



FORT POLK RETIREE COUNCIL
FORT POLK, LOUISIANA 71459-5302
TELEPHONE: (337) 531-0363



IMWE-POL-HRM

12 March 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Retiree Council Meeting, 12 March 2008

1. The Fort Polk Retiree Council met on 12 March 2008 at the Education Center/Library, Room 101 in Building 660. The meeting was called to order at 0900 hours by the Chairman. The invocation was given by MSG (R) Clark. The Pledge of Allegiance was then led by SFC (R) Horn.

2. The following is the attendance record for the meeting:

Council Members:

COL (R) Harry J. Montgomery	(Present)
COL (R) Ronald R. Thompson	(Present)
LTC (R) Lessie A. Griffith	(Absent)
LTC (R) Stephen C. Gibson	(Present)
MAJ (R) Charles E. Saucier	(Present)
MAJ (R) Alvie Brewer	(Present)
CW5 (R) Mervin J. LeBlanc	(Present)
SMA (R) Julius W. Gates	(Present)
CSM (R) Carl C. Henderson	(Absent)
SGM (R) Anthony L. Barattini	(Absent)
MSG (R) Rudolph Bourg	(Present)
MSG (R) Lathern P. Clark	(Present)
MSG (R) George Burrell	(Present)
SFC (R) Dan M. Horn	(Present)
SFC (R) Lovelace Williams	(Present)
SFC (R) Stephen D. Humphries	(Present)
SFC (R) T. J. Shelton	(Present)

Honorary Council Members Present:

COL (R) Wilson Orphe
MAJ (R) George C. Thompson
CSM (R) James C. Myrick

Non-Members Attending:

COL David G. Sage, Garrison Commander, Fort Polk, LA
COL Gwendolyn Lemaire, BJACH Acting Commander
CSM Kevin Sharkey, Garrison Command Sergeant Major, Fort Polk, LA
Mrs. Bobbi Stark, Director of Human Resources, Fort Polk, LA
Mr. Christopher Stevenson, Health Benefits Advisor
Mr. Michael Lanham, Fort Polk AAFES General Manager
Mrs. Nomicia Guillory, SWLATC Program Director, AmeriCorps National Service Organization, Lake Charles, LA

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Mrs. Tresa Lawson, Public Affairs Office, Fort Polk, LA

Mrs. Shelda Pelt, Public Affairs Office, Fort Polk, LA

Mr. Eddie Wise, Director, Vernon Parish Chamber of Commerce, Leesville, LA

Mrs. Pam Irvin, Retirement Services Officer, Fort Polk, LA

Ms. Alishea Rim, Contact Representative, Retirement Services

3. COL (R) Montgomery opened with thanking everyone who participated in the Retiree Appreciation Day and asked the council to present areas that need to be altered or improved and he would briefly review those areas.

4. COL (R) Montgomery introduced COL David Sage, Garrison Commander, Fort Polk, LA. COL Sage stated when there are meetings or events taking place on post that three quarters of the council members attend. He thanked the council members for their continued participation and stated that the council members are a great representation of Fort Polk Soldiers. COL Sage gave updates on current events occurring on Fort Polk. He stated that:

- The 4th Brigade, 10th Mountain Division and part of 1st Maneuver Enhanced Brigade is deployed and that more Soldiers will deploy this summer. The 4th Brigade, 10th Mountain Division is not scheduled to return until sometime next year.

- Major changes will take place this summer with the Command Group Staff, one of which will be, the Commanding General will PCS.

- Housing construction and renovation is on-gong with Picerne Housing, a new Community Center will open on North Fort, three new Child Development Centers are being built, Highway 467 will be repaved with sidewalks added, and the golf course will get a landscaping overhaul with a pub renovation adding a pro shop and a management office.

- COL Sage stated that he would like to thank the people of the local communities for their support in helping to improve the areas outside of Fort Polk. He also stated that the chamber has set up a "Polk Board" that is a combination of business leaders throughout central Louisiana that consist of Vernon, Beauregard, and Rapides parishes to be a lobbyist for the improvement and quality of life of Fort Polk.

- COL Sage stated that Vernon Parish Schools are ranked third in the state of Louisiana. Plans are being made to improve the infrastructure of schools in the local area. There will also be improvements made on the highways that lead to Fort Polk. In order for families to choose to stay in Louisiana, there needs to be improvements in the quality of life beginning with schools, employment, and housing.

- COL Sage received questions and comments from the council members.

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- COL (R) Montgomery thanked COL Sage for his remarks.

- COL (R) Montgomery asked for assistance from the council members in forming an actions committee to address concerns of the Fort Polk community. He encouraged them to contact community and state leaders in their area on issues of concern.

5. COL (R) Montgomery introduced CSM Kevin Sharkey, Garrison Command Sergeant Major, Fort Polk, LA. CSM Sharkey thanked the council members for all that they do for the Soldiers and the Families on Fort Polk. He stated that:

- The community center on North Fort will be approximately one-third larger than the center on South Fort. This will help improve the quality of life for the Soldiers and Families in that area.

