

**ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND**

December 1, 2022
1:00 PM

Chairman Strom explained the Legislative Subcommittee was meeting with the Legislative Council. Commissioner Wangen is also in attendance at the Legislative Council Meeting. Chairman Strom will call the meeting to order at 1:20 or sooner depending on the return of the subcommittee and Commissioner.

Meeting called to order at 1:10 PM by Chairman Murray Strom. Pledge of Allegiance and a Moment of Silence observed for POW/MIAs, those serving overseas.

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Brian Bartlett | Trish Hodny | Tom Ryan (TEAMS) |
| Richard Belling | Lamar Kruckenberg | Murray Strom |
| Joseph Bialke | Vernon Laning | Jim Verwey |
| Mamie Havelka | Gary Maddock | Glenn Wahus |
| Dave Hilleren | Dave Rice | Hal Weninger |

Absent:

Guests:

Danelle Hopkins, Governor's Office
Our attorney from Attorney General's Office
Tom Turk, Commander, VFW

Chairman Strom asked for a motion to accept the Agenda.

Motion by Vernon Laning to accept the Meeting Agenda as presented with the addition of a Vietnam video, Dave Hilleren 2nd. Motion carried.

A video on the history of the Vietnam War was shown. This is being played in schools to make students aware of the Vietnam War. Dan Stenvold, N.D. V.V.A. President, provided the video.

ND National Guard – MG Alan Dohrmann, Adjutant General [HANDOUT]
Summary of Mobilizations, Construction Projects. Information on a Military Museum.

MAJ Jay Sheldon [HANDOUT]

Updates on TaskForce MIND and Military Initiatives. Information on recent/upcoming events.

Office of the Adjutant General Legislative Reception set for Dec. 6, 2022 at the ND National Guard Army Aviation Facility, 3410 Yegen Rd, Bismarck ND 58504; 5:30-7:30.

Dr. Breton Weintraub, Fargo VAHCS Director, (TEAMS)

Electronic health records program to go online sometime in 2024. Contract clinics are struggling with staffing, especially in Williston. VA is working on a pilot program to expand VA services to Tribal Reservations in Minnesota. If it is successful, the program could be brought to North Dakota Reservations. Presently working on land acquisition for the Fisher House in Fargo.

UND Medical School provides residents for the VA, the VA pays for the residents.

Jerome Billups, ND Job Service Veterans Employment Programs Administrator

There are 16,000 job openings available in ND. Job Service provided assistance to 522 participants last year to secure employment. Job Service also assists employers in finding workers. There are five representative who work with veterans throughout North Dakota including the Reservations. Electronic training is being provided to veterans in areas such as assisting veterans with applications online and using video conferencing in place of veteran's travelling to a Job Service office. There are no federal funds for marketing Job Service assistance/programs for veterans.

Michelle Gauvin-Panos, ND Cares Director (TEAMS)

ND Cares is collaborating with Mitch Earhardt, Morton County VSO to use the Broadcaster Association to promote the Pact Act. The information needs to be presented in a way that it is a benefit for veterans. If it is successful, there could be plans to have a television ad. UND has received a \$5M grant from the CDC regarding veteran suicide prevention.

Mark Johnson, Veterans Home Administrator

An addition is being added to the Courtyard to include an extra entrance. Tabled Memorial Garden due to cost. Working with Commissioner Wangen on definition of a veteran; broadening definition to include Other than Honorable. New commercials are bringing in residents but staffing levels are low. The commercials are due to ND Cares funding. COVID cases are exploding after having decreased cases. There are also some

cases of the flu in the Home. More stringent protocols such as twice a week testing are being put in place to try and curb the cases. Thank you to the veterans' service organizations for all their donations to the Veterans Home.

Subcommittee meetings held.

December 2, 2022
Committee reconvened at: 9:00am

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------|
| Brian Bartlett | Trish Hodny | Murray Strom |
| Richard Belling | Vernon Laning | Jim Verwey |
| Joseph Bialke | Gary Maddock | Glenn Wahus |
| Mamie Havelka | Dave Rice | Hal Weninger |
| Dave Hilleren | Tom Ryan (TEAMS) | |

Absent – Excused

Lamar Kruckenberg

***Motion by Vern Laning to accept the September 2022 minutes, Jim Verwey second.
Motion carried.***

Discussion on next quarter meeting.

