



VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY

Executive Board Meeting Minutes

2 December 2025

Leyden Township

2501 N. Mannheim Road Franklin Park, IL 60131

(Executive Board Members): Frank Gutierrez (*President*), William Browne (*1st Vice President*), Dutch DeGroot (*2nd Vice President*), Robert Arciola (*Treasurer*),

At Large Board Members: Greg Jacobs, Jesus "Chuy" Segura, Evamarie Duff.
Non voting **Appointees** Jim Parker (*Secretary*), Kevin Ake (*Chaplain*), Pete Hurt (*Judge Advocate*), Lorenzo Fiorentino (*Sargent at Arms*). Elizabeth Soto (*Superintendent*)

I. Welcome – President Gutierrez

a. Board meeting called to Order at 1732 hrs.

b. Roll Call/Establish Quorum – 2nd VP De Groot confirmed the presence of a quorum. Present (6 of 7 Board Members): Absent: Greg Jacobs, At-Large

c. Recognition of Guests by President Gutierrez: Tiffany Perry, Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (State Approving Agency – GI Bill)
Representatives from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

II. Opening Reflection – Chaplain Ake

a. Prayer/Reflection In the absence of the Chaplain, George Gandara offered an opening prayer and reflection.

b. Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Consent Agenda – President Gutierrez

a. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – 30 September 2025 The minutes were previously distributed. No corrections were offered. The minutes stood approved

IV. Governance Report – Treasurer Aricola

a. Treasurer Arciola reported: Opening balance (end of September 2025): \$5,028.57
Deposit: \$89.50 (September) Current balance (as of December 1, 2025): \$5,118.07

No additional transactions since September Annual state filing completed and submitted to the Secretary IRS Form 990-N scheduled for filing in January Motion:

To approve the financial report Motion: Browne Second: Duff Vote: Unanimous approval

V. VACCC Office Report – Superintendent Elizabeth Soto

I n Superintendent Soto's absence, Executive Board provided a report based on direct communication and submitted documentation: October Assistance: Approximately \$112,000 distributed Veteran Contacts: Nearly 1,000 veteran interactions in one month Veterans Served: 309 veterans received financial assistance
Service Officers continue to process a high volume of successful claims Monthly performance continues to exceed previous records Budget context was provided: Requested FY26 Budget: \$5.0 million Approved Budget: \$3.2 million Two Service Officers processed 79 veterans in one month, potentially generating approximately \$1.2 million in federal benefits returned to Cook County.

VI. Unfinished Business – President Gutierrez

- a.** Progress digitizing VACCC records. Tabled by President Gutierrez.
- b.** Membership NFP Status – Secretary Parker No report. Deferred to next membership meeting.
- c.** Annual Superintendent Evaluation President Gutierrez reported that the evaluation has been completed and published on the VACCC website under public resources.
- d.** Office Space at VA Facilities Progress reported toward securing dedicated space at both Jesse Brown VA and Hines VA facilities.
- e.** Bylaw Discrepancy – Deputy Superintendent Hiring A discrepancy between bylaws and hiring practice was identified. Formal correction will be drafted to align procedure and title language.
- f.** Union League Club Presentation President Gutierrez announced plans for a VACCC office presentation to American Legion members at the Union League Club.

VII. New Business – President Gutierrez

- a.** Board Guidance on Outreach Prioritization President Gutierrez proposed formal board guidance directing staff to focus outreach efforts on high-impact locations (e.g., VA hospitals with 40+ veterans served) rather than low-attendance events, emphasizing this as supportive guidance, not micromanagement. Motion: To direct the Superintendent to prioritize outreach resources toward locations serving the greatest number of veterans Motion: Gutierrez Second: Segura Discussion: Extensive discussion emphasizing efficiency, continued outreach presence, volunteer engagement, and data-driven decisions Vote: Unanimous approval
- b.** Second Facebook Page The Board discussed the existence of an unmanaged secondary Facebook page. Consensus was reached to: Identify page ownership Explore rebranding, archiving, or repurposing Route all official social media content through Connor for consistency

VIII. Public Comment – President Gutierrez

- a.** Public comment was opened. Comments included: Veteran Treatment Court coordination Volunteer and ambassador outreach strategies MSP and Rode Home program coordination Importance of communication methods beyond flyers Public comment was closed..

IX. Good of the Order.

- a.** Items discussed included: Toys for Tots events at local posts Franklin Park Stand Down scheduled for January 25, 2026 Military history museum project update Union League Club Toys for Tots event invitation

X. Adjournment

- a.** Motion to Adjourn: Motion: Gutierrez Second: Duff Vote: Unanimous
The meeting was adjourned.
Next Meeting VACCC Membership Meeting 16 December 2025 – 1900 hours
Location: AMVETS Post 192, Bridgeview, IL

Submitted by Dutch DeGroot for Jim Parker, Secretary