

**Fort Jackson Retiree Council
Meeting Minutes
2 Nov 23**

	Rank	Last Name	First Name	Nov 23
1	CSM (ret)	Armstead	Michael L.	P
2	SMSgt (ret)	Askin	Denise	A
3	Mrs.	Baker	Donnell	A
4	MSGT (ret)	Barkalow	Robert W., Jr.	A
5	COL (ret)	Beatty	Dan	P
6	MAJ (ret)	Colombo	Joseph N.	A
7	MSGT (ret)	Creech	Jessica	A
8	Mr.	Creech	Paul	A
9	CSM (ret)	DeBerry	Jesse J.	A
10	CSM (ret)	Everson	Melvin	A
11	CAPT (ret)	Flondarina	Paul	P
12	COL (ret)	Gergulis	John G.	A
13	TSGT (ret)	Geriner	George	A
14	MSG (ret)	Goode	Villardine	A
15	CW4 (ret)	Green	Constantine S.	P
16	COL (ret)	Horn	Carl W.	P
17	CSM (ret)	Lopez	Carl M.	P
18	LTC (ret)	Marcucci	John R.	P
19	LTC (ret)	McAndrews	Tom	A
20	COL (ret)	McLamb	Joseph	P
21	Ms.	Morgan	Shannon	A
22	MCPO (ret)	Null	Jim	A
23	SGM (ret)	Price	Robert B.	A
24	SGM (ret)	Roberts	Joyce S.	A
25	COL (ret)	Robillard	Thomas A.	A
26	COL (ret)	Sanderson	JR	P
27	LTC (ret)	Snell	James Ross	A
28	COL (ret)	Vitali	Steve	P
29	Mrs.	Wallace	Pamela	A
30	COL (ret)	Whatley	William A.	P
31	CSM (ret)	Wrightsmen	Dan	A

Time: 1800

Location: Post Conference Room, Post Headquarters, Fort Jackson, South Carolina

Council Membership Attendance. "P" denotes present at the meeting, in person or through remote participation. "A" denotes absent from the meeting.

Others in Attendance.

LTC Abassi, Moncrief Health Clinic
Regina Harlon, Retiree Services Officer
John F. Merkle, Acting Director, Dorn VA Medical Center
Spencer Miller, Directorate of Human Resources
SFC (ret) Arnedtra Mitchell
Michael Smothers, Commissary
RoseAnn Turner, Family Morale, Welfare, and Recreation

1. **Opening.** The Chairman convened the meeting at 1800 with an opening prayer.

2. **Opening Remarks.** The Chairman introduced the Council to Colonel (retired) Dan Beatty, who will assume the role of Council Chairman in January, 2024.

3. **Minutes.** The Council approved the minutes of the 7 September, 2023, meeting.

4. **Garrison Update.** No representative of the Garrison was present.

5. **Dorn Veteran Medical Center.** John F. Merkle, Acting Director, Dorn VA Medical Center, provided the following updates.

a. Dorn received 8 Zero Harm awards this year in recognition of exceptional medical service. This is two more awards than the facility received last year, and only one short of the maximum number possible.

b. Patient Satisfaction surveys continue in the 93% range.

c. Dorn has both COIVD and flu vaccines. Schedule an appointment by calling 803-776-4000, extension 5CURE.

d. Dorn has about 300 vacancies within the staff, which the US Department of Veterans Affairs is working hard to fill. The nation-wide shortage of health workers is slowing progress.

e. Dorn Campus Update.

- Building 10, a primary care facility, should be completed in spring, 2024.
- Construction is underway of a second parking garage, which will add 500 parking spots.
- All parking lots will be repaved and be equipped with a red/green light system to indicate when a section is fully occupied.

f. Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

- The new facility in Sumter will open on 6 November, 2023.
- The new facility in Florence is expected to open in January, 2024.
- The new facility in Rock Hill is expected to be completed in Fall, 2024.

g. Mr. Merkle announced his tour as acting director will come to an end next week and he will be returning to his normal duties in Alabama. His replacement will be announced soon.

6. Agency Reports.

a. Moncrief Army Health Clinic. LTC Abbasi provided updates on the Clinic.

1) Optometry services are now available for all beneficiaries.

2) MACH has about 130 vacant positions within its staff, putting considerable strain on the organization. This situation is exacerbated by the current “strategic hiring pause” established by the Defense Health Agency. The typical wait time for an appointment with a primary care provider is now about 30 days.

3) The 3 October, 2023, Open House was cancelled due to the potential for a government shutdown. It has not yet been rescheduled. The Chair encouraged MACH to continue the practice of Open Houses.

4) Vaccines.

