



Tennessee Council of Chapters Military Officers Association of America



Minutes of the Meeting 18 October 2017

Tennessee Council of Chapters, MOAA met 18 October 2017 at the Ward Agriculture Center, Building E in Lebanon, TN with **19** members present as follows:

Chattanooga: Chris Dooley, Ray Adkins,
East Tennessee: No Representative
Ft. Campbell: Ivan Adames, Eddie Sumbler, Bill Summers, Steve Singleton, Tim Powers
General Andrew Jackson: John Wade
Memphis: Kathy Desjarlais, Jim Thomasson, John Dixon
Middle TN: Doug Minton, Patricia Bergquist, John Olinger, Bob Bussey
Mountain Empire: No Representative
Stones River: Jim Mapes
Sumner County: Steve Petersen
Upper Cumberland: Mark Pfaffenroth, Russ Schubert

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: 2018 MEETING INFORMATION IN THE MINUTES!

Mrs. Eunice Sumbler, spouse of Eddie Sumbler, was our guest at this meeting.

LCDR Kathy Desjarlais called the meeting to order at 11:10am and welcomed everyone. John Dixon delivered our opening prayer and Kathy led the pledge to the flag.

Jim Thomasson, Treasurer, reported that we expended \$9.67 and \$6,021.83 is our current balance. Motion made and seconded to approve the report.

Today, upon sign-in everyone was asked to “print legibly” all information on the sign-in sheet and to initial their name on the Treasurer’s list when paying for lunch to balance eating and paying. Remember: If you want lunch, reservations for all meetings are important!

Minutes of the July 2017 meeting were accepted.

Patricia reported on the SBP/DIC Offset. Current legislation to repeal the offset is: **H.R. 846** with 179 co-sponsors and **S. 339** with 33 co-sponsors

In review, the House voted to repeal the offset but left it up to the Senate to find sourcing. The Senate Armed Services Committee voted to make the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) permanent which is set to expire May 2018. If this

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 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.

MOAA Government Relations Staff report that they look for Congress to first tackle the tax and insurance issues. The conferees who will work through the bill issues have been decided - the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), The House Armed Services Committee (HASC), along with a couple others for a total of 70 conferees. As all legislative issues progress, MOAA will send out a legislative push. MOAA Legislative Alerts are important so please respond.

Everyone was encouraged to contact their Senators and Congressmen on this issue and to encourage their chapter membership to do the same. Patricia recommends a call to the Congressmen or Senators D.C. office 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.

The deadline for receipt of nominations at MOAA for The Surviving Spouse Level of Excellence Award is November 15, 2017.

The Surviving Spouse Advisory Committee Virtual Member application launches in November with a deadline of January 31, 2018. Selection will be made by the April 2018 MOAA Board of Directors Meeting.

The Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter briefly mentioned at the Regional Conference is presently on hold.

Doug Minton reported that seven of the nine chapters in our council participated in the MOAA Regional Conference in Memphis, TN. Unfortunately, Mountain Empire and General Andrew Jackson could not attend. It was a great opportunity to meet General Atkins, Col. Terry Coles, and others as MOAA has undergone a people transition in leadership roles.

There were several changes highlighted as follows:

- MOAA Newsletters: Sign-up for newsletters will change in the future. When the change occurs, even if members are already signed up for newsletters, they will

start over. The newsletters will essentially all be rolled into one. Members will identify their interest and will only see those interest. *Note: If you are signed-up for legislative updates, you have a direct link to your legislators.*

- MOAA Membership Model: Several years ago, MOAA added the Basic Membership (3 years at no cost) to capture the young officers less than 35 years of age. Now, MOAA is offering the Basic Membership to former officers who have ***never*** been a MOAA member. *Note: Chapters will not get credit for the MOAA National Basic Membership Recruitment.*
- ROTC/JROTC: In the budget reduction, MOAA stopped funding these medals for chapters. USAA is going to partially fund ROTC/JROTC this year. MOAA is trying to work out the percentage of medals to be covered. Price of medals is now down to \$5 or \$6.
- MOAA National Membership: Previously, MOAA National reported membership to be 389,000. During the bottom up review (BUR), membership records were reviewed and members deceased, duplicate, etc. were eliminated from system. Membership now stands at a solid 355,000.
- MOAA Financial Status: Kathy previously reported on MOAA's shaky financial status due to investment portfolio performance. General Atkins reported these issues are resolved.

