



Tennessee Council of Chapters Military Officers Association of America



Minutes of the Meeting 19 July 2017

Tennessee Council of Chapters, MOAA met 19 July 2017 at the Ward Agriculture Center, Building E in Lebanon, TN with **19** members present as follows:

Chattanooga: Billy Hewitt, Ray Adkins, Scott Hardin

East Tennessee: No Representative

Ft. Campbell: Ivan Adames, Warren Evans, Eddie Sumbler, Howard French,
Tim Powers

General Andrew Jackson: Phil Ponder

Memphis: Kathy Desjarlais, Jim Thomasson, John Dixon

Middle TN: Doug Minton, Patricia Bergquist, John Olinger

Mountain Empire: No Representative

Stones River: Jim Parks, Jim Mapes

Sumner County: Steve Petersen

Upper Cumberland: Mark Pfaffenroth

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

- SEPTEMBER 15-16, 2017 EAST SOUTH CENTRAL REGION COUNCIL AND CHAPTER LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP, MEMPHIS, TN
- OCTOBER 18, 2017 MEETING INFORMATION IN THE MINUTES!

We were delighted to have Mrs. Nancy Evans, Chapter Auxiliary Liaison for the Ft. Campbell Chapter and spouse of Warren Evans, as our guest at this meeting.

LCDR Kathy Desjarlais called the meeting to order at 11:15am and welcomed everyone. Eddie Sumbler delivered our opening prayer and Kathy led the pledge to the flag.

Jim Thomasson, Treasurer, reported that we expended \$148.48 and \$6,031.50 is our current balance. Motion made and seconded to approve the report.

Today, everyone was asked to sign-in when paying for lunch to balance eating and paying. Jim emphasized the importance of reservations for all meetings so we do not have more people than food.

Minutes of the April 2017 meetings were accepted. Meeting minutes do not require motions and approval only acceptance.

A copy of TVET Constitution for ratification was provided all attendees. Kathy reported that the TVET Constitution was not for discussion today. An electronic copy will be sent with the minutes of today's meeting and can be shared with chapter membership. Everyone needs to read it and offer any suggestions for change to either Kathy Desjarlais or Doug Minton. They will report suggestions for change to Bill Summers who was not present today, but he is involved in organizing TVET.

There was some discussion regarding the term constitution instead of by-laws. Doug Minton reported that Kentucky has a constitution which TVET is adapting to set-up its foundation to continue working on State veteran issues. The TN CoC supports TVET! By sharing their initiatives with each chapter's membership, we can grow our support. As we learn more, it will be shared with everyone.

Doug Minton reported that a member of the Middle TN Chapter has been trying for three years to get a Legion of Merit license plate authorized. State Representative Charles Sargent has agreed to sponsor the bill, but he needs a State Senate sponsor. The bill must pass the House, Senate, the Governor's signature, and then go to Department of Revenue. The Middle TN Chapter member desires, if he gets the bill introduced TN CoC support to contact State representatives and senators. How many Legion of Merit recipients there are in TN is *unknown*. Howard French suggested the member contact Ft. Campbell (90% of the Legion of Merit recipients are there).

Pete Norman, owner of Uncle Pete's Truck Stop and our lunch caterer, addressed the TN CoC regarding the "Lebanon Veterans Home", a new homeless veterans home in the area. Going to camps where the homeless veterans hangout, they found 16 homeless veterans in one hour. Pete leased a building near the Veterans Museum yesterday. He is looking at the "orange" building next door to expand services. This is a non-profit and he is trying to find an attorney to help with the 501(c) (3). Doug Minton may have someone to assist Pete. Doug will check and advise Pete (615-804-4404). Rules are: no drinking/drugs; agreement to stay 1 year as long as working to turn life around; and churches are welcome to come and talk with veterans, but not a religious organization. Pete covers expenses now (\$150/week or \$600/month). Someone will come in and cook dinner in the home kitchen every night. Those who drive or ride with a driver can come to Pete's Truck Stop for a discounted breakfast (\$5). Also, Pete is working with the lady from Next Step, an after rehab program.

