

Board on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Minutes – March 26, 2026 at 1:00pm
In-Person at Wisconsin Veterans Museum with a Virtual Option

Council Members Present:

Pat Beggs	District 1
Christopher Hanson, <i>Chair</i>	District 3
Yolanda Medina	District 5
John Morgen	District 6
Tammy Javenkoski	District 7
Chris Cornelius, <i>Secretary</i>	District 8
Laura Colbert	Member at Large

Absent:

Robert Hesselbein, <i>Vice Chair</i>	District 2
Tonnetta Carter	District 4

Others Present (not inclusive):

Paul Fisk – American Legion/COVP Chair
Owen Morgensen

WDVA Staff Present:

Joseph Hoey, Asst. Deputy Secretary
Dawn LaFond, Executive Assistant
Jeremy Lyon, DVB Administrator
Evan Thompson, IT

Chair Chris Hanson called the meeting to Order at 1:15pm. Roll call was taken, seven (7) members in attendance; a quorum was present

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited

Introduction of attendees was given:

- Tammy Javenkoski, BOVA District 7 New Member
- Paul Fisk, COVP Chair
- Jeremy Lyon, WDVA Division Administrator for the Veterans Benefits
- Owen Morgensen, Student Journalist

Minutes from December 18, 2025 were reviewed:

- MOTION: Pat Beggs made a motion to approve the minutes, second by Laura Colbert; minutes were unanimously approved

Executive Staff Assistant Dawn LaFond provided an Administrative Update

- Next meeting will be June 11, 2026 at Union Grove Veterans

- Tentative agenda:
 - 11:00am-12:30pm | COVP Meeting
 - 12:30pm-1:00pm | Lunch
 - 1:00pm-1:30pm | Tour the facility, including the new kitchen
 - 1:30pm-2:20pm | Attend activity with the Members
 - 2:30pm-3:30pm | BOVA Meeting
- Union Grove leadership will participate in the day

Assistant Deputy Secretary Joseph Hoey provided Legislative updates to the Council covering the following topics:

- Legislature will not meet again until January 2027 except to maybe take up a tax relief/school funding bill.
- Gave an overview of the 2025-2026 Legislative Session
 - Veteran Specific Bills already passed and signed into law
 - [2025 Senate Bill 38](#) (Act 50) personalized registration plate fees for gold star family
 - Bills that passed both houses and will be sent to the Governor for signing:
 - [2025 Assembly Bill 597](#) which creates a matching \$25 grant program for the private VA Funded Homeless Transition programs.
 - [2025 Senate Bill 387](#) which allows Guard and Reserve Members to put veteran status on their operators' licenses or identification cards.
 - [2025 Senate Bill 810](#) which increases the stipend payment for Military Funeral Honors from \$50 to \$100, which includes language making Hmong Lao fighters who were naturalized under the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000, eligible for Military Funeral Honors.
 - [2025 Assembly Bill 913](#) provides for tax equity with active-duty military pay by creating a subtraction for National Guard and Reserve pay.
 - [2025 Assembly Bill 659](#) modifies the residency requirement for the Wisconsin GI Bill and the Wisconsin Veterans Grant for Private Nonprofit Schools from 5 years to three.
 - [2025 Assembly Bill 935](#) remedial legislation, repeals statutory references to expired WDVA programs and makes updates and grammatical changes to definitions and adopts standardized and current terminology in WDVA statutes.
 - Two initiatives that were priorities for many of our partner Veteran Service Organizations that did not pass either house of the legislature:
 - Increased funding for the UW Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project.
 - [2025 Assembly Bill 428](#) / [2025 Senate Bill 411](#) – Senator Jacque/Rep. Franklin Bills
 - [2025 Assembly Bill 641](#) / [2025 Senate Bill 615](#) – Sen. Hesselbein/Rep. Sinicki Bills
 - Reducing the eligibility threshold to claim the veterans and surviving spouses' property tax credit.
 - [2025 Assembly Bill 686](#) / [2025 Senate Bill 664](#) - Sen Habush Sinykin/Rep. Doyle
 - [2025 Assembly Bill 428](#) / [2025 Senate Bill 411](#) – Senator Jacque/Rep. Franklin

- Discussed potential that Lobby Day at the Capitol would be more effective if held in February or March 2027, versus April.
- Presentation on State Laws regarding Wisconsin State Highway Maps and Signage Requirements for Veteran memorial highways and bridges:
 - Latest version of official DOT State Highways Map were provided and requirements regarding inclusion on the map were explained. History of the Map discussed in light of the increased availability of electronic mapping.
 - According to DOT, signs along the right of way designating commemorative highways or bridges are being phased out and replaced with more discreetly located commemorative markers for several reasons:
 - The signs conflict with updated state and federal laws that regulate the type and amount of signs viewable from numbered state and federal highways.
 - The signs distract motorists' attention away from higher priority regulatory or cautionary signage.
 - Many signs designating memorial highways or bridges are reaching the end of their useful life.
- Brief discussion held on free state park passes for veterans.

