



# VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY

**Executive Board Meeting Minutes**

**04 March 2024**

**AML Post 36**

**1291 Oakwood Ave, Des Plaines, IL 60016**

**(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, Wayne Kern, John Steciw. Non voting **Appointees** Jim Parker (*Secretary*), Kevin Ake (*Chaplain*), Gina A. LoGalbo (*Judge Advocate*), Lorenzo Fiorentino (*Sargent at Arms*). Elizabeth Soto (*Superintendent*)

## I Welcome – President Frank Gutierrez.

**a.** Call to order at 1706 hrs.

**b.** Guests President Gutierrez announced there were two guests in attendance: Jesus “Chuy” Segura ( via Zoom) and Mrs. Aricola.

**c.** Proposed Agenda Amendments:

— Removal of discussion on Cook County Veterans Affairs (CCVA) asset acquisition due to feasibility concerns.

— Prioritization of attorney recommendations under New Business for review and clarity on budget, procurement, IT, and personnel policies.

— Removal of Outreach & Funeral Home Engagement discussion unless urgent updates arise.

— Confirmation that Staff Training Metrics Update will be addressed at the next membership meeting.

Pursuant to a motion by President Frank Gutierrez, duly seconded, the motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

**d.** Roll Call/Quorum – 2nd VP DeGroot called the roll of Board

Members and announced that six elected members were present in person, The 7th John Steciw arrived late.

Also, appointed members Parker, Ake, attended in person and Superintendent Soto attended via Zoom.

## II Opening Reflection – Pledge of Allegiance. Chaplain Ake

## III Consent Agenda – President Gutierrez.

**a.** President Gutierrez moved for approval of Minutes of November 26, 2024 EB meeting.

It was seconded and passed by unanimous voice vote.

## IV Governance Report – Treasurer Arciola

**a.** Approval of Financial reports

## V. VACCC Office Reports – Superintendent Soto

**a.** Veterans Served. – No report. To be presented to the Board before next membership meeting.

**b.** Financial Updates. – No report. To be presented to the Board before next membership meeting.

**c.** Staff Training Matrix. Not required for this meeting but is being worked on and will be ready for next Membership meeting. Updates will be provided before future Board and Membership Meetings.

**d.** Digitizing VACCC Records. The County will require an official request for payment of fees if we elect to use an external company.

**e.** Increasing Monetary Assistance & Income Thresholds. There is some confusion regarding dollar amounts and percentages. Art Ellingson, Chuy Segura and Jim Schultz had some questions about the thresholds. Superintendent Soto said she will work with them and distribute a handout at the next Membership Meeting for use in formulating and answering questions.

Pursuant to a motion by 2nd VP DeGroot, duly seconded, the Office Report was approved by unanimous voice vote.

#### **VI** Updates on Cook County--President Gutierrez & 2nd VP DeGroot.

**a.** The CCVA has hired a new Director. He is Eric Armstrong, a USMC vet who has a background in education. President Gutierrez said he met CCVA Director Eric Armstrong who seems like a team player and someone we can work with.

**b.** Acquisition of CCVA. Seems less feasible now but we can discuss alternative strategies.

#### **VII** Consultants Reports.

**a.** Bylaws – Member John Steciw. No report.

**b.** Services provided – Member Wayne Kern. No report.

**c.** Budget – 1st VP Browne. No report.

**d.** Office Relocation Committee. We are working with Cook County Real Estate on having a presence in the Jesse Brown and VA Buildings. Superintendent Soto will bring up some news at the membership meeting. Four to five possible additional sites.

#### **VIII** Unfinished Business – President Gutierrez

**a.** Membership NFP Status Further discussion on restructuring. Frank said we will table this until the next Board meeting. Parker said he has researched this and is prepared to draft the necessary documents when we get approval to move forward from the Membership.

**b.** Relocation from current office. See Para. VII, d.

**c.** Outreach & Funeral Home Engagement – Awareness. Removed by agreement per motion by President Gutierrez.

#### **IX** New Business – President Gutierrez

**a.** Review of closed meeting minutes – 8/22 and 9/24. Tabled.

**b.** Review of Adjusted Benefits

President Gutierrez moved to accept the attorney's documents, as modified by Superintendent Soto subject to further changes based on the answers to the attorney's questions and membership approval at the next meeting. The motion was seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

**c.** Expanding VACCC Service Locations – Courthouse & District office. See Para. VII, d.

**d.** Nominations & Elections -- 2025-26. President Gutierrez.

President Gutierrez said the we will accept nominations for, and will elect the following at the next membership meeting.

**1.** EB Officers: President, 1st VP, 2nd VP, Treasurer

At Large Members (3)

*Nominations will be limited to three minutes.*

**2.** The new President will make appointments of the following Officers for 2025-2026  
Judge Advocate, Sergeant-at-Arms, Chaplain, Secretary

**e.** 2025 Membership status. Frank thanked Dutch for his efforts to increase our membership to 53 for 2025-2026.

**f.** Other proposals and Board discussion. None.

#### **IX** Public Comments.

1st VP Browne announced Richton Park VA Center will be opening in March or April and the VA center in Chicago Heights will be moving to the new facility.

I stated that Victor Samosa attended my VFW district meeting and spoke

on the VACCC.. Chuy and Victor Samosa also attended. Mr. Todd Moore Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Bureau of Administration, was also on line and asked for comments.

#### **X** Good of the Order.

**a.** 2nd VP DeGroot announced that member AmVets Post 66 will be sponsoring a Legislation Day in Springfield on March 19. Veterans will be visiting in small groups with a number of important Senators and Representative to push our agenda of needed new item as well as bill we support or oppose.

**b.** One of the bills we oppose is SB2018 which, if passed, will require partisan election of VAC officers and Board members. Witness slips will be provided at the appropriate time.

**c.** Frank announced a plan to have METRA provide free passes to vets with a 10% or greater disability. The CTA currently has this. Frank will be working on appropriate legislation for this plan..

#### **XI** Adjournment.

**a.** Next VACCC Membership Meeting – March 25, 2025 at  
Hines Hospital, Building 9, at 1900 hrs. (7:00pm CST)

**b.** Upon a proper Motion by Greg, duly seconded, and approved by unanimous voice vote, the meeting was adjourned at 1758 hrs.

Submitted by Jim Parker, Secretary