Yesterday Kathy received an e-mail from Col Terri Coles that there will be changes to the Level of Excellence (LOE) submission this year. A webinar is scheduled for November 1, 2017. After the webinar, Kathy will e-mail more information to everyone.

Discussion ensued regarding trouble getting MOAA e-mail using internet provider, AOL.

April 16 – 19 are the 2018 MOAA Board of Directors and “Storm the Hill” dates. Due to the unavailability of the James A. Ward facility in April, our meeting is scheduled for May 9 following “Storm the Hill”. **See Mark Your Calendar for all 2018 meeting dates.**

Discussion regarding the Regional Conference. Kathy suggested that participants give generous but kind feedback in their critiques. This is the best way to get things addressed and corrected.

Discussion occurred on active duty servicemembers being too busy to join MOAA. Per Kathy there is a fine line between what can and cannot be said to them about other organizations. Doug Minton pointed out that this is where you push the Basic Membership (3 years at no cost). MOAA reports 90,000 Basic members and over 60% are active duty.

Pete Norman, owner of Uncle Pete's Truck Stop and our lunch caterer, addressed the TN CoC again regarding the "Lebanon/Wilson County Veterans Home" located at Park and Main. They will have their first graduate from the home on Friday. Two more veterans are coming in – one from jail and one from a Drug/Alcohol Program. They are looking to start a second home for low income veterans (social security or VA pension). Pete initially funded the home with schools, churches, and others in community working with them to provide the veterans' needs. They have a three-member Board of Directors and are working with the City regarding three different grants. City and County work is needed in advance. The bottom line: Some veterans will come in and others will not. Homelessness has become their lifestyle.

Operation Stand Down Memphis is October 28, 2017.

Everyone was reminded to please sign-in and pay for lunch before leaving today!

Doug Minton reminded everyone that when a member dies to go to MOAA website and notify for the TAPS Column. At the bottom of the page is a box to mark regarding the surviving spouse. Marking this box, will prompt MOAA to send the reporting chapter information on the MOAA Member Number, if the deceased was a Life Member. Doug also mentioned again the Middle TN Chapter's practices on placing members including surviving spouses in Emeritus status. This is a way to keep them engaged although they can no longer attend meetings for various reasons.

2018 Slate of Officers:

President: Doug Minton

1st VP: Jim Thomasson

2nd VP: TBA (Ideally, someone from East TN)

Secretary: Patricia Bergquist

Treasurer: Bob Bussey

Historically, officers are from the three regions of the State. The 2nd VP has not had much responsibility in the past. We need to remedy that going forward. If you or someone you know is willing to assume the 2nd VP role, please contact either Doug Minton.

Bill Summers reported that TVET, a 501(3)(19), held a September meeting with as many veteran organizations as possible and two members of the Kentucky JECVO. Initial feedback was good. Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is onboard. However, the American Legion is not. They say it is an Executive Committee decision and claim they cannot belong to any organization that consumes their voice. TVET is a "political" arm for other organizations who are members of TVET to push veteran issues.

Last year TVET received help from the State Veterans Affairs Office and a \$4,000 luncheon donation. This cannot be expected to continue. Dues will be necessary. Both bills addressed last year passed.

Doug Minton participated in both the February and September events. "TVET is a great initiative to pay back what we put into it". Can the TN Council of Chapters join? The TN Council Bylaws found were approved in 1989 and do not say we can or cannot belong to other organizations. Doug will have a new set of bylaws ready for vote at our January 2018 meeting. He suggested a Letter of Intent be signed and submitted to TVET. After our bylaws are approved, the TN Council of Chapters can join TVET. Each chapter will need to provide how many chapter members they have on their rolls. Then, TVET will determine by formula our annual dues payment and how many votes. Support of TVET issues is important!

Doug Minto presented the motion that the TN Council of Chapters indicate to TVET our intent to join, pay dues, etc. Motion seconded and approved.

There was a short questions and answer period about previous attempts at a veterans group and TVET, an organization of veterans and for veterans. A day on the Hill is mentally exhausting and those traveling any distance may want to get a hotel room.

February 7, 2018 (Wednesday) is *tentatively* set as TN Veterans Day on the Hill. One problem encountered last year is how many veterans will sign up to participate on the Hill. They are working on a website to address this problem.

2018 Initiatives sent out to participating organizations are as follows:

1. Veteran Homes: Veteran State hierarchy to establish procedures for naming veteran homes. *No cost to State.*
2. Stolen Valor: No state law regarding wearing medals, etc. to which one is unentitled. Only Federal law says afoul of law to do so. *No cost to State.*
3. Appoint Veterans to Various State Boards and Committees. *No cost to State.*
4. Property Tax Based On VA Disability Rating (< 100%).

