



THOREAU CHAPTER VETERANS ORGANIZATION
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Commander Lester Emerson

Vice-Commander Willie Brown

Secretary Rosemary Gibson

**MEETING AGENDA – Sunday Feb 1, 2026
 0800 HOURS
 Thoreau Chapter Veterans Center**



- Call meeting to order
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Moment of Silence for all Comrades
- Chaplain’s corner – message/invocation
- Recognition of Guests and/or Officials

Review and adopt agenda

Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ___ Nay ___ Abstain ___

Review and adopt Jan 4, 2026 meeting minutes

Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ___ Nay ___ Abstain ___

Presentation: VSO Lori John

Financial Report:

- 1. Veterans Trust Funds
 - a. Thoreau Chapter Funds
- 2. Motion to accept Financial Report
 - a. Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ___ Nay ___ Abstain ___
- 3. Fundraising

Birthdays: Lester Ashley, Eli Bodie, Lester Emerson, Vincent R. Emerson, Udall Gibson, Sr.

Old Business:

- 1. Thoreau Veterans Service Center Project Update
- 2. Reports: ENVO, TCVO, TLAC Officers, Chapter Officials & Council Delegate
- 3. Concerns – comments



New Business:

1. Resolution TCVO-FY26-0__ : OPEN
2. Approve stipend payments for TCVO Officers (Feb 1, 2026 and Feb __, 2026), Approve stipend for ENVO meeting for Vice-Commander.

Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ___ Nay ___ Abstain ___

Set next meeting date _____ 2026

Announcements:

Adjournment @ _____

Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ___ Nay ___ Abstain ___



**THOREAU CHAPTER VETERANS ORGANIZATION
(Eastern Navajo Agency)
Post Office Box 1332
Thoreau, NM 87323
(505) 948-6737**

Lester Emerson, Commander

Willie Brown, Vice-Commander

Rosemary Gibson, Secretary

**THOREAU CHAPTER VETERANS ORGANIZATION
February 1, 2026 – Thoreau Chapter Veterans Center**

Call Meeting to Order – by Commander Emerson at 8:47am

Pledge of Allegiance – was recited by all; lead by Commander Emerson

Moment of Silence – To all Comrades, families, and extended families who have passed on.

Chaplain's Corner (Message & Invocation) Chaplain Long wasn't available to attend the meeting; therefore, Commander called on Anthony Peterman, a candidate for Council Delegate, to pray. Mr. Peterman provided a strong prayer. Commander Emerson thanked Mr. Peterman for comments and his strong prayer. Secretary Gibson also acknowledged Mr. Peterman and advised the attendees that Mr. Peterman kept his word to support veterans as he is a veteran himself. She also mentioned that he was at the Chapter's special meeting for those running to replace Steven Arviso who quit as Council Delegate. Secretary Gibson also recommended that we support Mr. Peterman as he has an impressive resume that he gave out at the Chapter meeting and is the only one from the other candidates who said they'll be here; the others didn't show so that just goes to show they're not supporting veterans. Hopefully, Mr. Peterman gets selected by the Speaker to replace Steven Arviso.

Recognition of Guests and/or Officials: Commander acknowledged his fellow officers and thanked everyone who are here with us for the meeting, in particular, Anthony Peterman, a candidate for Council to replace Steven Arviso. Commander also acknowledged the widow of Joe Silversmith, Code Talker and everyone who came to the meeting.

Review and Adopt Agenda: Commander read the agenda; Copies were also available at the entrance. Motion by Joe Herrera, 2nd by Udall Gibson, Sr., **Yea 15 Nay 0; Abstain 1**. Commander asked if there was any change or addition to be made to the agenda. Commander added items and motioning party agreed and items are added under New Business.

Review and Adopt January 4, 2026 Meeting Minutes: Commander asked if we should adopt the January 4, 2026 meeting minutes as is or have it read. Motion by Joe Herrera, 2nd by Udall Gibson, Sr., to adopt as is: **Yea 15 Nay 0; Abstain 1**.

