



**INSTALLATION SOLDIER FOR LIFE RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL
FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY 40121**

24 January 2020

The Fort Knox Soldier for Life Retiree Council was called to order at 0900 hours, Friday, 24 January 2020 in the DHR, Graham Hall, conference room by BG (Ret) Charles D. Estes, Chair, who presided.

The following attendance for the Retiree Council meeting was as follows:

Voting council members present:

Charles D. Estes, BG (Ret), USA, Chair
Rodney J. Newell, CSM (Ret), USA, Vice-Chair
Belinda Gaither-Schmitt, SFC (Ret), USA, Secretary
Jackie A. Ash, CSM (Ret), USA
Franklin T. Brady, CSM (Ret), USA
Douglas E. Frecker, CW3 (Ret), USA
Kevin F. Gregory, COL (Ret), USA (via VTC)
Thomas A. Goff, CW5 (Ret), USA
Irvin Lyons, Jr., SGM (Ret), USA
Donavan J. Mahuron, MSG (Ret), USA
Russell D. Gold, COL (Ret), USA

Non-voting members present:

Randy J. Gasser, CPO (Ret), USN
Michael Pesko, Jr., MAJ (Ret), USA
David Shearer, CW4 (Ret), USA

Voting members absent:

Thomas C. Cunningham, LTC (Ret) USA
John DeReu, LTC (Ret), USA

Non-voting members absent:

Glenda Nicol, MSG (Ret), USA
Sherman Nicol, SGM (Ret), USA
William Lamont, LTC (Ret), USA
Georgie Sharp, CPL (Ret), USMC
Richard C. Ward, MAJ (Ret), USA
Harold Denson, 1SG (Ret), USA
Mrs. Cathy Williamson, Volunteer

Non-voting council advisory members present:

Mrs. Jolene Culpepper, Civ, RSO/Chief/TC
Mr. Shawn Pollack, Civ, DHR/AG

The Chair led the attendees into The Pledge of Allegiance and began the meeting.

State reports:

Ohio: CW3 (Ret) Frecker started his comments by telling the members of the Fort Knox Retiree Council that he and CSM (Ret) Newell met with the Director, Veterans Service Office (VSO) for Ohio. During this meeting, they discussed how to improve the distribution of Fort Knox Retiree Council information to Ohio veterans. They also asked if the VSO would help with organizing a Retiree Appreciation Day (RAD) for Ohio Retirees and Alumni. The Ohio Retiree Council held their meeting on 9 December 2019 and 10 January 2010. Currently the Ohio Retiree Council has 12 members who are actively involved with various Veterans Organizations. CSM (Ret) Newell mentioned that two of the new members of the Ohio Retiree Council are Coast Guard. As a future initiative, CW3 (Ret) Frecker wants to reach out to the retiree activity office in Wright-Patterson Air Force Base to recruit more Air Force retirees for the Ohio Retiree Council.

LTC (Ret) Cunningham and CPO (Ret) Gasser are continuously working on keeping Facebook up to date and relevant. CPO (Ret) Gasser made several comments on how to improve the distribution of information. As previously discussed, the focus was on reaching more retirees, especially the younger generation and most recent retirees. CPO (Ret) Gasser recommended creating a new and improved Fort Knox Retiree Council flyer. He also feels that by linking the five states together on Facebook it would improve the distribution of information. Since CW4 (Ret) Goff already has approval to link certain comments of state messages on Facebook, he will work with CPO (Ret) Gasser to further improve the information flow. In addition, CPO (Ret) Gasser believes that by adding Twitter and Instagram as a channel of communication would also help in reaching out and involving more retired service members. He also mentioned that interviewing more of the participating retirees during the annual RAD would make more sense than interviewing vendors.

West Virginia: CW5 (Ret) Goff reported that the West Virginia Army National Guard (WVARNG) hosted their first retirement ceremony. This event was modeled on a Fort Knox Retirement Ceremony and was very well received. Through Facebook CO1 Connor is inviting recent retirees to plan a second retirement ceremony. The West Virginia Retiree Council met in October and November to discuss the merging with the West Virginia Retirement Service Office. This development requires the creation of a new charter. A follow up meeting will be held on 27 January with the WVARNG G1 and the West Virginia Retiree Council representatives to discuss the charter. The ultimate plan is to have future Fort Knox Retiree Council members representing West Virginia generated from the WVARNG council.

CW5 (Ret) Goff's comments also included talking points from the West Virginia Veterans Council. The main concern is the 5% cut for all state agencies, which causes the hold on building a new Veterans Nursing Home. An updated report on the numbers of homeless veterans is about to be released. Although the numbers show a decrease of homeless veterans, many veterans are not being counted due to disabilities, drug abuse, and incarceration. A main concern of the West Virginia Veterans Council is the inability to identify all veterans living in the state, which in turn causes the problem that many veterans are not aware of available benefits and the assistance they could receive from the state. CW5 (Ret) Goff created new business cards with links to the Facebook group. He has been passing out those business cards to make more people aware of the information available to them. He also mentioned the website for the State Veterans Benefit finder, where veterans can find the benefits they are entitled to for each state.

