

Veterans Assistance Commission of St. Clair County (VAC)

Meeting Minutes for: Commission Board Meeting

Date: 04/28/2026 **Time:** 6:00 PM

Location: 19 Public Square, 1st Floor Conference Room, Belleville, IL 62220

- 1. Pledge of Allegiance & Invocation**
- 2. Call to Order**
- 3. Roll Call of Executive Committee**
 - a. Present: 6 of 7
 - b. Excused:
 - c. Absent: 1
- 4. Roll Call of Delegates & Alternates**
 - a. Present: 13 of 16 organizations
 - b. Excused: 1 organization
 - c. Absent: 2 organizations
 - Quorum: Yes
- 5. Public Participation (Time Limited to 3-5 Minutes)**
 - a. None
- 6. Scheduled Guest Presentations (Time Limited to 15 Minutes)**
 - a. All in 4 You, Melanie O'Connell (no show)
- 7. Approval of Minutes** No changes or alibies-Approved as written
- 8. Correspondence (Encl)**
- 9. Reports**
 - a. **Standing Committee's Report**
 - i. Treasurer's Report (Encl)
Motion to Approve: Ron Milton
Second: Chip Barbour
Motion Carried
 - ii. Audit: Conducted 04/16/2026, Next Audit July
 - iii. Attorney
 - b. **Ad Hoc Committee Report**
 - i. By Laws
 - ii. Resolutions
 - c. **Superintendent's Report (Encl)**
 - d. **President's Report (Encl)**

10. Old Business

- a. Adoption of Public Comment Resolution 26-003

Motion to Approve: Ron Milton

Second: Bob Rosner

Vote Conducted, Ayes Have it, Motion Carried

11. New Business

- a. Chestnut Health MOU Proposal

Motion to Approve: Chip Barbour

Second: Bob Rosner

Vote Conducted, Ayes Have it, Motion Carried

12. President's Comments

13. Closed Executive Session N/A

14. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: Kori Bookman

Second: Steve Eller

Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM

Minutes submitted by Secretary Moon

Encl:

Superintendent's Report

Treasurer's Report

President's Report

Resolution 26-003

Chestnut Health MOU

IACVAC Awards Nomination Form

Food For Vets Flyer



**VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
ST. CLAIR COUNTY**

19 Public Square, Suite 300
Belleville, Illinois 62220-1695

"Veterans Serving Veterans"

John Lawson, Superintendent
Terrence Williams, Asst Superintendent

veterans@co.st-clair.il.us
www.co.st-clair.il.us

DATE: 04/27/2026

SUBJ: Superintendents Report

This is the Veterans Assistance Commission Superintendents Report for the Month & Year of: April-2026

Office Operations Report

<p>* Administration</p>	<p>The old copy machine has been relocated to our Freeburg office. Although an extension has been granted to 4/2027, work continues to ensure our website is fully ADA compliant. We are 90% there.</p>
<p>* Personnel</p>	<p>Steven Stroup has accepted our offer to join the VAC as a VSO. Steven is an experienced VSO with IDVA and former Veterans Representative with US Dept. of Veterans Affairs. He will be attending the next Basic Benefits class at the end of May. His anticipated first day will be May 4.</p>
<p>* Training</p>	<p>VSO Alison Moon has completed her annual CEU requirement through a scholarship awarded by VFW to attend their annual webinar course.</p>
<p>* Assistance</p>	<p>Month to Date Financial Assistance Total Distribution: \$5,754.14</p> <p>Please ensure you are communicating our program to your community, not just your members.</p>
<p>* Veterans Benefits</p>	<p>Month to Date FY26 YTD Total Awards (Cumulative): \$4,842,652.62 New Monthly Payments: \$36,057.78 Back-Pay Recovered: \$204,041.84 Tax Relief (P-Tax Exemptions): \$49,465.98 Total Cash Benefits Recovered for Veterans: \$289,565.60</p>
<p>* Commission</p>	<p>The VAC has been officially recognized as a partner of the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation.</p>
<p>* Offsite visits</p>	<p>The VAC Team received a tour of NPRC on 04/23/26 as part of the IACO Spring Conference.</p> <p>The IACO / IACVAC Spring Conference was attended by Supt. Lawson, Asst. Supt. Williams and VSO Moon.</p>

* VET Court	Graduates: 2 Participants: 21 Pending Review for Admission: 5
* Miscellaneous	Superintendent Lawson & President Page provided remarks at the 4/15 High School Senior Enlistee Dinner. Thank you to our member organizations for partnering together to support our newest servicemembers. Superintendent Lawson will be attending the MOAA Salute to Enlistees on 4/30.

