



COAST GUARD NATIONAL RETIREE COUNCIL

"Coast Guard For'er"

Co-chairs
RADM Fred L. Ames, USCG Retired
MCPOCG Vincent W. Patton, USCG, Retired

21 May 2007

To: Commandant (G-C)
Via: Assistant Commandant for Human Resources (CG-1)
Subj: 2007 NATIONAL RETIREE COUNCIL MEETING REPORT

1. Background

- a. The Commandant of the Coast Guard National Retiree Council (CCGNRC) held its sixth annual meeting in accordance with COMDTINST 1800.5E from 1 to 3 May 2007 at Coast Guard Headquarters. In addition to the Co-Chairs, eleven (11) chartered regional Coast Guard Retiree Councils were represented plus one "Retiree Council-at-Large" representative. Attendees are listed in the agenda, enclosure (1).
- b. The Co-Chairs could not attend the other Services' Retiree Councils due to previously scheduled engagements. However, liaison is maintained and copies of the meeting reports are shared.
- c. The Council had an ambitious agenda of briefings and discussions from staffs and organizations both within and external to the Coast Guard. In lieu of recounting the wide range of superb information passed on to the Council, this report focuses on those issues of potential importance to the Commandant and the Assistant Commandant for Human Resources.
- d. The Council was distinctly honored to be personally briefed by the Commandant on his vision, strategy and initiatives for his tenure; the Council was especially impressed by Admiral Allen's unique grasp of Coast Guard history and the underpinnings of his strategy to provide enhanced mission performance. Admiral Allen tasked the Council to "go forth and tell the story."
- e. The Council would like to make note of the continued exceptional support provided by the Military Coalition/National Military and Veterans Alliance, and especially the Military Officer Association of America (MOAA) and the Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) for this year's meeting. Besides the highly informative briefings, MOAA again sponsored a lunch for the Council in the Commandant's Flag Mess. The Council greatly appreciates the continued support of Delta Dental in providing a comprehensive briefing as well as hosting our welcome aboard reception on Monday evening.

2. Issues

- a. **Armed Forces Retirement Home.** The Council notes continued legislative progress to include the Coast Guard in the Armed Forces Retirement Home.
- b. **Benefits.** The Council notes the continuing progress by the Military Coalition, working with the Administration and Congress, in obtaining important benefits for active duty and reserve members, the retiree community, and their families. The Council continues to support those legislative initiatives that honor the men

and women who serve everyday in harms way. Especially with the recruiting and retention challenges within various active duty, Reserve and National Guard components, the Nation must keep faith with the relatively small numbers of service members who bear the majority of the responsibility for the protection of our liberties. Although our Nation is at war, only 1% of Americans are actually engaged. While recruiting is going well for the Coast Guard, the other Service's have considerable challenges that are not likely to get better with time. Keeping faith with this critical population will be one of the important keys to maintaining the all-volunteer-force. We remained concerned with the message being sent by proposed increases in TRICARE enrollment fees and pharmacy co-pays. While the Council recognizes that changes may be necessary, we remain concerned that they may be launched too hastily without due consideration of the long-term effects on the force.

c. **Healthcare.**

- i. The Council continues to note the tremendous strides made by TRICARE and associated enhanced benefits, such as TRICARE for Life (TFL) and the expanded pharmacy benefit.
- ii. The TRICARE website, www.tricare.osd.mil, is an exceptional healthcare information/access tool. Additionally, all Coast Guard members, especially retirees, should make note of the Coast Guard's toll-free health benefits advisor number, 1-800-9HBAHBA. All too often members are attempting to tackle complex issues on their own when expert help is readily available.
- iii. TRICARE Retire Dental Program. Some important items to note:
 1. Delta Dental does not have a connection with DEERS; changes to DEERS status, such as dependents, must be transmitted to Delta Dental too.
 2. This program is immediately available to "grey area" reserves.
 3. There is no waiting period if the member signs up within 120 days after retirement.
 4. Preventative maintenance is the key to ensuring oral health—this program provides that foundation.

- d. **CGHQ's National Retiree Help Desk (NRHD).** CAPT Bob Warakomsky provided a detailed brief, including inquiry and response statistics. Over 260 inquiries have been handled since standup in July 2006 with an average response fewer than 48 hours. Recent data shows the inquiry rate is steadily increasing to 3-4 inquiries per day. While members of the Capital Area Council have readily taken on this mission and perform most of the "watchstander" duties, the NRHD has been set up to do this remotely. Members of the Council were tasked with soliciting volunteers to stand the watch from wherever they may live. CAPT Warakomsky's status report is included as enclosure (2). The organization and operational concepts were developed by CAPT Norm Lemley, Ret, CAPT Bob Warakomsky, Ret, and LCDR Dave DuPont, Ret. And they are to be commended. The Council sincerely appreciates the support provided by CAPT Jack Smith, CO, Headquarters Support Command, and his staff in helping to establish and maintain this capability. CAPT Smith has graciously provided all the support that has been requested and his support has played a major role in the success of the program.

