



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



IMSE-POL-HRM

11 March 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Retiree Council Meeting, 11 March 2009

1. The Fort Polk Retiree Council met on 11 March 2009 at the Palmetto Terrace Neighborhood Center. The meeting was called to order at 0900 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	(Present)
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) Norman Keith
COL (R) Wilson Orphe
MAJ (R) George Thompson
CSM (R) Vernon Ware
CSM (R) James Myrick

Non-Members Attending:

Mr. Vincent Grewatz, Deputy to the Garrison Commander
COL David N. Giacoppe, Jr., MEDDAC Commander
CSM Christopher Greca, Post Command Sergeant Major, JRTC and Fort Polk
Mrs. Bobbi Stark, Director of Human Resources, Fort Polk, LA
Mr. Lazarus Thicklen, Chief of Military Personnel Services Division, Fort Polk, LA
Mr. Thomas Enright, Deputy Secretary, LA Department of Veterans Affairs
Mr. Jay DeWorth, AA/Director, Alexandria VA Hospital
Mr. Damon Nash, FMWR Marketing Manager
Mrs. Charlotte Mixon, Installation Customer Service Representative

IMSE-POL-HRM

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Retiree Council Meeting, 11 March 2009

Mr. Christopher Stevenson, Health Benefits Advisor
Mr. Charles Shropshire, Fort Polk Commissary Director
Mrs. Camisha V. Smith, Fort Polk AAFES Representative
Mrs. Pam Irvin, Retirement Services Officer
Ms. Alishea Rim, Assistant Retirement Services Officer

3. COL (R) Montgomery gave opening remarks. He stated that council member, SGM (R) Anthony Barattini, passed away on 18 December 2008. SGM (R) Barattini served on the council for six years. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Judith Barattini.

4. COL (R) Montgomery introduced Mr. Vincent Grewatz, Deputy to the Garrison Commander of Fort Polk. Mr. Grewatz thanked the Retiree Council for the invitation to the meeting and allowing him to step in for COL Sage who is presently at the US Army Installation Management Command conference in Virginia. He stated that:

- A lot of changes are taking place on the installation, some of which are, the building of a new commissary and PX and \$193 million project to repair the barracks that have been in disrepair for a long time.

- An economic stimulus package was awarded to Fort Polk to be used to fund infrastructure improvements. Other changes taking place that are good and will be noticed are improvements to entrance gates security, roadways, and construction of new facilities.

- Mr. Grewatz received questions and comments from the council members.

- COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mr. Grewatz for his remarks to the council members.

5. COL (R) Montgomery introduced COL George N. Giacoppe, Jr., MEDDAC Commander, Fort Polk, LA. COL Giacoppe provided a handout to the council members on the new appointment line process and explained the procedure. He stated that:

- When a patient calls one central number, (337) 531- 3011, the computer and the operator's job is to get the patient to the correct destination. COL Giacoppe stated that the Surgeon General requires two goals: 1) Answer the telephone within ninety seconds. 2) Get the patient what they need in one call. If the patient's call is dropped or transferred to the wrong location, the patient can enter their social security or telephone number with area code into the system and the patient will receive a call back. The patient will have the option to make an appointment, cancel an appointment, or refill/renew a prescription. Triage Nurses are available to assist patients in meeting acute care needs.

IMSE-POL-HRM

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Retiree Council Meeting, 11 March 2009

- The TRICARE contract was extended for another year with no changes.
- The operating room renovations will be complete in three months. In the next couple of years, there will be renovations on the sixth and seventh floors.
- The Army has placed emphasis on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and suicide prevention to benefit Soldiers who served in overseas deployments. Behavioral health services will be available in the next three to six months for Soldiers and their Families.
- COL Giacoppe received questions and comments from the council members.
- COL (R) Montgomery thanked COL Giacoppe for his remarks to the council members.

6. COL (R) Montgomery introduced CSM Christopher Greca, Post Command Sergeant Major, JRTC and Fort Polk. CSM Greca stated that it is a pleasure to attend the Retiree Council meeting and be a part of the Fort Polk Community. He stated that:

- Recently the 162d Brigade was transferred from Fort Riley, Kansas to Fort Polk. The brigade has approximately 800 Soldiers and its goal is to train Soldiers in tactical maneuvers for overseas deployments.
- The commanding general is working with the Louisiana legislatures to improve the quality of life for Fort Polk Soldiers and their families to establish better restaurants, entertainment, and other aspects in the local area.
- The year of 2009 is the year of the non-commissioned officer (NCO) and a time to educate the public on the important role of an NCO. Throughout the year NCOs will be highlighted through the media and other aspects. He asked the council for ideas and suggestions to help get the message out.
- CSM Greca thanked the Retiree Council members for all they do for the active duty Soldiers and their Families and told them that if there was anything that he could do for them to let him know.
- CSM Greca received questions and comments from the council members.
- COL (R) Montgomery thanked CSM Greca for his remarks to the council members.

