

New River Chapter  
BOD Meeting  
July 9, 2020 @ 1400  
Barbara Sears' House

The New River Chapter's officers and Board of Director's met on Thursday, July 9, 2020 @ 1400 at the home of Barbara Sears, our Personal Affairs Chair and Surviving Spouse Liaison. The purpose of the meeting was to have the Chapter leadership hold a discussion on long-term management and operation of our New River Chapter, specifically with emphasis on how to maintain the important work of this Military Officers Association of America chapter that supports all veterans in our catchment area of Alleghany, Ashe and Wilkes Counties in North Carolina.

Attached to this set of minutes is [an outline](#) that was utilized to address some of the elements of the Chapter, since Chartering in 2009 through the on-going problems associated with recruitment and Chapter support from a limited, yet dwindling group of persons willing to hold positions of Chapter leadership. The outline was not meant to be a complete list of concerns, nor issues directed at any one aspect of the Chapter, but was simply a set of musings that were quickly put on paper to stimulate discussion.

Attendees included: Treasurer – Bob Worley; Program Chair – Charles Knapp; Surviving Spouse – Barbara Sears; President – Steve Tucker; Scholarship Chair – Cathy Ehrhardt; Membership Chair – Mik Mikulan; Legislative Chair – Jim Cain; and Past President – Doug Ehrhardt. Secretary – Don Goodhart was an excused absentee.

To open the discussion, Doug presented [a working document](#) (untitled), that contained 5 subcategories of issues that he quickly drafted to assist in a discussion on how/where our New River Chapter can continue to be active. These topics included:

- NRC Elements
- Successes
- Successes, not so much
- Unknowns
- Road Ahead

Doug wanted to emphasize that the document was intended, neither to be a complete listing of issues, nor a definitive examination of any of the topics, rather they were ideas put on paper to “get the ball rolling!”

Bob Worley shared the sentiment – based on his important role as our treasurer – that as a fraternal organization, we are made up of a group of like-minded retired military officers who fit into three categories:

- 1/3 active who “do all the work”
- 1/3 active who pay dues and attend some of the time
- 1/3 inactive who pay dues but are never participants in chapter activities

Bob also gave a report on the chapter's solvency that was previously presented for inclusion in the June 30, 2020, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarterly “New River Current” newsletter that had not been published by the editor specifically for the purpose of being able to include information from this meeting. Bob did share that we received an electronic deposit of \$5,000 in our Chapter bank account which was the COVID-19 grant

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given to our chapter from MOAA, specifically after we had applied for, and received, a liability policy for the Chapter.

Jim shared his own impression on the activity of the Chapter, also what he considered as a fraternal organization, but for which he knew of others in our three county catchment area that were eligible to be chapter members, many of which were already MOAA members, but were not moved to become involved with our chapter's programs. Others in the discussion shared a number of things which probably can be attributed to this concern, to include:

- Persons who came to the northwest corner of NC to RETIRE and weren't interested in continuing to maintain a "military degree of participation in organizations."
- Persons who stated that they want to remain anonymous and don't want a job that would probably be associated with joining.
- Persons who are just not interested!

Jim questioned the attitude of many and wondered why we are not able to get them interest? Charles weighed in and shared that in his many years as a builder whose business built a type of home, he learned at a national meeting on how to sell homes that there are professional psychologists who spend a lot of time trying to learn who is buying? The result: there is a changed approach by retirees who build \$1/2M homes locally, but as military retirees are trying to get away from the life on a post, or military installation. Now people want to be independent. MOAA chapters have limitations on being unable to advertise nationally.