- The COVID vaccine is available for all beneficiaries. Walk-ins accepted by the Vaccine Clinic daily, 0800-1100 and 1300-1500.
- Flu vaccines are currently limited active duty, but service is expected to expand to all beneficiaries by the third week of November.
- LTC Abbasi encouraged all retirees to get both the COVID and flu vaccines as soon as possible, reminding them that Tri-Care will cover the cost of such vaccinations at commercial vendors.

5) Because of the possibility of a partial government shutdown on 17 November, 2023, LTC Abbasi recommends retirees renew prescriptions before that date.

6) MACH will be closed on 10 November, 2023, and 23 November, 2023.

b. Commissary. Mr. Smothers provided the following updates.

1) The Commissary will be closed on Thanksgiving.

2) The Commissary has all the components for Thanksgiving meals and will have Christmas candy beginning next Monday.

3) There is a limit of 2 on Thanksgiving turkeys.

c. Family Morale, Welfare, and Recreation. Rose Turner provided the following updates.

1) Many facilities will be closed on Friday, 10 November, as well as Thanksgiving Day.

2) Perez Gym will be open during Victory Block Leave. Coleman Gym will also be available, but only to those who pre-register at the gym in advance of Victory Block Leave.

3) Knight Pool will be closed during Victory Block Leave.

4) Aachen Range will host a privately owned weapon day on 4 November, 2023, 0900-1300.

5) Fort Jackson will conduct a Christmas tree lighting ceremony on 21 December, 2023.

6) The NCO Club will shift its Soul Food meal from Tuesday to Thursday beginning on 9 November, 2023.

7) MWR will host a trip to Biltmore on 6 December, 2023. Details at: <https://jackson.armymwr.com/calendar/event/holiday-biltmore-trip/6243949/83748>.

8) The Post Command Sergeant Major will host a skeet shoot at Aachen Range, 17 November, 2023. Details at: <https://jackson.armymwr.com/calendar/event/post-csm-skeet-shoot/6252721/83934>.

9) See the MWR website (<https://jackson.armymwr.com/>) for additional information on all MWR activities. You can contact Rose directly at rose.a.turner.naf@army.mil.

7. Retirement Services Officer Update. Regina Harlan reminded the Council that planning for the 2024 Retiree Appreciation Days will begin in January.

8. Unfinished Business.

a. Communications. Paul Flondarina reported the Council's communications on the web and on social media have improved significantly in the last year. Paul thanked Regina Harlan for her hard work on this initiative.

b. Leader Transitions. The Chair reminded the Council that he would finish his term at the end of the calendar year, with the same applying to the secretary.

9. New Business.

a. Nominations to serve on the Chief of Staff of the Army Retired Soldier Council. The Council unanimously nominated SFC (retired) Arnedtra Mitchell to serve on the Chief of Staff of the Army Retired Soldier Council.

b. Nominations for issues to submit to the Chief of Staff of the Army Retired Soldier Council. The council approved three issues to be forwarded to the Chief of Staff of the Army Retired Soldier Council.

- **Issue:** Legal support to retired Soldiers.
 - **Discussion:** While current Army guidelines allow military installations to provide legal assistance to retirees when staffing allows, the shortage of legal staff effectively reduces such support to the occasional power of attorney. Similar staffing shortages in other services preclude the use of legal service providers from other Department of Defense installations.
 - **Recommendation:** Mandate and resource a requirement for all Army installations to provide a minimum level of legal support (to include at least powers of attorney and personal wills) to retired Soldiers.
- **Issue:** Chip-enabled identification cards for retired Soldiers.
 - **Discussion:** The current retired identification card lacks the chip of a Common Access Card. As a result, retired Soldiers are required to use a cumbersome and antiquated password system to access web-based services such as MyPay and Tri-care. A chip-based card, in contrast, would give the retired Soldiers a modern access capability.
 - **Recommendation:** Issue chip-enabled identification cards to retired Soldiers.
- **Issue:** Potential gaps in medical coverage for retiring Soldiers.
 - **Discussion:** Retired Soldiers face a complex and at times confusing transition process, and the provision of medical services appears to be an area where misunderstandings and subsequent disappointments are common. Some have complained to our local Council of gaps in medical coverage that retired Soldiers have been forced to cover out-of-pocket.
 - **Recommendation:** Conduct a comprehensive review of medical coverage for retiring Soldiers, to include the steps taken to communicate available options and their respective costs to Soldiers during the transition process.

10. **Closing Comments.** The Chairman reviewed his two-year term and expressed gratification for the Council's focus on the mental health of the retiree community over the past two years. He also expressed his belief that more work is required in the effort to connect transitioning service members with the retiree community during the transition process. He closed by thanking BG Kelly, Regina Harlan, and the members of the Council.

11. **Adjournment.** The meeting adjourned at 1904.
12. **Next scheduled meeting:** 4 Jan 24, 1800, Post Headquarters.


J.R. SANDERSON
Colonel, US Army Retired
Chairman