The MOAA East South Central Region Council and Chapters Leadership Workshop (AL, AR, KY, LA, MS, MO, and TN) will be held at the Marriott Memphis East, (5795 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, TN). Workshop check-in begins at 3pm on Friday, September 15th, followed by an Icebreaker Reception/Buffer Dinner at 6pm and training Saturday, the 16th, from 8am to 12pm. Carol Robertson in MOAA Councils and Chapters sent invitations from information in the MOAA database to invite the Chapter Presidents, Membership Chairs, and Legislative Liaisons. The Chapter President and Membership Chair may send a substitute, but the Legislative Chair may not. If you have a substitute attending, send the e-mail you received to them for their registration. Dress for the entire workshop is "business casual" (sport shirt/open collar). **SAVE THE DATE!**

Patricia reported on the SBP/DIC Offset. MOAA has been lobbying 16 years for full repeal of the offset! Current legislation to repeal the offset is: **H.R. 846** with 163 co-sponsors and **S. 339** with 33 co-sponsors

The congressional sense is that the offset is wrong and needs to be eliminated, but the costs are high. The House left it up to the Senate to find sourcing. The Senate Armed Services Committee has voted to make the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) permanent which is set to expire May 2018. If this initiative becomes law, the SSIA payment of \$310 per month would be adjusted annually, beginning in 2018, by the same COLA percentage used to keep military retirement from eroding due to inflation. *The unknown fact here is that the proposed TRICARE Rx co-pay increases are intended to subsidize the SSIA!*

TN Senators have not co-sponsored S 339. Also, Congressman Duncan (District 2), Chuck Fleischman (District 3), Diane Black (District 6) and David Kustoff (District 8) have not co-sponsored H.R. 846.

Everyone was encouraged to contact their Senators and Congressmen on these issues. We recommend a call followed by an e-mail. Then, wait several days and make a follow-up call. If you prefer, use the MOAA Capitol Switchboard toll-free number: **1-866-272-6622**, request operator to connect you to the office of your Senator or Congressman, and ask to speak with the Military Legislative Assistant.

Patricia reported that H.R. 888 introduced by Representative Walter Jones which would require the VA to treat notification of death of a totally disabled veteran as a claim by the surviving spouse and children for DIC. We will watch this and advise.

Also, Patricia alerted everyone that last Friday's MOAA Legislative Update mentioned a TRICARE Advantage Pilot. Doug Minton stated the veteran groups are hesitant to endorse the TFL Advantage for fear of taking away from TFL. Ray Adkins reported that there had been mention of a Medicare Part B premium increase.

Since MOAA no longer sponsors the Gold Bar Program, some chapters use the USAA grant to fund their program. Kathy recommends chapters go to MOAA online and apply for the USAA grant to fund their Gold Bar Program. Do it early! Most chapters never apply for the grant, so funds are left over. MOAA reports that \$2-3K of the funds USAA sets aside for grants are left over each year. MOAA is trying to work out a process where chapters that work the Gold Bar Program get a percentage of the remaining funds based on the number of Gold Bars given.

MOAA believes it is great that chapters support the JROTC, but high school students do not become officers. Those who enter the service and become commissioned officers are eligible for MOAA membership. This is a financial gain for MOAA.

Following our last meeting, the Mountain Empire Chapter sent an e-mail asking how chapters were funding their Gold Bar Program. Doug Minton reminded everyone that the whole purpose of the Council is to share our “best practices” with other chapters.

The 2018 Council President is looking for a 1st and 2nd Vice President to serve a two year commitment and does not have to be a Chapter officer. Historically, each of the positions has been held by someone from each of the three regions of the State. Due to lack of people to take office, the Council has gotten away from this practice.

If anyone is interested or if you know someone from your chapter or even another chapter, we need their names by the next meeting. Step forward and continue to serve!

The Council President performs the following duties: available and runs the quarterly meetings, travels to DC in April every year and participates in MOAA’s “Storm the Hill”, participates in phone conferences, communicates with local chapter officers, etc. Also, the President needs a Treasurer from his/her local Chapter.

The Ward Agriculture Center is no cost to the Council. If anyone knows of a better location or another location, please advise Kathy or Doug. Phil Ponder offered that the Community Room at McKendree Tower in Hermitage was a great place since its renovation with a \$10 lunch cost. John Olinger’s lake house (closed in winter) was mentioned also.

Patricia has stepped forward to handle our coffee service replacing John Lloyd.

