

Council Meeting - Detailed Summary

Meeting Overview

The North Carolina Council of Military Officers (NCCOC) held its monthly meeting on February 13, 2026, via Zoom. The meeting was chaired by Donna Culp (President) and included chapter presidents, vice presidents, and representatives from across North Carolina, as well as guest Peter Warner from the Tennessee Council.

Technical Challenges and Meeting Setup

The meeting began with significant technical difficulties as participants joined. Several members experienced audio and video issues, with Jay Nelson noting that Zoom had recently made platform changes that were difficult to navigate. There were concerns about whether the recording was functioning properly. Despite these challenges, the group proceeded with the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer led by Donna Culp before beginning the formal agenda.

Roll Call and Quorum

Secretary Frankie Pennington Groff conducted a roll call, confirming attendance from 13 voting members, establishing a quorum. Jim Brumit, serving as parliamentarian, clarified important voting procedures based on Article 5, Section 3 of the bylaws: proxy voting is not permitted, and only presidents, vice presidents, the immediate past president, and (in case of a tie) the president can vote. This led to a by-name roll call vote for approving the previous meeting's minutes rather than a blanket vote.

Financial Report

Treasurer Ken Hillman presented the financial status:

- Checking account: \$6,937.56
- Savings account: \$11,735.20
- 2026 revenue to date: \$1,045.67
- 2026 expenses: \$0

Six chapters had already paid their 2026 dues: Cape Fear, Southeast, Tar Heel, Triangle, Central, and High Country. Ken reminded all chapters that dues are due and payable.

Membership and Chapter Management (CM) System

Frankie Pennington Groff provided updates on the CM project, acknowledging the system is "very confusing." She thanked Ken, Jim, and Donna for a training Zoom call that helped her begin navigating the system. The discussion focused on:

- Accessing the "box" (catchment area data) to identify potential new members
- Prioritizing lifetime members over basic MOA members, as they show higher engagement
- Segmenting prospects by geographic areas and age groups, with particular interest in younger members
- Jim Brumit's suggestion to involve service members as coordinators within councils and chapters to boost membership

Donna encouraged chapter presidents to share updates and issues regarding the CM project at future meetings, and mentioned that Victoria Twine could be invited to a future meeting if technical difficulties with CM persist.

Chapter President Introductions and Highlights

Tar Heel Central Chapter - Tom Miller

Captain, USAF veteran (1977-1985). The chapter is service-oriented with four main initiatives:

- Toys for Tots
- Marine Corps mud run
- Wreaths Across America
- New initiative to support homeless veterans
(committee currently working on this)

Wilmington (Sinclad) Chapter - Michael Apicella

Retired Army dentist with 36 years of service. Joined the chapter 4 years ago during COVID when meetings were held via Zoom. Recently became president, taking over from Alan Turner. Chapter activities include:

- Monthly luncheons drawing 70-80 attendees
- Strong community outreach program helping veterans with rent, mortgages, and utilities
- Veteran scholarships for veterans and their children
- Participation in the 250th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Moores Creek (February 2026)

Cape Fear Chapter - Gregory Williamson

Located at Fort Bragg (now home to the new Western Command). The chapter has an impressive scope:

- 1,900 unique members in their catchment area
- 25 JROTC programs
- 4 ROTC programs
- March awards ceremony to be hosted at Fayetteville State University
- Strong relationship with Fort Bragg and excellent financial management
- Habitat for Humanity Veterans Build projects (third year)
- Golf tournament funding scholarships and grants for ROTC and JROTC programs

Gregory noted the treasurer finally completed the financial system changes required for receiving funds, and praised George Bond's work as liaison with Post and community relations.

Outer Banks (First Flight) Chapter - Albert DelGarbino

A smaller, aging chapter with approximately 20 very loyal members. Activities include:

- JROTC scholarships (two \$1,500 scholarships awarded last year)
 - Monthly meetings on the third Tuesday at Duckwoods Country Club
 - Meetings paused in July and August due to tourism traffic
 - Regular attendance of 15-20 members at luncheons
- Albert acknowledged the challenge of maintaining membership as older members pass away, though they occasionally gain new members.