Motion by Richard Belling to meet February 16 & 17, 2023 in Bismarck, Glenn Wahus second. Motion carried.

ND DVA Report – Commissioner Lonnie Wangen [POWER POINT PRESENTATION]

Commissioner Wangen spoke on the Department's website section pertaining to Legislation and how the committee members can follow bills submitted during the Legislative Session.

He also spoke on possible legislative items for the Legislative Session:
Appreciation of Veterans and Military:

– DAV Vehicle Plates

Budget NDDVA:

– Optional Packages

Burial & Memorial:

– Add Bridges for the Fallen program. Allow bridges in ND to be named after fallen service men and women

– Funeral Honor Guard Stipend Funding

– Resolution - USS Frank E. Evans

Education:

– Dependent Tuition Waiver Amend: Prorated use and graduate level added

– Dependent Tuition Waiver – Discount and refunds

Employment/Entrepreneur:

– Veterans Preference-Amend to add Active-duty pre-discharge eligibility and current National Guard and Reserve

– Entrepreneur – Preference to ND Veterans, Disabled veteran and Spouse bidders, sellers, and contractors

– Leave during drill weekends

Financial:

– Property Tax – Amend taxable value up to \$300,000. Remove “un-remarried”

– Post War Trust Fund – Gaming Tax to Post War Trust Fund

– Organizations State Departments for administrative and operation expenses

– Scan and digitize all DD214’s and Veteran files at County and Tribal offices

– Grants to Veteran Service Organizations for Service Officers

Housing:

– Amend. Certain disabled former service members, National Guard & Reserve as eligible for residency at ND State Veterans Home

National Guard:

– NDDVA Financial – Amend ND National Guard and Reserve eligible for NDDVA Loan Program

Law & Policy Change:

– Add. Definition of Military, Armed Forces and Uniformed Services

– ND Veterans Affairs access to Vital Records Death Certificates

***Motion by Hal Weninger to accept Commissioner’s Report, Trish Hodny second.
Motion carried unanimously.***

Legislative Subcommittee – report by Mamie Havelka

Met with ND Veterans Legislative Council and reviewed possible legislative items for 2023 Legislative Session. Discussed ACOVA Guidelines and found some changes that need to be made.

***Motion by Mamie Havelka to accept subcommittee report, second by Trish Hodny.
Motion carried unanimously.***

Veterans Affairs Subcommittee – report by Hal Weninger

Item #3 Discuss Fund 410: question on there is a refund amount – Issue happened in prior biennium, Department and veteran both paid bill. Instead of refunding the money to the veteran, the vendor refunded the money to the Department. Funds had to be sent to Vendor again to pay bill in current biennium.

Loan Policy #232 – Veterans Aid Loan – Interest Refunds

Add: Applicant is entitled to a refund of half the interest paid if loan payments are made in good faith and the loan is repaid by the loan maturity date.

Reviewed Loan Program Binder.

Reviewed current budget and proposed 2023-2025 Budget.

Motion by Hal Weninger to accept subcommittee minutes, second by Richard Belling.

Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion on Commissioner granting a deferment of payments due to financial hardship. Joseph Bialke stated that he believed it is within the Commissioner's authority to extend loan maturity date.

Motion by Hal Weninger to adopt changes to Policy 232, Glenn Wahus second. Motion carried.

PWTF & Appeals Subcommittee – report by Vern Laning.

Reviewed PWTF and Fund 410 balances, no issues noted. The possibility of requesting a bill to be submitted to the Legislature to allow 50% of the gaming tax to be allocated to the PWTF or NDDVA discussed. Subcommittee voted to support such a bill. No requests for funding.

Appeals Subcommittee – report by Vern Laning

No appeals or procedural changes to consider. Subcommittee inquired about a previous appeal dealing with a roof repair cost of \$21,000 of which the subcommittee authorized \$5,000 to be paid. It was reported that the roof was repaired and \$5,000 has been paid.

Motion by Vern Laning to accept both subcommittee reports, Dave Rice second. Motion carried unanimously.

Jim Verwey asked the Commissioner to report to the full committee on the appeal regarding roofing repair.

Chairman Report

Budget Report by Governor Burgum on December 7th at 10:00am.

January 3rd is the State of the State Message by Governor Burgum at 1:00pm.

