**VCOC 4th QUARTER MEETING**

**Thursday October 24, 2024**

**Zoom Meeting**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

1. **Administration**

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 PM by Col Diana Kupchella, USAF (Ret), VCOC President. President Kupchella also led the Pledge and delivered the Invocation.

The Roll Call was conducted by VCOC Acting Secretary, CAPT Mary Lou Wassel. Of the 15 chapters, 11 were represented, and a quorum was met. Chapter representatives present included:

**Central Virginia** - Ruth McWilliams

**Falcons Landing –** Phil Walsh

**George C Marshall –** Greg Frederick

**Heritage** - Bill Gooding

**Heritage Hunt –** Jim Beavers

**Mount Vernon** - Doug Yurovich

**Northern Neck –** not present

**Northern Virginia** - Monti Zimmerman

**Piedmont** - Judy Chantelois

**Portsmouth Area** - Bruce Yolandi

**Potomac -** not present

**Richmond Area** – Mark Rich

**Southside VA -** not present

**SW VA** - Gary Powers

**Virginia Peninsula** – not present

* **VCOC officers:** **President:** COL Diana Kupchella, USAF (Ret), **Second Vice President**: CDR John Prevar, USN (Ret), **Third Vice President** COL Monti Zimmerman, USA (Ret), **Treasurer** MAJ Sherry Ferki, USA (Ret), and **Legal Counsel, COL** Vince Cammarata, USA (Ret). Additional chapter members attending: Ken App, John Down, Buddy Everage, Matt Haag, Mary Lou Wassel, and Bruce Yolandi,
* Meeting Agenda was adopted.
* The 3rd Quarter meeting minutes were approved as amended

2. **President’s Report**

* COL Diana Kupchella, USAF (Ret) welcomed everyone. Currently there are still vacant positions including First VP, Secretary, and Chaplain. New nominations for all officer positions are requested by the July 2025 Q3 Meeting for the 2026-2028 calendar years. Elections will be held in Q4 October Meeting for assumption of duties in 2026. Potential officers can be any members from chapters not just those currently holding office or positions with VCOC. She again appealed that all the work necessary to operate the Council cannot be accomplished without additional assistance.
* National MOAA has again requested VCOC consider resuming the previously held annual Congressional Luncheon. President Kupchella asked for volunteers familiar with organizing past Congressional Luncheons as she is not familiar with contacts at various venues or the process for organizing this event. There were no volunteers. When asked if anyone present has previous experience with the organization of past events. If no one volunteers, VCOC may decline to sponsor this event in 2025.
* In the continued absence of a 1st VP/Communications Officer, President Kupchella has been updating the website as she can and when chapters send requested information. Chapters are reminded to send her their pertinent chapter information in a timely fashion.
* President Kupchella thanked COL Monti Zimmerman and LTC John Down for all their legislative efforts on behalf of MOAA especially the long hours related to resolution of the threat to eliminate the VMSDEP (Veterans and Military Dependents Education Program).

3**. Treasurer’s Report**

* MAJ Sherry Ferki, USA (Ret) reviewed the distributed VCOC Q3 Financial Report highlighting recent activities.
* Income: included a $600 stipend was received from National MOAA.
* Expenses: included a $66.72 charge for bank checks that will be preferred method of payment versus having a credit card.
* Website: Two more $114 charges are anticipated expenses for the year for website costs with Network Solutions. MAJ John Nahm, a member with IT experience from the Richmond Area Chapter, volunteered at the last VCOC meeting to consult regarding the website. MAJ Ferki and COL Kupchella will try to coordinate conversation with him.
* Award Costs: COL Zimmerman mentioned the expected expense for the award statues pending presentations to the VCOC State Legislator of the Year and State Executive Member of the Year. He will research the vendor and anticipated costs for these awards.
* Insurance: MAJ Ferki is still following up on insurance coverage needs and options for the council. She asked chapter members present to touch base with her regarding insurance knowledge and suggestions.

