



Tennessee Council of Chapters
Military Officers Association of America



Minutes of the Meeting 15 July 2020

Tennessee Council of Chapters, MOAA met 15 July 2020 on-line in a Zoom meeting with **15** members on-line and CAPT Stone from MOAA national as follows:

Chattanooga: Bill Hewitt
East Tennessee: No Representative
Ft. Campbell: Ivan Adames, Steve Singleton, Eddie Sumbler
General Andrew Jackson: J.D. Rottero
Memphis: Kathy Desjarlais, John Dixon, Jim Thomasson
Middle TN: Mike Patenaude, Patricia Bergquist, Doug Minton
Mountain Empire: Mark Tipton
Stones River: Pete Warner
Sumner County: Steve Petersen
Upper Cumberland: Locke Kelly

MOAA National: CAPT Erin Stone, Navy, (Retired)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: 2020 MEETING INFORMATION IN THE MINUTES!

No guests attended on Zoom

Council President Jim Thomasson began the meeting at 11:30am.

Ivan Adames led the pledge to the flag. Pastor Eddie Sumbler said a prayer for the attendants of the meeting and their families, and for those In-uniform for our country

Acceptance of Minutes

Minutes of the 15 January 2020 meeting were approved by acclamation.

Financial Report

John Dixon, Treasurer, delivered the financial report for the period January 1 – June 30, 2020. There was not much activity. There were no expenditures in the Unrestricted Funds (operating account). *The one outstanding check of \$100 dated September 27th payable to TVET covering the Council dues cleared in February 2020.*

There were no expenditures from our Restricted Travel Funds. However, the council did receive from MOAA a stipend of \$1,150 on January 31, 2020 for qualified travel.

Our 18-month Certificate of Deposit (2.47% interest) at Regions Bank earned \$38.02 in quarterly interest for the six-month period. **\$7,242.15** is the ending balance of council funds. John Dixon reported that the CD matures next week. He recommended that the CD not be renewed due to the exceptionally low interest rates now available. The Council agreed and voted to place the proceeds in our checking account.

The Council accepted the Treasurer's Report as presented without question by vote.

MOAA National – CAPT Erin Stone, U. S. Navy, (Retired)

CAPT Stone spoke to the Council about activities at MOAA headquarters in Virginia. She briefed on most items that were covered in the May 21, 2020 Council president's webinar. A one-page summary is attached. Also attached are PowerPoint slides that she briefed from.

She said that the national convention in October in Kansas City will be a virtual event, with most activities to be available on-line. The awarding of Level of Excellence awards will likely be done later, but the method has not been determined.

The Training Workshops scheduled around the country are being rescheduled and will also be on-line, making them available for all chapter members in the appropriate area. More information will be coming out.

A working group at MOAA has been formed and is working to find new ways to support and sustain Councils and Chapters. A briefing was made to the MOAA BOD in July and another will be made in October.

61 Covid-19 emergency grants of \$500 each have been made to date.

The MOAA website has recently been upgraded. A new Policies and Procedures book is coming out soon.

MOAA tries to visit every state Council at least annually and every chapter every 3 or 4 years. This is currently being accomplished via Zoom.

Many of the activities that were to be covered by the USAA grants were cancelled due to the covid-19 pandemic. MOAA does not want the funds returned. Chapters should find another appropriate, similar activity for them. Billy Hewitt of Chattanooga asked about an event in his chapter that was cancelled and if another activity that he described was appropriate. CAPT Stone said it was.

Surviving Spouse Report

Patricia Bergquist, our surviving spouse representative, gave the following report:

On the SBP/DIC update, there is no new information to report.

DFAS has not updated all the rules and regulations on the SBP/DIC Offset to walk thru all the procedures. Leadership and surviving spouses need to continue to follow the DFAS website's Surviving Spouses page for updates.

As reported previously, it is important that surviving spouses make sure their DFAS "My Pay" Account is updated. Do not call DFAS.

Surviving spouses may be interested in a new Facebook group that has been started, "Military Surviving Spouses DFAS Issues". This group is administered by a surviving spouse who is employed at DFAS.

On June 10th, Patricia spoke with Col Dan Merry, MOAA Government Relations Director. The Military Coalition is building a foundation on the following:

- 1) To update surviving spouse language in the law to remove the language "holding yourself out as a married person", along with "opposite sex" as the VA honors same sex marriages.
- 2) To change the age of the remarriage penalty from age 57 to age 55 which aligns with other Federal Programs, and
- 3) To align the DIC rate being paid at 55% vs 43% again like other Federal Programs

MOAA is not slowing down due to the full repeal of the SBP/DIC Offset. However, it is a tighter fight because of the \$3 Trillion COVID funds already expended, and there may be more.

