



# DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

232 Union Ave Somerville, NJ Chapter 16

Last Meeting Minutes



The regularly scheduled meeting of the DAV, Somerville Chapter 16 was held on Saturday, August 29, 2020. It was the last Saturday instead of the usual fourth. Rather than in-person this was a virtual meeting using the free Jitsi application. The virtual room was secured, and our colors were posted by our Commander. Our meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by our Commander. The result of a roll call of Officers was 8 present and 1 excused. Other commanders present were: Joe Kordzikowski (Purple Heart) and Thomas H. Cellilli Jr. (VFW). Total attendance was 32 per a virtual Roll Call done by the Adjutant with the assistance of the Commander.

## **Minutes Report:**

Our Adjutant, Dwight read the February Meeting Minutes. That was our last membership meeting before the Covid-19 pandemic rules precluding in-person groups took effect in March. They were accepted as read and the motion was approved (1st by Lou Colluci and 2nd by Tim Henshall).

## **Treasurer's Report:**

Our Treasurer, Richard read the monthly Finance Reports (March through June) which were accepted as read and the motion was approved (1st by Lou Colluci and 2nd by Tim Henshall).

## **Regular business:**

Our Commander stated that during the past months he has continued to receive calls from Veterans needing assistance and from other organizations seeking help or information. Although our service room in Lyons VAMC is temporarily not available we continue to do outreach with claims via our Service Officers Tim, Steven, and Wendall.

Our Commander confirmed receipt of snail-mailed post cards sent to members and noted there are still some incorrect e mail address. We have been in contact with VAMC Lyons. All events there are on hold. We have received thank you letters for prior events and donations. Veterans Haven North veterans home sent us a thank you letter for our donation of a laptop. We received another thank you letter from Independence for Veterans for the blankets and toiletries we donated to them. The chapter received about 100 boxes of Girl Scout cookies. These were dropped off at VA Lyons Hospital. The Commander stated we still have one laptop and several desktops for donations to veterans. He advised the group that these are available to our members as well. Donations were made to Independence for Veterans for their food pantry. (Joe and Harriette Doll will shop for food.). We also donated \$100 to Project Help for their clothing drive. We also participate with Operation Chillout and will have a meeting with Kevin Murphy to see how we can contribute toward future events. He spoke to Ed Mendoza about a donation from Gieger Foundation. Ed is living in Florida now and attended this virtual meeting. Trustee, Gene Moretti joined us virtually for this meeting and will try to make next meeting.

The Commander polled the group for those waiting for chapter hats. As we may not have an in-person meeting for a while he plans to mail them to those who are waiting. One is member, Howard Lumbard.



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The Commander stated as we move toward the end of the year the Officers will be working on their year-end reports for our Chapter. The Treasurer and Commander expect to have them completed on time.

Our Chapter received a nice letter from DAV National recognizing Jr. Vice Commander Steve Cicmansky for his dedication. He was given a National Outstanding Service Award.

Attorney, Ann Buckley Johnson advised that the VA continues to deny claims. So you may need to re-file your claim and reschedule appointments. This has become an even slower process.

During the past months our Chapter Officers have attended Zoom meetings with the state. The Commander explained we are using a virtual meeting application called Jitsi in lieu of Zoom since it is free, and no license is required. It was decided that members should wear their DAV hats and golf shirts if available for our virtual meetings. Officers will wear regular uniform with white dress shirt and tie for in-person meetings. We will have one when it is safe to do so..

## **Chapter New Business:**

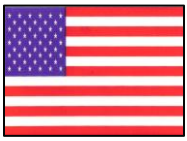
The Commander, Treasurer and Adjutant are exploring possible alternative sites for our coming in-person meetings. This is due to the restrictions imposed by the state due to COVAD19. The Commander asked who would attend an in-person meeting if the group meeting restrictions are lifted. A show of hands said many would come. An outdoor option is Eagle Park where we can practice social distancing. That is across the street from our usual American Legion location. The members present said they would attend.

Sr. Vice Cdr "Doc" Wilson has received requests for chapter shirts and he is taking care of those orders directly. If you require clothing, contact him, and he will provide from stock or place orders. Tim Henshall will contact him for a Golf Shirt. Also mentioned was planning for our annual Christmas Party. This will be discussed further as we get closer to the date.

Chapter Treasurer, Rich Pirrello mentioned his promotion to 3rd Jr Vice Commander at state. Also mentioned were outreach efforts for both the Chapter and the state. Many veterans are not aware of the benefits they have earned or how to use the VA system.

Chapter Adjutant, Dwight Staehler mentioned the Chapter e mail list based upon the sign-in sheet has fewer bounces. The VA is getting behind on medical appointments due to Covad19. New rules permit fewer patients be processed in one day. Future appointments are being rescheduled to accommodate this. Building entry is more complex. Body temperature checks are being performed. Three new conditions (bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, & parkinsonism) may be added to cover Agent Orange exposure.

DSOs Wendell Stowe and Tim O'Brian have been busy covering our office at Lyons remotely during its temporary closure. Daily operations there have changed. Bldg 5 is now closed and temperature checks are required to enter the facility.



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Lenny Jackson updated our group about the status of retired Somerset County veterans representative, Betsy. She and her husband have relocated to Fla. She thanks all who attended her retirement party.

Rev Carol Pierce questioned Officer election status.. The Commander explained all officers who have not stepped down will stay in place for the following term. She is working with women veterans on greater participation with the DAV and VA programs as well as homeless veterans in the community. So she is resigning as Chapter Chaplin.

Jim Velcheck advised us the VAMC is open. There should be no problems gaining entry.

Steve Maris is still posting updates to our Chapter 16 Face Book page. He reports lots of "Likes". He suggested we look into using an app named DISCORD for virtual meetings and messages.

The Commander opened the floor to the members for comments

## **Closing:**

A chapter member made a motion to close the meeting. The motion was seconded. The Commander closed the meeting and our chaplain said the closing prayer. The colors were retired.

Our next meeting is Saturday, September 26, 2020.

A moment of silence was observed for those members who passed.