Minutes-Michigan Council of Chapters, MOAA
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom, 1-230PM, June 16, 2025

1.The Michigan Council of Chapters of MOAA met on June 16, 2025, via Zoom. Council President Mary Johnson called the meeting to order at 1PM.

2. Council members present:

Mary Johnson, Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids.
Mel Flikkema, Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids.
Mark Benjamin, Northwestern Michigan Chapter.
Rich Higgins, Southeastern Michigan Chapter.
John Walus, Southeastern Michigan Chapter.
Roy Yaple, Southeastern Michigan Chapter.

3. A motion to approve the minutes of the 24 February 2025 meeting was made, seconded, and approved.

4. The Treasurer's Report of 16 June 2025 was submitted by Treasurer Mel Flikkema. A motion was made to accept the report, the motion was seconded and the report was accepted by vote. The only expenditure was $154.00 to support the Council website.

The previous balance was $3927.96. The current balance after the expenditure was $3773.96.

5. President's Report.

a. Mel Flikkema spoke regarding a pending $800 grant from USAA. Mary Johnson was pleased to summarize the recent chapter performance including three Levels of Excellence (LOE) awards (Capital Area, Northwestern, and Army/Navy Club of Grand Rapids) and two Harris Communications Awards by Southeastern Michigan and Northwestern Michigan.

b. Mary passed reporting to Rich Higgins who summarized his attendance at the May MVAA Conference in Marquette. Rich provided a 107-page date-oriented document from the conference. Rich reported that there is potential for a virtual chapter in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Rich noted that it may be appropriate to encourage chapter member attendance at the next MVAA conference and plan to set up and staff a Council MOAA table to spread the word and encourage membership.

6. Committee Standing Reports.

a. Legislation Committee.

1) Rich discussed his participation at the April Advocacy in Action (AIA) event in Washington D.C. Rich noted that this year, MOAA had implemented the Soapbox application to schedule member meetings with their legislators. Rich, in his first trip to AIA, was very positive regarding Soapbox, although others who had attended previously preferred the previous method which involved extensive personal effort to set up and manage AIA appointments. Rich also plans to coordinate with Jim Sigmon to meet with legislative members of the Michigan Commanders Group to gather information and organize a focused legislative plan of action.

2) Jim Sigmon was unable to attend the Council meeting as he was actively involved at the same time with the Commanders Group.

b. Membership Committee.

Attendees summarized status including numbers of members and efforts to achieve Council goals to increase chapter membership by 10% and retain at least 90% of chapter members from the previous year.

c. Communications Committee.

Rich reported that the Council now has its own website.

d. Finance Committee.

Two motions were made regarding finances. The first motion was made to approve payment of the annual Michigan LARA fee of $20 which will come due prior to October 1, 2025. The motion was made, seconded, and approved by vote. The second motion was made to approve payment of the annual Michigan Commander's Group fee of $75. This motion was made, seconded, and approved by vote.

7. Chapter Reports.

a. Northwestern Michigan. Mark Benjamin discussed plans to address leadership succession in the Northwestern Michigan chapter including multiple openings. Mark also discussed the chapter's use of local 60 second radio spots to encourage members to join. Mark also described the chapter's efforts to provide financial support to local veterans organizations Reining Liberty Ranch (www.reininglibertyranch.org)and 22 2 None (www.222none.org). Mark welcomed Council members to visit the chapter.

b. Southeastern Michigan. Rich Higgins reported that Roy Yaple had received a MOAA Leadership Award for his service to the chapter. Rich reported that the chapter had received its IRS Determination Letter certifying the chapter as a federal-tax exempt organization under IRS Code 501(c)(3). Roy added recent experience in making changes to chapter and membership rosters in the Committee Module.

c. Army/Navy Club of Grand Rapids. Mary Johnson reported that 35 members attended the last meeting. Mary participated in the Western Michigan University ROTC award ceremony and the combined ceremony for Ferris State University and Central Michigan University. The chapter's annual picnic will be held on August 16, and MOAA Board member Fred Midgette will visit the chapter for its December 4, 2025, meeting. Mary reported on the chapter's community support project with Heroes Corner. Mary noted that the building's roof fell in, but that the organization had raised $80,000 to complete repairs. Mary reported that the chapter is pursuing support for a logo/mural to be installed on the building.

d. Capital Area. Reporting was deferred.

8. Old Business.

a. Fisher House. The Council reviewed status with respect to participating with Fisher House of Michigan who manages Fisher Houses in Detroit and Ann Arbor. Efforts to establish contact and begin participation have yet to yield results. Mary will follow up with them. Pending results, we will consider a future course of action that may involve other organizations.

b. MOAA Dues Portal. Use status for the MOAA Cheddar dues application was discussed with Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids and Southeastern Michigan reporting positive results and Northwestern Michigan being optimistic.

c. State Convention. Holding a MOAA state convention was discussed. There were concerns as to the purpose, parameters (location, length, participants, date) and the number of chapter members who would attend. Rich indicated that making use of the MVAA state convention as a chance to hold a parallel meeting for MOAA members could be an appropriate accompanying MOAA event. It was also noted that Jim Sigmon was at the Commanders Group and was not present to provide input on this topic where he has been extensively involved. Further discussion was tabled so Jim can participate.

9. New Business.

a. Rich Higgins has agreed to serve as Council President for the second year of Mary Johnson's two-year term beginning January 1, 2026

b. In a close contest, DeLee Dankenbring of the Capital Area Chapter was selected as the Michigan Council of Chapters of MOAA Veteran of the Year.

c. Mel Flikkema requested that a schedule of 2026 chapter meetings be posted.

10. The meeting was adjourned at 215PM

Roy L. Yaple
CDR, US Navy (Retired)
Secretary, Michigan Council of Chapters, MOAA
June 17, 2025