



Tohatchi Veterans Organization
P.O. Box 287
Tohatchi, NM 87325
Phone#: (505) 733-2845 Fax#: (505) 733-2847



Commander: Manuel Shirleson

Vice-Commander: Laris Manuelito

Secretary: Rosie Deschiney

Sergeant of Arms: Franklin Sandoval

MINUTES

Friday: August 8, 2025 at 10:00 am
Tohatchi Chapter House

1. Meeting Called to Order by: Commander Manuel Shirleson at 10:15
 - A. Roll Call: Commander
Commander – Manuel Shirleson X Vice-Commander – Laris Manuelito X
Secretary/Treasurer: Rosie Deschiney X Non-Commission Officer, Paul Begay
(NCO) ____ Chaplin: Milton Shirleson ____
Sergeant of Arms: Franklin Sandoval ____
 - B. Invocation: Given by Virginia Burbank
 - C. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence for 'MIA-POW-KIA': Done by all
2. Review/Approval of the Agenda: Motion: Alice Francisco Second by: Benson Yazzie
Vote: 8 in favor, 0 opposed and 1 abstention
3. Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes for July: Motion by Charles Arviso, second by Benson Yazzie with a vote of 10 in favor, 0 opposing and 1 abstention.
4. Introduction of Guest(s): District 14 Veterans Organization, Tikesha Echeverria, Commander for Mexican Springs, Taryn Nofchissey, Housing Specialist, Falon Begay, Veterans Service Officer and Richard Notah, Naschitti Commander
5. Old Business: Plaque for the Navajo Code Talker, we briefly talked about the Navajo Code Talker at the request of Franklin Sandoval. Presently we have only 1 Code Talker from our community who is James T. Nahkai. I receive calls stating that their family member is a Code Talker, but no record. We presently have two Navajo Code Talker: former President, Peter MacDonald and Tom Begay. The original 29 all gone, these individuals traveled to Washington DC and the rest went to Window Rock. The main event is scheduled at Window Rock and others at their own places.

Rosie gave a report that she was instructed to get a quote for a plaque, I did get a quote from Butler's in the amount of \$144.22 plaque with the United State Flag and another one with a clock for \$102.00 with the following wording: "JAMES T. NAHKAI, NAVAJO CODE TALKER, YOUR SERVICE FOR THIS COUNTRY WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED". I need your opinion and approval if this is what you would like, if there are any changes let us know. Motion by: Charles Arviso, seconded by Benson Yazzie for the plaque for \$144.22. to be presented at the September 5th. meeting. Vote: 12 in favor, 0 opposed with 1 abstention.

6. New Business: Charles would like to include the report from the agency meeting and to include an update from the Stand Down update by Mexican Springs. Included in the motion.

Tikesha Echeverria mentioned that the District 14 2025 Stand Down will take place Friday September 12, 2025 at the Twin Lakes Chapter. They will have outside vendor, we hired Bidii Chidi from Coyote Canyon to feed 300 people, so I gave an estimate of \$2,168.00 to be divided by our District 14 Chapters. This will amount to \$430.00 per chapter. We are also asking for one volunteer to post color at the event. Some items on the agenda to include from the education side, we have UNM, NTU and San Juan College, from the veterans side we have the health services department, still pending NM Workforce, Dine Naz Bah, and others. We are also looking into traditional healing, resources for Gold Star parents and veterans themselves.

Elvis Bitsilly, Chapter President, are you asking for donation from the chapter or the organization? Questioned if so, the chapter requires protocols to follow.

Charles questioned if chapter funds could be used?

The organization came up with the full amount by donations in the amount of \$230.00 and \$200.00 from Laris Manuelito. Tikesha provided what will be on the menu and drinks. Other chapters are doing fund raising. At the same time, Phillip James was appointed to do the Color Posting.

Falon Begay, Veterans Service Officer from the agency office, who also manages the Northern Agency as well until they staff their office. She manages 59 chapters. She brought the new Veterans Registration forms, handed the forms to the surviving spouse and veterans. The form is the same but requires it to be updated each year along with a map of where you live for emergency services. It's okay to make mistakes, documents are due before or by October 1, 2025. I promoted staff, Gilbertina Jackson who is now the Accounts Maintenance Specialist, Crystal Teller Office Specialist and I am the new Veterans Service Officer. Travis Yazzie is our new Office Assistant and Kiana Yellowhair as the Executive Office Assistant. New listed handed out.

I encourage everyone to call the office and ask; "if my everything is up to date in my folder"? Phone number 928/871-7307. Make sure every document is updated, i.e. Driver's license, address and what's required. The Finance Department wants to ensure that the Trust Fund money is provided to veterans, surviving spouses and gold star parents. My team will contact you if your payment is denied.