Western North Carolina (Asheville) Chapter - Jeff Snyder (representing Steve Watkins)

Career Air Force maintenance officer with 12 years in the chapter. Chapter activities include:

- Work with veterans homeless shelter (capacity 200 people, devastated by Hurricane Helene, currently in temporary motel housing)
- Serving meals up to 3 times per month at the shelter
- Junior ROTC awards programs across 18 units in Western North Carolina
- Strong support for Honor Flight (which originated in Hendersonville)
- Quarterly meeting scheduled for February 21st with table hosts to welcome new members

Steve Watkins has been actively reaching out to people in the national database, resulting in several first-time attendees expected at the upcoming meeting.

Tennessee Council - Peter Warner

Peter is serving his second term as Tennessee Council president. He recently presented at the Florida State Convention about the Knoxville chapter rebuild. Key announcements:

- Chattanooga will host the Southeast Leadership Workshop in November 2026
- Workshop will encompass 8 states
- Details being coordinated by Frank and his team, including hotel arrangements and possible side trips
- Date will be set to work around Veterans Day

Peter credited Ray Mitchell, former Chattanooga chapter president, as one of MOA's "changemakers" (featured on page 46 of the January MOA magazine) and largely responsible for bringing the workshop to Tennessee. He praised North Carolina for starting the regional collaboration trend and expressed hope to expand regional cooperation.

Coastal Carolina Chapter - Randall Ramian

Chapter focuses on several key areas:

- Awarding at least 5 scholarships to veteran students annually
- Recognition dinner in April for scholarship awardees and their parents
- Leadership awards for JROTC and ROTC programs in local schools
- Support for Kinston Veterans Home
- Toys for Tots support with December luncheon

- Support for various veteran organizations and initiatives in the area

High Country Chapter - Frankie Pennington Groff (representing Melanie Trado)

An aging chapter with some members in their 40s and early 50s. Activities include:

- Events at Boone Mall for Memorial Weekend and Veterans Weekend
- Flag program at the oldest cemetery in Watauga County (placing over 700 flags twice yearly)
- Community involvement from Girl Scouts, JROTC, and ROTC from Appalachian State
- Annual pancake breakfast fundraiser at Applebee's (restarted after COVID)
- JROTC scholarships and leadership awards at Watauga High School
- Speaker's program at local high schools (5-6 speakers visit for 45-minute sessions once a week)
- Participation in Fourth of July parade

Charlotte Metro Chapter - Jay Nelson

The chapter operates the largest JROTC program among all chapters:

- 35 high schools in their area of responsibility (with more being built)
- Support for ROTC at UNC Charlotte
- Extensive travel required to present medals and awards at numerous schools

Jay also highlighted the collaborative nature of the North Carolina Council, regularly hosting guests from National MOA leadership (Victoria Twine, Dina, Frank) and representatives from other state councils including

Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia, South Carolina, Florida, plus virtual chapters.

Resources and Tools Shared

Donna Culp shared several helpful resources from the MOA website:

Self-Evaluation Checklist

A tool available to chapters for presidents to assess their strengths and identify areas for potential growth. The checklist was included in the meeting attachments and is also available on the MOA website. Donna encouraged all chapter presidents to use this tool and noted the council would also be using it.

Insurance Information

Information about insurance options for chapters, particularly liability insurance, which Jim Brumit has championed as a special project. Donna emphasized the importance of liability coverage, especially for chapters participating in public events like parades. Information was provided about companies offering insurance quotes, and some companies also offer advertising opportunities (such as USAA).

Legislative Affairs - Comprehensive Overview by Herb Siegel

Herb Siegel, the new third vice president and state legislative chair, presented a detailed "terrain analysis" of the legislative landscape in North Carolina. He organized the information into three levels:

National Level Players

Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLO)

Operating for the past 20 years within the Defense Department, this office supports state policymakers with ideas that promote programs of value to military families.

They produce an annual list of active initiatives and provide a color-coded state-by-state scorecard of progress on their website.