- e. **Continuing Service – Coast Guard For'er.** CAPT Rodriguez, USPHS, Chief, Office of Work-Life discussed his program's need for volunteer assistance. Again we recommend that regional retiree councils work with the Work-Life Program supervisors in the field to understand local needs and match qualified/interested volunteers. Opportunities include transition/relocation program, health promotion, decedent affairs, financial counseling/training, and administrative assistance to the offices. Retirees participating in TAPS workshops, to serve on panels or to talk about life after the Coast Guard, are important roles in helping members transition. The Council noted the limited capability of the Work-Life Program; of particular concern is the impact of the mission support reorganization soon to be undertaken. The Council recommends that particular attention be paid to the Work-Life Program during this transition to ensure that it retains the necessary capacity to fulfill its mission.
- f. **Civilian Retirees.** The Department of Defense is working on a civilian retiree ID card. As they bring this into place, the Coast Guard intends to be included. Importantly, this will enable access to Coast Guard MWR facilities.
- g. **Coast Guard Mutual Assistance.** CWO Barry Boisvere, USCG (Ret.), acting Executive Director, and CWO Ron Wolf, USCG (Ret.) briefed on CGMA operations and needs. CGMA continues to be the very best way retirees can support today's Coasties and are encouraged to do so via allotments from their retired pay. In fact, the retiree community is the only group that gives more than it receives. From 2002 through 2006, retired members contributed more than \$1.5M and only received a little more than \$1.2M in loans and grants. The Council would like to specially acknowledge the superb service of CAPT Omri, USCG (Ret.), previous Executive Director, and wish him the very best in his future endeavors.
- h. **Personnel Services Center (PSC).** Ms. Debbie Farley, Chief, Retiree and Annuitant Branch attended and briefed. The Council made note of the superb support provided by her Branch to all retirees and the regional councils.
 - i. The retiree records and pay system is the first to move to "Global Pay" this year, as part of the service-wide move to a web-enabled pay and personnel records system—the Coast Guard state-of-the-art personnel system called "Direct Access." Retirees will be able to make a number of on-line changes to their profiles that will make life easier for both the retiree and PSC staff. This self-service feature should be available by 1 January 2008 and will include such things as mailing address, phone number, allotments/bonds, and banking information. Parallel testing will begin in November and the pay will go live on the new system in December. RAS statements for December 2007 will have the Employee Identification Number (EMPLID) that will be used in place of the SSN when accessing the system.
 - ii. PSC's Survivors Guide is considered an excellent publication for the financial aspects; the Council felt more information and associated links to websites would enhance and complete the guide. Council members will send PSC their recommended additions.
 - iii. As a repeat from last year's report, the Council suggests that a more appropriate name be given to the retiree newsletter "Evening Colors" as most retirees feel they are just beginning their next phase in life. It is

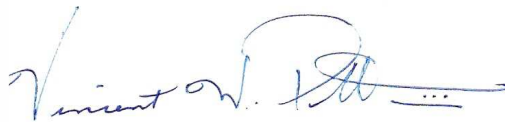
suggested that consideration be given to renaming as “Coast Guard For’er” to follow with the theme/vision of the CCGNRC. Feedback was not provided on this recommendation.

3. Increasing the Number and Size of Regional Councils.

- a. While there has been some growth in the number of regional councils with the latest start-up in Hawaii, there are numerous areas of the U.S. with a good retiree population and proximate Coast Guard units with no regional councils. We need to reach out to specific retirees in those areas to encourage and help them establish or reestablish councils. A “one-pager” guide on how to establish and charter a council was developed, enclosure (3).
 - b. The question was raised, “Now that I have the council chartered, how do you encourage participation?” There was unanimous agreement that holding meetings to just get folks together to swap sea stories just won’t cut it today. Rather, each council must develop a menu of meaningful activities for its members. Viable councils are those that are activity-based where the members can “make a difference.” Volunteering to assist the Work-Life program, staffing a retiree’s office at the local Coast Guard unit, assisting the local command with decedent affairs, and NRHD watchstanding are areas where we can make a difference and will attract member involvement.
4. Summary. This was the fourth meeting of the Council “on its own,” having previously been a participant with the Secretary of the Navy Retiree Council. The CCGNRC program continues to mature with a cadre of highly dedicated retirees. Significant value is being provided to those Coast Guard units and surrounding retiree communities where there is “enlightened leadership” at the commands. Retirees who are willing to volunteer their time, skills, knowledge and expertise to the Coast Guard community leverage the commands’ workforce. Those supportive commanders and commanding officers truly understand that for a minor investment in space, resources, and time, and a good dose of respect, pays substantial dividends. The Council salutes their insight and will continue to encourage others to step forward. Special recognition is to be made of our Council Coordinator, Mr. Jarvis Kolen (CG-1222). He expertly handled all facets of planning and orchestrating the meeting and logistics; we could not ask for a better individual at the helm and he certainly facilitated the work of the Co-Chairs – BZ!