Indiana: MSG (Ret) Mahuron mentioned that the VA Hospital has quarterly meetings to provide veterans with news and updated information. CSM (Ret) Ash stated that Crawford and Harrison County's started to have open houses for homeless veterans.

Illinois: CSM (Ret) Brady discussed that currently the Illinois sub-council is dormant and not functional, but they are working on that. The military museum is opening this year. His handout included excerpts from the Military Officers Association of America in reference to the ongoing uncertainty of the DECA and

Exchange merger, the loss of TRICARE coverage for some prescription drugs, and the release of the VA “Survivors Quick Start Guide”.

Kentucky: SGM (Ret) Lyons provided information about the “Minority Veterans Advisory Committee” he attends every year. This committee is tasked with “fact finding” on issues that address the effectiveness of the VA delivering benefits and services to minority veterans. The summit is annual and members have the opportunity to visit the VA hospital in the area and ask veterans questions about issues they have with the services provided by the VA hospital. During these summits, veterans are able to process claims, ask questions, and voice their concerns. The next summit is 3 April 2020 in Tampa, FL.

SGM (Ret) Lyons continued with announcing the upcoming posthumous promotion of COL Charles Young to Brigadier General on 11 February 2010 in Frankfort. COL Charles Young was the third African-American graduate of the USMA and commanded the Buffalo Soldiers.

The Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs is seeking to exclude the US military retirees’ pension income from state tax. The KCMA is also trying to relieve qualified VSOs of property tax, as long as they are purely public charities. Another bill waives the fees for vehicle operator’s license, ID cards, and travel ID’s for veterans. Upcoming events include the “Shining the Light on Military Women” on 7 March 2020 and SGM (Ret) Lyons receiving the “2020 Beacon of Light Humanitarian” award on 27 February 2020. In addition, \$2.5 million were awarded to build a new veterans center in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

The Chair called for a short break.

New Business

BG (Ret) Estes reviewed the Fort Knox Soldier for Life Retired Soldier Council Goals and Objectives for 2020 with the Retiree Council members. The first discussion focused on the future procedures for deceased council members. After a short deliberation, council members agreed that a certificate of appreciation signed by the Fort Knox Garrison Commander to the next of kin would be the most appropriate action. CW5 (Ret) Goff then inquired, if it was possible to also present certificates of appreciation to departing council members and/or give certificates of appreciation to personnel who support their state retiree council. The council members thought that incorporating certificates of appreciation would be a good idea. Mr. Pollack mentioned that the new certificates of appreciation are a representation of the Fort Knox centennial anniversary and added that the Fort Knox Garrison Commander would not have an issue with signing certificates of appreciation.

The next discussion was about making the Fort Knox Retiree Council less Army centric to increase the interest for membership from other services. Some members agreed, but thought that as long as the name of the council includes the word Soldier, it would be hard to make it more centric. SGM (Ret) Lyons thought that eliminating the word Soldier would not be the right thing to do, since he is proud of being a Soldier.

CW5 (Ret) Goff asked why there is no representative from the Fort Knox Retiree Council, which is the biggest retiree community, at the CSA council. The answers included that the CSA Council previously had representation from Fort Knox. Mrs. Culpepper replied that once the CSA Council has openings they would distribute request for nominations to each Retiree Council. The CSA Council will then select the best qualified for the position.

Budget Constrains

Mr. Pollack, Director Human Resources, informed the Retiree Council about the decision that funding is reduced to two meetings being fully funded one meeting partially funded and one meeting being not funded except for accommodations. The result of this decision is that the RAD last October and the July meeting are fully funded for travel and accommodations. The January meeting was funded for accommodations only and the April meeting will only be funded for one voting member per State.

Although the funding for the January 2020 meeting was at first limited, Mr. Pollack thanked everyone for attending despite the incurrence of personal costs. He also thanked everyone for the support in the past and that this was his last meeting due to his transfer to Fort Campbell.

CSA Retiree Council Issues

BG (Ret) Estes asked the council members to submit valid questions and concerns to him by April 2020. In an earlier discussion, CSM (Ret) Newell asked about the probability to requisition nameplates that would identify Fort Knox Retiree Council members when attending official functions. The council members thought this could be a valid question to the CSA Council.

RSO Issues

Mrs. Culpepper passed out updated information about the Thrift Savings Plan and the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). In reference to the changes to the SBP, Mrs. Culpepper insisted that council members should not brief on these changes, because these are very complex laws and the SBP advisory panel is still working on implementing policies and procedures. She let council members know that the DFAS W4 is in a new format and mentioned that the best way to get documents from DFAS is through the myPay website. During an office call with DFAS, Mrs. Culpepper was told that unless DFAS personnel are funded, they will not send representatives to future RAD's. BG (Ret) Estes will call DFAS to see if they would reconsider this decision.

BG (Ret) Estes closed the discussion and adjourned the meeting at 1050 hours, Friday 24 January 2020.

/s/ Belinda Gaither-Schmitt
BELINDA GAITHER-SCHMITT
SFC (RET), USA
Secretary, Retiree Council

/s/ Charles D. Estes
CHARLES D. ESTES
BG (Ret), USA
Chair, Retiree Council