

Northeast Georgia Veteran Organizations Coalition

Meeting Minutes

July 2, 2012

I. Persons Present

NAME	POSITION	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL
Dave Browne	Commander	Vietnam Veterans of America	sailorskchief@aol.com
David C. Cooper	Senior Vice Commander	American Legion Post 328	dcc-01@msn.com
Dave Dellinger	Commander	American Legion Post 7	dtdellinger@charter.net
James E. Gilmer	Past President	Georgia State Council Vietnam Veterans of America	jegilmer@att.net
Paul Godfrey	Personal Affairs Officer	Georgia Mountain Chapter Military Officers Association of America	paulwaynegodfrey@charter.net
Gary McBride	Legislative Liaison	Disabled American Veterans Post 17	gmseven11@gmail.com
Cookie Salinas	Immediate Past Commandant	Marine Corps League Upper Det 665	cs820@bellsouth.net
Asberry Turner	Commander	American Legion Post 328	turner@yahoo.com
Johnny Varner	Adjutant	American Legion Post 328	legionpost328@gmail.com

Meetings are held in an atmosphere of informality and mutual respect by men of proven valor.

American Legion Post 7 Hosts the meetings. Traditionally, as a first order of business, each veteran present discusses ongoing or recently completed activities of their organization. This is followed by the raising of issues of mutual interest among the groups for discussion. The exchange of information and making of mutual decisions is stressed, not following of a prescribe order of business.

II. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting opened at approximately 7:15 pm.

James Gilmer informally served as chairperson.

III. Deliberations. The fifth meeting opened with the general discussion of organizational events.

1. Mr. Paul ???, Korean Veterans of America (KVA), was unable to attend, but the first status report noted the successful efforts of that veteran organization to erect a monument at Rock Creek Park. It was noted that a private group from Gwinnett County approached the KVA and offered to fully finance the effort based on substantive control of the project; however, the KVA opted to pursue their efforts without external influence. Dates and times of completion are expected shortly from the group.
2. The issue of the veteran monuments at the park were briefly discussed with a conclusion that should additional Hall County (KIA-MIA) be identified and verified, their names could be added to the monuments in place.
3. Gary McBride, for the DAV Post 17, announced their initiative to sponsor a July 12, Annual Meeting & Celebration thanking the entire community for their support of all Veterans. While this is a DAV event, all veteran groups in the county were invited to attend and “show the flag.”



**DAV Meeting/
Celebration**

*All are welcome to join Chapter 17 in
thanking our community for the support
of our veterans and their families.*

Date: Thursday, July 12th, 2012
Time: 7 pm
Place: Army Reserve Training Center
570 Shallowford Rd.
(next to Target)
Gainesville, Georgia

For More Information
call Commander Sam Smith at (678) 761-2330 or
Gary McBride at (770) 503-5117

4. Gary also provided the group information concerning the DAV Post 17 initiative with Gainesville State College to provide specific support to the some 190 veterans attending that college. It was noted that, with the merger of North Georgia College and State University and Gainesville State College, this effort had promise of bearing fruit throughout the region insofar as identification of veterans who may require services and for recruitment into the various veterans organizations providing those services.

5. Dave Dellinger identified the ongoing initiatives of American Legion Post 7. Most notable at this time was the fruition of the efforts to restore the historic pavilion and park on the post property by the city of Gainesville. The ultimate idea of the post is to make this a veteran park and pavilion available for use by all veteran organizations for low or no cost.

6. Dave also provided details on the 4th of July fireworks display Wednesday, July 4th, at Laurel Park. The festivities leading up to the display beginning around 9am are traditional sponsored by the post, with assistance from other veterans groups, and this is no different. The exception is that this years fireworks are graciously sponsored by the CCA organization that manages the incarceration facility recently agreed to be transferred from Hall County to the city of Gainesville for a negotiated fee.

7. Dave further identified that the post was ready, willing, and able to rent its facilities to groups within the community, including veterans groups.