Presentation: Commander received a text message from Lori John, VCO, at 9:47am that she wasn't coming; she was supposed to be the presenter this morning. Instead, Commander welcomed Mr. Anthony Peterman again and asked him to present his candidacy for Council Delegate. Mr. Peterman accepted and announced his clans and is from our community although he resides at Churchrock with his wife. He explained his work experience which included having worked for the Navajo Nation. Out of the candidates that presented themselves at the Chapter House that they were running to fill Steven Arviso's vacated position, Mr. Peterman was the only one who kept his word and came to the Veterans meeting; therefore, Secretary Gibson recommended that we support him to replace Steven Arviso. Besides his impressive resume he gave to the community who were at the meeting, Mr. Peterman is also a veteran. Willie Brown, Vice Commander second the

motion during the Chapter Meeting for Mr. Peterman. Secretary Gibson mentioned to Mr. Peterman that when you get selected to fill Mr. Arviso's position, please remember veterans!

Commander stated that in addition to the Sign In Sheet, he has added an Updated Waiver/Liability for using the veterans building to attend TCVO meetings. This is part of the Veterans Building Facility Usage Management Plan. Commander further explained the reason and seemingly was understood by attendees.

Financial Report: 1. Veterans Trust Funds: Commander mentioned that \$50,523 was allocated for each 31 chapters under Eastern Navajo. TCVO has used up \$44,367. There is still \$6,156 left including stipend and \$2,500 for education. In March, if there are no requests for education, TCVO will transfer that amount into hardship. Secretary Gibson requested that some of the funds be transferred to office supplies due to printing and ink cartridges are too expensive and doesn't like to keep buying them. General Fund: Eastern Agency received \$600,000 and our balance is \$176,768. Also, \$216 is allowed for utility bills. When you ask to pay for utility bills, you'll need to submit your utility bill and if it shows that the bill is \$150, that will be the amount you'll be given instead of the \$216 so remember to claim wood or propane that costs more. As usual, nothing to report from the Executive Director's office regarding Trust Funds or any positive information. As reported by Chapter Secretary-Treasurer Judy Platero, the Chapter received \$5,000 for Veterans; funds that was recently approved by Council. Naturally, with the stipulation that it's only for catering and awards. Thoreau Chapter Funds: We've submitted three fundraising funds to the Chapter Coordinator and will be getting an updated report from her sometime soon, hopefully. Motion by Udall Gibson, Sr., 2nd by Joe Herrera: **Yea, 15; Nay, 0; Abstain, 1.**

Old Business: Earlier, Commander asked the motioning party to add Update TCVO Fund Management Plan under Old Business and was agreed to by the motioning party. This topic will change the resolution numbers and the agenda topic numbers: **Yea, 15; Nay, 0; Abstain, 1.** Thoreau Veterans Service Center Project Update: Currently, our meetings are held at the Veterans Center. Commander was denied the use of the Chapter House for our meeting and although we've been pressured by the Chapter Coordinator and Chapter Secretary that we need to have a Facility Usage Management Plan developed before we could use it, a request Commander submitted to the Chapter's receptionist and was told the Chapter was available for veterans to use but the coordinator denied the completed form. TCVO is under the direction of the Chapter as a bona fide subcommittee. TCVO has requested verbally and in written form, a resolution with a completed Facility Usage Management Plan attached thereto, to schedule a meeting immediately with the Chapter Coordinator, Chapter Officials including Leonard Hardy with TCVO so we can all know what and who's who regarding the Veterans Center. This request has been riding for the past several months and officially presented at the Planning Meeting to be addressed at the next Regular Chapter Meeting.