I also want to mention the during Navajo Code Talker Day next week, if you need file a disability claim, surviving spouse claim, CSO, State Federal VA from Arizona and hopefully New Mexico will be there. They will print your Veteran ID that will be done onsite. I encourage you to file your claim on site, they will have available resources for veterans. A lot of cultural presentations for entertainment, there will be free complimentary food for veterans, there will be a fly over at 12:00 from Kirtland Air Force base. 5K run walk at 7:00

am starting at 8:00 a.m.

Peter MacDonald and Thomas Begay will be honored. Will have keynote speakers, tribal royalties and dignitaries, all taking place at Window Rock Fair grounds.

She covered the 2026 budget. The agency office stopped all payments effective 6/30/25. The budget is based on veteran's count so in the policy that veterans and surviving spouse are required to attend veteran meetings, just talk right now. Regardless of who comes to this meeting as a veteran and lives elsewhere, this money is allocated to this CVO, they play a huge part whether they come to this meeting or not. This is important to update your folder.

Tohatchi started with \$56,548, used \$56,398 with a balance of \$150.00 this balance will be forward to the trust fund. As of 6/30 this amount goes back into the trust fund. The more money we use, the council knows we are spending the money at 99.73%. We are limited more line items because it's hard to keep up with quotes, too much hassle. Updated the Fort Defiance budget.

Sonny Moore pointed out that he attended the agency meeting, there is a legislation that Andy Nez and Nathan Notah are working on; this legislation supports the veterans getting a higher percentage in the future budget. This legislation needs to be approved first.

Once I get the official budget I will meet with the Commander, Vice-Commander and the Secretary, and then we will come here, and you can revise it. We really want you to be attentive to the veteran forms, you coming to the office and making sure your folders are up to date that is required by policies, if not your request will be denied.

Phillip Yazzie noted that most veterans need help to complete these forms and are unable to be there physically. A lot of guys cannot do it themselves.

Falon reiterated that these forms must be completed and submitted by them. These forms have sensitive information that is personal, we practice the privacy act and confidentiality to ensure that we are assisting veteran that needs assistance or surviving spouse. Come October 1, 2025 get your financial assistance forms, do not turn it in at the chapter house and email me, don't turn it to the Vice Commander, Secretary, or your buddy down the road because I do not want your information to get out there. The only form I am going to accept is Form DD3 by either yourself or your commander or a POA.

Cecelia; you mentioned the wife or ex-wife why would these to ladies get ahold of it?

Charles questioned the June 30th deadline, does it include General Funds? I have two honor guards that haven't been paid. Not until October 1st.

The veterans received an additional 4% this fiscal year.

Charles Arviso attended the agency meeting reporting the possibility of including "Navajo Code of Conduct", redistrict of the five chapters, and possibly receiving more funding.

It is recommended to include other sub-accounts in line item 16.

Taryn Nofchissey, Housing Specialist for the Fort Defiance Veterans Agency. We have 5 completed homes, home improvement we have approve 26, home renovation apparently pending.

We have a memo here sent by Mr. Nez stating the 164 process is still under review, once approved we will proceed with the listing. I get questions on when the house is going to be built or renovated. We hope to complete this list by 2026. With the New construction we have 28 currently on our listing, with 16 denials, this includes new homes and renovations. The present list we have will be closed, so if you want to know an update come by the office and meet with me. Call before you go to the office. Follow up on your applications. Please be honest; same with home improvement. Denials are processed within 90 days. Most homes are investigated, which requires a lot of time.

Nancy Allison requested home renovation, does this require a resolution, the homesite is not in her name. Can she probate it? Sonny volunteered to help her with the homesite.

Question from Randy Pinto are these your homes, does it have to be foundation home or mobile home does this apply to that?

Mobile homes are very limited; these go through a contractor.

The data is available at the office.

Cecelia and Benson Yazzie have had a home for almost 30 years: how much percentage is required to get a new home? Presently she has been renovated on her own, stating that last year they had a water break and damaged her floor.

All home improvements or new homes require onsite visits to determine that call.

Laris questioned; What contractors are you working with?
Swift, Vinco and Sparrow,

Laris are they building to code, with state or Navajo Nation, most homes are not built to code.

That would be a question to Ms. Teller.

7. Honor/Color Guards report: Limited service due to personal reason.
8. Officers Reports: Most of it covered during the meeting.
9. Next TVO Meeting; September 5, 2025
10. Ft. Defiance Agency Meeting: October 3, 2025 at Kinlichee.

11. Announcement(s): Bingo at Mexican Springs and etc.
12. Adjournment at 12:32 pm

Respectfully Submitted

Rosie Deschiney