If your chapter surviving spouses have specific questions about specific problems with survivor benefits, please send them to Patricia so she can get them through to MOAA.

Surviving Spouses impacted by the DIC rate in #3 above may want to join the Facebook page "DIC Surviving Spouses and Friends". This group is working to garner co-sponsors for HR 6933 introduced by Congressman Cox (CA). There are over 419,000 DIC surviving spouses impacted.

Patricia also emphasized, as she has for at least seven years, that military members and former members must discuss with their spouses the available benefits and make decisions according to their needs. She continues to receive phone calls from widows who have been given almost no information from their deceased spouses, causing confusion and much heartache.

TVET Update

The following Summary Notes are from Col Doug Minton, USA, (Ret), who is the Council's new representative to TVET. The notes from the 27 June 2020 TVET Strategic Planning Meeting

Meeting was held at the newly reopened/remodeled Operation Stand Down TN facility in Nashville. The meeting began at 1015 hours.

At your request, I represented the MOAA TN CoC; however, there were (3) other MOAA members from the Ft. Campbell Chapter (Bill Summers in an advisory role, Steve Singleton serving as outgoing TVET Secretary and representing the National Sojourners, and Eddie

Sumbler representing the Buffalo Soldiers) and (1) other member from the Middle TN Chapter (Doug Gilbert representing Reserve Officers Association (ROA)) in attendance.

In addition to the above, representatives from AMVETS (2), ROA (1) additional, Marine Corps League (1), VFW (1), and Women Veterans of America (WVA) (Monica Meeks – outgoing TVET President, and Robin Beamon –Treasurer) were in attendance; for a total of (11) in attendance either in person or by video. (Note: this was the first meeting using video (Windows) that had taken place at OSDTN, so there were some glitches to be expected.)

There was no representation from The Farmer Veteran Coalition, Military Order of the Purple Heart, TREA, or VVA (although to be fair they were holding their state conference at the same time as this meeting).

After opening remarks, the Pledge and a prayer had taken place the first order of business was the Treasurer's report. Robin Beamon with the help of several others (remember that advisory role that Bill Summers played?) has accomplished a miraculous stand-up of the organization in her two-year term with little or no finances available. Bank Account (Regions), P. O. Box, Tax Exempt Status, IRS 990 filed, etc. *While they had some limited funds paid in as dues (MOAA was current), it could not have been accomplished without the personal contributions by Robin Beamon and Bill Summers (purportedly all reimbursed), and a \$1000 donation made by State Senator Bill Powers of Montgomery County.* A Treasurers Report was provided, and I believe has already been shared; but the bottom line is that TVET is solvent with \$912.25 in our account, but with anticipated unpaid liabilities of approximately \$500 right around the corner. Also, the new TVET address is TVET, P. O. Box 31863, Clarksville, TN 37040.

The current leadership team at TVET will change this year, with the President and Secretary stepping down. Eddie Sumbler with the Buffalo Soldiers will become President, Mike Cowger from the VVA organization will become VP. At this point no candidate for Secretary has stepped forward, but the current Treasurer will continue in her role. The new leadership team will function for two years and then VVA should assume the Presidency for the following two years. The leadership succession plan has been a point of concern since the inception of TVET – leadership is supposed to rotate amongst the member organizations, but the process has yet to become reliably stable. *Of special note: the leadership provided by the members of the WVA and Bill Summers and Steve Singleton (who was co-representing the MOAA and the Sojourners as Secretary) are to be highly commended for their efforts to build and then fund and staff its inaugural term; their efforts got us this far!*

The next item of discussion involved the lessons learned from the most recent TVET Day on the TN Hill initiative:

- Limit TVET sponsored bills to just 2-4 legislative initiatives to maintain focus and not get lost in the rush of bills under consideration. Member and “participant” organizations must be able to get behind the TVET bills, and not have to wait for approval of their state conferences (usually held after the legislative period) or national organizations.
- TVET leadership must be able to task member organizations to accomplish some of the preliminary footwork necessary for a successful Day on the Hill event. This means that member organizations in and around Nashville will need to step up to take on these tasks (arranging parking, permits, etc.) that require on-site action.

- We need to find a balance between educating/entertaining veterans and educating legislators. Majority of our effort has been to keep veterans busy and to educate them during their day on hill. Much time and effort has been spent on the entertaining (tours). Additionally, the past three years have been focused on having participants meet with their legislators, but this means that if no veterans participate from a region of the state, then the legislators from that area have been missed. We must find a way to approach every legislator! Also, TDVS has suggested setting up some classes for the veteran participants to provide education (example: suicide prevention, TDVS benefits, etc.).
- Meals for the Day on the Hill have been provided by Mission BBQ for the past 2-3 years; however, because legislators and their staffs have also partaken of those meals Mission BBQ has said that is out of their scope and they are going to have to cease providing the meals. We will probably need to go to a \$5 or \$10 fee for our meals going forward, but there are collection issues that have to be addressed before this can be a reality; plus we have the collection issue of “participant organizations” that cannot or do not join TVET, but participate in large numbers (American Legion as an example). Parking and Transportation also play into possible future costs.