Disbursements Report

Utilities (Ameren & Water / Sewer)	2,042.14
Rental Assistance	2,562.00
Mortgage Assistance	0.00
Food Assistance (Voucher Cards) Total	1,150.00
Monthly Assistance	\$5,754.14

Other unplanned expenditures

EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT	JUSTIFICATION

For Questions or Concerns relating to the Superintendents report please contact the VAC Superintendent at 618-277-0040 or John Lawson at: john.lawson@co.st-clair.il.us

John Lawson



Digitally signed by John D. Lawson
Date: 2026.04.27 14:16:51 -05'00'

Superintendent
Veterans Assistance Commission of St. Clair County

VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF ST. CLAIR COUNTY
19 PUBLIC SQUARE, SUITE 300, BELLEVILLE, IL 62220

JAMES V. PAGE
PRESIDENT



JOHN D. LAWSON
SUPERINTENDENT

Treasurer's Report as of 04/28/2026

The Veterans Assistance Commission of St. Clair County balance as of April 1, 2026, was \$1,583.66. No money was received for the month ending April 2026. Ending Balance as of April 28, 2026, is \$1,583.66.

Bob Rosner
Treasurer
St Clair County VAC



VACSCC President's Report
April 28, 2026

I have been travelling around the region this past month. I have visited DAV, Legion, and VFW Posts. The biggest concern I hear is dwindling membership. I don't have a magic bullet to make this better across the board. If there is something that is working for you, share it in this forum under the Good of the Order. We know that we have to work membership. If we continue to lose membership, we run the risk of our voices not being heard by our Representatives and we close our doors.

We need to continue to advocate for Veterans and Veterans issues. Show your support by sending your Representatives emails. Most Veterans Service Organizations have advocacy centers on the National websites. Use these to let them know how you feel. One issue is the Richard Star Act. This Bill has been out there to long with no action.

I want to say thank you to DAV Chapter 24 and their Auxiliary, Catholic War Vets, and John Lawson for a very nice recognition at the recent Enlistment Dinner. This dinner was a great success. The future of our Nation will continue shining brightly with the caliber of these new recruits. Dave, John, and John thank you for all you do.

Updates:

As of 4-28-2026, 2:18PM, IL HB 5085 is still in the Rules Committee

Jim Page

President, VACSCC

RESOLUTION NO. 26-003

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING RULES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT AT VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION MEETINGS

WHEREAS the Veterans Assistance Commission of St. Clair County, VACSCC, is an Illinois unit of local government organized and operating pursuant to the Military Veterans Assistance Act (330 ILCS 45/1, et seq); and

WHEREAS the Open Meetings Act, OMA, (5ILCS 120/2.06)permits any person an opportunity to address public officials during a meeting pursuant to the rules established and recorded by the public body; and

WHEREAS the VACSCC wishes to provide for the orderly taking of public comments and to avoid unprofessional and derogatory conduct meant to be harmful to the conduct of the meeting, profanity, the tendency of some individuals to speak over other members of the public trying to make public comment, the disruption of the conduct of VACSCC business through interruption by comments of those who are not part of VACSCC outside of the public comment period; and

WHEREAS the VACSCC finds that to ensure meetings are orderly and effective, it is in the VACSCC's best interest to explicitly clarify the basic rules by which members of the public may comment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the President and the Delegates of the Veterans Assistance Commission of St. Clair County, that:

Section 1. The VACSCC hereby adopts and incorporates the foregoing recitals herein.

Section 2. The VACSCC hereby adopts the following rules for public comment:

Rules for Public Comment


Members of the public may address the VACSCC and it's Committees during regular and special open meetings pursuant to the following rules:

1. Those wishing to provide public comment shall so indicate on the public comment list prior to the start of the meeting. Meeting this requirement will allow adjustments to be made to speaking time to give everyone a fair opportunity to comment.
2. Those wishing to make comment may do so at the time indicated on the agenda and recognized by the President of the VACSCC or the President's designee.
3. The total period for public comments shall generally be limited to 30 minutes total unless there are special circumstances warranting an extension of this time, in which case the President may decide to extend the time for public comment, which extension shall not generally exceed 15 additional minutes.
4. Those wishing to comment shall be generally limited to three (3) minutes. If a large number of those wishing to speak are present, the President may shorten the individual time for comments. When the speaker concludes their comments, any remaining time the speaker had shall have deemed to be expired. All speakers shall respect a request to cease speaking when time expires.