Commander stated that the TCVO Fund Management Plan is updated and a resolution was submitted to the Chapter during the Planning Meeting to be put on the Regular Chapter Meeting along with 5 or 6 other resolutions that need to be addressed. This is to satisfy the repeated requests for resolutions (although verbal exchanges were made between Commander and Coordinator), and also included is a resolution requesting a meeting with them and Leonard Hardy so that we can all be on the same page in supporting one another instead of the current back and forth we're experiencing right now. We're often being told the veterans building belongs to the Chapter or the Navajo Nation. Therefore, a meeting between TCVO, Chapter Coordinator, Chapter Officers and Leonard Hardy is very important. Also submitted is the Facility Usage Management Plan for the Veterans building along with a resolution to the Chapter. We need to begin letting different entities use the building for meetings and events that meet our requirements stated in the facility usage plan; any and all revenue generated from this will be applied towards paying for utilities as priority and other expenses as secondary.

Commander explained that he has added two of his sons as participants to TCVO when they became veterans. His sons have been discharged from service and no longer serving. He felt his sons needed to leave their military service due to the uncertainty with Trump's Administration using the military without proper planning; the latest causing conflict with Venezuela and bombing boats and killing people. Commander has his sons' permission to be represented by him during meetings and other TCVO events. He further explained that Anita Benally, who is a veteran's widow has notarized papers on file also with TCVO to represent herself, when not attending, and her two veterans. He showed the notary form necessary to

complete to represent an absent veteran. Secretary Gibson also stated that Nelson Morgan and his wife Delsey are represented through their approval when they cannot attend due to Nelson's health. They attend when Nelson is feeling better. Their donation for our fundraising food sale is greatly appreciated and support for TCVO.

Charley Long mentioned he attended Mariano Lake's chapter meeting and finds that Mariano Lake is progressing along pretty well as should we. He believes they are certified and Chapter has been able to have new buildings built. They also selected Henry Begay, Jr., and Anthony Begay as nominees to replace Steven Arviso who bailed on us. Henry Begay had the most votes. Regarding the Chapter funds, let's move on from December and January regarding the TCVO Fund Management Plan; we've got it in resolution form so we'll see how its handled by the Chapter at their next meeting for our resolutions to be put on the Regular meeting agenda. He also reported that he represented Navajo Prep school who does good work for their school and students. On the school's behalf, he met with 12 state representatives during the state legislative sessions. He met with Representative Garcia from Ramah who replaced Eliseo Alcone and attended Budget Committee meeting. Students will be visiting the State Capital. Mr. Long felt that the veterans are missing an opportunity to attend the legislative sessions to request state capital outlay funds. He had some things to do so he excused himself from the TCVO meeting. Commander Emerson gave Mr. Long a copy of the completed form for the \$200,000 Reauthorization that Representative Michelle Abeyta said she was going to follow through on bearing her signature on the completed form. Mr. Long was also going to meet with her too. This funding was secured from former Representative, Harry Garcia.

Udall Gibson, Sr., also has a concern on the uranium shipment from Churchrock that will be transported across reservation land. You might also want to bring that up to those people you're meeting with he mentioned to Mr. Long. Its already contaminated our water which our animal's drink. Imagine all the toxicity caused by uranium although the mine shut down several years ago but the after effects are causing problems to all of us. The Navajo Nation lacks leadership and currently, \$24million dollars has disappeared under Nygren. This is also \$14million missing from a Go Fund Me during COVID under Jonathan Nez' administration along with sheep costing over \$1100. We've got a bunch of thieves taking money from the Navajo People; money that is from the federal government to be used for the Navajo People. What happened to the 1,000-home initiative for veterans' housing. These are all the many problems facing us and not being investigated. Udall thanked Mrs. Silversmith for attending our meeting.

Commander stated it's a big issue.... Mr. MacDonald was a good Chairman but unfortunately, he got caught up in some wrong doings that was detrimental to himself and to our tribe as a whole. His predecessors were not any better and look at where we're at right now. Nothing has been accomplished with the ARPA funds. Same goes with the Veterans Executive Director's Office and staff. There's no written policy but are made up along the way without involving Commanders out in the field that do the work according to what goes on in their communities.

