

Military Officers Association of America  
El Paso Chapter



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
August 2020

A meeting of the El Paso Chapter of the Military Officers Association (MOAA) was held 29 August 2020 via conference call.

Attendance:

President: COL (RET) Mike Hester  
Secretary: Col (RET) Steve Barrett  
Chaplain/Surviving Spouse Liaison: Ms. Connie Sullivan  
Legislative Liaison: CW2 (RET) Dave Garcia  
Public Relations/Door Prizes: LTC (RET) Martha Caldwell  
Publications/Newsletter Editor: COL (RET) William Oseles  
Membership Chairman: CPT (RET) Steve Mendoza  
Outreach Foundation Vice-President: LTC (RET) John Robbins

1. Administrative: The meeting was called to order at 0802. Chapter Chaplain Ms. Connie Sullivan provided the invocation.
2. President's Remarks: COL (RET) Mike Hester indicated he would hold his comments until the end of the meeting.
3. Old Business:
  - A. Secretary: Col (RET) Steve Barrett provided minutes from the July 2020 BOD meeting which were approved as written.
  - B. Treasurer: LTC (RET) Dave Powell was absent and advised he would share financial data via email next week.
  - C. Immediate Past President: No report, COL (RET) Forrest Smith was absent.
  - D. Membership: CPT (RET) Steve Mendoza reported that the upcoming Honor Flight has been cancelled due to COVID concerns. The next Flight is tentatively scheduled for April 2021.
    1. CPT (RET) Mendoza indicated he did not receive the membership list he thought COL (RET) Hester was going to share with him and asked that someone provide him the list.
    2. He also indicated he had not yet reviewed the membership resources on the MOAA National website; he will try to review the information soon.
  - E. Programs: Col (RET) Bob Pitt was absent however he relayed a report verifying the Underwood Golf Course remains open for inside service with a maximum of 30 occupants. Col (RET) Barrett recommended we officially cancel the October Luncheon. CPT (RET) Mendoza then asked what the latest deadline was to confirm our decision with the Golf Course. Discussion ensued and the group collectively agreed to cancel the October luncheon. COL (RET) Hester asked the BOD to think about options for the scheduled December meeting.

- F. Legislative Liaison: CW2 (RET) Dave Garcia opened his comments proclaiming a bit of good news—he cited an article on the MOAA National website that reported on the continued fight for Agent Orange benefits. The article shared words that three new presumptive illnesses have been tentatively approved in addition to the previous 14 approved presumptive illnesses. He encourages everyone to go the MOAA website to take action indicating your support.
1. CW(2) (RET) Garcia also reported an updated list of priority bills was presented to Congresswoman Escobar. He advises she is considering supporting H.R. 5028, Protecting Benefits for Disabled Veterans Act of 2019. He is unsure if she will support any additional bills however he and other VSO reps will target whoever is elected in Districts 16 and 23 to strongly encourage them to support priority veteran issues.
  2. Although she has not supported many priority issues, Congresswoman Escobar did co-sponsor H.R. 4985, Veterans Residential Care Choice Act. This bill authorizes the VA to provide care to eligible veterans in licensed or certified nursing homes, assisted living and adult day health facilities as well as personal care home and other identified facilities.
- G. Publications/Webmaster: COL (RET) Bill Oseles reported he received a call from one of our Chapter members who voiced a complaint that COL (RET) Hester’s recent Border Bulletin article about the ongoing nationwide protests was an inappropriate political statement. COL (RET) Hester will reach out to discuss the issue with the member and indicated he would share additional comments later in the meeting.
1. COL (RET) Oseles also advised that articles for the next Border Bulletin are due next Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>.
  2. He further advised that we should consider sending out the December version early especially if the Chapter will not have an in-person membership meeting due to COVID—we should include the proposed slate of new officers for everyone to review and vote on.
- H. Public Relations: LTC (RET) Martha Caldwell restated that no PR announcements will be submitted until luncheons and Chapter activities resume.
- I. JROTC/ROTC: LTC (RET) Dave Powell was absent. (NSTR).
- J. Auxiliary/Surviving Spouse Liaison: Ms. Sullivan had nothing significant to report.
- K. Door Prizes: LTC (RET) Caldwell reported no change in status due to the COVID-related cancellation of luncheons.
- L. Marketing: No report, CPT (RET) Dave Thackston was absent.
- M. EP MOAA Outreach Foundation Update: LTC (RET) Robbins provided the following updates:
1. The Foundation has a \$7K balance with \$2K identified for scholarships and \$2K in reserve. At today’s Outreach meeting he will propose skipping remaining 2020 grants. With Giving Day right around the corner, his recommendation is to schedule 2021 grants in the near future.
  2. LTC (RET) Robbins also stated the Foundation will try specifically to raise funds to increase scholarships but an official scholarship policy needs to be created. He would like to insert an article in the January Border Bulletin asking members what they want in the policy and simultaneously ask them for donations to support the scholarships.

4. New Business:

- A. COVID-19 and VA Medical Updates: Statewide numbers have begun to decrease and local cases are still a concern however many restaurants and businesses are open and operating at 25% capacity. CW2 (RET) Garcia also attended a VSO meeting with COL (RET) Amaral yesterday and shared the following updates:

1. Flu shots should be available after Labor Day and they are considering potential drive-thru options. They are also working with community partners and if you use your VA card at a community partner site, they will share your flu shot data with the VA.
2. The new Westside El Paso community-based outpatient center (CBOC) is now open and seeing limited patients; increased patient appointments should be available soon. There are also plans to open an additional CBOC in Northeast El Paso.

B. Border Bulletin; Costs of Black/White vs. Color Printing:

1. Col (RET) Barrett provided a brief recap of the transition from full color to predominately black/white over the past couple of years with the cost of printing being the primary driver for the change.
2. Another lively discussion ensued and it was clear everyone prefers color printing. Some of the staunchest supporters clearly stated their desire for color regardless of costs but did not offer any options for consideration on how to cover those costs. Others support color printing but understand costs must be factored into the decision matrix.
3. LTC (RET) Robbins then highlighted the Border Bulletin should be a great source of advertising for the Chapter but for that to occur, it really should be printed in color to appeal to potential advertisers. He made a very solid point on the need to get out and find advertisers. He believes the Chapter needs to invest in the future--if that means using some of the existing Chapter funds to cover the cost until more advertisers are found then he strongly recommends that option. He also shared an extremely valid point that we need to re-visit our advertising rates; he runs advertisements for another organization in different publications and those rates are only one half the cost of our Border Bulletin rates.
4. As the discussion continued with many offering different options (for example, front cover and middle inserts printed in color) and asking about website advertising fees, COL(RET) Hester asked to table the topic for now but did state we should commit to printing the upcoming version in color in conjunction with Giving Day.

C. Alibis: None.

5. President's Closing Remarks:

- A. COL (RET) Hester shared that he clearly hit a nerve with some Chapter members with his Border Bulletin article as those members believe the comments were too political. COL (RET) Hester respectfully disagrees as he believes veterans and the military can make a huge contribution with regard to race relations as everyone who served in the military has experience with, and should be very aware of the importance of, cultural diversity. He believes part of our duty is to help educate our younger generation and real change must start with honest conversations. The BOD recognizes the topic is a sensitive one however all voiced strong support for his comments and his desire to generate the hard conversations that need to occur.

6. Chapter Chaplain Connie Sullivan provided the Benediction.

7. The meeting adjourned at 0910.

Respectfully submitted by:

Col (RET) Steve Barrett, Secretary

MIKE HESTER  
COL, USA, Retired  
MOAA President, El Paso Chapter