

State of Tennessee Department of Veterans Services

TriStars and Stripes: Governor's Council on Service Members, Veterans, and their Families

Meeting of April 23, 2024, at 11:00 am

Nashville, TN-Tennessee Tower, 3rd Floor, Tennessee Room 1

Members:

Charlotte "Charlie" Trussell – Family Member of Currently Serving Tennessee Citizen

Scott Brower – Higher Education

Marilyn Childress – Veteran Service Organizations or Coalitions

Blake Hogan – Veteran Service Organizations or Coalitions

Ralph Schulz – Business Interests

Joey Hale – Business Interests

Wes Golden – County/City Mayor

Ex-officio Members

Commissioner of Veterans Services – Tommy Baker

TN Adjutant General of TN Dept. of Military – TAG BG Warner Ross, II

- Designee Lt. Col. John Rigdon

Commissioner of TN Dept. of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services - Marie Williams

- Designee Rob Cotterman

Commissioner of TN Dept. of Labor & Workforce Development – Deniece Thomas

- Designee Jeff Dent

TN State Senator – Rusty Crowe

TN State Representative – Jay Reedy

Guests

- Chelsea Anderson
- Deanna Day
- Stephen Bell
- Travis Murphy
- Lorenza Wills
- Kathryn Held
- Sherry Pickering
- Jennifer Allen

Welcome: Chris Lancia welcomed everyone, reviewed the meeting's agenda.

Call to Order & Roll Call: Chris Lancia

Members:

- Charlotte "Charlie" Trussell – In Person
- Scott Brower – In Person
- Marilyn Childress – In Person
- Blake Hogan – In Person

- Ralph Schulz – In Person
- Joey Hale – In Person
- Wes Golden – In Person

EX- Officio Members:

- Commissioner Baker – In Person
- TAG BG Warner Ross, II – Not Present
 - Designee Lt. Col. John Rigdon – In Person
- Commissioner Deniece Thomas – In Person
 - Designee Jeffrey Dent – In Person
- Commissioner Marie Williams – Not Present
 - Designee Rob Cotterman – Microsoft Teams
- TN State Senator Rusty Crow – In Person
- TN State Representative Jay Reedy – Not Present

Pledge of Allegiance: Assistant Commissioner Lorenza Wills

Welcome

- **Opening Remarks**
 - Commissioner Baker thanked all attendees for their commitment, and consistent effort of the group. He also briefly discussed the reformatting of the council, and expressed appreciation of everyone’s support as the direction of the council is redefined.

Old Business:

- **Approval of Minutes**
 - Motion – n/a
 - 2nd – n/a
 - Vote –
- **Motion to Open New Business**
 - Motion – n/a
 - 2nd – n/a
 - Vote –

New Business:

- Chris Lancia discussed the executive order, and how it reads that the chairperson can set up committees made up of council members. He then discussed refocusing the committees, and the five focus areas determined after a discussion with the council members. He then opened the floor up to the council members for a discussion.
- Discussions among council members included concerns on efforts for women veterans, clarification on “Veteran Resource and Assistance Development,” the Suicide Prevention committee, and the implementation of the Outreach Committee.
- The five focus areas determined, and their co-chairs:
 - SMVF Employment and Entrepreneurship
 - Co-chairs: Blake Hogan and Ralph Schulz
 - SMVF Education Benefits
 - Co-chairs: Scott Brower and Charlie Trussell
 - SMVF Resources and Equity
 - Co-chairs: Marilyn Childress and Jeff Dent

- SMVF Suicide Prevention
 - Co-chairs: Travis Murphy and Rob Cotterman
- SMVF Communications
 - Co-chairs: Joey Hale and LTC John Rigdon
- **A 25 minute recess was taken.**
- Following the recess, each committee broke into groups for approximately 30 minutes and used white boards to work through the top priorities for the particular focus area.
- **A 20 minute recess was taken.**
- Following the recess, each committee presented it's top strategies/priorities.
 - SMVF Employment and Entrepreneurship
 - Priorities
 - Develop a coordinated pipeline to connect SMVF to career and entrepreneurial opportunities
 - SMVF Education Benefits
 - Priorities
 - Recognize Military Education Achievements
 - Align Support Structures to Educational Needs
 - Exceed National Best Practices in Military Education Support
 - SMVF Resources and Equity
 - Priorities
 - Homelessness and Food Insecurity
 - Female Veterans
 - Justice-Involved Veterans
 - SMVF Suicide Prevention
 - Priorities:
 - Share timely, valid, and actionable data to drive impactful strategies
 - Establish, engage, and support communities
 - Coordinate, collaborate, and synchronize to improve the SMVF suicide prevention ecosystem
 - SMVF Communications
 - Priorities
 - Ensure cross-committee communication
 - Create a single marketing/brand for council efforts
 - Consolidate information for collaboration and outreach (single location for contacts, efforts, and resources to be accessed by the entire council)
- **The Way Ahead**
 - Chris Lancia discussed sending out an email with blank strategic framework documents for revised committees to fill in, along with some due dates.
- **Announcements:**
 - Discussed the next proposed meeting date: Thursday, July 18th, 2024.
 - Steve Bell, Director of State Operations at TDVS, briefed on the VA Economic Development Initiative, Governor Lee coming out to the Middle Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery to celebrate the receipt of an Operational Excellence Award, the Governor's Memorial Day Ceremony, the Veteran Ready Business Recognition Program hard launch in 2024 July.

- Commissioner Baker briefly touched on the work done for the Veteran Ready Business Recognition Program, the Honor Guard Grant Program, the most recent Operational Excellence Award given to the West Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery, and the Wings of Liberty Museum.

- **Floor Opened to Audience:**

- N/A

Adjourn meeting -