This involves 100,000 people and would be a large cost to the State. The suggestion has been made to establish an income level, but that might come back to bite the 100% permanent and total disabled veterans which TVET got the \$175,000 property tax deduction restored for last year.

Bill suggested that we accept the top three initiatives with no cost to the State and go back to the veteran groups on the fourth initiative. The members present endorsed Bill's suggestion for these three initiatives to be considered for the upcoming 2018 TN Veterans Day on the Hill without a formal motion or vote.

The Chattanooga representatives suggested that the Stolen Valor initiative be revised to include language that supported respect for the flag and national anthem.

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

Chattanooga – Chris Dooley reported that Congressman Chuck Fleishman and Mark Green have spoken at recent dinner meetings. They have new MOAA shirts and coins. They will be dedicating the monument in the National Cemetery and they have invited General Atkins to attend. They are working on an Information Fair. JROTC scholarships (4) for a total of \$6,000. Chapter is looking at another scholarship for University of Tennessee Chattanooga. Tickets available for veterans to Veterans Day Football game.

Ft. Campbell – Ivan Adames reported 585 people at the Retiree Appreciation Day. They recruited three new chapter members, three for other chapters, and three were already members. Their next meeting is a Demo's Restaurant and their speaker is the daughter of a Vietnam War MIA. He showed everyone their Veteran's Parade signs which only cost \$80.

Gen. Andrew Jackson Chapter – John Wade reported that they meet monthly at McKendree Tower, their recent program with Col Ponder and Robert Keffer on "My Father's War" – the experiences of a WWII pilot out of England. Each month one member shares a personal military experience. The Field of Honor schedule at The Hermitage: November 10 at 2pm, November 11 at 8pm, and November 12 at 2pm. ROTC scholarship and JROTC medal recipients invited to meeting.

Memphis – John Dixon reported they hold either lunch or dinner meetings at different locations the 3rd Thursday of the month. The chapter had a table at the West TN Veterans Home (WTVH) Gala which was well attended including local politicians and State Representative Debra Moody. The Retiree's Activity Seminar in September was not as well attended as before. They have a new JROTC Representative.

Middle TN Chapter – John Olinger reported they have had great speakers such as Senator Corker, Beth Harwell, Williamson County Crime Stoppers among others. He also reported on Service Academy Days.

Mountain Empire – Doug Minton reported that he had recently spoken with the President. They meet every two months. Congressman Phil Roe attended their last meeting. They are doing okay.

Stones River Chapter – Jim Mapes reported their chapter has 60 members. The chapter has four pillars: Legislative led by Tom Henderson, Legislative Liaison; Military Support (Active Duty, ROTC/JROTC, Retired); Philanthropy supporting 2 veteran tables Veteran's Day; and lending dollars to Healing Waters; and Comradery meeting the third Thursday of each month. A visit from MOAA National is scheduled March 15, 2018.

Sumner County Chapter – Steve Petersen, President, reported their chapter dinner meeting is the 4th Thursday of each month. Five new members. The traveling Vietnam Wall will be in Hendersonville in November. Clarence Counts, MOAA Council and Chapters, will visit them January 25 or February 22, 2018.

Upper Cumberland Chapter – Mark Pfaffenroth, President, reported that they have quarterly meetings. They still fund their \$2,000 JROTC scholarship. They are getting more involved with the JROTC community.

Kathy reminded everyone that MOAA National does not require insurance but strongly encourages it when hosting events, participating in parades, etc.

Deferred to a later date was Steve Singleton's suggestion we donate to Pete's Home.

Kathy reported on the State Veteran Homes. Bradley County is #1 on the list. Hopefully, Memphis will be #1 on the list next year. The problem is that \$600 billion is requested from VA building funds to fix safety issues, build these homes, etc. Another petition will be set up which needs 100,000 signatures in 30 days. Kathy will alert and needs everyone's support.

Our next meeting is scheduled for **17 January 2018** at 11:00am in Ward Agriculture Center, Building E.

Mark Your Calendar!	TN Vets Day On The Hill:	7 February 2018
	TN CoC Meeting:	9 May 2018
	TN CoC Meeting:	18 July 2018, Building E
	TN CoC Meeting:	17 October 2018, Building C

The meeting adjourned at 1:50pm.

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