The above items all need to be discussed at the member organization level and then feedback be provided to the TVET leadership team. The next planning meeting will be in August 2020.

TVET has had success in the past with legislative items (note the Women Veterans Recognition signed by the Governor this year) and is once again asking for member organizations to submit suggestions for the upcoming legislative session. Everyone understands this will be a \$ constrained year, but we need to have some initiatives to pursue with the legislators. Also, dues are now payable for our organization as of 30 June.

The meeting adjourned at 1415 hours.

A thought or two on TVET:

- The concept is excellent, and the execution provided by the initial leadership team has been exceptional, especially considering everything that had to be accomplished to build an organization from the ground up. It is difficult to accomplish focused action when your forces come from disparate and frequently disorganized member organizations! Given that we have only been at this for under five years, I think it looks surprisingly good.
- We need a virtual round of applause for Bill and Steve, they have been warriors; and we also need to applaud Eddie Sumbler for stepping into the gauntlet to provide leadership to an organization still in transition, he will need our combined support to see this through!

Presentation of Col Marvin J Harris Communications Award

The Memphis chapter was awarded a five-star Col Marvin J Harris Communication Award for its recently initiated web site. The following letter from MOAA President Dana Atkins was read to the Council:

Congratulations to the Tennessee COC and its one chapter for receiving the 2019 Colonel Marvin Harris Communications Awards for one or both print/e-newsletters and websites. You are in an elite group, as just over one-quarter of our affiliates are being recognized with this award this year. As you know, I would normally be presenting the Communications Awards to our council and chapter presidents in person at the annual Storming the Hill/Council Presidents' Seminar, but due to the cancellation of this event, we were unable to do so. However, I wanted to offer my personal congratulations on this great achievement.

Good communication and active member engagement are the hallmarks of an effective council or chapter and your team has created a winning formula. Timely, accurate, and abundant communication is always important, but in these unprecedented times of mass "social distancing," "top-notch communications, and avoiding "social disconnecting," are more critical than ever.

In closing, please accept my enthusiastic congratulations and a heartfelt "thank you" for all you continue to do to support your national association, council/chapter, and local community.

SIGNED,

Dana T. Atkins

MOAA Guidance From The May 21, 2020 Webinar

The following is an outline of the briefing at the May 21, 2020 Webinar. Most of this was briefed by CAPT Stone of MOAA.

- National Convention in Kansas City Oct 21 to 24 in doubt: decision by July 15 (It has been cancelled.)
- Virtual Storming the Hill in May:
 - 14,000 meetings, letters, contacts, etc.
 - 90% of Congressional offices reached
- Levels of Excellence (LOE) Awards to be announced in early August – only 173 submittals
- Mercer Advertising - 65 chapters have used the advertising for the \$100 payment
- Online Dues Payment –
 - A second administrator has been added
 - Can now accept donations without a dues payment
 - Can select or deselect a 6-month proration of dues
- A new Management System is being installed – Salesforce
- New MOAA store with more items has been installed.
- Membership
 - 47% are life; 19% are premium; 34 % are basic
 - 41% of life members are 80 or older!
 - Membership increased 3.8% in 2019

- 2900 new Life Members
- Premium membership grew in 2019, but renewals remained steady at 77%
- Marketing
 - Goal is to be more visible – to members and in our communities
 - Showcase why MOAA membership is more important than ever
 - Make programs more relevant in today's environment
 - Stay the course on core initiatives
 - Listen to members
- Grants – (Chapters and programs were listed for the 34 winning grants)
 - Community Outreach Grants
 - Has grown from 6 (\$25,000) in 2017 to 23 (\$84,832) in 2020
 - 3 Criteria
 - Community Impact
 - Involvement of council/chapter
 - MOAA brand potential
 - Covid-19 Relief Fund Chapter Grants
 - 11 grants awarded in 2020 for \$55,000
 - Covid-19 Emergency Relief Grants (up to \$500 each)
 - Available for currently serving and caregivers
 - Preference for those not eligible for other relief societies

Chapter Updates

Memphis - Kathy Desjarlais

1. Received 50th anniversary certificate from MOAA National
2. Received its first ever Col Marvin J Harris Communications award for new website, thanks to PZ Horton, webmaster
3. Chapter has now held 3 BOD meetings on Zoom. No chapter meetings since February.
4. Has started selling a chapter challenge coin as a fund raiser.
5. Three (3) scholarships will be awarded this fall.

