 12 for PACT (HS) to increase the size of the PACT Area- A study has been completed identifying a potential space layout.
- Building 8 Upgrade. Semi-Private rooms and an elevator.
- Increase in CLC beds.

### **Construction updates – Fort Meade**

- Renovate Inpatient 113 will consolidate inpatient care (ICU, Med/Surg, and sleep lab) for staffing efficiency and modernize patient rooms. Anticipated completion in September 2024.
- The Upgrade MH Lock Ward project will correct several MHEOC deficiencies including ceiling height, hard ceilings, windows, and handrails. The project has been awarded, with an anticipated start in September 2023 and completion in September 2024.

### **U.S. Congressional Representative Liaisons for Senator John Thune, Senator Michael Rounds, and Representative Dusty Johnson**

Jesse Ewing– Senator Thune. Senate is in Session, and it is an election year. Large moving pieces with Mitch McConnell possibly stepping down. Senator Thune is prioritizing the Rural Transportation Care Act, the Consolidate Appropriations Act, the TAP Promotion Act. He additionally co-sponsored the NAIV Charter.

GP Carmichael – Senator Rounds. Discussed the Vietnam Lape Pinning Programs, Two MOPH cases that have been successful in getting for Veterans, Sponsoring the NAIV Charter, Outreach pragmas in Pine Ridge and other communities.

Katie Neff – Representative Johnson. Has been a hard legislative year. Discussed Representative Johnson’s priority in the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment Not for Salae Act, Liver Fluke Study Act, The Major Richard Star Act, and the Expanding Care for Veterans Act.

### **Unfinished Business**

- Legislation - President Connie Johnson reviewed the 99<sup>th</sup> Legislation handout.

**New Business**

- Bylaws – A revised Council was handed out along with the current approved Council Bylaws dated Oct 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Multiple discussion points were made to the revised Council Bylaws.

**ARTICLE II – PURPOSE**

- Section 3 – Business Authority ..... 4  
Spelling correction – “gift or devise, hold, *possess*,....”
- Section 4 – Principal Phases ..... 4  
Add - *(d).Make recommendations on legislation and lobby legislation on behalf of the Council.*

**ARTICLE IV – OFFICERS**

- Section 1 – Elected Officers ..... 5  
Split the Secretary/Treasurer Position in to two Officer Positions - The elected officers of the Council shall be President, Vice President, Judge Advocate, ~~and Secretary/Treasurer.~~ *Secretary, and Treasurer.*
- Section 2 – ~~Term of Office~~ Eligibility of Members. .... 5  
Change when Officers are elected so that there are not officers changed over at the same time and continuity is continued year after year. -The Officers shall be elected by and from the council members in good standing at the regular meeting of the Council. ~~in odd-numbered years and shall hold office for a term of two (2) years, or until their successors are duly elected and/or appointed.~~
- Section 6 – Officer Expenses ..... 5  
Remove the numeric of officers and add the term to better define what meetings are referenced -The expenses of the ~~four (4)~~ elected Council Officers doing business for the Council, other than *regular scheduled Council* meetings, will be paid by the Council Treasurer, after the approval of a majority vote of the Council using the current rates.
- Section 7 – Term of Office ..... 6  
Add -The President and Vice President will be elected on odd number years and shall hold office for a term of two (2) years, or until their successors are duly elected and/or appointed. *The Secretary, Treasurer, and Judge Advocate will be elected on even number years and shall hold office for a term of two (2) years, or until their successors are duly elected and/or appointed.*

On a motion by Gene Murphy (DAV) and seconded by Terry Mayer (VVA 959) to approve the SDVC Bylaws date 17 April 2024. Discussion. Motion carried.



- 2024-2025 Officer Elections – With the Bylaw changes made, Officer Elections for Secretary, Treasurer and Judge Advocate will take place at the July 2024 Council meeting.
- Chet Sorenson Award – attached and will be voted on by the Council in July. Every organization of the Council needs to provide one by July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, to the President.
- 2025 Legislation – Every organization was given the opportunity to list out their organization’s top priorities. These will be annotated and distributed to the group for consideration by the Council to champion in the coming year.
- 2024 Meeting Dates

- June 26 – Microsoft Teams Meeting TBD for Members Only

- July 17 – Aberdeen VFW Post #17, 802 S Main St., starting at 1:00 p.m. CST.  
POC: Sean Johnson 605-228-1636

On a motion by Fred Nelson (TAL) and seconded by Terry Mayer (VVA 959) to approve the July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Council meeting to be held in Aberdeen, at post 17 starting at 1:00 pm CST. Discussion. Motion carried.

- August 21 – Yankton VFW Post #791, 209 S. Cedar, starting at 1:00 p.m. CST.  
POC: Anna Arnold 314-435-5772

- September 18 - Rapid City The American Legion Post 22, 818 E. Saint Patrick St., starting at 9:00 a.m. MT.  
POC C.P. Van Delist 605-210-0428

- October 16 – Brookings The American Legion Post 74, 1229 Western Ave., starting at 1:00 p.m. CST.  
POC: Connie Johnson 605-651-3649

- November 20 – Sioux Falls – DAV, 1519 W. 51<sup>st</sup> St, Sioux Falls, starting at 9:00 a.m. CST.  
POC: Marty Pennock 605-332-6866

- November 20 Legislative Roundtable – Sioux Falls, DAV – 12:00p.m. – 1:30 p.m. CST

- November 21 Legislative Roundtable – Watertown, TAL Post 17

- November 22 Legislative Roundtable – Rapid City, TAL Post 22

- November 23 Legislative Roundtable - Pierre, TAL Post 8

- January 15, 2025 – Pierre – TAL Post 8, 520 S. Pierre, SD 57501,  
POC Kaitlyn 605-224-7681

**Good of the Order and Closing Comments**

- What's in VA2025 VA Budget
- PVA Washington Update – March 2024
- Council Press Release
- SDDVA 2023 Annual Report
- Hotel List of Ramkota Venues in South Dakota

**Closing Prayer**

Vice President Arnold provided a closing prayer.

**Honors to the American Flag and Adjournment**

President Johnson rendered honors to the flag.

On a motion by Gene Murphy (DAV) and seconded by Anna Arnold (VFW) to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:48 p.m.

*Marty Pennock, Secretary-Treasurer* **4/22/24**