5. No member of the public shall talk over other people or interrupt other speakers.
6. Those wishing to provide public comment shall do so with respect and civility and shall not engage in using obscene and vulgar language, fighting words, or defamatory comments.

Section 3. This Resolution shall take immediate effect.

PASSED and APPROVED this 28th day of April, 2026.



Jim Page
President, Veterans Assistance Commission of St. Clair County

ATTEST:



John Lawson

Superintendent, Veterans Assistance Commission of St. Clair County

This **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING** (this “**MOU**”) is made this ____ day of _____ 20 ___, by and between **CHESTNUT HEALTH SYSTEMS, INC.**, an Illinois not-for-profit corporation (“**Chestnut**”), and **Veterans Assistance Commission of St. Clair County, a government body,** _____ (“**Party 2**”). Chestnut and Party 2 are sometimes individually referred to herein as a “**Party**” and collectively as the “**Parties**”.

WHEREAS, it is the shared vision of the Parties to ensure individuals in need of receiving substance use services in **Madison-St. Clair** County have access to quality care; and

WHEREAS, as such, the mutual goal or goals of the Parties is to utilize peer recovery support resources to connect patients identified with substance use disorder to appropriate providers of care after engagement with staff from either agency.

NOW, THEREFORE, Chestnut and Party 2 agree that it is in the best interests of all concerned to enter into this MOU for the purpose of working toward achievement of such goal or goals.

1. **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHESTNUT.** The duties and responsibilities of Chestnut are as follows:
 - a) Chestnut staff will work collaboratively with Party 2 to connect referred individuals to the following service areas:
 - i) behavioral health services (outpatient and residential)
 - ii) crisis intervention services
 - iii) primary care services
 - iv) recovery support services
 - v) prevention and harm reduction supports
 - vi) supportive services for veterans
 - vii) linkage to other community-based organizations and supports
 - b) Offer education and training specific to available behavioral health services and resources, including but not limited to: Mental Health First Aid, Accessing Crisis Intervention Services, Stigma Reduction, and Harm Reduction Best Practices.
 - c) Conduct targeted outreach in mutually agreed upon high priority areas in the community.
 - d) Provide ongoing project updates and data metrics throughout the period of the project as mutually agreed upon.
 - e) Schedule and facilitate meetings as needed to discuss agency/community needs and develop action steps for addressing barriers to service access.
2. **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTY 2.** The duties and responsibilities of Party 2 are as follows:
 - a) Make client referrals to Chestnut staff for the needed services including:
 - i) behavioral health services (outpatient and residential)
 - ii) crisis intervention services
 - iii) primary care services
 - iv) recovery support services
 - v) prevention and harm reduction supports
 - vi) supportive services for veterans
 - vii) linkage to other community-based organizations and supports
 - b) Provide Chestnut with information regarding ongoing project assessment and evaluation.
 - c) Attend meetings as needed to discuss agency/community needs and develop action steps for addressing barriers to service access.

3. **TERM.**

3.1 **Term.** This MOU shall commence on the Effective Date and shall continue for one (1) year. THEREAFTER, THIS MOU SHALL AUTOMATICALLY RENEW FOR SUCCESSIVE ONE (1) YEAR PERIODS UNLESS SOONER TERMINATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 3.2 HEREOF.

3.2 **Termination.** Either Party may terminate this MOU upon thirty (30) days' prior written notice to the other Party.

4. **CONFIDENTIALITY.**

4.1 ~~Each party shall maintain the confidentiality of the other party's, including affiliates, customers, and client's, information acquired by virtue of, arising out of, or otherwise created or maintained in connection with the performance of the Services. Neither party shall use the other party's confidential information for their benefit or the benefit of others or divulge to others, any information, knowledge or data of a confidential or proprietary nature, including without limitation, trade secrets, business and financial methods or practices, pricing, products, software, research, services, client lists, processes, know-how, designs, formulas and any other subject matter pertaining to any business of the other party or its affiliates, customers, or clients or otherwise not readily available to members of the general public that concerns the business affairs of the other party or its affiliates, customers, or clients, except as expressly authorized in the performance of the Services. Party 2 shall maintain the confidentiality of Chestnut's and its affiliates', customers', and clients' information acquired by virtue of, arising out of, or otherwise created or maintained in connection with the performance of the Services. Party 2 shall not use for Party 2's benefit or for the benefit of others, or divulge to others, any information, knowledge or data of a confidential or proprietary nature, including without limitation, trade secrets, business and financial methods or practices, pricing, products, software, research, services, client lists, processes, know how, designs, formulas and any other subject matter pertaining to any business of Chestnut or its affiliates, customers, or clients or otherwise not readily available to members of the general public that concerns the business affairs of Chestnut or its affiliates, customers, or clients.~~