- There are still improvements that need to be done in the barracks that house single Soldiers. The main concern is the allocation of funds to revitalize these barracks; there is \$24 million allocated for construction of new barracks throughout Fort Polk.

- CSM Sharkey asked the council not to forget the single Soldiers on Fort Polk and that it is a community involvement to show that someone is there for them also acting as a family unit.

- CSM Sharkey received questions and comments from the council members.

- COL Sage stated that CSM Sharkey had reminded him of an important update concerning the efforts that are currently being worked to establish a VA Clinic in Vernon Parish. He stated that there needs to be a VA Clinic in Leesville to assist medically separated Soldiers with the VA process. He stated that Soldiers separating from the service should be able to transition into the VA system smoothly.

- COL Sage asked for an update on the VA cemetery for Vernon Parish from Mr. Steve Humphries. Mr. Humphries stated that he met with representatives from Baton Rouge and Shreveport and was told that funding for the cemetery would be released in October of the next fiscal year. The architecture and plans is ninety-nine percent complete and should take one year to build.

- COL Sage also stated that there are plans to build a new main exchange across the street from the old location, directly behind the Sabine State Bank and the Class Six store. Groundbreaking should occur this summer.

- COL (R) Montgomery thanked CSM Sharkey for his remarks.

6. COL (R) Montgomery introduced COL Gwendolyn Lemaire, BJACH Acting Commander, Fort Polk, LA. COL Lemaire stated that a massive operating room restructuring and

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reconstruction is currently taking place that will take about 18 months to complete. Additionally, a new ambulatory surgery center is being established

- The Warrior Transition Unit is over 300 strong and is still growing. Unfortunately, more Soldiers are coming back from the war with injuries that need time to heal or that will not permit the Soldiers to service their country while on active duty.

- The nation will completely revamp the flu vaccine this year. There will be three new strands to develop the flu vaccine for next year. What this means to us is it is unlikely that the flu vaccines will be available by the Retiree Appreciation Day event.

- Active attention is paid by our patients and by our staff to the ICE system. If someone has a customer service concern and submits it through the ICE system or on a customer comment card and names a provider, an area, or clinic, and the customer was not serviced appropriately, that patient will receive a telephone call with an offer to meet with the chief of the department, the commander, and the provider or staff member to address the concerns. These meetings are extremely valuable and allow customers an opportunity to ensure their concerns are heard by the command and by the person who did not provide quality customer service.

- COL Lemaire received questions and comments from the Retiree council members.

- COL (R) Montgomery thanked COL Lemaire for her remarks.

7. COL (R) Montgomery introduced Mrs. Tresa Lawson, Fort Polk Public Affairs. Mrs. Lawson provided an information packet to each council member and discussed the mission of the Soldier and Families Assistance Center. She thanked the council members for their support to the Soldiers and Families on Fort Polk.

- Mrs. Lawson received questions and comments from the Retiree council members.

- COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mrs. Lawson for her remarks.

8. COL (R) Montgomery introduced Mr. Christopher Stevenson, Fort Polk's Health Benefits Advisor. Mr. Stevenson discussed the different proposals that are before Congress pertaining to TRICARE coverage for health care benefits. He stated that:

- Some of the proposals that are before Congress right now will affect the South region. The prime service areas are shrinking to within a forty mile radius of the military treatment facilities. This means that the prime service areas that service retirees will no longer have TRICARE Prime coverage. The retiree will fall under TRICARE Standard and will incur a deductible and cost share.

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- Also before Congress, there is a proposed raise in pharmaceuticals. For \$3 generic drugs, there is a proposal to increase those to \$15 and brand names drugs will increase from \$9 to \$25. Non-formulary drugs that are special ordered will increase from \$22 to \$45.
- In TRICARE Prime, there is a proposed increase in the annual premium from \$460 to as high as \$2,090 per year for a family. Compared to other insurance plans this is still a low end cost amount for insurance. Congress is also proposing an increase in the TRICARE Standard deductible from \$300 to \$1,270 per family.
- Mr. Stevenson advised the council members to make contact with their Congressional leaders and voice their opinions about these changes.
- Mr. Stevenson received questions and comments from the council members.
- Mr. Stevenson also stated that there is a proposal to add a fee of \$120 per year to TRICARE for Life in addition to the monthly Medicare premium of \$98. He stated that if the proposals are passed by Congress, the changes would take effect in 2009.
- Within the South region alone, 86,000 beneficiaries will lose the TRICARE Prime benefit if the proposals are passed by Congress.
- COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mr. Stevenson for his remarks.