COVP Chair Report was provided by Paul Fisk

- The COVP had a presentation by Jeremy Lyon on WDVA Division of Benefits, which was provided to BOVA at the December 2025 meeting.
- Dave Zien informed the Council of mining dollars that could fund the veterans trust fund, which may be on the June agenda.
- Camp American Legion improvements to their cabins of which Cabin 11 will be demolishing and building by the end of May 2026.

BOVA Chair Report was provided by Chair Chris Hanson, District 3

- Secretary Bond went to the King Falls Veterans Home and delivered valentines to members and their spouses.
 - Pat Beggs went to Union Grove and delivered valentines with Secretary Bond.
 - Chris Cornelius went to King and delivered valentines with Secretary Bond.
 - Chris Hanson went to Chippewa Falls and delivered valentines with WDVA's Comms Team.
- Veterans are frustrated with Congress and the Richard Star Act.
 - ACTION: All to reach out to your local legislators and encourage them to get this Act to pass.
- Ft. McCoy will be holding their Armed Forces Open House on May 16 and all are encouraged to attend.
- Two different changes of comments – Two-star General and Garrison Commander 06.
- Several grant programs available

- ACTION: All to promote the grants that are available.

Board Member District Reports provided by:

- Patt Beggs – District 1
- Yolanda Medina – District 5
- John Morgen – District 6
- Tammy Javenkoski – District 7
- Chris Cornelius – District 8
- Laura Colbert – Member at Large

- Upcoming events and requests to support:

- 03.29.2026 @1:00pm | Vietnam Veterans Day Ceremony, Klossner-Dietzler VFW Post 5729, *Medford*
- 04.11.2026 @9:00am-12:00pm | Angels to Heroes and White Paws German Sheperd Rescue’s “Dogs to Veterans” Program Bowling Fundraiser, Buzz Social, *Green Bay*
- 04.29.2026 @5:30pm | MIA Program, UW Madison Biotech Bldg, *Madison*
- May/June | MOU Signing for the Commandant’s House, King Veterans Home
- 05.16.2026 @9:00am-3:00pm | Armed Forces Day, *Fort McCoy*
- 05.23.2026 | Milwaukee VA Memorial Day Picnic, *Milwaukee*
- 06.12.2026 @10:00am-12:00pm | Veterans Lunch, Neville Public Museum, *Green Bay*
- 06.10.2026-06.13.2026 | VFW State Convention, Central Wisconsin Convention Center, *Rothschild*
- 06.11.2026-06.13.2026 | DAV State Convention, Oneida Hotel & Conference Center, *Green Bay*
- 06.19.2026-06.22.2026 | AMVETS State Convention, Oneida Hotel & Conference Center, *Green Bay*
- 06.22.2026-06.23.2026 | WACRO Conference, Technical College, *La Crosse*
- 07.06.2026 @9:30am-5:00pm | Military & Veterans Family Day, Milwaukee County Zoo, *Milwaukee*
- 07.11.2026 @1:00pm-10:00pm | Honor and Valor Outdoors Veterans Benefit, Pearly Gates Bar & Grill, *Green Bay*
- 07.27.2026 | Annual Fred White Memorial Golf Tournament, Oneida Golf & Country Club, *Green Bay*

Public Comments

- Owen Mogensen: Journalism student to learn about BOVA and would like more information on the state park passes.
 - ACTION: Chris Hanson to speak further with Owen Mogensen.

Future agenda items:

- ACTION: Send any agenda topics to Dawn LaFond

Next Meetings:

- June 11, 2026 – Union Grove Veterans Home
- September 2026 – Possibly UW Camp Randall
- December 2026 – Wisconsin Veterans Museum
- March 2027 – TBD
- June 2027 – Tentatively at King Veterans Home

Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by Pat Beggs, second by Chris Cornelius and carried on a voice vote to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 2:31pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Hanson, Chair