4.2 **Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016.** Notwithstanding the nondisclosure obligations contained in this Agreement, nothing in this Agreement is intended to interfere with or discourage a good faith disclosure to any governmental entity related to a suspected violation of the law. Neither Party will be held criminally or civilly liable under any federal or state trade secret law for the disclosure of a trade secret, or confidential information, that is made: (a) in confidence to a federal, state, or local government official, either directly or indirectly, to an attorney, and solely for the purpose of reporting or investigating a suspected violation of law; or (b) in a compliant or other document filed in a lawsuit or other proceeding, if such filing is made under seal. Neither Party will retaliate against the other Party in any way for a disclosure made in accordance with 18 U.S.C. Section 1833.

4.3 Party 2 acknowledges that to the extent Party 2 receives, stores or otherwise deals with any Chestnut client information, Party 2 is bound by the requirements of (a) The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 ("HIPAA"), the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act ("HITECH"), and the implementing regulations thereunder, including but not limited to, the Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information at 45 CFR Parts 160 and 164 (the "Privacy Rule") and the Security Standards for the Protection of Electronic Health Information at 45 CFR Parts 160 and 164 (the "Security Rule"), and the requirements of the final modifications of the HIPAA Privacy rule, Security Rule, et al., issued on January 25, 2013, and effective March 26, 2013, as may be amended from time to time; (b) the federal regulations on the Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Records found at 42 C.F.R. Part 2; and/or (c) the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act found at 740 ILCS 110. Party 2 agrees to execute such Business Associate Agreement, Qualified Service Organization Agreement, Business Associate/Qualified Service Organization Agreement, or other agreements as may be required by Chestnut and to otherwise comply with all laws applicable to the confidentiality of client information. Chestnut acknowledges the Party 2 is a governmental body subject to certain disclosure requirements as detailed in the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140, as hereinafter amended) and similar state and federal statutes. Any disclosure made pursuant to statutory requirements shall not be considered a violation of this Section 4.3.

4.4 This Section shall survive expiration or earlier termination of this Agreement.

5. **NO OBLIGATION TO REFER.** Both parties believe that this Agreement will contribute to the ability of Chestnut to maintain or increase the availability and quality of services being provided to medically underserved individuals by providing needed services to such individuals, regardless of ability to pay. Notwithstanding anything else set forth herein, neither party is under any obligation to refer patients or any other business to the other party (or an affiliate of the other party) as a result of this Agreement. Chestnut, Party 2 and all of their affiliated health professionals are free to refer patients to any physician or entity, consistent with the professional judgment of the treating practitioners. Nothing herein shall be construed to limit any patient's freedom of choice in selecting a medical practitioner. Each party shall provide effective notification to patients of their freedom to choose any provider. Moreover, neither party nor any other person will receive or be entitled to receive any compensation from any other party for any referral, and the services provided hereunder will at no time be subject to any unlawful agreement, whatsoever arising, express or implied, with respect to the referral of any patient or patients to any person or entity for the provision of health care services.

6. **MISCELLANEOUS.**

6.1 **Compliance with Law.** Each Party agrees to perform its responsibilities hereunder in accordance with all applicable laws.

6.2 **Notices.** Any and all notices, demands, requests, and other communications required or permitted hereunder shall be in writing and shall be given in person or by registered mail, return receipt requested, or by facsimile or electronic transmission, addressed as follows. Any notice shall be deemed to have been given at the time of actual receipt.

If to Chestnut:

Chestnut Health Systems, Inc.
Attention: Puneet Leekha, General
Counsel
1003 Martin Luther King Drive
Bloomington, Illinois 61701
Email: legal@chestnut.org

If to Party 2:

Name: [Veterans Assistance Commission of St. Clair County](#)
Attention: [Superintendent John Lawson](#)
Address: [19 Public Square, Ste. 300](#)
Address: [Belleville, IL 62220](#)
Email: John.Lawson@co.st-clair.il.us

6.3 **Amendments.** This MOU may only be amended or modified in writing as mutually agreed upon by the Parties.

6.4 **Assignment.** The Parties expressly agree that neither Party may assign any of its rights or responsibilities under this MOU to any individual or entity without the prior written consent of the other Party. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Party 2 acknowledges that Chestnut may assign any or all of its rights or responsibilities under this MOU to any of its wholly-owned subsidiaries, affiliates, or related entities, or another related entity, without the consent of Party 2.

6.5 **Entire Understanding.** This MOU, constitutes the entire understanding between the Parties with respect to the subject matter hereof.