Regarding the five subcategories of issues on the attachment, Charles recommended:

- Do not consider discontinuing the chapter; there are still 10-12 members who want to have relationship.
- Consider a satellite – no! That was a proposal that wouldn't work when we formed and wouldn't work now. Distance! Also, it was felt that our programs and our issues wouldn't be a priority.
- Scholarship program – maintain, but drop consideration of one of the schools in our catchment area, Wilkes County HS...our priority should be to ACHS. We don't experience any quid pro quo from Wilkes and Cathy shared how it was always a job to even get their JROTC students to submit an application. Regarding opening the scholarship program to students at the local community, or university, the original intent was to support a graduating senior.
- Allow our Scholarship monies be depleted, or send to National – no!
- Newsletters and website – consider the level of interest and ways to insure use by members.
- Websites – a discussion was held re: hits, but there was also a concern on how MOAA provides support to chapters for advertising our site?

The road ahead!?! The best alternative discussed was to establish an Executive Committee that would function to manage/operate our Chapter. Essentially, we will still have members listed as holding titles, e.g., President, Chairs, etc., but there would be a cadre of 2-3 persons working as needs arise, with the exception of having the Treasurer continue to maintain a full-time control of our funds and our fiduciary concerns, e.g., IRS.

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The report about the \$5,000 COVID-19 grant was received with great enthusiasm, but Bob shared that as of this date, there was no acknowledgement from the Ft. Bragg Fisher House as a letter of appreciation, nor had the check cleared our account. Barbara took on the responsibility of communicating with the Ft. Bragg Fisher House to close that loop.

Encouraging maximum advertisement of Chapter programs and seeking the means for greater recruitment, if possible. For both our upcoming August Picnic, September Breakfast on the Mountain and December Holiday Party, Member Chair, Mik Mikulan will work on developing articles and flyers that can be used to promote our Chapter to the community, e.g., stories to be published in the Ashe Post and Times that will INVITE EVERYONE to come out and enjoy the offerings of food and drink, but also learn more about the New River Chapter MOAA. These should run for 1 or 2 weeks prior to the dates when the events will be held.

Mik will also coordinate with Charles to ensure that the Chapter receives advertisement via the Chamber of Commerce (of which we are a member organization) calendar. Charles is also an individual Chamber of Commerce member who can hopefully influence getting the word out to the community.

As a final item of discussion, there was some concern on how National MOAA creates a direct means of advertising the local chapter, e.g., making the digital aspects of MOAA, as well as our chapter more readily available through the promotion of [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org). Each of us has encountered many persons in our catchment area who indicate they do not know about MOAA...in other words, how do former military and those who are not getting out via their retirement from the services getting the word??:

Charles will work with Mik to begin developing a position paper that we will then work on as a Chapter in order to suggest to National MOAA two things: 1) our concern that there are too many eligible persons across, not only our catchment area, but also in the country who don't know how to link to MOAA, but 2) don't have the expertise to drill down to the state level and the chapter level to learn how to access the websites – which should be a primary introduction to someone looking to relocate to an area – of chapters. The MOAA website was considered to be vastly improved over prior linkages, but there still seems to be a lack of connectivity between how eligible persons learn of local chapter efforts.

The meeting adjourned at 1630.

Prepared by:

Doug Ehrhardt

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1. NRC Elements:

- Programs
- Website
- Newsletter
- Scholarship Fund
- Meetings
- Events – Marathon Jam / Supporting New River Marathon / Summer Picnics & Holiday Party

2. Successes:

- Chartering Ceremony
- Marathon Jam
- Scholarship Fund
- Picnics/Holiday Party

3. Successes, Not So Much:

- Recruitment
- Support Functions, e.g., Officer and BOD Personnel
- Fundraising – Postcard sales

4. Unknowns:

- Newsletter Acceptance
- Website Utilization
- Continuing Officer Involvement – lifetime appointments??
- Other?

5. Road ahead:

- Form Executive Committee to manage chapter vs. Officers
- Only hold 3 events: Marathon Jam, Picnic, Holiday Party
- Continue with Scholarship Fund until depleted
- Send Scholarship \$\$ to National
- Become a Satellite of High Country
- Discontinue Chapter
- Other?