Commander reminded everyone that the after Valentines Day cook out is still on for the 15th. He will bring his grill and hamburger meat. Secretary Gibson than asked Udall Gibson what he will bring and go around the table. Sally Antonio said if people want steaks, they have to bring their own! Gloria Becenti volunteered to bring hot dogs and chips; Joe Herrera won't be able to attend; Harry Antonio donated \$60 to go towards utility bills; Sally Antonio will bring potato salad; Rosemary Gibson will contribute a dish and Percy Willie will also. Udall Gibson donated \$30 for utility bills and \$10 from Rosemary Gibson. A cashier's check for \$100 was given to Vivinita Bennett, Chapter Coordinator to be deposited into TCVO's veterans account maintained by the Chapter.

Birthdays: Lester Ashley, Eli Bodie, Lester Emerson, Vincent R. Emerson, and Udall Gibson, Sr., all had birthdays in February. Cake was served and singing of happy birthday was done although only Lester and Udall were in attendance to be honored.

Reports: ENVO Vice Commander Willie Brown reported he attended the ENVO Commanders' Meeting. Housing issues was discussed regarding renovations or repair. He didn't get the number on how many homes were fixed but that veterans have to complete an application. William Nez is the Housing Manager but didn't get his number. ENAVO VSO Lori John gave a report on Trust Funds but didn't have all the information. She talked about Trust Funds allocated and used. He also

read a document referencing removing Bobbie Baldwin as Veterans Executive Director due to many legitimate reasons; one being, she never shows up when requested to attend ENVO Commanders meeting but showed up today, which was a surprise. She was told in her presence and too her face that Eastern Agency wants her to resign or be removed due to no confidence. A resolution was passed by Eastern Navajo Veterans Organization along with other Agencies. Commander Platero had to adjourn the meeting due to a couple Commanders acting unbecoming a leader as Commander. No meeting for next month nor venue was given due to the adjournment.

TLAC Secretary Gibson said she sounds like a broken record but volunteers are needed to help TCVO planned activities particularly when doing a food fundraising to help set up booth, donations of supplies, and told the veterans that they need to get involved because the ladies do all the work and are not veterans. She also explained that Thoreau Commander has been asked again to help out with the annual Vietnam Veterans Walk to be held on March 28-29 and we all need to be proactive. We need TCVO to come through with breakfast items and treat our veterans better than some other chapters. We'll get a list of volunteers, donated breakfast items and even participate in the Walk at our March meeting. Chapter Officials. The Chapter officials were not in attendance but President informed Commander that she and her two veterans have power of attorney on file with TCVO and to count them in favor of concerns and issues discussed.

Concerns – Comments: For the Vietnam Veterans Walk, TCVO will submit a resolution requesting the Chapter to take care of the insurance and permit that they procure each year we help the sponsor. We'll also request police escort. Also, please contribute of your time and donate what you can for our breakfast as the Walk begins at our Chapter. Motion by Joe Herrera, 2nd by Udall Gibson, Sr., **Yea, 16, Nay 0; Abstain 1.**

New Business: Submit resolutions for: Reauthorization of \$200,000 capital outlay funds; Coordinator to set up meeting with Chapter officials; Leonard Hardy and TCVO; Amend TCVO Fund Management Plan (Donations & Fundraisers); TCVO Amendment Facility Management Plan; Agreement between TCVO and Chapter Coordinator to Deposit funds for Veterans; and Recognition of current TCVO Officers. Motion by Udall Gibson, Sr., 2nd by Joe Herrera: **Yea, 16, Nay 0; Abstain 1**

Approve stipend payments for TCVO Officers: February 1, 2026 for TCVO officers; approve stipend for ENVO meeting for Vice Commander on January 14, 2026 and upcoming February 11, 2026 meeting. Motion by Joe Herrera, 2nd by Pam Borga **Yea, 16, Nay 0; Abstain 1.**

Set next meeting date: March 1, 2026, 8am-1:00pm.

Adjournment @ (1:30). Motion by Joe Herrera, 2nd by Udall Gibson, Sr: By Consensus with a loud YAY!

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Rosemary Gibson

Rosemary Gibson, Secretary

cc: Fleurette Brown (requested meeting notes transcription)