



**Department of Veterans Affairs  
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
October 22, 2025**

*(Minutes subject to review at next Board Meeting)*

**I. Convene Meeting:**

The Meeting was held in the Gold Star Auditorium at the Department of Veterans Affairs located at 287 West Street, Rocky Hill, CT.

Trustees in attendance: Philip Caccioloa, Carlita Cotton, Juan Cruz, Donna Dognin, Peter Galgano Jr., Adele Hodges, John Lawlor, Ryan McKenna, Patrick Nelligan, Shard Samy, Sherri Vogt

Absent: John Banks, Richard Dziekan, Frederick Leaf, Heather Sandler

New Trustees in attendance: Seth Lapine, Michael Tetreault

DVA Staff in attendance: Commissioner Ronald P. Welch, Paul Berger, John Carragher, Lindsay Jesshop, Thomas Garrahy, Renee Gorr, Mary Grennan, Teri Mercey, Jane Siegel and Bethanne Watts

Chair Patrick Nelligan called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m. quorum confirmed by Teri Mercey

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Patrick Nelligan stated the Board would be swearing new Trustees in at this meeting. He asked them to state their names and share a bit of their background.

- Seth Lapine – Retired family business owner – Advocate to support the veteran community
- Michael Tetreault – Veteran Council President, Resident of Rocky Hill Residential Program

Swearing in of New Trustees conducted by Attorney Jane Siegel.

Members of the Public – Michael Palumbo, (Residential Vice), Michael Saylor, (HCC Vice), Amanda (HHC).

The Chair offered a motion to accept minutes for the July 23, 2025, meeting, accepted by John Lawlor and Philip Cacciola.

Chairman Neligan addressed the subcommittees, emphasizing the critical role of the Board of Trustees in supporting the mission of the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs. He highlighted the importance of active involvement from the Trustees, noting that their engagement is essential in meeting the evolving needs

of Connecticut's veteran community. Chairman Neligan underscored the urgency of addressing these needs through collaborative efforts and strategic action.

Commissioner Welch opened with the announcement that Trustee Peter Galgano, presented a generous \$500 donation to the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of the Berlin Veterans Commission. The contribution reflects the Commission's commitment to honoring and supporting Connecticut's veteran community. Commissioner Welch introduced the new Safety and Security Director, Thomas Garrahy and Plants Facility Engineer, Paul Berger, that will be reporting on behalf of Deputy Danao for this meeting. Commissioner Welch highlighted Stand Down 2025, as a very successful event with over 200 state, local federal, and community providers. The Commissioner also shared his great expectations for the opening of the Levitow Lane Housing Program, which will offer meaningful support and new opportunities to veterans and their families.

## **II. Old/Ongoing Business**

### **Mary Grenna, FAM 2**

- Continuing to work on ways to cut costs
- All departments are working together to minimize spending
- Deficits are due to high inflation, electricity, food, water etc.

Trustee Vogt "how much is the monthly electricity cost?"

Fiscal Manager Mary Grennan stated:

- 2025 \$800,000 – \$1 million yearly
- Solar Field will fully supply the HCC

Trustee Samy - What if we are unable to meet the deficit?

Fiscal Manager Mary Grennan stated:

- We are working closely with a deficit mitigation plan

Chairman Neligan – Referred back to the subcommittees to support

Fiscal Manager Mary Grennan stated:

- She has regular communication planning with OPM
- Next quarter, there will be discussion of the fee schedule

Co-Chair Lawlor inquired on the status of the temporary boiler close out for situational awareness

Fiscal Manager Mary Grennan stated: Active ongoing boiler project, with 50 percent currently completed and the final completion date expectation of Summer 2026

### **Paul Berger, Plant Facilities Manager**

- Review of planning phase, design phase, bid phase and construction phase of campus projects
- Water Tower and Roof (Old Hospital) are not in action stages

Chairman Neligan – What is going on with Building 51?

Paul Berger stated: Anticipated 6 Families, 15 Single Units -Estimated Completion Date Spring/Summer 2026

Chairman Neligan – Questioned the Bid Phase of the Solar Project

Paul Berger stated: Solar project to begin December 2025 with estimated finish date in 2026

**John Carragher, Manager of Office of Advocacy and Assistance**

- Stand Down 2025 – Successfully executed – Thank you to the Staff and Vendor Coordinators
- Staffing: OA&A 19/24
- Cemetery and Memorial Services: Available Cemetery Plots: Casketed Remains 1,798 (JUL 2035) Buried Cremains 518 (SEPT 2027) Columbarium Niches 1,670 (OCT 2035) Ongoing record archiving
- Claims Operations: 8,755 Total Clients, 788 Claims Submitted (3Q 2025)
- Other Programs and Initiative: Reports to CGA Required by New Legislation

Chairman Neligan – When will the new VSO positions be filled?

