



Meeting Summary

Date: May 20, 2026

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Not specified

Attendees: Michael Hayden, Gary Reynolds, Kevin Gatewood, Ryan Shirts, Zach Brooks

Organization Absent: VFW Mount Vernon

1. Roll Call and Minutes

- **Roll Call:** Attendance taken; only VFW Mount Vernon absent.
- **Minutes of Previous Meeting:**
 - Minutes exist but not read (available via Wave transcript app).
 - Motion to skip reading the minutes: Motioned by Michael Hayden, seconded by Gary Reynolds. All approved.

2. Treasurer's Report

Presented by: (Not clearly specified, likely Michael Hayden)

- **Operations Account:** \$13,240.79 (as of this morning)
- **Discretionary Account:** \$2,494.43
- **Recent Purchases (Operations Account):**
 - Namecheap.com: \$7.68 (domain registration: vac4jc.org)
 - Peacock: \$35 (unclear purpose)
- **Discretionary Account:**
 - Google: \$3.83
- **Receipts:** Some pending to send to Zach (for Namecheap purchase).
- **Website:**
 - New domain registered (vac4jc.org).
 - Zach to be set up as an admin to test Namecheap's hosting/web builder.

Approval:

- Motion to accept the treasurer's report: Motion by Ryan, seconded by Gary. All approved.

3. Bills and Major Expenses

- **Outstanding Rent Payment:**
 - 10 months at \$500/month = \$5,000 remaining for the year.
 - Motion to pay remaining rent: Motioned by Ryan, seconded by Michael. All approved.
- **Reimbursements:**
 - Brittany to deposit \$1,759.21 to replenish funds up to \$5,000 after previous bills.
- **Upcoming Possible Bills:**
 - No others discussed except potential signage.
- **Signage:** To be discussed in detail later.

4. Sickness and Distress

- **No reported illnesses among veteran clients or members.**
- **Veteran Case: Dallas Lively**
 - Laid off from Continental, delay in starting at Walgreens and new position at prison led to seven weeks without income.
 - Behind on rent; electric bill was at risk (due on 5/18, resolved).
 - Does not meet current income eligibility criteria (138% federal poverty level).
 - Is being considered by DAV, Legion, and VFW for possible assistance; attempts made to connect with all relevant presidents.
 - Not a member of any organization; discussions on how to provide assistance given current guidelines.

5. Extended Discussion: Eligibility Guidelines & Financial Assistance

Background

- Current financial assistance threshold: 138% of federal poverty level (FPL) for one: \$1,835.00/month.
- Discussion about potential to raise the threshold based on other counties' (Washington, Clinton, Belleville) use of up to 325% FPL.
- No state mandate on income guidelines. Most default to 138%.
- Concern about lack of uniformity leading to scrutiny or loss of local control (context: statewide proposed law shifting authority).

Case Application: Dallas Lively

- Income is above current guidelines due to employment at Walgreens.
- Consideration of splitting/matching assistance among organizations (DAV, Legion, VFW).
- Amount of assistance to be confirmed (estimated in \$300–\$500 range for rent).
- Discussion if aid can be provided from discretionary account (non-taxpayer funds: "we can do what we want as long as we're not defrauding").

Procedures and Safeguards

- Suggestion: Give a Legion membership (cost: \$45) if required for eligibility for certain types of aid.
- Consensus: Donations between organizations (especially from discretionary funds) are appropriate and routine.

Bylaws and Flexibility

- No firm bylaw restrictions on discretionary account disbursements; prior limits were removed.
- General agreement that emergencies may justify exceeding FPL rule, especially for active self-improving veterans in temporary need.

6. Unfinished & New Business

a. Signage for Building

- **Proposal:** New cabinet sign by T Ham Sign.
- **Quote:** \$2,943.44 (deposit: \$1,471.72)
- **Scope:** Complete cabinet, labor, warranty. Final cost may change based on sign positioning.
- **Electrical:** No current lighting; electrical work planned in October.
- **Decision:** Hold off on finalizing until electrical installed, but pre-approve up to \$3,500 for modification.
 - Motion by Ryan, seconded by Michael. All approved.

b. Flagpole

- On hold until after building upgrades in October.
- Consideration for community garden proposed; may require permit if >20 feet.
- Suggestion to seek donations or city assistance in future.

c. Outreach & Communications

- **Inquiries:** Most new contacts via Facebook, local Sentinel publication, and the Mt. Vernon Clinic.
- **Business Cards:** Adequate supply (~1,000); cards available for distribution.
- **Discussion** about further print materials if needed.
- **Tracking Contacts:** Maintained but numbers not available at the meeting.

7. Eligibility Guidelines Reform

Proposal:

- Illinois adheres to "Broad Based Categorical Eligibility" (BBCE) guidelines for programs like SNAP, increasing the threshold from 138% to 165% of FPL.

- Would raise aid eligibility to ~\$2,234.40/month for an individual.
- This approach is common in Illinois, but waiting on opinion from the State's Attorney for full legality.

Motion:

- Adhere to BBCE guidelines (165%) for financial assistance upon written approval from State's Attorney.
 - Motion by Gary Reynolds; second by Michael Hayden. All approved.
- **Follow-up:** Zach to update group via text upon receiving State's Attorney's opinion.

8. Communication Methods

- **Group Texts vs. Mass Messaging Service:**
 - Zach requests names and numbers for group texts for accountability.
 - Gary offers a mass texting solution (used for reminders—prevents unwanted group texts, but group text remains preferred by Zach for record-keeping).
 - Consensus: Group texting preferred for now for transparency.

9. Additional Discussions

- **VAC Guidance for Operations:** Zach to provide updates on official guidance and ensure measures for accountability are followed (example given of an incident with late paperwork jeopardizing eligibility).
- **Bylaws & Executive Authority:** Clarified that superintendent/executive can act on financial assistance, subject to board oversight.
- **Member Suggestions:** Continue to seek greater district support and pursue unified eligibility guidelines for all southern Illinois.

10. Action Items

11. Follow-up & Next Steps

- Await State's Attorney opinion to update financial assistance eligibility.
- Further sign and flagpole decisions deferred until after building electrical upgrades in October.
- Continue group communication practices for operational transparency.
- Zach to continue tracking performance metrics and outreach data for future review.
- Next meeting date not specified; implied to be monthly.

12. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn: Motion by Gary Reynolds, seconded by Mike Hayden. All approved.
- **Adjourned:** Time not specified; meeting concluded after action items and closing remarks.

Additional/Out-of-Meeting Notes

- Ongoing consideration of broader county and organizational initiatives, including possible district restructuring for Southern Illinois VACs.

Summary prepared as an in-room observer, with emphasis on major discussions, procedural decisions, and actionable items for organizational continuity.