Fred L. Ames



Vincent W. Patton

Enclosures:

- (1) CCGNRC 2007 Agenda
- (2) National Retirees Help Desk – May 2007
- (3) Steps to Starting a Regional Retiree Council

Enclosure (1)

2007 COMDT COAST GUARD NATIONAL RETIREE COUNCIL

AGENDA

Monday, 30 April 2007

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
1500 to 1800	HOTEL CHECK-IN The Virginian Suites, Arlington, VA Pick-up Welcome Letters
1800	Welcome Reception sponsored by Delta Dental Capital Area Retiree Council Attendees: CAPT Charles J. Glass, USCG (Ret.) CDR Bruce A. Russell, USCG (Ret.) CAPT Warren G. (Bud) Schneeweis, USCG (Ret.) CWO4 Elizabeth F. Splain, USCG (Ret.) CDR Benjamin J. Stoppe, Jr., USCG (Ret.) SCPO Dennis (Mike) M. White, USCG (Ret.) LCDR David A. Du Pont, USCG (Ret.)

ATTENDEES

RADM Fred Ames	CCGNRC Co-Chair
MCPOCG Vince Patton	CCGNRC Co-Chair
RADM Bert Kinghorn	Pacific Northwest
CDR Bruce A. Russell	Capital Area
SCPO Dennis (Mike) White	Capital Area
CAPT Bill Wilkins	North Coast
MCPO Ib Andersen	Cape May
CAPT William Lehr	Tidewater
CAPT Gerald O/ Lesperance	Hawaii
MCPO Marc M. Fagenbaum	Greater Miami
CWO Edward Weiss	Jacksonville
MCPO Adrian H. Rymer	Yorktown
CDR Salvador Romo, Jr	Northern California
CWO Fred Siegel	Council-at-Large
Mr. Jarvis Kolen (CG-1222)	CCGNRC Liaison

AGENDA

Tuesday, 1 May 2007

Room 3103, Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Speaker(s)</u>
0730	Refreshments	
0800	Welcome and Introduction	Council Co-Chairs
0820	Administrative Announcements	Mr. Jarvis Kolen CCGNRC Coordinator
0830	Review 2006 Council Report	Council Co-Chairs
0900	Welcome & Update	RADM Pearson CG-1
Personnel/Workforce Issues		
0945	BREAK	
1000	Retiree Dental Program	Mr. Patrick Henry/Tom McDavid Delta Dental
1200	LUNCH	on your own; available at CGHQ
1300	“Open MIC” Discussion of issues from Regional Councils	All Attendees
1530	BREAK	
1545	“Open MIC continued	All Attendees
1600	Review & Preps for Next Day	Co-Chairs
1630	SECURE	

AGENDA

Wednesday, 2 May 2007

Room 3103, Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Speakers</u>
0800	Medical Update (TRICARE, TFL, TRICARE Senior Pharmacy)	RADM Paul Higgins, USPHS (CG-11) CWO2 Rebecca Vinlove USCG
0945	BREAK	
1000	Deepwater Project	RADM Gary Blore, USCG, PEO Deepwater
1045	BREAK	
1100	CG Mutual Assistance Support/Outreach	CWO Ronald Wolf, USCG (Ret.) Executive Director, CGMA CWO Boisvere, USCG, (Ret)
1200	MOAA LUNCHEON (Flag Mess)	VADM Vivien Crea, CG-09, USCG/ VADM Norb Ryan, USN (Ret), Pres MOAA
1300	Military Coalition & Veterans Alliance Update	Mr. Joe Barnes (FRA) Ms. Deirdre Holleman (TREA) CDR Rene Campo, USN (Ret) (MOAA)
1500	BREAK	
1515	CGHQ'S Retiree's Program Helpdesk	Bob Warakomsky, USCGR (Ret.)
1615	Review & Preps for Next Day	Co-Chairs
1630	SECURE	

