



THOREAU CHAPTER VETERANS ORGANIZATION

PO BOX 1332

THOREAU, NEW MEXICO 87323

505-948-6737

Commander Lester Emerson

Vice-Commander Willie Brown

Secretary Rosemary Gibson

MEETING AGENDA – Sunday March 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 Feb 1, 2026 meeting minutes

Motion _____ **2nd** _____ **Yea** ____ **Nay** ____ **Abstain** ____

Presentation: Mr. Honorable Harry Garcia

Mr. Mike Bekis

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: Nicholas Kien, Herman Kenneth Sr., Charley Long Sr., Nelson Morgan

Old Business:

1. Thoreau Veterans Service Center Project Update





2. Discussion Update: Vietnam Veterans Honor Walk
3. Reports: ENVO, TCVO, TLAC Officers, Chapter Officials & Council Delegate
4. Concerns – comments

New Business:

1. Resolution TCVO-FY26-0__ : OPEN
2. TCVO NN Trust Fund Budget Transfer
3. Approve stipend payments for TCVO Officers (March 1, 2026) and Approve stipend for ENVO meeting for Vice-Commander on March __ 2026.

Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ____ Nay ____ Abstain ____

Set next meeting date _____ 2026

Announcements:

Adjournment @ _____

Motion _____ 2nd _____ Yea ____ Nay ____ Abstain ____



THOREAU CHAPTER VETERANS' ORGANIZATION
(Eastern Navajo Agency)
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Thoreau, NM 87323
(505) 948-6737



Lester Emerson, Commander

Willie Brown, Vice-Commander

Rosemary Gibson, Secretary

THOREAU CHAPTER VETERANS' ORGANIZATION
March 1, 2026 – Thoreau Chapter Veterans Center

Call Meeting to Order – by Commander Emerson at 8:54am

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 recited and interpreted from 2nd Corinthians 5:14-15 after a hearty greeting to all attending. He commented "Love", the food of all souls. His message was reminding folks of the coming of the Lord and to be prepared as he has died for all. It is with our belief and deep love for our veterans; they have returned home and sadden that others did not. Regardless, believe in the Lord and pray especially at this time when we don't know exactly how Trump will end a war that he began. Chaplain Long than gave a lengthy and powerful prayer.

Recognition of Guests and/or Officials: Commander acknowledged his fellow officers and thanked everyone who are here with us for the meeting. He thanked Anthony Peterman who came just to attend the veterans meeting. Commander thanked Mrs. Silversmith, widow of Code Talker Joe Silversmith and thanked everyone again who came to the meeting. He also thanked Herman Yellowhorse, former Chapter Vice President for attending.

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 announced that he 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 for attending and Mr. Peterman commented that he is here to attend the meeting as a Veteran. He was offered to serve himself for breakfast but declined due to him observing lent. Chaplain Long was given the floor to make a presentation on the events that took place at the State Legislative Session which he attended. He reported that he went twice; the first time was ok and second time he went, he said it was something else. He did meet with several law makers but didn't have a report on the \$200,000 Reauthorization Request that supposedly Representative Michelle Abeyta was to follow up on as she promised at a December Chapter meeting. Commander Emerson had given Chaplain Long a copy of the Reauthorization to receive the status from Mrs. Abeyta. He reported that he attended on behalf of the Navajo Preparatory School that he's been on board with for several years. He also reported that there was a meeting with the Governor on the Navajo Code Talkers. A resolution was presented to her to have a memorial built in Farmington. He explained that way

back a long time ago, it was proposed to have a memorial for the Navajo Code Talkers in Washington, DC. It didn't happen due to a poor presentation. Even the Civil Rights is recognized on a national level. At that time, Chaplain Long decided that he will join the group that's working on the Code Talkers so it began with a resolution given to President Ben Shelly at the time who passed it on to Rex Lee Jim, his vice, but nothing happened. The past Code Talkers Day, he gave notice to Nygren regarding establishing a museum for the Code Talkers. To date, nothing has been pursued to have any type of memorial for them. We have several from our area who served – Mrs. Joe Silversmith is among us this morning; her husband Joe was a Code Talker; Alfred Newman, Joe Vandever, Edmund Henry. All of these men need to be recognized along with who are from surrounding chapters. They saved our country. At Chachiltah, Albert Smith passed on and we paid his burial balance to the mortuary. We still have Peter MacDonald and Thomas H. Begay are the only two left.