- Director: Sarah Stein
- Southeast Regional Liaison: Samantha Swini (also on active duty with New Jersey Air National Guard)

MOA's State Liaison Exchange Forum (SLEF)

A companion oversight effort that meets quarterly with leadership from among MOA chapters. Herb noted he needs to clarify exactly who has responsibility for this, as it is not clearly listed on the MOA website.

State Level Entities

NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Divided into divisions covering military affairs, veterans affairs, transition services, veterans homes, and veteran cemeteries.

- Secretary: Jocelyn Millet (new appointment)
- Legislative Director: Corey Slife

Both Millet and Slife attended Greg Williamson's annual Cape Fear luncheon, where Secretary Millet delivered well-received remarks.

Military Affairs Commission

An advisory group to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Veterans Affairs Commission

Another advisory body with more publicly available information.

- Chair: Greer Martin (Triangle Chapter life member)
- Member: Jim Brumit (NCCOC member)

North Carolina Veterans Council

A volunteer group comprised of members from various chartered veterans-related organizations, including MOA. The council meets quarterly and advises the Secretary on the needs and desires of the veteran community.

- Leader: Tammy Williamson (retired Marine Gunnery Sergeant)
- Legislative Chair: Chris Brown
- Treasurer: Larry Coleman (NCCOC member)

Herb missed the first meeting of this council (which occurred before his investiture), but the first meeting of the legislative subcouncil was scheduled for the following evening.

Legislative Level

House of Representatives

Has a standing committee on Homeland Security, Military and Veterans Affairs with three co-chairs:

- Representative Goodwin
- Representative Loftus (principal chair)
- Representative Pike

Senate

Does not have a companion committee, but Senator Lazaro from Onslow County is reportedly the most active senator in areas of interest to military and veteran affairs.

County Level (Often Overlooked)

Veterans Service Officers (VSOs)

These officials assist veterans in navigating the complex benefit system, but also have important advocacy, resource referral, and educational roles. Herb emphasized that chapters should know who their VSO is and leverage their expertise when planning local programs.

District Attorneys

Play a key role in establishing and maintaining veterans courts (also called veterans treatment courts). These entities divert ill veterans out of the criminal justice system and into treatment programs, usually at the VA. Herb noted this is an often-overlooked but critical function.

Herb's Action Items and Philosophy

Herb requested that each chapter identify the individual charged with helping on legislative matters of state importance. His goals include:

- Meeting with identified legislative representatives from each chapter
- Brainstorming approaches to legislative advocacy
- Potentially developing subject matter experts on specific legislative topics within the council

Herb concluded with an important principle he learned from his conversations: "Legislative work is not a fire and forget opportunity." It requires constant engagement and people showing up consistently. He expressed hope that the council's effort would embody this sustained commitment.

Follow-Up Actions

Donna Culp announced she had reviewed the committee modules for all chapters and found that some modules don't clearly state whether there is a legislative representative. She requested that all chapter presidents:

- Review and update their committee modules to ensure legislative affairs representatives are clearly identified
- Verify contact information is current

Donna created a contact list with names, email addresses, and phone numbers for those clearly listed in the

committee modules, plus a separate page with all chapter presidents' contact information. With the group's approval, she planned to share this with Herb for coordination and follow-up.

Other Business

Newsletter

Jay Nelson reported working on refreshing the council newsletter, giving it an updated look while maintaining core content.

AIA Involvement

Vivianne Worsel (not present at the meeting) clarified through Donna that MOA is covering her expenses for AIA (Auxiliary and Surviving Spouse) involvement, which is not supported by the council budget.

Future Meeting Logistics

Due to ongoing electricity and internet issues in Donna's area, Jay Nelson agreed to host future Zoom council meetings. Donna will serve as backup if Jay encounters technical difficulties, and may tag another member to take charge if needed.

Closing Remarks

Donna emphasized several key themes:

- The importance of collaboration and networking among chapters
- The value of attending the Southeast Leadership Workshop in Chattanooga (November 2026)
- The principle that "steel sharpens steel" - growth requires seeking opportunities to learn and improve
- Her commitment to visiting all chapters individually to meet members in person

- The council's primary mission of advocacy, supported by all the community service and outreach activities chapters are conducting

The meeting was adjourned with a motion from Jay Nelson, seconded by another member, with all in favor. Jay wished everyone a happy Valentine's Day as participants signed off.