As is the tradition of the TN Council, each Chapter President or representative shared an update of their Chapter recent activities as follows:

Chattanooga – Ray Adkins reported 180 members. They hold 6 meetings a year and their Board meets in months when there are no meetings. The JROTC Banquet had 148 attendees this year. They may need bigger space next year. In June, there was a three day event honoring Vietnam Veterans. Those veterans who served in-country gave a 5 minute talk about their time in Vietnam. Additionally, they are working to get sponsors (\$500 or \$1,000 each) for the Charles H. Coolidge Heritage Medal of Honor Center. The veteran only lifetime membership is \$500 (hat, pen, etc. included with membership). They will send information to Kathy Desjarlais and she will share.

Ft. Campbell – Ivan Adames reported their last event was at the Casey Jones Distillery. The Solar Eclipse is August 21st with lots of parties being held on the 18th, 19th, and 20th. COL Jeri Graham, USA (Ret) and Member, MOAA Board of Directors, will be their guest speaker at the August meeting. “Welcome Home Veterans Celebration 2017” will be

held September 13-16. This will include the American Veterans Traveling Tribute Wall, USS LST 325 from Evansville, and Bill Robinson, POW, will speak on Friday. The Field of Honor offers an opportunity to purchase a flag in honor of someone. Several of the events will take place at Beachaven Winery. Details are in the brochure distributed at the meeting.

Gen. Andrew Jackson Chapter – Phil Ponder, President, reported that they meet at McKendree Tower. John Dearing is working on new members. They are working to engage them through spotlight on experience, military trivia, strong programs, scholarship funds, participation with the Exchange Club on the Field of Honor at The Hermitage (Veteran's Day) – the only one in the country held on presidential property.

Memphis – John Dixon reported they hold monthly meetings with a guest speaker. Attendance is 20-30. This month the speaker is from the Shelby County Veterans Court. They will participate in the Retiree's Activity Seminar in September.

Middle TN Chapter – John Olinger reported they have 257 members. Brigadier General Dan Cherry spoke on "My Enemy, My Friend" at the June meeting with 60 members in attendance. This month LCDR Patrick Ryan will speak on "The South China Sea: Flashpoint between the United States and China". In August, Senator Corker or Kyle Johnson from his office is scheduled to speak.

John detailed the Congressional Academy Coordinator Workshop that was held at Richland Country Club on July 18th. Seven out of nine congressional districts attended. He has a list of contacts for the local district offices. If you would like a copy e-mailed to you, please let him. Patricia provided contact information for the Washington, DC offices.

The 7th OSD TN Annual Heroes Breakfast will be held August 18th at the Omni Hotel.

The chapter has 30 Emeritus members (surviving spouses and MOAA members). All chapter members active at one time, but who are no longer able to participate due to personal or family member limitations are placed on Emeritus status. Since most do not have e-mail, the newsletter is mailed. While this is a chapter cost, the continued receipt of the newsletter is often important to these members!

Stones River Chapter – Jim Parks reported their chapter has 52 members. Their average attendance is 35 including members and spouses. Reservations are required. The chapter purges its membership rolls every year. Anyone who turns 85 before January 1 is a Member for Life with no dues collected. Jim Mapes is the new membership chair. The Chapter continues to support the Fisher House.

Sumner County Chapter – Steve Petersen, President, reported 67 members. They hold a chapter dinner meeting the 4th Thursday of the month at either the VFW or Gallatin Country Club. Meal cost is \$16. If members sign-up for a meal and do not come, they pay anyway, unless there is an emergency.

Upper Cumberland Chapter – Mark Pfaffenroth, President, reported 80 active members and quarterly meetings. They are trying to find a new chapter project. They still fund their \$2,000 JROTC scholarship and the 2017 recipient attended Cookeville High School. There are actually three schools in Cookeville. They are considering expanding their scholarship.

There was discussion regarding January and February weather relative to our quarterly meeting. We will continue with the 3rd Wednesday of January, pending weather conditions.

Our next meeting is scheduled for **18 October 2017** at 11:00am (subject to change based on space availability either at the Fairgrounds or new Veterans Center at the Wilson County Courthouse).

Mark Your Calendar! Future Meeting Date: January 17, 2018

Eddie Sumbler delivered our closing prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 1:25pm.

Minutes prepared by Patricia Bergquist, Secretary and Council Auxiliary Liaison
Respectfully Submitted by Kathy Desjarlais, President, TN Council of Chapters