4. **Standing Committee Reports**

* **Communications and Public Affairs**
  + COL Diana Kupchella, (USAF) (Ret) – Reminded Chapter info needs to be submitted to Diana by the 15th of each month to update website
* **Membership and Chapter Affairs**
  + CDR John Prevar, USN (Ret) – Current membership based on last available info is 1517. Not all semi-annual reports have been received. A decline of about 99 members was noticed from previous quarter. The bi-annual chapter reports are due the 6th of January. Please send all chapter reports to President, 2nd VP (membership), and Treasurer. Chapter dues are based on chapter member numbers on 12-31-2024 (end of year).
* **Legislative Chair -** COL Monti Zimmerman, USA (Ret)
* LTC John Down will now that the lead role on representing VCOC at the Joint Leadership Council (JLC).
* COL Zimmerman reported there were two “big wins” this year on the State level with the General Assembly. One is final achievement of the current November ballot initiative for the Surviving Widow/Widowers to have property tax relief across the Commonwealth. Our major legislative win last session was to get the Constitutional Amendment on the ballot.  A "YES" vote will provide property tax relief to approximately 110 widows and 4 widowers whose military spouse died in the line of duty.
* Following the General Session, in May, the legislature moved to eliminate the oldest veteran's benefit in Virginia, the VMSDEP (Veterans and Military Dependents Education Program) 8-semesters of tuition free education for surviving spouses, their children, 90% or 100% combat, and disabled spouses and their children, and 90% or 100% VA service-disabled spouses and their children.  With significant effort, a group of concerned military and veteran service organizations led by Monti and a grass roots advocacy group, (Friends of VMSDEP) managed to get the legislature and governor to restore the benefit in July.  Currently the JLARC (Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission), the Governor with a Commission (COL Zimmerman is a member), and the Senate with a working group are studying the long-term viability of VMSDEP.
* MOAA & ROA are working together to get income tax relief for the approximately 30 NOAA retirees and 150 PHS retirees of the Commissioned Corps living in Virginia.
* LTC John Down reviewed the JLC 2025 Initiatives that were adopted and prioritized at the September 19 meeting. There are five initiatives for the 2025 General Assembly and members are encouraged to begin sharing them with elected legislators and asking for individual sponsor and patrons. Here are the initiatives in priority order with links to full text position papers:
  + - [JLC Initiative 2025-01 Verification of Veteran Status: Arrest, Jails, and Prisons](https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/JLC-2025-01-Verification-of-Veteran-Status-1.pdf)
    - [JLC Initiative 2025-02 Stop Unscrupulous Firms from Exploiting Veterans](https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/JLC-2025-02-Stop-Unscrupulous-Firms-from-Exploiting-Veterans-1.pdf)
    - [JLC Initiative 2025-03 Virginia National Guard Tuition](https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/JLC-2025-03-Virginia-National-Guard-Tuition-1.pdf)
    - [JLC Initiative 2025-04 Suffolk State Veterans Cemetery Expansion](https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/JLC-2025-04-Suffolk-State-Veterans-Cemetery-Expansion-1.pdf)
    - [JLC Initiative 2025-05 Women Veterans Day](https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/JLC-2025-05-Women-Veterans-Day-1.pdf)

LTC John Down also shared the planned JLC Day on the Hill is scheduled for January 9th. COL Phil Walsh asked if the JLC was working with any of the Veteran Engagement Councils like they have at Falcons Landing. LTC Down said he is not aware of any interaction with these groups. CDR Ken App also mentioned some initiative from Hampton Roads Chapter. CAPT Wassel mentioned that the Richmond Area Chapter is hosting their annual Legislative Forum on November 21st virtually with 0730 and 1500 sessions. LTC Down recommended inviting individual initiative sponsor contacts to participate.

5. **Other Committee Reports:**

**Surviving Spouse:** MAJ Sherry Ferki, USA (Ret)

* + There is a wealth of Surviving Spouse information on the MOAA website that chapters can use for their newsletters. There is not much Surviving Spouse info in the magazine.
  + The Survival Spouse Virtual Chapter also has excellent meetings and valuable discussions. Please recommend this resource to your members.
  + Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter Briefings encourage all chapters to have a yearly program about Surviving spouses.
  + MOAA will do either an in-person or virtual meetings on Surviving Spouses to the Chapters. MOAA is trying to keep people from dealing with the issues they dealt with themselves.

1. **Old Business:**

* Directory: CDR Ken Apps reviewed the current VCOC Directory structure that seems to include different content between chapters. Recommend consistent format. Suggested getting all chapter’s info and then sharing directory with Chapters for distribution versus accessing online. Recommends listing just Chapter Presidents contacts online.
* Recruitment Strategies: MOAA will send an email blast twice a year to the potential members in your area to assist in advertising any of your upcoming meetings. Several mentioned netting more new members from word-of-mouth recruitment from current members. COL Gary Powers from SWV Chapter reported their chapter conducted a spring picnic and invited legislators netting good turnout and potential new members.

1. **New Business** –

* 2025 VCOC Quarterly Meeting Schedule – COL Kupchella suggested consideration of three virtual quarterly meetings and one in-person meeting in October when new officers will be installed. It was recommended a routine day of the week and week of the month be considered for the quarterly meetings. The 2nd Tuesday of the month was discussed. There was some discussion of a second in-person meeting in April at Patriots Colony. Some thought that might be difficult for many chapters who had further to travel and impact attendance.

**MOTION**: COL Zimmerman moved that there be three virtual and one in-person meetings in 2025. Seconded by CAPT Ruth McWilliams. Motion passed.

The proposed 2025 VCOC Quarterly schedule is:  
Tuesday, January 14 – Virtual 1500-1700

Tuesday, April 8 – Virtual 1500-1700  
Tuesday, July 8 – Virtual 1500-1700  
Tuesday, October 14 – In-person time TBD  
  
COL Kupchella suggested in-person meeting be held in Richmond at either the American Legion or the Virginia War Memorial. CAPT Wassel volunteered to check availability of the VWM and report back to COL Kupchella.  
**MOTION**: CDR Ken App moved the July meeting date be moved to the 3rd Tuesday to avoid proximity to July 4th holiday. Seconded by CAPT Ruth McWilliams. Motion defeated.

* Congressional Luncheon – COL Kupchella will explore viability of VCOC hosting for 2025. Again there were no volunteers with experience hosting the event.

CDR Ken App made a motion to adjourn, CAPT Ruth McWilliams seconded. The meeting was adjourned by COL Diana Kupchella at 1650.

Respectively Submitted By: Mary Lou Wassel, CAPT, USN, (Ret), Acting Secretary, VCOC