Key Takeaways

The North Carolina Council demonstrates strong regional collaboration, with active participation from neighboring state councils and regular engagement with National MOA leadership. Chapters are highly engaged in community service, JROTC/ROTC support, veteran assistance, and scholarship programs. The new legislative affairs initiative under Herb Siegel's leadership represents a significant step toward more organized and sustained advocacy efforts at the state level.

Quick recap

The monthly meeting of the North Carolina Council of Military Officers (NCCOC) focused on chapter updates and legislative advocacy efforts. Chapter presidents shared their organizations' activities and initiatives, including service projects, scholarship programs, and community outreach efforts. Herb Siegel, the new state legislative chair, presented an overview of the legislative landscape in North Carolina, outlining key players and organizations involved in veterans' affairs. The council discussed the importance of advocacy and the need for consistent engagement in legislative efforts. Donna Culp, the meeting chair, emphasized the value of collaboration and networking among chapters. The conversation ended

with a motion to adjourn, and Jay Nelson agreed to host the next Zoom meeting, with Donna Culp or another member taking over if technical issues arise.

Next steps

- Frankie: Continue working on accessing and analyzing the "box" (catchment area numbers) in the CM system to identify potential new members, with focus on lifetime and younger members, and provide a better report next month.
- Chapter Presidents/Representatives: Review and update committee modules to ensure legislative affairs representatives are clearly identified for each chapter.
- Donna: Send compiled contact list (names, emails, phone numbers) of legislative affairs representatives to Herb for coordination and follow-up.
- Herb: Reach out to identified legislative affairs representatives from each chapter to meet, brainstorm, and develop subject matter experts for legislative topics.
- Chapter Presidents/Representatives: Designate or confirm a service member as a service coordinator within each chapter to assist with membership and outreach, as discussed.
- Jay (NCCOC): Continue work on refreshing and distributing the council newsletter.
- Peter: Provide updates and details to the group as more information becomes available regarding the Southeast Leadership Workshop in Chattanooga in November.

- Donna: Coordinate individual visits/meetings with each chapter president as discussed.
- Jay (NCCOC): Host future Zoom council meetings, with Donna as backup if technical issues arise.
- Frankie (and interested chapters): Consider inviting Victoria Twine to a future meeting for assistance with technical issues related to the CM/box if ongoing difficulties persist.

Summary

Charlotte Metro Chapter and Regional Collaboration

Jay, representing the Charlotte Metro chapter, shared that they operate the largest JROTC program among all chapters, covering 35 high schools in their area of responsibility, with more schools being built. The chapter also supports ROTC at UNC Charlotte. Jay emphasized the extensive travel required to present medals and awards at these numerous schools. He also highlighted an important aspect of the North Carolina Council: its collaborative nature with other regions. The council regularly hosts guests from National MOA leadership (including Victoria Twine, Dina, and Frank) as well as representatives from other state councils including Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia, South Carolina, and Florida, plus virtual chapters. Peter Warner from the Tennessee Council confirmed this collaboration is excellent and expressed hope to expand regional cooperation at the upcoming leadership workshop.

Donna introduced a legislative analysis by Herb, the new third vice president and state legislative chair, who outlined the complex landscape of state-level military and veterans affairs organizations, including national, state,

and local players. Herb's detailed "terrain analysis" covered three levels: National players include the Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLO) led by Sarah Stein with Southeast Regional Liaison Samantha Swini, and MOA's State Liaison Exchange Forum (SLEF) which meets quarterly. State-level entities include the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (with new Secretary Jocelyn Millet and Legislative Director Corey Slife), the Military Affairs Commission, the Veterans Affairs Commission (chaired by Triangle Chapter life member Greer Martin, with Jim Brumit serving as a member), and the North Carolina Veterans Council (led by retired Marine Gunnery Sergeant Tammy Williamson with Chris Brown as legislative chair and Larry Coleman as treasurer). At the legislative level, the House has a standing committee on Homeland Security, Military and Veterans Affairs with Representatives Goodwin, Loftus (principal chair), and Pike, while the Senate relies primarily on Senator Lazaro from Onslow County. Herb also highlighted two often-overlooked county-level positions: Veterans Service Officers (who assist with benefits navigation, advocacy, and education) and District Attorneys (who play key roles in establishing and maintaining veterans treatment courts that divert ill veterans into treatment programs rather than the criminal justice system). Herb emphasized that legislative work is "not a fire and forget opportunity" but requires constant engagement and people showing up consistently. He requested chapters to identify their legislative representatives, which Donna will compile into a contact list (with names, emails, and phone numbers) to share with Herb for coordination. Herb plans to meet with

