Meeting Minutes
BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Meeting Agenda

- Date: Thursday, June 11, 2026
- Time: 2:30pm to 3:30pm
- Location: Union Grove Veterans Home, 21425 Spring Street, Union Grove with virtual option

Members

- Chair | Christopher Hanson, District 3 (Present)
- Vice Chair | Robert Hesselbein, District 2 (Present)
- Secretary | Chris Cornelius, District 8 (Present)
- Pat Beggs, District 1 (Present)
- Dr. Berdie Cowser, District 4 (Present)
- Yolanda Medina, District 5 (Present)
- John Morgen, District 6 (Present)
- Tammy Javenkoski, District 7 (Absent)
- Laura Colbert, Member at Large (Present)

WDVA Staff Present

- Joseph Hoey, Assistant Deputy Secretary
- Dawn LaFond, Executive Staff Assistant
- Ben Spargur, IT
- Amy Moore, Women Veterans Coordinator

Others Present (not inclusive)

- Paul Fisk – American Legion/COVP Chair
- Terry Dextater

Meeting Purpose

Please take notice that the Board of Veterans Affairs will conduct a council meeting and may hear briefings, hold discussion, or act on any item on this agenda. The public is invited to participate.

Agenda Items

- Chair Chris Hanson called the meeting to Order at 2:31pm. Roll call was taken, seven (7) members in attendance; a quorum was present

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited

Introduction of other attendees was given:

- Dr. Berdie Cowser, new BOVA District 4 Member
- Amy Moore, WDVA new Women's Veteran Coordinator
- Paul Fisk, COV Chair

Minutes from March 26, 2026 were reviewed:

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

Executive Staff Assistant Dawn LaFond provided an Administrative Update:

- Thank you to COVP members who are attending in person:
  - Lunch following the meeting
  - Meet with leadership
  - Tour of the home, including the new kitchen
- WDVA hosting a Mental Health First Aid Course available to veterans, servicemembers and their families:
  - ACTION: Pass on information to those who qualify
  - Dates:
    - June 25-26, 2026
    - July 30-31, 2026
    - August 13-14, 2026
    - August 27-28, 2026

Assistant Deputy Secretary Joseph Hoey provided Legislative Updates to the Board covering the following topics:

- November 2026 elections will have all Assembly Members and half of Senate running for reelection. This is a great opportunity for COVP and veterans to reach out to those running for office to learn their positions and be influential in building support for a number of initiatives that have not yet been enacted
  - Lowering the threshold for claiming the Veterans & Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit

    - Funding for the UW Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project
    - Additional funding for services for Homeless veterans
    - New Wisconsin Veterans Museum
- ACTION: Joey Hoey to send resources to BOVA on best ways to be effective when contacting those up running for office

- Wisconsin Legislative Council Study Committee Update. Six (6) of these specialized panels of lawmakers and citizen experts that investigate specific policy issues with the goal of developing and recommending legislation for the next legislative session will be meeting this fall, one of which is focused on Veteran Benefits. They will review the benefits state law currently provides to veterans and determine whether the term "veteran" should be redefined to provide a more uniform use of the term throughout the statutes.
- ACTION: Joey Hoey to send information on how to track the meetings and progress of the Study Committee.

- Wisconsin Veterans Museum Update. The Legislature gave WDVA $6 million and we recently hired HGA and Gallagher – world class firms who have designed museums and cultural centers across the country. We expect to have preliminary drawings available in 6-7 months. The lawsuit with the current landlord is still ongoing in Waushara County with the next step being a court ordered mediation in July 2026.

COVP Chair Report was provided by Paul Fisk

- Nothing to report

BOVA Chair Report was provided by Chris Hanson, District 3

- 07.11.2026 | 88th Readiness Division/Fort McCoy Senior Commander Change of Command at Fort McCoy.
    - Garrison Commander change of command ceremony 7.17.2026.
- Attended Memorial Day Remembrance Parade Celebration in Sparta
    - Concern over national politics and the future, especially around benefits for disabled veterans.

Board Member District Reports provided by:

Pat Beggs – District 1
Bob Hesselbein – District 2
Dr. Berdie Cowser – District 4
Yolanda Medina – District 5
John Morgen – District 6

Chris Cornelius – District 8
Laura Colbert – Member at Large

Upcoming events and requests to support:

- Military Color Guard, Menominee services
- 06.14.2026 | NPR presenting in Sheboygan on MIA
- 06.22.2026 @6:30pm | National Native Veteran's Memorial by Smithsonian, *Waupaca High School*
- 06.27.2026 @12:00pm-6:00pm | Summerfest Military and Veterans First Responder Day, *Milwaukee https://wisvetsnet.org/community-event/summerfest-military-and-first-responder-appreciation-day/*
- 08.21.2026-08.23.2026 | Mexican Fiesta, *Milwaukee*
  - Contact *medinay@uwm.edu* for more information
- 09.11.2026 @10:00am-12:00pm | Veterans lunch w/Father Nelson, *Brown County https://www.nevilepublicmuseum.org/events/calendar/2026-09/veterans-lunch-2026-09-11*
- 11.07.2026 | Suicide Awareness March, *Green Bay https://hooahwig.org/veteran-suicide-awareness-march*
- 11.14.2026 | Suicide Awareness March, *La Crosse https://hooahwig.org/veteran-suicide-awareness-march*
- Powwows throughout Wisconsin
  - 06.26.2026-06.28.2026 | Oneida Nation Powwow, *Oneida*
  - 06.26.2026-06.28.2026 | St. Croix Casino Powwow Contest, *Turtle Lake*
  - 07.03.2026-07.05.2026 | Gaa-Miskwaabikaanga Red Cliff Powwow, *Red Cliff*
  - 07.10.2026-07.12.2026 | Bear River Annual Traditional Powwow, *Lac du Flambeau*
  - 08.07.2026-08.09.2026 | 50th annual Mohican Powwow, *Bowler*

Public Comments

- Discounts available for veterans with disability ratings for fishing licenses.
- Free state park passes if 70% disabled; $7 park pass if 50-70% disabled

Election of Officers (June Meeting)

- Chair: Motion made by Bob Hessselbein for Chris Hanson as Chair, second by John Morgen; unanimously approved and accepted
- Vice Chair: Motion made by John Morgen for Bob Hesselbein as Vice Chair, second by Laura Colbert; unanimously approved and accepted
- Secretary: Motion made by Laura Colbert for Chris Chornelius as Secretary, second by John Morgen; unanimously approved and accepted

Future agenda items:

- Update from UW Camp Randall and tour of Veterans Plaza
- Discussion on potential future legislation
  - ACTION: Send ideas to Joey Hoey before the September 2026 meeting who will compile and forward proposals to Legislators

Upcoming Meetings:

- September 17, 2026 – UW Camp Randall
- December 17, 2026 – Wisconsin Veterans Museum
- March 2027 – TBD
- June 2027 – Tentatively at King Veterans Home

Moton to adjourn the meeting was moved by Bob Hesselbein, second by Chris Cornelius and carried on a voice vote to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 3:43pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Hanson, Chair