8. Asberry Turner outlined the ongoing activities of the American Legion Post 328 in its growth. He cited its reaching its more than 100% membership goal set by the state department. In addition, he identified the post's recent efforts in selling properties to finance the purchase of an interim facility as it works toward a long term permanent post building.

9. Cookie Salinas outlined the ongoing activities of the Marine Corps league in raising funds and supporting Marine veterans. It should be noted that the Colors Unit of the MCL Detachment 665, has been a significant aid to various veteran activities throughout the community, including the welcome home of Sean Adams, a Marine injured in conflict, and the Warrior golf tourney at Lake Lanier Island in June.

10. Paul Godfrey outlined the GMC MOAA efforts to raise funds in support of the Warrior banquet and tournament and cited the generous contribution of over \$70,000 by local businesses to the event. He also explained the role the GMC has played in identifying and supporting veterans within the nine counties plus two cities in the GMC area of responsibility (AOR) in North Georgia.

11. Johnny Varner, adjutant of the Post 328, advised the group of the desire of the Hall County Republican Party to form a veterans support group and solicited issues the veterans coalition might have that that group might address. Several of the veterans spoke out strongly about the nonpartisan nature of the organization in the coalition and emphasized that their sole purpose for existence, and the purpose for the coalition, was specifically to provide charitable and other support to veterans.

12. After all recognized and affirmed this nonpartisan position, the group, as was customary, identified several issues of mutual concern to all the organizations represented. Of course, the three bedrock

issues of identification of veterans in need, an aging membership in each organization and hence a recruitment need, and the ever present issue of raising funds with which to help the veterans were cited.

13. On the veteran in need identification issue, James pointed out that we could only help those who wanted help and that we are not psychologists who can surmise that help is needed when it is not asked for. Cookie also reminded us that help for vets should not neglect our own members.

14. An issue of relatively immediate concern raised was the upcoming Mule Camp event and the desire of the various veteran organizations' booths to be positioned in a central location as a group, or to be spread out throughout the camp. The consensus was that the groups should be spread out throughout the camp. This would allow the people maximum opportunity to express their thanks for the service of the veterans and visit the veteran groups regardless of where they spent their time in the camp.

15. On another positive note, James brought up the topic of college credit for veteran experience as a positive issue that the state had pursued through the university system.

16. A second issue was of more far-reaching scope, and that was concerning the so-called stolen valor act recently overturned by the Supreme Court due to the vagaries and broad reach of the act's construction. The principal action agreed on was to discuss the issue within the various groups and

Wong said a 2011 revision of the challenged law would pass the constitutionality test. "Congress needs to do whatever it takes to pass H.R. 1775, a 2011 rewrite of the original Stolen Valor Act, which we believe the Supreme Court would accept as constitutional. The justices did not say that the idea is wrong because the idea is not wrong. It's just a matter of conforming to constitutional parameters."

18. This led into the discussion of establishing an ongoing forum for veterans within the county. While this coalition is one such, thought should be given to a strengthened forum.

19. Finally, the group discussed the perceived shortcomings of support by government or quasi-governmental agencies specifically charged with veteran support. Both the VA in Atlanta and DAV support in Atlanta were cited. It was generally felt, although not a consensus, that agencies were either overwhelmed with work or lacking in motivated staff. Some felt that the various service officers needed to do a better job, while others felt there were times of exceptional support by those same service officers. The inconsistency of opinions hints at an underlying problem that may be either structural or human in nature. It was felt by a majority that we needed to more clearly identify the problem.

20. To that end, Gary offered to follow-up on the circumstances of the DAV support for which there were concerns and provide feedback to the group and Johnny offered to follow-up on the VA side and do the same.

21. Finally, the group recognized and welcomed the new Vietnam Veterans of America President VVA President Dave Browne to the group.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

1. The meeting was adjourned at about 9:45 pm until the next first Monday in August.

Respectfully submitted for comment, addition, deletion, and change

(Just cause I wrote it, don't necessarily make it so)

Paul Godfrey, Scribe