AGENDA

THURSDAY, 3 May 2007

Room 3103 Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Speakers</u>
0800	Morning discussions (Open MIC)	ALL Attendees
0900	Personnel Service Center (PSC)	Ms. Debbie Farley PSC (RAS)
1030	BREAK	
1045	Retiree Volunteers Support to Work-Life Program	CAPT Jose Rodriguez, USPHS (CG-111)
1200	LUNCH	on your own; available at CGHQ
1300	Commandant's Perspective (Conference Room 3103)	Admiral Thad W. ALLEN (G-C)
1400	Develop Topic List for Report	All Attendees
1445	BREAK	
1500	Administrative Details -- Complete travel claims -- Fill out Conference Evaluation Form -- Pack up materials for mailing home	Mr. Jarvis Kolen
1530	Closing Remarks	Co-Chairs
1600	2007 MEETING ADJOURNED	for Regional Council Reps
1615	Review 2007 Meeting, Outline Draft Report	Co-Chairs

Enclosure (2)

National Retirees Help Desk – May 2007

Background:

Under the auspices of the Commandant of the Coast Guard National Retiree Council (CCGRNC) program, the **National Retiree Help Desk** serves as the United States Coast Guard Headquarters single point of contact in CG-1 to keep open a positive line of communications between the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard military retiree community in an effort to ensure the resources and capabilities of each are used to help resolve the needs of the other.

Discussion:

The National Retiree Help Desk (NRHD) has been in operation since July 2006 and is staffed by members of the Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Council and other DC Area Retiree volunteers. The Help Desk organization and operational concepts were developed by CAPT Norm Lemley, Ret, CAPT Bob Warakomsky, Ret, and LCDR Dave DuPont, Ret.

The NRHD serves as a Headquarters point of contact for retirees needing assistance to determine to whom or where they should direct their inquiries. This has already proven to be a valuable communication channel between the active duty Coast Guard and the retiree community. In times of significant organizational change along with ever-changing benefits and retiree support programs, a well functioning NRHD is essential. The NRHD is not meant to curtail direct contact between retirees and the Coast Guard if the contact information is already known.

Office space has been allocated in Room 8-0234 at the Coast Guard Headquarters Jemal Building. It is equipped with a computer, e-mail, and telephone service. Retirees are able to call or email questions and concerns. As of 5/1/07, over 260 queries have been recorded since the last week of July 2006. The average number of queries has been over 10 per week, and the average response time is under 2 days.

Contact Information:

Voicemail: 202-475-5381 or 1-866-664-6245

General E-Mail Address: NRHD@uscg.mil

Watchstanders monitor the voicemail and e-mail account and respond in an appropriate and timely manner.

CAPT Bob Warakomsky has set up the program and is the Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Council's Coordinator. A watchstanders list of Council members has been established, but additional people are still needed to help. A notice was sent to All Capital Area retirees asking for volunteers interested in participating as watchstanders. A similar notice was sent via the Council email distribution list.

Watchstanding procedures, frequently asked questions (FAQs), a list of links with key programs

and other resource material have been developed. Watchstanders are given a briefing on responsibilities; primarily they answer phone and e-mail inquiries. No one is expected to be an expert on Coast Guard programs and retiree-related information (benefits, healthcare, etc.), but rather as watchstanders they assist in directing the inquirer to the right source. The FAQs file is a good information source for the watchstander. Care is being taken to minimize the duties of being a watchstander.

The concept of a remote watchstander outside of the National Capital Region has worked well, proving that watchstanders in any geographical location can perform their duties effectively.

The Watchstanding Team maintains contact with the National Retiree Council Liaison, Jarvis Kolen, as a direct point of contact to interface with HQ for administrative support that may be required. He is located in an office near the Retiree Program Coordinator's Office in the Jemal Building.

Enclosure (3)

Steps to Starting a Regional Retiree Council

1. Review COMDTINST 1800.5E.
2. Contact CCGNRC Co-Chair(s) and other regional council leadership to discuss startup process and intentions.
3. Determine demographics. Contact PSC Topeka to obtain a listing of retirees and addresses in the geographic area which will help determine the regional council area of responsibility.
4. Make an appointment to visit/contact the local command in the area to get their buy-in to sponsor the regional council. Establish a principal point of contact.
5. Send out invitations/announcements to alert members in the region of the establishment of a regional council. Announcements should be made through personal mailings, Evening Colors, the sponsoring command website, and Fred's Place.
6. Identify the principal active membership within the proposed council (minimum recommended ten per COMDTINST 1800.5E). Report back to the command with the list of members.
7. Draft letter from command to Coast Guard Headquarters (CG-1) to establish regional council and charter. Work with command to get signed and sent to HQs. Liaison with Jarvis Kolen, CGHQ (CG-1222), Ph: (202) 475-5400, FAX: (202) 475-5927; Email: Jarvis.Kolen@uscg.mil.
8. Along the way, keep CCGNRC Co-Chairs informed of progress.