7. Mr. Thomas Enright, Deputy Secretary, LA Department of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Enright stated that he was excited to see an application for the Louisiana Veterans Honor Medal in the Retiree Council packets. He stated that:

IMSE-POL-HRM

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Retiree Council Meeting, 11 March 2009

- Governor Bobby Jindal handed out over 300 gold medals to Veterans on 10 March 2009 at Barksdale Air Force Base during a luncheon that was coordinated by a Retiree organization with over 800 in attendance.
 - The Louisiana State Legislature authorized Louisiana Veterans (over 326,000 eligible Veterans) to receive a Veteran's Honor Medal.
 - The Military Family Assistance Fund is a program to provide assistance to Louisiana Reserve and National Guard Soldiers who are activated for more than 30 days who experience some type of financial hardship.
 - The Louisiana Veterans website can be accessed at: www.vetaffairs@la.gov. There is a Veterans web page that can be found at the social websites called Facebook or MySpace. You can search for Louisiana Veterans, connect with the younger Veterans, and find information on calendar events.
 - The Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary, Mr. Lee Carson, wants to do everything possible to take care of the Veterans in this state.
 - The funding for the Louisiana Veterans Cemetery that will be place in Leesville is slated third in the nation's listing for funding. October 2010 is slated for groundbreaking and construction to begin.
 - Veterans with VA disability ratings of 60 percent or greater will not pay to have their driver's license renewed. The Louisiana State Legislature was given a report by the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs concerning a monetary bonus for Veterans who have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. In the report, recommendations outlined Veterans with VA disability ratings of zero percent or greater receive free driver's license renewal, free hunting and fishing licenses, and free admissions to state parks and museums.
 - COL (R) Montgomery recommended that a petition be signed by the Retiree council members and presented, as a group, to the federal and state legislatures concerning the state cemetery and address the issue of continual construction delays.
 - Mr. Enright received questions and comments from the Retiree Council members.
 - COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mr. Enright for his remarks to the council members.
8. COL (R) Montgomery introduced Mr. Jay DeWorth, AA Director, Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), Alexandria, LA. He made the following remarks:

IMSE-POL-HRM

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Retiree Council Meeting, 11 March 2009

- There is close to one million dollars allocated for funding of construction projects at the VA Medical Center. In 2010 there will be a groundbreaking on a new outpatient mental health clinic and an expansion of the main hospital with renovations to the main parking lot.
 - A national suicide hotline is available to all Veterans who are suicidal, post-traumatic stress disorder, homeless, and other issues.
 - Three new outpatient clinics approved for Fort Polk, Natchitoches, and Lake Charles will open no later than January 2010. A modular building will be constructed on LA Highway 467 for the Fort Polk clinic.
 - The VAMC is working with BJACH under a VA Cooperative Sharing Agreement that will outline if a patient needs x-rays or lab work.
 - Under President Obama's administration, almost a million new Veterans will be added to receive care in the next five years through the Service for Priority A Veterans Program.
 - There are two new programs located at BJACH, the Benefits Delivery on Discharge and the Discharge Evaluation System, that speeds up the process and gets the Veteran into the system as quickly as possible.
 - Recommend Retiree council members encourage Veterans leaving the service to file a VA claim application once their DD Form 214 is issued.
 - Mr. DeWorth received questions and comments from the Retiree Council members.
 - COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mr. DeWorth for his remarks to the council members.
9. COL (R) Montgomery introduced Mr. Damon Nash, Family, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (FMWR) Marketing Manager, Fort Polk, LA. Mr. Nash provided the council members with a Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Guide and discussed MWR events and activities taking place on Fort Polk. He stated that he will provide update information periodically to council members by e-mail.
- Mr. Nash received questions and comments from the Retiree Council members.
 - COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mr. Nash for his remarks to the council members.
10. COL (R) Montgomery introduced Mrs. Charlotte Mixon, Installation Customer Service Representative, Fort Polk, LA. Mrs. Mixon provided handouts to the council members on the issues discussed at the Retiree Focus Group that was held on 22 January 2009. She provided the following information on the top three issues in order by priority of the focus group:

- Issue 1: Retiree representative at BJACH - Scope: Retirees are not aware of all available services at BJACH. Recommendation: Have a central point of contact for Retirees to explain BJACH-specific services. BJACH Response: BJACH has two health beneficiary advisors and a quarterly Health Care Consortium. The names and telephone numbers for the benefit advisors and also the dates for the quarterly Health Care Consortium will be provided to the council members.