6.6 **Singular, Plural, and Gender.** Throughout this MOU and whenever required by context, the use of the singular shall be construed to include the plural, and the use of plural the singular, and the use of any gender shall include all genders.

6.7 **Counterparts.** This MOU may be executed in any number of counterparts, each of which shall be considered an original and all of which shall together constitute one and the same document. Delivery of an executed counterpart of this MOU by electronic or facsimile transmission shall be equally as effective as delivery of an original executed counterpart. Any party delivering an executed counterpart of this MOU by electronic or facsimile transmission shall also deliver an original executed counterpart, but failure to deliver an original executed counterpart shall not affect the validity of this MOU.

6.8 Drafting. Chestnut, or Chestnut’s legal counsel, has drafted this MOU solely as a matter of convenience for the Parties hereto. Each Party has carefully reviewed and negotiated the terms of this MOU and, accordingly, any drafting errors, ambiguities or inconsistencies will not be interpreted against Chestnut.

6.9 Expenses. Each Party will pay its own fees and expenses and those of its agents, advisors, attorneys and accountants, with respect to the preparation and negotiation of this MOU.

6.10 Non-Binding. The Parties understand and agree that, notwithstanding anything contained herein to the contrary, this MOU simply reflects the Parties’ mutual understandings as of the date hereof. Each Party acknowledges that this MOU does not create, nor does it constitute, any legally binding obligation between the Parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have signed this **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING** as of the date first set forth above.

CHESTNUT:

PARTY 2:

CHESTNUT HEALTH SYSTEMS, INC.

By: _____
Name: Puneet Leekha
Title: Chief Executive Officer

By: _____
Name: John Lawson
Title: Superintendent



IDEAL CRITERIA FOR AWARD NOMINEES

One form per nomination category.

Barry Walter Advocate of the Year: Nominee need not be employed by a County Veterans Assistance Commission. Advocacy performance will only be considered for work done outside of the scope of claims assistance of an accredited Veteran Service Officer. Ideal nominee will have exhibited outstanding advocacy resulting in the enhancement of the welfare of veterans and/or their families on a statewide basis. Award named in honor of Barry Walter, former Veterans of Foreign Wars Department Service Officer, for his statewide impact on veteran advocacy in training Veteran Service Officers throughout the State of Illinois and keeping them updated on changes to veteran benefits legislation, regulations, case law, and policies.

Steve Barrett Veteran Service Officer of the Year: Nominee must be employed by a County Veterans Assistance Commission, must hold current accreditation with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and cannot be the Superintendent of a County Veterans Assistance Commission (unless there are two or less employees of that Commission). Ideal nominee will have exhibited exceptional performance on U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs claims related work. Metrics displaying exceptional performance should be submitted in support of the application. Award named in posthumous honor of Steve Barrett, Superintendent of the Veterans Assistance Commission of Kendall County.

Legislator(s) of the Year: More than one award may be given, but not from the same legislative chamber. Legislator must represent a portion of the State of Illinois. Ideal nominees will have championed the Association's legislative priorities leading to the enhancement of the welfare of veterans and/or their families within the State of Illinois.



**Illinois Association of County
Veterans Assistance Commissions**

AWARD NOMINATION FORM

1.) Name of Nominee:

2.) Employer of Nominee:

3.) Award Nominated For:

Barry Walter Advocate of the Year

Steve Barrett Veteran Service Officer of the Year

Legislator of the Year

4.) Why did you nominate this person for this award?

5.) Name of Nominator:

6.) Employer of Nominator:

Signature: _____ Date Signed

Please send this completed form to ALL of the following email addresses:
zimmermanjacob@kanecountyil.gov, jsolum@willcounty.gov, and atangen@lakecountyil.gov.
Nominations are due by the close of business on August 1st. Winners will be chosen by the
Executive Committee and awarded at the Fall Banquet.



FOOD FOR VETS 2026

ALL EVENTS ARE
0900AM - 1030AM



Saturday January 31

VFW POST 3944

10815 Midland
Overland, MO 63114



Saturday March 7

The Salvation Army

2740 Arsenal
St. Louis, MO 63118



Friday May 8

Operation Food Search

1644 Lotsie Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63132



Saturday July 11

The Salvation Army

824 Union Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63123



Saturday September 19

The Salvation Army

10634 St. Charles Rock Rd.
St Ann, MO 63074



Saturday November 14

The Salvation Army

20 Glory Place
Belleville, IL 62226



REGISTRATION OPENS 30 DAYS
PRIOR TO THE EVENT

To register go to
thekaufmanfund.org
or call 314.455.9415