For some reason or another, the site at Window Rock was dismissed and moved to Tse Bonito and then to Gallup. None of these sites worked out. Nygren met with the Governor and maybe he talked about the museum. At this point, a proposal is to build by Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington. The school representative was surprised at the announcement after a meeting two weeks ago in Farmington. It seems there hasn't been any agreement and lack of communication. Chaplain Long brought a newspaper article referencing the history of trying to get the Code Talkers Museum off the ground but that the Governor will only support Farmington and redirect funding if its not built in Farmington. Chaplain Long was giving a lengthy report when Herman Yellowhorse called for a point of order to get back on the agenda. Commander Emerson reminded him that Chaplain Long was given the floor to make a presentation and that at the veterans' meeting, folks are invited to speak. It's important that we hear about the status of trying to honor the Code Talkers with a memorial. Secretary Gibson asked Mr. Long who are on the board and commented that site at Window Rock didn't happen and even Gallup. Udall Gibson, Sr., mentioned that the original site near Window Rock is now the Department of Transportation. The other area by Tse Bonito was donated by Chevron after they did a reclamation and this was years ago. Our Code Talkers deserve a memorial of some sort on Navajo Land.

Commander thanked Chaplain Long for his representation at the State Legislative Session and appreciated his presentation on the status of the Code Talkers Museum that's been talked about for so many years. Chaplain Long said the Navajo Preparatory School got \$10 million and it should be able to fund and operate for a while. He wishes the Code Talkers board would work together but even the Navajo Nation is not cooperating. Anthony Peterman commented that he's a veteran and just stopped in to say hello before he left. Commander Emerson explained again the waiver that is on the Sign In sheet. The Chapter Secretary Judy Platero refused to sign the Sign In Sheet due to her understanding of its legality and wanted to know if has been approved by higher ups. She stated that she never signs anything without first reading what she's signing and since she was not in agreement with the statement on the Sign In Sheet, she refused to sign it. Nickolas Kien also commented that he also doesn't agree and asked if additional research is needed and if the statement has been approved or if its legal. Commander Emerson explained that he did research on the issue and fits the current status of utilizing the Veterans Building. He decided to revise the Sign In Sheet after the discussion on the veterans building not having a facility usage plan (now called a policy when we were told to have a Facility Usage Plan); one was prepared using the Chapter's Facility Usage Plan as a guide received from the Chapter but was tabled at the Chapter meeting.

Secretary Gibson stated that after having worked for the federal government, there has been waivers on various situations. For example, when one attends an event, like going to a dance, there are disclaimers posted that event sponsor puts out notices "Not responsible for injury, theft, etc.". The Commander has the same concept that because the Facility Usage Plan or policy, now, is pending approval by the Chapter, because the veterans building is under Chapter, he is only stating that TCVO will not be responsible should someone gets hurt, say like at the entrance, falls and breaks a bone, TCVO is not going to be responsible. This shouldn't be hard to understand. Commander mentioned he will be looking further into this concern. Udall Gibson, Sr., commented that we all have to remember that we have been given a Certificate of Occupancy for our veterans building and along with having this certification, shouldn't it give us notice that we can utilize this building for meetings and that it is safe to use. In the meantime, we all need to observe safety and abide by what is brought forth for now without the benefit of having a facility usage rules until it has been approved. He's pleased that we are finally in this building after waiting for so long. At this point, Chapter President Anita Benally entered the meeting and explained that she's sorry for running late but that she's not feeling well and didn't want to get anyone sick by coming in but felt she had

to be here after all she represents her veterans, her daughter and her son although they have notarized Authorization on file with TCVO. She explained her support for the veterans and that she'll be available to assist as President of the Chapter. She further explained that although she is busy with Chapter projects, whenever the Veterans have concerns, she ensures that their issues are addressed. In addition, the Chapter is working on getting permit and insurance for the Vietnam Veterans Walk. TCVO needs to get in touch with the Navajo Nation Police Department for escort and all the paperwork required has to be in place before the Walk. She mentioned the Agency Council meeting on the 7th but she has a commitment to attend a function in Ruidoso so the Chapter vice president will represent our Chapter at Nageezi. She apologized for being late and leaving early since she's not feeling well. Secretary Gibson asked who the new veteran is that just joined. Commander Emerson asked the veteran to introduce himself and welcomed him as well. The veteran introduced himself and identified himself as Justin Francisco. Also in attendance was John Mitchell (Delsey Morgan's nephew). Both were welcomed.

