Minutes-Michigan Council of Chapters, MOAA
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom, 1-230PM, February 24, 2025

1.The Michigan Council of Chapters of MOAA met on February 24, 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.
Dave Kennedy, Army-Navy Club of Grand Rapids.
Steve Preston, DSLO (Defense State Liaison Office).
Jim Sigmon, Capital Area Chapter.
Mark Benjamin, Northwestern Michigan Chapter.
Mike Wildman, Northwestern Michigan Chapter.
Todd Sanders, 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 2 December 2024 meeting was made, seconded, and approved.

4. The Treasurer's Report of 24 February 2025 was submitted by Treasurer Mel Flikkema and accepted. Current balance: $3927.96

There have been no changes in the council treasury since the last meeting in December.

5. Jim Sigmon introduced Shane Preston of the Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO). Shane provided an overview of his work on DoD policies to support servicemembers and their families in the upper Midwest region of the United States where he works. The following policy initiatives were discussed:

a. Improving reporting cases of Child Abuse and Neglect involving military personnel and military installations.
b. Jurisdiction clarification for juvenile justice matters on and off military installations.
c. Licensure for spousal employment due to moves (for example temporary occupational licensure for PT, OT, teachers, and other occupations to enable credential receipt within 30 days of arrival consistent with interstate compact.
d. State law changes to provide for advanced school enrollment ahead of actual student arrival in the new state.
e. Policy/law changes to advance activities of military family councils in advancing family issues of interest.

In general, these areas will be the subject of three to four pieces of state legislation. Rich Higgins asked how the MOAA Council can help. Steve responded that active monitoring of legislation and being able to bring interested parties knowledgeable and motivated to testify in support of them on a timely basis. The nature of the policy process requires active monitoring as windows to respond and bring advocacy to bear are often limited.

6. Mary Johnson spoke about the phased rollout of the national MOAA Association Management System (AMS), formerly Committee Module and Near Real Time Report (CM/NRT). She noted that MOAA national award packages were due submitted to MOAA by 18 February. Mary recommended that everyone attend the February 27, 2027, 7PM MOAA Roundtable training on the AMS.

7. Committee Standing Reports.

a. Legislation Committee.

1) Jim Sigmon and Rich Higgins discussed the upcoming MOAA national legislative campaign, Advocacy in Action (AIA). This year, instead of state MOAA representatives arranging their appointments, congressional appointments are being centrally controlled and scheduled by MOAA. Focus will be items discussed on the MOAA Legislative Activity Center with each state team focusing on three of five issues.

2) Jim Sigmon discussed his recent February 21 meeting with the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) associated in support of the Michigan Commanders Group and a future meeting via Zoom on March 14, 2025.

3) Mary Johnson discussed pending legislation on Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) and its use in cases of PTSD and other mental health programs. Mary also referenced a past tour of the HBOT facility (Oxford). See HB 4377.

b. Membership Committee.

No inputs were discussed.

c. Communications Committee.

Rich Higgins discussed developments in web sites and newsletters as well as participation on the MOAA Public Affairs/Communications Virtual Committee. A motion was made, seconded, and approved with $170 funding for a Michigan Council web site. Rich Higgins will take the lead.

d. Finance Committee

No inputs were discussed.

8. Chapter Reports.

a. Northwestern Michigan. Mark Benjamin introduced chapter member chair Mike Waldman and reported that the chapter new web site was having a positive impact on chapter dinner signups. The chapter has published its 2025 schedule and submitted for a Level of Excellence Award (LOE). The chapter has a full schedule of events including a mini-golf outing, a picnic, and a golf outing. The chapter continues to seek new members with local radio announcements.

b. Capitol City. Jim Sigmon reported that chapter has filed for a $300 grant from USAA and continues to hold regular chapter meetings at the Coral Gables. The chapter is pleased to support that Rich Higgins has been vital to their new web site www.cacmoaa.com The chapter is planning a March tour of the Michigan History Museum in Lansing followed by a meeting with guest speaker Bryan Love of the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA). Jim Sigmon reports that they are working on multiple membership initiatives including using the MVAA website to publicize chapter events.

c. Southeast. Rich Higgins reported on the Nov 7, 2024, Chapter General Membership Meeting including a visit by James Michael from the Congressional Office of Representative John James (R-MI). Rich indicated that he was able to provide Mr. Michael with a package of legislative support documents and the chapter is optimistic that James and his wife, who joined MOAA will become chapter members. Rich also highlighted plans for a 1 May chapter visit by VADM Fred Midgette, USCG (Retired) from MOAA at Mulligans at Selfridge. Rich is preparing to represent Michigan at Advocacy in Action from 7 to 10 April 2025 and highlighted chapter plans to seek new members via press releases in local area newspapers.

d. Army and Navy Club of Grand Rapids. Mary Johnson provided a summary of the recent chapter meeting and reported that the chapter had filed for a $300 USAA Grant. Mary expanded on the chapter's collaboration with Heroes/Sheroes Corner, a social support, and Safe Place for male and female veterans. The chapter's next meeting will be April 24th at Heroes/Sheroes Corner with guest speaker Ryan Graham of the Kent County Center for Veterans. Mary reported the chapter has added three new veterans to membership.

9. Awards. Chapters participating in the MOAA awards program were to submit packaged by 18 February. Discussed earlier in the meeting.

10. Old Business.

a. Fisher House. Mary Johnson discussed Council attendees' attendance at the November 2024 Fisher House Detroit opening. Involvement with the Fisher House Advancement Committee or Events Committee was discussed. Serving on the Advancement Committee would be more strategic and long-term; Events Committee would be more direct and associated with regular scheduling and planning of events. Consensus was that we would continue to collaborate with Fisher House and seek to begin service on the Advancement Committee; Rich Higgins would take the lead.

b. CM/NRT. Discussed previously in the meeting associated with the Association Management System.

c. MOAA Stipend. Mary discussed her discussion with MOAA (Frank Michael) re travel reimbursement of Council officers via Stipend as well as separate MOAA reimbursement for IT support such as a Zoom license.

d. MOAA Dues Portal. Mary Johnson provided a summary of known chapter participation using the new MOAA application Cheddar Up.

e. AIA. Previously discussed in this meeting. Mary wants to combine the MOAA visit to the Southeastern Michigan Chapter on 1 May to have VADM Midgette visit the Council during the same visit.

f. State Convention. No discussion.

11. New Business.

a. Jim Sigmon discussed the nomination and selection process for the Michigan Veteran of the Year. Jim has developed an application format for the Council's internal process. Ideally, each chapter would submit one nominee. Chapters took back for local action. More action may be forthcoming once the Council has a nominee.

b. Mary Johnson led a review of 2025 Council goals from previous meetings. Mel Flikkema recommended formally distributing the goals to chapters.

Roy L. Yaple
CDR, US Navy (Retired)
Secretary, Michigan Council of Chapters, MOAA
February 24, 2025