these representatives to brainstorm approaches and potentially develop subject matter experts on specific legislative topics. The conversation ended with a motion to adjourn, and Donna noted that future Zoom meetings might be hosted by Jay due to ongoing internet and electricity issues in the area.

Resources and Tools Shared

Donna shared several helpful resources from the MOA website during the meeting. She highlighted a self-evaluation checklist tool available to chapters, encouraging presidents to use it to assess their strengths and identify areas for potential growth. The checklist was included in the meeting attachments and is also available on the MOA website. Additionally, Donna presented information about insurance options for chapters, particularly liability insurance, which Jim Brumit has championed as a special project. She emphasized the importance of liability coverage, especially for chapters participating in public events like parades. Information was provided about companies offering insurance quotes, and some companies also offer advertising opportunities through organizations like USAA.

Technical Difficulties Meeting Start

The meeting began with technical difficulties as participants joined, with some experiencing issues with audio and video. Jay noted that Zoom had recently made changes to the platform, making it difficult to keep up with new features and settings. There were concerns about whether the recording was working properly. Donna, the meeting facilitator, acknowledged these challenges and thanked Jay and others for their efforts in resolving them.

The group conducted the Pledge of Allegiance and prepared to start the meeting proper, with Donna expressing gratitude for everyone's patience and cooperation.

Uniformed Services Benefits Advocacy Council

The meeting began with a prayer led by Donna, followed by a roll call conducted by Frankie. Several members were present or represented, including Nelson who was represented by Jay. The meeting focused on the mission of the council, which is to advocate for and preserve earned benefits for Uniformed Services members, veterans, and their families. The council consists of the board of directors and all attendees, working together to achieve their goals through advocacy and education.

2026 Dues Payment Update

The council meeting began with a quorum check, confirming 13 members present, including Donna, Herb, Ken, and the immediate past president. Frankie conducted a by-name vote to approve the minutes from the last meeting, with all present members voting in favor, including the immediate past president and president. Ken presented the Treasure's Report, noting \$6,937.56 in the checking account, \$11,735.20 in savings, and \$1,045.67 in 2026 revenue, with zero expenses. He reminded the council that 2026 dues were due and payable, with six chapters having already paid.

Membership Engagement and Voting Procedures

The meeting focused on clarifying voting procedures and discussing membership engagement strategies. Jim Brumit, serving as parliamentarian, clarified important voting rules based on Article 5, Section 3 of the bylaws: proxy voting is not permitted, and only presidents, vice

presidents, the immediate past president, and (in case of a tie) the president can vote. This led to a by-name roll call vote rather than a blanket vote. Frankie provided updates on the CM (Chapter Management) project, emphasizing the importance of identifying potential members based on their level of involvement and age. She acknowledged the system is "very confusing" and thanked Ken, Jim, and Donna for a training Zoom call. The discussion focused on accessing the "box" (catchment area data) to identify prospects, prioritizing lifetime members over basic MOA members, and segmenting by geographic areas and age groups. Jim suggested involving service members as coordinators within councils and chapters to boost membership. Donna encouraged chapter presidents to share updates and issues in the next Zoom meeting, particularly regarding the CM project, and mentioned that suggested involving service members as coordinators within councils and chapters to boost membership. Donna encouraged chapter presidents to share updates and issues in the next Zoom meeting, particularly regarding the CM project, and mentioned that Herb would present. Victoria Twine could be invited to a significant effort in the Zoom meeting if technical difficulties with CM persist. Jay reported working on refreshing the newsletter, while Vivianne clarified that MOA is covering her expenses for AIA involvement, which is not supported by the council. The conversation ended with Donna inviting new presidents to share their chapter's strengths. Jay reported working on refreshing the newsletter, while Vivianne clarified that MOA is covering her expenses for AIA involvement, which is not supported by the council. The

conversation ended with Donna inviting new presidents to share their chapter's strengths.

