

OPAG Minutes 02/06/2019

MISSION: Represent and advocate for the professional discipline of optometry and its Commissioned Officers, civil servants, contract and tribal optometrists serving within the Public Health Service and affiliated services.

OPAG Voting Member

Present:

- CDR Christopher Cordes (Chair)
- LCDR Laura Alexander (Chair-Elect)
- LT Hanna Fylpaa (Executive Secretary)
- LT Jill Thompson
- LT Albert Licup
- LT Matthew Geiger
- CDR Sarah Stienbarger
- CDR Patrick Britton

Absent:

- CDR Gregory Smith

Liasons

- LT Regina Sullivan y

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve minutes from 12/05/2018 with unanimous consent: CDR Christopher Cordes.

With no objections, minutes are approved.

Subcommittee Chair Reports

1. **Administrative Management:** LCDR Laura Alexander

No report.

2. **Awards:** LCDR Laura Alexander

HSPAC awards subcommittee: Awards put on hold during government shutdown. There is a new streamlined process for nomination and selection of PAC and PAG-level awards. This changes the process for OPAG awards. The original deadline for OPAG awards nominations was 12/31/2018, but OPAG awards deadline is now consistent with HSPAC awards deadline, which is normally 02/8/2019 with possible extension to 02/15/2019. LCDR Alexander requests deadline extension to 02/15/2019 to send out another email with call for nominations because only 1 nomination for 1 award has been received. There were no objections to extending the deadline so OPAG awards nomination deadline has been extended to 02/15/2019.

LCDR Alexander will discuss a few new changes with CDR Cordes separately such as verified basic readiness and eligibility of PAG voting members.

3. **Communications:** LT Jill Thompson

The next communications subcommittee meeting is postponed to March 2019 due to next week's town hall meeting conflicting with the previously scheduled meeting.

LT Thompson will put 12/05/2018 meeting minutes on OPAG website.

CDR Cordes reminds that there is a town hall meeting Monday 2/11/2019 with ASH and Surgeon General. Will likely address government shutdown and new policies.

4. Data & Evaluations: LT Albert Licup

No report. Will reach out to PAC committee to see if there are any upcoming action items.

5. Policy: LT Matthew Geiger

LT Geiger was briefed by CDR Rennard on current policies. OPAG is in a holding pattern regarding the work done on policies, waiting to hear back from HSPAC.

6. Recruitment (Ad Hoc): CDR Sarah Stienbarger

There is a new application process for the Commissioned Corps. No longer graded on the OPAG rubric. Applicants are boarded by a phone call, then receive LMS access, then complete form PHS-50. Next, medical and security clearance will be completed at the same time, which is good news as it should be faster than the old system of doing medical and security as two separate consecutive processes.

Therapist category has priority at this time so HSO category may be considered next month.

PJ plans to restart the application process.

No contact information for MM, attempting to acquire contact information for her.

An optometrist at Walter Reed is interested in Commissioned Corps application process and CDR Steinbarger is working with him.

Husband and wife optometrists are looking to work in IHS, focusing on dual positions in Navajo Area as civil service.

7. Stakeholder & Community Engagement: CDR Patrick Britton

No Report.

8. Technical Readiness: CDR Robert Chelberg

No report.

9. Training, Education, and Mentorship: CDR Greg Smith

No report.

Stakeholder Engagement Reports

• **Chief Clinical Consultant:** CDR Cordes for CAPT Dawn Clary

○ CAPT Clary can be contacted directly with any questions or concerns.

○ A new pay scale when into effect on 10/14/2018 for government civil service optometrists. The new pay scale involves a substantial pay raise from previous pay scales by increasing the baseline for GS optometrists within IHS. However, the new pay scale did not get implemented efficiently. Each area has been given some latitude on how to implement new pay tables. There may have been 3-4 pay periods that the new pay scale was not implemented after it became effective.

National office has said optometrists should be retroactively paid if new pay scale was not implemented by 10/14/2018 however some area offices are not agreeing to retroactive pay. This

issue was an exempt activity so was put on hold during the government shutdown. CAPT Clary is continuing to work on this issue.

- **CDC Liaison:** LT Regina Sullivan
 - Moving forward LT Sullivan will spend approximately 5 minutes reporting at OPAG meetings on the Vision Health Initiative within CDC and relevant research topics of interest to optometrists.

Discussion Topics/ Q&A

- **Health Professions Special Pay (HPSP): IP/BP/BCIP**
 - **Board Certification Incentive Pay (BCIP):** Fellowship in the American Academy of Optometry.
 - May appeal to receive BCIP for other board certifications (ex ABO) but currently only Fellowship in AAO is recognized as board certification for optometrists in the Commissioned Corps.
 - No new paperwork is required if it was submitted last year.
 - BCIP is currently \$500/month for Fellows in good standing.
 - **Incentive Pay (IP):** \$100/month for being an optometrist.
 - Legislated into law in the 70's or 80's after a big push from the AOA and AFOS to compensate optometrists similar to other health professionals with a special skill set, as an incentive to work for the government. Continuing to determine whether or not IP requires a yearly contract since it is a federal law.
 - If not under a current IP/BP contract then apply as soon as possible to begin receiving these pays.
 - If under a current contract for IP/BP then re-submit contract paperwork during the month of retirement credit date (RCD). Example – if RCD is July then submit paperwork in July, this will allow the IP/BP contract to end at the same time that you are eligible to retire. If you already have a current contract then you should continue to get paid at the same rate as 2018 until you submit new paperwork during the month of your RCD.
 - Last year IP/BP were together but this year they have been separated again.
 - **Retention Bonus (BP)**
 - BP contract only needs to be renewed as often as your contract length (2, 3, or 4 years).
 - LT Licup questions Appendix B and C – certain professions specify “IP without Retention Bonus” vs “IP in conjunction with Retention Bonus,” however the optometry section is unclear in that it appears you select EITHER IP or Retention Bonus, but it seems you can't combine them. CDR Cordes emailed the compensation branch and PHS Inquiry about this topic and has not received a response from either; however CAPT Clary's advice is to submit both. Recommendation is to over submit instead of under submit.
- **Promotion** – Follow up on promotion issues
 - eDOCu is shut off except for non-promotion documents.
 - No formal information distributed about why no one promoted last year.
- **New Call to Active Duty OD's** – nothing to report.

Good/Welfare

- CDR Steinbarger reports there is a RAM event associated with 2019 COA in Minneapolis, MN in May.
 - LT Geiger reports that the RAM Mission associated with 2018 COA had the ASH and many CPOs in attendance. It was a high profile event.
- LCDR Alexander reports a RAM event is scheduled to take place in Weatherford, Oklahoma on July 13-14, 2019.

- Situation is unknown as far as potential government shutdown on February 15, CDR Cordes encourages everyone to continue putting their best foot forward and be a good example of optometry and what we can do.
- LT Fylpaa question regarding OPAG Listserv – it is not an active Listerv and has not been used in a few years.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:31am by CDR Cordes.

Upcoming OPAG meetings:

03-April-2019

All meetings are:

08:00 Alaska

09:00 Pacific

10:00 Mountain

11:00 Central

12:00 Eastern