Veterans Assistance Commission Of Cook County

Executive Board Meeting Minutes
16 June 17hr30
Elmwood Park Public Library 1 Conti Parkway
Elmwood Park, IL 60707

(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 **Apponitees** Jim Parker ***(Secretary)***, George Gandara ***(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: TA guest was recognized at the outset of the meeting.

II. Opening Reflection – Chaplain Ake

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

b. Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Consent Agenda – President Gutierrez

a. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – 02 December 2025 The minutes were previously distributed. No corrections were offered. The minutes stood approved

IV. Governance Report – Treasurer Aricola

a. Treasurer Robert Arciola presented the financial report for the membership-side 501(c)(3). He reported:

- Beginning balance: $5,118.07
- No deposits or withdrawals since the last report
- Balance as of 1 March 2026 remained $5,118.07

He also reported that the IRS Form 990 postcard filing for 2025 had been completed and that the state annual report was current.

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

V. VACCC Office Report – Superintendent Elizabeth Soto

In the absence of Superintendent Elizabeth Soto, no full office report was presented. However, the Board noted a key update from the recently posted newsletter:

- current service staffing includes two service officers and one trainee
- since the start of the fiscal year, the two service officers have processed $9.2 million in claims

A fuller service report was expected at the upcoming membership meeting.

VI. Unfinished Business – President Gutierrez

a. Bylaws Follow-Up Chairman Robert Arciola reported that revisions to the proposed bylaw amendments had been completed and submitted to the membership for review ahead of the upcoming membership meeting. The Board discussed procedure for presentation and adoption, including whether the amendments should be introduced by article or section. President Gutierrez stated he would coordinate with legal counsel, Josh, on the proper motion and voting format and would also ask counsel to review prior related email discussions. The Board anticipated the next membership meeting would serve as the second reading, with possible adoption at that time.

b. Progress on Digitizing VACCC Records

No update was provided on digitization of VACCC records.

c. Membership NFP Status

The Board reaffirmed its intent to retain the 501(c)(3). Discussion centered on the need for a separate governance structure to manage the nonprofit while maintaining alignment with VACCC. Board members discussed:

- the likely need for separate bylaws
- creation of a formal governing structure
- the possibility that the president should be a delegate
- the value of having a treasurer or similar officer with CPA or accounting experience
- the Illinois VFW foundation model as a possible reference
- inconsistencies in the organization's naming across IRS and state records, with possible future alignment under a "doing business as" structure

No final structural action was taken.

d. Office Space at Jesse Brown VA and Hines VA

President Gutierrez reported that office space efforts at Jesse Brown VA and Hines VA were still in progress and expressed confidence that a continuing presence there was achievable. He also stated that discussions with Cook County may create an opportunity both to increase the budget and to accelerate the hiring process.

e. Union League Club Presentation Update

President Gutierrez reported on the Building America's Future event at the UnionLeague Club on March 2, 2026. VAC participated as an exhibitor alongside publicentities including the Tollway, IDOT, CTA, MTA, and MWRD. He reported that severalagencies and contractors have workforce initiatives that include veteran hiring expectations, creating a potential opportunity for VAC to serve as a workforce pipeline connecting veterans to employment and long-term stability. He also noted interest in having the Superintendent present VAC's work to American Legion and Union League audiences as visibility and donor engagement continue to grow

VII. New Business – President Gutierrez

a. FY24 Cook County Auditor Inquiry / Audit Coordination

President Gutierrez reported that the FY24 Cook County Auditor inquiry was underway and that discussions with the auditors had gone well. Topics included leadership, governance, budgeting, programs, and procedures. Board members discussed one area initially perceived as a shortfall: board development. The Board clarified that OMA and MVAA training provided through the Military Veterans Assistance Bureau qualifies as board development and is documented in the annual report.

The Board expressed its intention, once the audit is complete, to invite the auditors to a future membership meeting so the findings can be presented directly by the third party in the interest of transparency.

b. Building America's Future Event – March 2, 2026

This item was discussed in connection with the Union League Club update. Leadership emphasized the strategic importance of developing workforce partnerships tied to public-sector and contractor hiring initiatives, especially those involving veteran hiring expectations

VIII. Public Comment – President Gutierrez

a. No formal public comment was offered

IX. Good of the Order. Several updates and discussion items were shared

- Leyden Township Veterans Job Fair: Scheduled for Saturday, April 18, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Carl Fiorito Senior Center, in partnership with Triton College School of Continuing Education and the Veteran Education Foundation. Additional employers were still being sought. President Gutierrez offered to connect organizers with public-sector contacts.
- Board Development: The ILEAD Trustee portal was recommended as a possible professional development resource for the executive board.
- OMA Certification Tracking: The Board discussed sending an email to members with the OMA certification link and having the Secretary retain certifications on file for compliance and FOIA readiness.
- External Benchmarking: Board members shared takeaways from another organization's meeting, including bylaw examples, handbook materials, and VSO deployment practices based on demonstrated demand.
- Hines VA Meeting: Board leadership planned to attend a meeting at Hines VA the following day to discuss Building 217, the food pantry, and broader operational concerns, with the stated goal of helping drive improvement.
- Staffing/Budget Discussions: Additional comments reiterated that county-level discussions were ongoing regarding faster hiring and possible budget increases.
- Member Organization Updates: Board members discussed encouraging organizations to bring handouts or written materials for distribution at meetings instead of lengthy oral reports.
- Elections/Continuity: The Board discussed preparations for upcoming elections, including floor nominations and prepared voting materials by post. Members also reflected positively on the year's progress and on continuity of leadership.
- Political Boundaries: The Board discussed recent election results involving veteran allies and concluded that official VAC communications should remain apolitical, with congratulatory outreach better made in a personal capacity.

X. Adjournment A motion to adjourn was made by Robert Arciola and seconded by Evamarie Duff. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at approximately 1811. The next VACCC Membership Meeting was scheduled for 24 March 2026 at 7:00 PM at Hines VA Building 9, 5000 5th Ave, Hines, IL 60141.

Submitted by Dutch DeGroot for Jim Parker, Secretary