Financial Report: 1. Veterans Trust Funds: TCVO has \$4055.50 as balance. Thoreau veterans were recognized as only having 31 veterans but after veterans' paperwork were updated, Thoreau now has 74 veterans. We had 98 listed before and 24 are still purged. For Eastern, the count is 1,366. Commander asked who knows Matthew Sam, John Joe, Jr. Eric Christopher and a couple other names. He reported there are 8 surviving spouses, 64 male veterans and 8 female veterans. General Fund: Eastern Agency received \$600,000 and \$596,293.62 has been used up leaving a balance of \$1,406.38. Commander read from a document with information of other veterans' activities. Two chapters have spent all 100 percent of its funds; Little Water and Nageezi. Thoreau still has \$4,930.50. Secretary Gibson said stipends haven't been paid for last month so balance should be different. Motion by Udall Gibson, Sr., 2nd by Joe Herrera to accept Financial Report: **Yea 23, Nay, 0; Abstain, 4.**

Commander gave a full detail of both NN Veteran Trust Funds using his calculation to explain that TCVO has to do a budget transfer and asked attendees what their thoughts are and to make a decision of \$4055.50. A discussion ensued and it was decided to do a budget transfer: Balances; Acct 3811-Stipend-\$2025.00. Acct 8060-Hardship-\$15.00. Acct 8060-Education-\$2000.00. Acct 8065-Energy-\$15.50. **BALANCES TO BE TRANSFERRED AS FOLLOWING:**

Account 3811- Stipend - \$167.58.00 to be transferred into Acct 8065 – Hardship
Account 3811 – Stipend - \$207.42 to be transferred into Acct 4120 – Office Supplies
Account 8060 – Education - \$1446.43 to be transferred into Acct 4420 – Operating/Office Equipment
Account 8060 – Education - \$553.57 - \$553.57 to be transferred into Acct 4120 – Office Supplies
Account 8065 – Energy - \$15.50 - \$15.50 to be transferred into Acct 4120 – Office Supplies

TOTAL BALANCES AFTER TRANSFER

Account 3811 - Stipend	- \$1650.00
Account 4120 – Office Supplies	- \$776.49
Account 4420 – Operating/Office Equipment	- \$1446.43
Account 8060 – Hardship	- \$182.58
Total	- \$4055.50

Motion was made by Udall Gibson, Sr., 2nd by Joe Herrera to do a request for budget transfer: **Yea, 19 Nay, 0; Abstain, 4.**

Thoreau Chapter Funds: Chapter Secretary Judy Platero was given the floor to present on Chapter funds on TCVO account balances and handed out 6 pages to support her talking points after greeting the veterans and her support for veterans. She read balances of veterans' budget from Fund 01 which is the Chapter Activities General Fund the Chapter utilizes to maintain the Veterans' funds. She mentioned that for any activities requested by the veteran, a resolution is required in order for the chapter to act upon such requests. TCVO has to submit resolutions for the Vietnam Veterans Walk activities in particular as to which account funds will be used. She noted that the \$5,000 for Catering and Awards was broken down into 3 categories: GL 6352 – Purchases – Food; GL 6604 – Catering and GL 6620 – Gifts and Awards.

It was acknowledged by the Commander that resolutions will be submitted to effect these requests, in particular for the Vietnam Walk which TCVO was requested to host to help out Mr. Bekis who organizes the Walk for the past 16 years. This is the 17th annual. We'll be receiving the Walkers on the 24th and Mr. Garcia kindly offered to sponsor the breakfast and we'll still be taking donation for breakfast dishes and snacks for participants. Mr. Bekis wasn't able to attend this morning to

make a presentation due to his disability and not being able to drive himself here but that Commander maintains contact with him. Secretary Platero explained that she'll make presentations like she just did on a quarterly basis; not monthly like preferred. She commented that depending on any changes that might be made, information will be more up to date quarterly. A discussion on electricity was brought up regarding the cost for electricity and telephone costs. Although there is no telephone in the building, we need to have a connection to the fire department. Also, she had asked about electricity because at different times, the light would come on and then not so much. She didn't get a clear response as to why lights come on and then not. She excused herself since she has to travel but that she will attend veterans meeting to provide funding information.

Birthdays: Nicholas Kien, Herman Kenneth, Sr., Charley Long, Sr., Nelson Morgan and Anthony Peterman all had March birthdays. Cake was served and singing of happy birthday was sung.