Appointments to Governing Board.

Cathy Keogh, Dean Overby and Mary Vetter will be coming off the Governing Board as of June 30, 2023. Chairman Strom would like to have someone from the Administrative Committee serving on the Board.

Chairman Strom moved to accept his report, Brian Bartlett second. Motion carried unanimously.

Roundtable Discussion:

Hal Weninger– Veterans from ND travelled to Washington DC for the 40th Anniversary of the Vietnam Memorial Wall. Commissioner Wangen carried the North Dakota State Flag for the Ceremony. Hal spoke on the event and shared his experience. Average age of those named on the Wall is 23.1.

Gary Maddock: Missed some of the presentations due to meeting with ND Legislative Council. Welcomed Trish back to the committee. The President of the Ladies Auxillary project is the Fisher House.

Dave Rice: Reported that 565 veterans and 138 spouses have been interred in National Cemetery, Fargo. Issues with the Cemetery and some individuals are settling down with the assistance of Senator Hoeven's office. Added wind wall for protection of the Honor Guard. Owner of land wants to sell to City of Fargo instead of a private organization; the city would then lease to Honor Guard. This would ensure continuation of the buildings' upkeep. Fargo VFW hosted Thanksgiving dinner on 23rd for homeless shelter and veterans in need; 200 meals were served; they are planning on doing it again next year.

Dave Hilleren: Talked about Firebase Ripcord; after 20 years, information started coming out about it. 1/72nd diorama of Firebase Ripcord in Museum in South Carolina. Also went to the 40th Anniversary of the Vietnam Wall in Washington D.C. The Vietnam Veterans Conference will be held the 3rd week July in Mayville. New Town will sponsor it in 2024. Encouraged everyone to go see the Vietnam Wall if they haven't; it's very moving way to honor those who gave all.

Trish Hodny: Glad to be on the Committee. Teaches at University of North Dakota in Grand Forks and is also a municipal judge. Subcommittees should all break out at the same time so members don't miss hearing the Speakers information. This happens to the Legislative Subcommittee. She felt like she missed out especially for the VA report. Suggested it would be in ACOVA's best interest to draft policy concerning Governing Board appointments, i.e. ACOVA member, medical background, banking, and best practices.

Dutch Bialke: Appreciated initiatives that are being put forward for the legislative session, especially interested in the Military museum. US soccer team playing Netherlands at 10am tomorrow morning, will be rooting for the US.

Vernon Laning: Legion has agreement with park service, once animals have wandered out of the park they are executed and the meat is distributed to members in the community.

Lonnie Wangen: Thanked Vietnam veterans for the Washington experience. Already getting calls from Legislative Council regarding upcoming Legislative bills. Appreciates what everyone does and welcomed back Trish.

Dan Thorstad: Thanked committee for their support and insights. Social media is important and asked committee members to spread the word.

Tom Ryan: Thanked Dan for working with him on Teams so he can attend the meeting. He has visited the Wall twice, it was a very moving experience for him. Learned a lot from this meeting. Looking forward to an opportunity to visit with Commissioner and how to get legislators on board in supporting veterans.

Jim Verwey: Lot of good information. Nice to have Dan for information on IT. Asked about finding out information on Legislators such as, if they are a veteran.

Brian Bartlett: Talked about AMVETS program on Americanism. Really good bills being put forward for the legislative session. Thanked Dan for being here for when the subcommittee is discussing changes to policies.

Richard Belling: Good meeting. Reconnected with someone he served in Vietnam and hadn't talked to since 1969.

Glenn Wahus: Good to have office information. BetheOne.Org program – mental health stigmatism concentrating on veterans. Talked about Buddy check program and has posted on social media. Related a story about a veteran that was helped because someone checked on him.

Mamie Havelka: Good to be at meeting. Legislative time is coming but she will be out of state. It will be helpful to be able to follow the bills on the website.

Murray Strom: Wanted clarity on wearing red shirt on Friday. Legislation is very important and wanted the subcommittee to meet with ND Legislative Council. Chairman

is willing to move committee meeting to start at 10:00 in the morning so there isn't a conflict. Trish asked if the speakers could start at 3:00pm.

***Motion to adjourn by Jim Verwey, second by Richard Belling.
Motion passed.***

Respectfully submitted:

Jim Verwey
Secretary