

MINUTES OF THE FORT HOOD RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL MEETING

1. The 11 January 2016, meeting of the Soldier for Life, Fort Hood Retiree Council convened at 1130 hours at the Spirit of Fort Hood Warrior and Family Chapel, Fort Hood, Texas.

2. Membership Attendance:

a. Members Present:

GEN (Ret) Thurman, Co-Chairman
CSM (Ret) King, Jr., Co-Chairman
LTC (Ret) Christ, Member
LTC (Ret) MacMillan, Secretary
LTC (Ret) Pierce, Member
CW3 (Ret) Heath, Member
CMCPO (Ret) Hall, Member
CSM (Ret) Wilson, Member
SFC (Ret) Pullins, Member
SFC (Ret) Moore, Member
Ms. Roupe, Member

COL (Ret) Oliver, Jr., Assoc. Member
COL (Ret) Portmann, Assoc. Member
CSM (Ret) Minosky, Assoc. Member

b. Members Absent:

COL (Ret) Phillips, Jr., Member
CSM (Ret) Small, Member
CSM (Ret) Bobb, Member
CSM (Ret) Waller, Member
SGM (Ret) Lopez, Member

3. The Co-Chairman, GEN (Ret) Thurman called the meeting to order at 1145 hours wishing everyone a Happy New Year. He thanked everyone for their service and for what they do in the community. He stated he wants to make 2016 a great year for retirees as we take on issues to help them. GEN (Ret) Thurman said the Retiree Appreciation Day (RAD) was very well done and had good attendance. He said we will continue to see budget issues affecting the military. 2017 will be tough for the Army as the active force cuts continue. He said we can't take it any lower with the current world situation (ISIS, Korea, Middle East and Germany). He reminded us that we represent LTG MacFarland. He thanked Ms. Bedgood for all the good work she continues to do.

CSM (Ret) King thanked everyone for their condolences regarding the loss of his mother. He said the RAD went well and that we need to focus on involvement in the community and wear our nametags. CSM (Ret) King introduced our newest member, CSM (Ret) Angie Wilson. He then introduced our special guests from Central Texas College, Elaine Ritey the Associate Dean for Fort Hood, and Barbara Merlo the Director of Marketing and Outreach. He then introduced CPT Robinson with the Federal Court SJA.

4. Topics of discussion for this meeting:

- Barbara Merlo from Central Texas College (CTC) gave a brief summary of the programs CTC provides for transitioning veterans. CTC has two full time VA employees working in their Veterans Success Office. The college works with the Texas Workforce Commission. CTC supports a new state program, College Credit for Heroes, where veterans can get a free transcript evaluation for the

work they did in the military and receive college credit. There are several training programs offered at CTC including truck driving, welding and pipe fitting where employers provide funding and jobs once a veteran completes the training. CTC is working to establish a program with industry to train project managers. They already provide certification programs in order for veterans to gain employment quickly.

- GEN (Ret) Thurman asked how can an employer gain access to a list of veterans leaving the service with specific skill sets. Several members spoke up saying that it is a privacy information issue. CSM (Ret) Minosky recommended employers go through the unit CSM for the particular skill set for which they are looking. For example if they are looking for communications skill sets talk to the signal CSM.
- CPT Robinson briefed the Council about a pilot program being conducted at Fort Hood called Fort Hood VETS Court. The program takes veterans who have mental health or substance abuse challenges and commit a criminal offense on Fort Hood. The program connects these veterans to community mentors and enduring treatment solutions provided by the VA in lieu of federal criminal conviction and jail time.
- CSM (Ret) King asked CSM (Ret) Minosky to briefly explain the Central Texas Veterans Coalition Program. He said it is a group in Bell County working to bring together all the organizations that help veterans to resolve systemic problems. They have found several organizations do the same things but do not talk to each other and the veteran they are trying to help gets left out not getting the help he needs.
- RAD went very well. CSM (Ret) King said they received only one negative comment everything else was extremely positive.

5. Individual Council Member Updates:

- Health Care Advisory Council Update: LTC (Ret) Pierce reported the new hospital has been signed for and will open April 3. He set up a tour of the new facility for the Council on 14 or 15 January. Mrs. Roupe said she will notify everyone of the time. It will take about 2 to 3 hours for the tour.
- Benefits Update: SFC (Ret) Pullins reported the Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits are being cut in half. She encouraged everyone to get the word out on Education benefits. There are several changes. She handed out a veteran benefits update packet which includes information regarding Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015; Tri-care pharmacy co-pay changes; VA launch of free confidential online Anger Management Resource; Free Confidential Courses to Launch Your New Year; VA Expands Choice, Seeks Dollars for Outside Care, Scholarships for Military Children; Tri-care and Maintenance Drugs; and 2016 National Defense Act Contains Retirement and Pay Changes.
- Installation Update: On post housing has been opened to retirees and DOD employees. A discussion ensued regarding this and how it might be better to put SSG and below on post.

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- **AAFES Update:** LTC (Ret) MacMillan reported that she attended the AFFES/DECA meeting in December. Only three people attended the meeting besides the organization representatives. She stated that the managers all reported what is being done to better take care of their customer, the soldiers. The representatives were all very positive; a great team.
- **DECA Update:** CW3 (Ret) Heath reported the commissary has scholarships for dependents of active duty and survivors. There are 700 scholarships of \$2,000 each DECA will be awarding. Each commissary awards one in their area. Deadline for submissions is Feb 12.

6. Final Comments:

- CSM (Ret) King said several Council members have fulfilled their time and need to identify a replacement.
- GEN (Ret) Thurman stated he appreciates everyone's efforts in support of our retirees. He said it is important to have diversity on the Council as well as all services.

7. GEN (Ret) Thurman closed the meeting at 1300 hours and thanked everyone for attending. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, 14 April 2016.


GEN (Ret) James D. Thurman
Co-Chairman


Approved/Disapproved
JOHN W. REYNOLDS, III
Colonel, GS
Chief of Staff