Old Business: Thoreau Veterans Service Center Project Update: Commander commented that so far, no word on repair request from over a year ago and no word on the \$200,000 Reauthorization which was promised by Representative Abeyta to follow up and provide us status and to ensure that it is done but no feedback to her promise. Update on Vietnam Veterans Honor Walk: We will be helping with the Vietnam Veterans Walk starting on March 24 when we normally serve breakfast and they begin their walk from here. He inquired about the use of the Veterans Center for the Walk and was advised by the Coordinator that as long as it's a Veterans function, the building can be used. We will have our festivities here in the Veterans building. He stated to use Resolution No. TCVO-FY26-019 for Stella, the Cook, who will prepare and serve at the luncheon on March 28. Commander will submit a justification to utilize Ms. Rockbridge's service as she has been successfully able to do in past events. Also, a resolution for Food Purchase will need to be submitted using GL 6352 and GL 6604 using the veterans' funds. Commander's visit with Mr. Bekis is that we'll invite Peter MacDonald and Thomas H. Begay. Commander has called George Tolth, Lester Yazzie, Norman Begay, and George Munoz to invite them but hasn't received a response. Possibly Chaplain Long can contact MacDonald and Mr. Begay through his Code Talkers group. It will be nice to have them attend.

Reports: ENVO Vice Commander Willie Brown reported he attended the ENVO Commanders' Meeting at Casamero Lake. Housing issues was hot topic and discussed again like the last meeting. Lori John talked about Eastern veterans is back up to 768 veterans. Trust Funds allocated and used. Commander Emerson explained that on January 7, 2026, Eastern Agency Commanders submitted resolution regarding the Code of Conduct which was opposed by ENAVO. In addition, Fort Defiance, Northern, Western and Eastern submitted resolutions of "No Confidence" in Bobbi Baldwin. It's ironic that the resolutions go back to the Executive Director; to Jim Johnson, her liaison. Even the Veterans Advisory Council gave its approval for No Confidence. Meeting is set for April 1, 2026. Vice Commander Brown reported that Commander Platero stepped down and Hubert Smith was elevated to Commander of Eastern Navajo Commanders. TLAC: None; Chapter Officials: Secretary Platero gave her report and No Council Delegate and no news on who is selected by Crystalyn Curley but names were given to her.

Concerns – Comments: Please contribute of your time and donate what you can for our breakfast as the Walk begins at our Chapter. Secretary Gibson thanked Mr. Garcia for sponsoring the breakfast on the 24th but still contribute juices, water.

New Business:

1) TCVO will submit a resolution for TCVO to Endorse Mr. Harry Garcia for State House Representative, District 69. Mr. Garcia mentioned that he will appreciate an endorsement from TCVO to add to other Endorsements he has already received. He also stated that his past work performance as State Representative speaks for itself. As is his usual, Mr. Garcia brought 2 dozen donuts to our meeting. Motion by Udall Gibson, Sr., 2nd by Herman Yellowhorse: **Yea, 26, Nay 0; Abstain 1.** Resolution No. TCVO-FY26-018 was assigned to the Endorsement.

2) Submit a Resolution for TCVO to utilize Trust Funds Catering funds: TCVO-FY26-19 was assigned to this resolution for submission to the Chapter for Vietnam Veterans End of 2026 Walk Luncheon at Thoreau Chapter Veterans Center on March 28. Motion by Joe Herrera; 2nd by Udall Gibson, Sr: **Yea, 19, Nay 0; Abstain 4.**

3) Submit a Resolution to Lori John, ENAVO for Budget Transfer, TCVO-FY26-020 was assigned to this Resolution. Motion by Udall Gibson, 2nd by Joe Herrera **Yea, 19, Nay 0; Abstain 4.**

Approve stipend payments for TCVO Officers: March 1, 2026 for TCVO officers; approve stipend for ENVO meeting for Vice Commander on February 11, 2026 and upcoming March 2026 meeting. Motion by Udall Gibson, 2nd by Joe Herrera **Yea, 24, Nay 0; Abstain 4.**

Set next meeting date: April 12, 2026, 8am-1:00pm.

Adjournment @ (1:27). Motion by Joe Herrera, 2nd by Udall Gibson, Sr: By Consensus with a loud YAY!

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Rosemary Gibson

Rosemary Gibson, Secretary