John Carragher stated: Northwest 2 VSO 1 OA 2026

Trustee Carlita Cotton: Offered to help find space in Mansfield

Trustee Sherri Vogt – Do you hold DD214s of deceased veterans for pre-eligibility for spouse?

John Carragher stated: Yes, all military documents are on file when the veteran is interred.

**Lindsay Jesshop, Manager of Community Advocacy**

- Dress to Empower held in July 2025 – 75 Women veterans and service members registered/attended
- Veterans Farmers' Market August 2025, held in collaboration with Resource conservation and Development Area, Inc, Connecticut Department of Agriculture, and VA Connecticut Healthcare System. Very well attended and included resource tabling, state, local and Federal organizations. The market featured participation from 8 Veteran Farmers and 2 Veteran-owned food trucks. RipChord of the 102d Army Band performed for the afternoon.
- Stand Down 2025, held at six locations. Overall, close to 2,000 Veterans attended and there were over 200 state, local federal, and community providers providing an array of information and services to Connecticut Veterans.

Chairman Neligan- What studies will be conducted?

Lindsay Jesshop stated: 2026 Claim Sharks /Dental  
2027 Property Tax / Veteran Representatives

Chairman Neligan – Spoke on the Municipal Representative study – need to establish guidelines  
Tax Exemption – concern is how to deliver the best relief for the veterans in need – thoughts to the committee

Trustee Sherri Vogt - stated veterans appreciate the tax relief

Trustee Carlitta Cotton – Stressed the importance to keep in the front of the agenda

## **Renee Gorr, Director of Residential**

- Current census: 143 total, 126 Residential Facility, 5 Patriots Landing (17 total),
- Bed Hold Policy – Provided Veterans with education and discussion
- Recreation Department moved to a new area on campus
- Recovery Support
- Veteran Service Officer - Monthly visit
- ARPA Project
- Staffing – Chaplin/Social Worker/VFW PT Residential Supervisor
- Corrective Action Planning based on the 2024 Federal Survey

Chairman Neligan – Inquired about the residents and how are needs accessed

Renee Gorr stated: Each individual is accessed with the intake person and the team to ensure that our facility will be the appropriate and most beneficial environment. Matrix Care was referenced as it tracks and follows the needs of the individuals.

Commissioner Welch stated: Referenced the quarterly report having full complete details

Trustee Adele Hodges - How many that leave are homeless?

Renee Gorr stated: Positive leaves all have an address, sometimes they return

Trustee Seth Lapine- How long do you maintain contact

Renee Gorr stated: We don't necessarily track, our Social Worker is a wonderful resource, and they typically stay in contact to touch base and network

Trustee Juan Cruz- Can the Trustees attend events

Renee Gorr stated: Yes, you are always welcome!

Trustee Shard Sammy- How do they get extra help while they are here/what services are lacking

Renee Gorr stated: We offer all the help with resources, recovery groups, recreation for socialization, and encourage higher level of education and training. Mental health attention.

Trustee Sherri Vogt- What happens if they need assistance? Walker/shower/extra care

Renee Gorr stated: We have VOC that assists with recommendations

## **Laura Nelson, Director of Healthcare Center (Presented by Director Gorr due to Director Nelson's Absence)**

- Federal VA inspection Oct 2025
- DPH inspection completed Q1, plan of correction completed Q2, 100% compliant

- Healthcare Center is a Medicare 5 Star facility, Medicare's highest rating
- Pharmacy billing project ongoing, working through billing options with fiscal and DAS
- Veteran Council meetings and family council meetings held monthly per policy
- Medical staff from UCONN continues to co-manage Veteran care with the Federal VA
- New Electronic Health Record went live June 19, 2025
- Vacant positions pending (CSR, multiple staff nurse and nurse aide positions)
- Quality Assurance programs in place: fall prevention, incontinence, pressure sore reduction, ambulation program for strengthening, bowel protocol, gradual dose reduction of anti-psychotic medication, undesirable weight loss, and tracking of Federal VA CAP

### **Bethanne Watts, Human Resource**

- FT 244 (July 2025)
- Actively filling positions
- 1199 Contracts
- 2 LPNs went through the program which allowed them to obtain their RN degree and collect a salary
- Leaders – Service Rating – All Accomplished

### **Thomas Garrahy, Director of Safety and Security**

State Fire Marshall – No deficiencies found

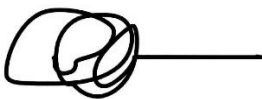
Rated very well

100% Compliant

### **Closing**

There being no further business Chair Nelligan entertained a motion to adjourn which was accepted by Co-Chair Lawlor and Trustee Vogt followed by all Trustees. The meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Chair Patrick Nelligan

Date: October 29, 2025