

VA HEALTH CARE UPSTATE NEW YORK  
STRATTON VA MEDICAL CENTER (528A8)  
113 HOLLAND AVENUE  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12208

**CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (CDCE) COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**June 26, 2024**

PHONE (518) 626-5507

FAX (518) 626-5511

Richard Loubriel  
VAVS Committee Chair  
Associate Director

Erwin "Dom" Dominguez  
VAVS Committee Deputy Chair  
Chief, CDCE

**I. OPENING OF MEETING:** A meeting of the 3rd Quarter, FY 24, VAVS Committee was held on Wednesday, June 26, 2024, at 13:03 in person and via Microsoft Teams conference call. Erwin "Dom" Dominguez called the meeting to order and recited The Pledge of Allegiance. His introductory remarks highlighted the importance of growth and mission support partnership between the VA and VAVS members.

**II. CERTIFICATIONS & RECERTIFICATION OF REPRESENTATIVES & DEPUTIES:**

Certifications: Michael Golden, National Society Sons of the American Revolution.

Mr. Golden made comments about his group's mission of education and remembrance, their hope to be very involved with the VA, and noted that color guards and artillery cannon demos were available.

Catherine Knauer, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Recertifications:

Eleanor Morris, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution(R)  
Amanda Potter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution(D)

**III. MANAGEMENT REPORT:**

**Darlene Delancey, Stratton VAMC Director:**

Darlene thanked the group for all they do to uphold the VA commitment to quality care for Veterans. She noted that the parking lot was coming along, and that the design phase for the Women's Health Care building has started and should be done by year-end. We have made many building improvements and continue to improve cleanliness standards. Our Joint Commission survey went very well, with excellent performances all around and a five-star rating for our CLC.

Darlene also noted bringing the prior \$17 million deficit down to \$4 million, and hope to eradicate this in 2025, but budgets will be a challenge, as it is nationwide for all VAs,

plus private companies and organizations. Darlene is working very hard on efficiencies with internal and external groups. She stressed that staffing is a national issue, and though we might hold off on some hires as appropriate, hands-on clinical staffing will not be delayed. Darlene stressed the key role volunteers play in maintaining our high standards of Veteran care.

Some in the group shared their and other Veterans' positive experiences, highlighting our great staff and one-stop care model, and noting how much faster we can provide care than community health practices. She commented on some disparity between out and inpatient experiences, adding that we can often tailor Veteran care to improve that. Darlene closed by urging all to get their members to use the VA, as this boosts our resources; bring in two Veterans for care, and two to volunteer. She noted the importance of using county Veteran Services Officers to help access VA care and benefits.

Darlene, Dom and Jason replied to Ms. Knauer's queries on homeless Veteran care by fully explaining the many ways in which the Stratton VA is a national leader in multi-tiered region-wide internal and outreach programs that range from housing to food to jobs to drug treatment and all health care. It can take a few days to years to earn these Veterans' trust, and we work with many other groups, and serve both male and female veterans.

#### **IV. OLD BUSINESS:**

- a. **Approval of the meeting minutes:** Dom asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 13, 2024 meeting. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Skip Diamond(Marine Corps League) and seconded by Carrie Farley(American Gold Star Mothers).
  
- b. **Annual Joint Reviews:** Please contact Dom Dominguez at 626-5507 to schedule. Reviews may be done in person or offered virtually.

#### **V. NEW BUSINESS:**

Program updates were presented by:

##### **Women's Health Center:**

Dom thanked John Pillsworthy for his eagerness to contribute flowers for the Women's Health Baby Showers.

##### **Psycho-Social Rehab and Recovery Center – Laura Kline, Britany McDonald**

Center staff thanked all for their response to earlier requests, and noted Red Cross/Panera events, Cornell Cooperative Extension Master Gardener group's help; this has boosted our programs and built skills growth and engagement for our participating Veterans. The program would like to expand this partnership with VAVS members by asking for help with

the very successful and popular monthly hot breakfast program, which we can no longer provide as before for fire safety reasons. Other services include daily group programs, regular field trips, in-person and video counseling. Our goal is to get these Veterans into the VA for mental and physical care, and expand their life skills, such as computers, CPR, etc. Note that outside groups can train Veterans, not staff. They concluded by thanking all again, and noting today's outside annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July picnic event. A Christmas party is also planned.

### **Fisher House/Stratton Inn – Michael Horning**

Mike noted that the \$1.2 million renovations, mainly provided by the national Foundation, are underway, with Iron Sword as our contractor. Fisher House and VA Public Affairs plan a 30th year grand reopening for October. We are seeking any former House guests who would like to speak at the event.

The House is closed during renovations, but Stratton Inn and Hotels for Heroes will be utilized during this period.

Because we moved all non-perishable food items to the VA food pantry, in the Fall Fisher House will need light snacks, water, canned goods, fast meal prep items. Kerry Farley asked for a detailed list of needs.

Mike shared a list of high-end House furniture and accessories that are readily available to be picked up for Veteran or organization use; a non-resale waiver would be signed. Please contact him or Dom this summer. Carrie Farley suggested contacting the new Frontier House in Saratoga County.

### **Food Pantry, Volunteer On-Boarding/Roles – Jason Goman**

Jason showed a list of item and volunteer needs, and urged the group to contact him about donations and volunteers. He showed before and after photos of the Lowe's renovation of the food pantry, noting needs for food items and \$25 grocery gift cards, along with shaving cream, body wash, sunscreen for chemo patients, other toiletries.

He also provided a volunteer and item needs handout, and explained the 'shut-in' community compassion contact program. Drivers are needed in Schenectady County. It was clarified that our transport services are door-to-door only and do not provide physical assistance for liability reasons.

## **VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS:**

Dom Dominguez, Chief, CDCE (

Latest Statistics:

4,245 Veteran's used the food pantry , over 34,000 items distributed, 318 Fisher House Families have checked in, 271 Veterans have used the Stratton Inn, and 1,762 patients have been transported through the Veteran transportation Network.

Dom said that Home Depot, who redid the food pantry, also will redo the Stratton Inn dining room, with a café theme. Inn room renovations, sorely needed, are being done with over \$75,000 from All-in-1 Realty golf events. The sponsor received life-saving cancer treatment at the VA, and is showing his gratitude for our help in giving him his 'second life.' A flyer for this year's event, along with Saratoga-Wilton Elks late July Veterans picnic and golf scramble events, were noted. Please let us know of your groups' events, and we will publicize them. Please also let Dom know if you would like to visit our food pantry (one of only three out of 14 Vas statewide) and Stratton Inn rooms.

**VII. QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD:**

One question arose about VA caregivers attending events.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 14:05.

**IX. NEXT MEETING DATES:**

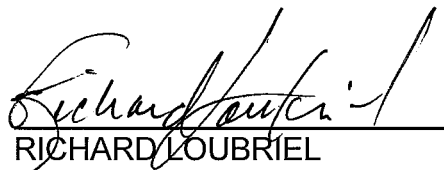
Next in-person meeting is September 24 12 at 13:00 hours, same location.

***NOTE: Please mark this date on your home calendar. Representatives and Deputies must attend 3 meetings out of 4 to keep their certification.***

Mission: To strategically integrate volunteers, donations and community partners into VA operations so that they may supplement and sustain the care and services provided to America's Veterans, their families and caregivers.



ERWIN "DOM" DOMINGUEZ  
Chief, CDCE  
VAVS Committee Deputy Chair



RICHARD LOUBRIEL  
Associate Director  
VAVS Committee Chair