Chapter Presidents' Community Initiatives

The meeting featured introductions from several chapter presidents, including Tom's from Tar Hill Central, Michael from Wilmington, and Gregory from Cape Fear. Tom's highlighted their service-oriented initiatives, including Toys for Tots, Marine Corps mud run, Wreaths Across America, and plans to support homeless veterans. Michael discussed their chapter's community outreach, veteran scholarships, and monthly luncheons, while that typically draw 70-80 attendees. He noted he joined during COVID when meetings were held via Zoom and recently took over as president from Alan Turner. Michael also mentioned the chapter's involvement in the 250th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Moores Creek. Gregory shared details about their strong relationship with Fort Bragg, Gregory shared details about their strong relationship with Fort Bragg (now home to the new Western Command) financial management, and involvement in Habitat for Humanity Veterans Build projects. A, financial management, and involvement in Habitat for Humanity Veterans Build projects. He noted their catchment area includes 1,900 unique members in the "box," 25 JROTC programs, and 4 ROTC programs, with their March awards ceremony to be hosted at Fayetteville State University. Ibert from the Outer Banks chapter concluded the introductions, mentioning their JROTC scholarship program and challenges with membership size. Albert from the Outer Banks chapter concluded the introductions, mentioning their JROTC

scholarship program and challenges with membership size in an aging chapter.

Chapter Updates and Outreach Plans

Albert discussed the Outer Banks chapter's monthly meetings at Duckwoods Country Club, noting they typically draw 15-20 members and pause during July and August due to tourism. Jeff, representing Steve Watkins, shared updates about the Asheville chapter's outreach programs, including their work with a veterans homeless shelter, junior ROTC awards, and support for Honor Flight. The chapter is preparing for its quarterly meeting on February 21st, where they plan to welcome new members with table hosts.

Chapter Leadership and Regional Initiatives

Peter shared his experience as the council president and his recent presentation at the Florida State Convention, where he discussed the Knoxville rebuild. He credited North Carolina with starting the regional collaboration trend. He also announced that Chattanooga will host the Southeast Leadership Workshop in November, covering 8 states, with details being coordinated by Frank and his team, including hotel arrangements and possible side trips. Peter highlighted Ray Mitchell, the former Chattanooga chapter president, as one of MOA's "changemakers" featured on page 46 of the January MOA magazine, crediting him as largely responsible for bringing the workshop to Tennessee. Randall highlighted the Coastal Carolina chapter's focus on awarding at least 5 scholarships to veteran students, hosting a recognition dinner for awardees and their parents in April, supporting JROTC and ROTC leadership

programs in local school leadership programs in local schools, working with the Kinston Veterans Home, and supporting Toys for Tots with a December luncheon. Frankie described the High Country chapter's activities, including their Memorial Weekend. Frankie described the High Country chapter's activities, including their Memorial Weekend even and Veterans Weekend events at Boone Mall, a flag program at the oldest cemetery in Watauga County (placing over 700 flags twice yearly with community support from Girl Scouts, JROTC, and efforts to support ROTC), an annual pancake breakfast fundraiser at Applebee's (restarted after COVID), JROTC scholarships and leadership awards, and a speaker's program at local high schools and veterans where 5-6 speakers visit for 45-minute sessions once a week. The chapter also plans to participate in the Fourth of July parade.

State Legislative Advocacy Overview

Donna introduced a legislative analysis by Herb, the new third vice president and state legislative chair, who outlined the complex landscape of state-level military and veterans affairs organizations, including national, state, and local players. Herb emphasized the importance of ongoing legislative efforts and requested chapters to identify their legislative representatives, which Donna will compile to share with Herb. The conversation ended with a motion to adjourn, and Donna noted that future Zoom meetings might be hosted by Jay due to ongoing internet and electricity issues in the area.