9. COL (R) Montgomery introduced Mrs. Nomicia Guillory, SWLATC Program Director, AmeriCorps National Service Organization, Lake Charles, LA. Mrs. Guillory stated that the program is actually called Area Health Education Center (AHEC), one of four in the state of Louisiana and this particular center covers the Southwest region of the state consisting of 13 parishes. She stated that:

- SWLATC has a spectrum of health programs in an effort to create a healthy Louisiana. Under the AHEC there are programs that consist of HIV testing, March of Dimes bus that goes into rural communities and gives health care to pregnant mothers who cannot get health care, grants that pay tuition for people interested in attending school for medical, certified nursing assistant, licensed practical nursing, registered nursing, and nurse practitioner; upon graduation the student must commit to work two years in that field in southwest Louisiana in rural communities. More information can be found at the website at www.swlatc.org.
- Mrs. Guillory briefed the council on the AmeriCorps program and what it entails and gave her personal testimony.
- Mrs. Guillory received questions and comments from the council members.

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- COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mrs. Guillory for her remarks.

10. COL (R) Montgomery introduced Mr. Michael Lanham, AAFES General Manager, Fort Polk, LA. Mr. Lanham provided an update on the changes in the hours of operation at some of the AAFES facilities on post. He stated that:

- AAFES is partnering with other organizations to provide a free auto clinic that is geared toward employed staff that will show Spouses and everyone how to check the basics in auto maintenance.

- If you know of any small businesses in your area that would like to be a short term vendor for a week with AAFES, please have them call Ms. Pam Taylor, AAFES Service Business Manager, at (337) 537-0858. This will help the businesses get their name known in the surrounding communities. The business owner would have to sign a short term contract to become a vendor at the Post Exchange.

- Groundbreaking will tentatively take place for the new Post Exchange around July 08 and will cover about 122,000 square feet. Starbucks will be one of the businesses that will be located at the food court in the new exchange.

- Mr. Lanham received questions and comments from the Retiree council members and told the council that he appreciates their patriotism.

- COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mr. Lanham for his remarks.

11. COL (R) Montgomery discussed items of Old and Unfinished Business:

- SFC (R) Horn stated that there is \$183.50 in the flower fund.

12. COL (R) Montgomery discussed items of New Business:

- COL (R) Montgomery asked the council if there were any comments concerning the agenda. Mrs. Pam Irvin, Fort Polk Retirement Services Officer, stated that due to the flu vaccine not being available until November and the case lot sale limited to the month of October she would like to know the council member's comments or suggestions on the date of the Retiree Appreciation Day (RAD). She asked that the council members to email her with their comments. She also stated that the door prize drawing will take place randomly throughout the day and that the winner, if not present at time of drawing, will be notified by phone or mail.

- COL (R) Montgomery asked the council to email Mrs. Irvin with their comments on a member of the command group providing a briefing on Fort Polk updates either by video or by a presentation at the Bayou Theatre on the day of the RAD.

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- MSG (R) Rudy Bourg suggested that a list of participating agencies be handed out at the entrance of the "County Fair" to inform the Retirees of services provided.

- COL (R) Montgomery commented on business cards for the council members that if they provide the information to Pam or Alishea, they will print up the cards for you.

14. MSG (R) Rudy Bourg gave information on the RAD Golf Tournament. He stated that now is the time to start collecting door prizes for the tournament and encouraged each council member to collect door prizes from their area. He stated that he would like to see more participants take part in the tournament.

- COL (R) Montgomery stated that he appreciates all of the work that MSG (R) Bourg puts into the tournament.

- COL (R) Montgomery stated that SMA (R) Bill Gates would give a presentation on the Therapeutic Riding Program that was addressed at that hospital meeting in February.

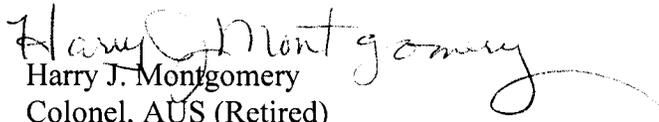
- SMA (R) Gates provided handouts of the Double Star Therapeutic Ranch Program and briefly discussed the programs mission. He stated that the program assist Soldiers that come back from combat with physical and stress related injuries by providing mental and physical therapy with horses.

- SMA (R) Gates received questions and comments from the council members.

- COL (R) Montgomery thanked SMA (R) Gates for his remarks.

- COL (R) Montgomery asked for other New Business and comments from the council members.

15. The Chairman thanked the guest speakers, active council members, and honorary council members for attending. The meeting was adjourned.


Harry J. Montgomery
Colonel, AUS (Retired)
Chairman, Fort Polk Retiree Council

DISTRIBUTION:

1 - Each member

1 - Army Retirement Services (DAPE-RSO), ATTN: Mr. Radke, Hoffman Bldg 1, Room 1240, Alexandria, VA 22331-0470

1 - IMCOM, ATTN: Mr. Randy J. Blackburn, 2450 Stanley Rd, Suite 101, Fort Sam Houston, TX 78234-6102