Minutes-Michigan Council of Chapters, MOAA
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom, 10-1130AM, December 2, 2024

1.The Michigan Council of Chapters of MOAA met on December 2, 2024, via Zoom. Council President Mary Johnson called the meeting to order at 10AM.

2. Council members present:

Mary Johnson, Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids.
Mel Flikkema, Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids.
Jim Sigmon, Capital Area Chapter.
Mark Benjamin, Northwestern Michigan Chapter.
Todd Sanders, Northwestern Michigan Chapter.
Rich Higgins, Southeastern Michigan Chapter
Roy Yaple, Southeastern Michigan Chapter.

3. A motion to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2024, meeting was made, seconded, and approved.

4. The Treasurer's Report of November 18, 2024, was submitted by Treasurer Mel Flikkema and accepted.

Current balance $3927.96

This reflects the previous balance of $4022.96 and expenses of $20 for the annual LARA (State of Michigan) fee and the Commanders' Group dues of $75.00.

5. President's Report by Mary Johnson: Mary summarized recent events regarding the Fisher House Detroit which opened on November 26. Representatives from the Michigan Council of Chapters of MOAA attended the opening ceremony and were impressed with the facility and opening ceremony. Mary also reported on participation at the Fisher House Golf Tournament earlier this summer in Grand Haven. Mary then led with discussion on Council participation in the Michigan Commanders' Group and asked Jim Sigmon to provide additional remarks. Mary did report that she would encourage participation by any Council member who wants to take over her duties in the group. Jim discussed MOAA legislative advocacy associated with the Major Richard Star Act (currently awaiting passage in the Senate) and the Elizabeth Dole Act. Efforts continue to get both bills signed into law prior to the end of the Congressional session. MOAA members are encouraged to make use of the MOAA Legislative Action Center and the legislative advocacy functionality available on the Commanders' Group website.

6. Jim Sigmon also discussed plans for the Commanders' Group meeting in January to reintroduce key members to the new members of the legislature. There was also discussion of new state legislation recently signed by Governor Whitmer to lower eligibility thresholds for disabled veteran license plates and park access from 100% disabled to 50% disabled. Finally, Jim recommended that the Council form a Legislative Committee made up of representatives from each chapter.

7. Property tax benefits have been extended to include coverage for a spouse's move to a second residence.

8. Jim Sigmon has recommended the formation of a legislative committee from members of each chapter. Rich Higgins has volunteered to chair the committee.

9. There was discussion about forming a Council Committee for Communication. Rich Higgins has volunteered to coordinate.

10. Chapter Reports:

Northwestern Michigan Chapter. Mark Benjamin provided a summary of membership including solid meeting attendance as well as efforts regarding efforts to get members to pay dues. The chapter scholarship is going well.

Capital Area Chapter. Jim Sigmon reported on plans for chapter meetings including the normally scheduled Board meeting on the first Thursday of the month and the general membership meeting on the second Thursday of the month. He also discussed the future Veterans' Day event at the Alumni Cathedral. He noted the planned 2026 meeting in 2026 of a Medal of Honor Group where the Council may want to participate.

Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids. Mary Johnson provided a chapter update including their support of Heroes Corner making it a haven for female veterans. The chapter dinner will be held on Dec 5, 2024.

Southeastern Michigan Chapter. The chapter continues to operate with 34 members. Chapter officers were elected during the November 7, 2024, general membership meeting held in Detroit.

11. Mary Johnson reported that as the new MOAA Association Management System remains in testing, the system will not be used in ratings for awards applications; she encouraged chapters to apply for MOAA awards.

12. Old Business. The Council discussed the Fisher House Detroit that opened on November 26th and how the Council could increase its support for the program. The MOAA Foundation grant, a support initiative, is open for applications until February 2025. Mary indicated that she would email Kate at the Fisher House to request to join a committee to increase our participation. There was discussion that MOAA requires that the grant recipient (a MOAA council or chapter) carry

liability insurance. Mel Flikkema asked if the Council could use the Fisher House's liability insurance; this is an item to be explored.

13. New Business. Mary Johnson reported that while the AMS remains undergoing testing, the new MOAA dues functionality, Cheddar Up, is operational. Rich Higgins of the Southeastern Michigan Chapter announced shifting to Cheddar Up as each transaction is free.

14. Mary Johnson led the Council in a review of the current Council By-laws from 2018. The Council agreed that no changes were necessary to the by-laws.

15. Advocacy in Action, the MOAA national legislative campaign, was discussed. Rich Higgins of the Southeastern Michigan Chapter volunteered to attend the 7-10 April 2025 event. Mark Benjamin of the Northwestern Michigan Chapter plans to be the second representative for Michigan.

16. The Council held officer elections with the following results:

Mary Johnson	President	Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids
Mark Benjamin	First Vice-President	Northwestern Michigan Chapter
Rich Higgins	Second Vice-President	Southeastern Michigan Chapter
Tony Kruckeberg	Third Vice-President	Capital Area Chapter
Mel Flikkema	Treasurer	Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids
Roy Yaple	Secretary	Southeastern Michigan Chapter
Mary Johnson	Surviving Spouse Liaison	Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids

17. Mary Johnson reported that she is interested in ensuring each Council meeting has an appropriate guest speaker (February, May, August, November).

18. Mary Johnson led a discussion about planning and hosting a state MOAA convention. This led to discussion about numbers of attendees, reason for a convention, location for the convention, and possible leadership/speaker/political guest list. After significant discussion, consensus was reached to table the matter until the February 2025 Council meeting.

19. The meeting was adjourned at 1130AM.

Roy L. Yaple
CDR, US Navy (Retired)
Secretary, Michigan Council of Chapters, MOAA
January 9, 2025