Mountain Empire – Mark Tipton

1. Last chapter meeting in February due to meeting location closed for extended period.
2. BOD meetings have resumed meeting in person.
3. Annual picnic scheduled for July 18th, this Saturday. Virus and members traveling will keep attendance low
4. Next chapter meeting is Sep 20th, with special guest Miss Virginia Courtney Lynn, an Army Reservist. Meeting is contingent upon local conditions.

General Andrew Jackson – J. D. Rottero

1. Last meeting in February. March meeting cancelled due to tornado. Covid-19 since then.
2. Chapter members have stayed in touch via email and conference call since then.

3. Two (2) scholarships were awarded to JROTC cadets.

Middle Tennessee – Mike Patenaude

1. Last chapter meeting on Feb 25th, with all cancelled through July. Future meetings are TBD
2. Memorial Day remembrance at Tn State Veterans Cemetery postponed due to pandemic.
3. Chapter successfully applied for a Covid-19 Relief Grants, which was awarded to a veteran in Nashville.
4. Operations Stand Down Heroes Breakfast scheduled for August has been postponed to November 12 with a planned in-person and virtual option available – more to follow.
5. Two (2) scholarships are being awarded to students at Lipscomb College and Belmont University.

Upper Cumberland – Locke Kelly

1. All activities suspended since March due to large percentage of “highly vulnerable” members.
2. Summer picnic moved from June to mid-September. This is 30th anniversary of chapter.
3. Last BOD meeting on April 29th at an outdoor pavilion with social distancing. Next one is August 3rd.
4. Chapter awarded two (2) scholarships this spring: a \$2,000 scholarship and special \$1,000 scholarship in honor of chapter’s 30th anniversary.
5. All members remain healthy to this point!

Ft Campbell – Ivan Adames

1. Last in-person luncheon was Feb 15th. Next one is scheduled for July 18th.
2. Last in-person BOD meeting was Feb 18th and have been zoom since then.
3. Funeral services honors for two (2) chapter members were on hold from June and July
4. Col Ted A. Crozier Memorial Golf Outing set for Aug 21st, Cole Park Golf Course at Ft Campbell.
5. Retiree Appreciation Day planned for Sep 26th at Ft Campbell
6. Ivan reminded everyone of the tax-free holiday coming July 24-26 in Tennessee.

Sumner County – Steve Petersen

1. No BOD meetings since March. Zoom BOD meeting planned this month.
2. No scheduled dinner meetings due to pandemic. Patricia Bergquist spoke at the last meeting in January.
3. Chapter has lost 2 members to the Covid-19 virus, Jack Rives and Floyd Lacey, who was the chaplain and former president (6 years ago).

Stones River – Pete Warner

1. Last BOD and chapter meetings were in January, due to the Covid-19 virus.
2. Just completed second Zoom BOD meeting last week.
3. Chapter dinners for July and August are cancelled, but a picnic is scheduled for Sep 17th.
4. Chapter donated \$500 to MOAA’s Covid-19 Relief Fund.

Chattanooga – Billy Hewitt

1. Meetings have been held via Zoom for several months.
2. In-person dinner is scheduled for Aug 25th, but some members will attend via Zoom.
3. One scholarship has been awarded and three (3) are pending.

Conclusion of Meeting

Doug Minton proposed that the Council donate \$100 to the MOAA Covid-19 relief fund. This was raised to \$250 since the Council has nearly \$6000 in unrestricted funds. The Council approved unanimously.

Jim Thomasson reminded everyone of the post card pull-outs in this month's MOAA magazine that we should be sending Congressmen Kevin McCarthy and Nancy Pelosi on portions of the NDA 2021 that pertain to medical billets and medical treatment facilities that DOD is wanting to change.

The meeting was adjourned about 12:50 CST.

Upcoming Dates

1. MOAA National Meeting will be held in Kansas City, MO on 23 October 2020. On-line only.
2. MOAA Chapter Leaders Training Workshop will be held 13-14 November 2020. Invitations will be for (4) from each Chapter: President, Membership Chair, Legislative Chair, and Surviving Spouse Liaison. Invitations will be based on Committee Module assignments, so Chapters need to work to see that all (4) positions are filled for the New Year. All workshops are expected to be on-line only.
3. TVET Storming the Hill in Nashville, Feb 3, 2021.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is scheduled for **21 October 2020** and may be at 11:00am at Sammy B's in Lebanon, or in another Zoom meeting.

Future Meetings – at Sammy B's or on Zoom Mark Your Calendar!

TN CoC Meeting:	20 January 2021
TN CoC Meeting:	21 April 2021
TN CoC Meeting:	21 July 2021

Minutes prepared by Jim Thomasson, President and Secretary
Respectfully submitted by Jim Thomasson, President, TN Council of Chapters