- Issue 2: Information of MWR events for Retirees. - Scope: MWR events are not adequately advertised to Retirees. Recommendation: Have MWR event flyer located at the commissary, PX, and the pharmacy. Have "rental item of the week" posted in the Guardian. DFMWR Response: We have coordinated with the commissary, PX, and pharmacy to place the Fort Polk Life magazine at each location and will be working with the Guardian to place highlights concerning the rental center.

- Issue 3: Grab and go at the front of the commissary. - Scope: There is not an area at the front of the commissary for grab and go staple items like milk, bread, and eggs. Patrons have to use shoppettes for these items that cost more. Recommendation: Have some staple items at front of store. DECA's response: A test run of eggs and milk are located near self-checkout.

- There were other issues discussed but not worked by the focus group. Mrs. Mixon went over those ten issues with the council members.

- Mrs. Mixon received questions and comments from the council members.

- COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mrs. Mixon for her remarks to the council members.

11. COL (R) Montgomery introduced Mr. Christopher Stevenson, Fort Polk's Health Benefits Advisor. Mr. Stevenson stated that the TRICARE contract has been extended for another year. Under the new contract beneficiaries outside of a forty mile radius of the military treatment facilities will be disenrolled from the TRICARE Prime program and enrolled into TRICARE Standard. He stated that:

- There are legislation updates that may affect Retiree enrollment premiums under TRICARE Standard and TRICARE for Life. Please be aware of legislation that is taking place concerning TRICARE as it will affect active duty and Retired Soldiers.

- At the end of this fiscal year, Retirees will continue under TRICARE Prime but those who live outside of a forty mile radius will be disenrolled from BJACH. This can be waived by the hospital commander up to ninety-nine miles away from the hospital.

- There is a new program called Uniformed Services Family Health Plan (USFHP) that is an expansion of the TRICARE program and includes the areas of Lake Charles, Beaumont,

IMSE-POL-HRM

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Retiree Council Meeting, 11 March 2009

Port Arthur, Jasper, and DeRidder. Retirees electing to enroll in this program will use USFHP physicians and can use BJACH for emergency purposes only.

- Mr. Stevenson received questions and comments from the council members.
- COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mr. Stevenson for his remarks to the council members.

12. COL (R) Montgomery introduced the new Fort Polk Commissary Director, Mr. Charles Shropshire. In January 2009, the commissary went through a refit that takes place every three to five years. He stated that:

- The Certi Check program has been extended through 31 July 2009.
- Two special case lot sales are scheduled for May and September. The May sale will be on 15 and 16 May. At some military installations active duty Soldiers and Spouses of deployed Soldiers are given priority to shop prior to other customers; there was a favorable conscientious mentioned to the council members for approval. The council members approved unanimously.
- The commissary website is <http://www.commissaries.com/>.
- Mr. Shropshire received questions and comments from the Retiree council members.
- COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mr. Shropshire for his remarks to the council members.

13. COL (R) Montgomery introduced Mrs. Camisha V. Smith, AAFES Representative, Fort Polk, LA. Mrs. Smith stated that the new \$21 million main store is coming along greatly and the construction of the foundation will begin at the end of March. The main complex will cater to all customers. She stated that:

- On 14 September 2009, there will be an outdoor living presentation with demonstrations and giveaways provided. On 28 March 2009, there will be a pet show presentation. On 18 April 2009, AAFES will participate in the LA Homecoming for the Soldiers and their Families with giveaways.
- Retiree council members received ditty bags that contained goodies and an AAFES catalog.
- Mrs. Smith received questions and comments from the Retiree council members.
- COL (R) Montgomery thanked Mrs. Smith for her remarks to the council members.
- CW5 (R) LeBlanc presented information to the council members on Military Family Assistance Programs, VA headstones and markers, and benefit information for Survivors.

IMSE-POL-IIRM

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Retiree Council Meeting, 11 March 2009

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

- SFC (R) Horn stated that there is \$120.00 in the flower fund.

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

- MSG (R) Rudy Bourg provided information on the RAD Golf Tournament. He stated that the Retiree Golf Tournament will be conducted on 23 October 2009 and has started collecting door prizes for the tournament. Thanks to SFC (R) Shelton for arranging for a vehicle to be donated again this year. The vehicle will either be a truck or car. The only disadvantage is there will be an increase in registration fees due to the increase in golf cart and tee fees. He encouraged each council member to solicit and bring unique door prizes from their area businesses.

- COL (R) Montgomery stated that the Retiree Appreciation Day will be conducted on 24 October 2009.

- COL (R) Montgomery stated that the next council meeting will be at the Education Center on 9 September 2009.

16. 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-HRP-RSO), ATTN: Mr. Radke, 200 Stovall Street, Alexandria, VA 22331-0470

1 - IMCOM-SE, ATTN: Mr. Michael Sherrill, Bldg 171, 1593 Hardee Ave, Fort McPherson, GA 30330