

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Teams Meeting

June 6, 2023

Meeting called to order at 10:08am by Chairman Murray Strom. Pledge of Allegiance and a Moment of Silence observed for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Brian Bartlett	Trish Hodney	Tom Ryan
Richard Belling	Lamar Kruckenberg	Murray Strom
Joseph Bialke	Vernon Laning	Glenn Wahus
Mamie Havelka	Gary Maddock	Hal Weninger
Dave Hilleren	Dave Rice	

Absent:

Jim Verwey

Chairman Strom turned the meeting over to Richard Belling, Chairman Subcommittee on Department of Veterans Affairs.

Richard explained a subcommittee meeting was called with Hal Weninger being present along with Cathy Halgunseth, employee, ND DVA. Subsequently, there are no recommendations but Hal will give report on the discussion.

Commissioner Wangen's present monthly is \$7,391. The 6% raise on July 1, 2023 will bring his salary to \$7,834.46 and the 4% raise on July 1, 2023 will bring the monthly salary to \$8,147.84.

The equity money given the Department went to staff with none going to the Commissioner. The Veterans Benefit Specialist positions received most of the equity funds since their compensation is 30-40% behind Minnesota and the Federal VA.

In reviewing the Department positions, Commissioner Wangen received a report provided by HRMS showing a comparison of similar size agencies and what the agency heads/directors receive in compensation. Commissioner Wangen's salary was near the bottom even though he has been with the Department for 15 years.

It was proposed the Committee should consider giving a Performance Bonus the Commissioner.

Trish Hodny asked how his salary compared with other State Directors, Commissioner Wangen replied that in the larger states, the Deputy Commissioners make 2 -3 times

more than he does. The Commissioners in those states make six figure salaries. North Dakota is one of the lower paying States.

Discussion took place on when the last time the Commissioner's Job Description was updated and the workload of the Commissioner.

Joseph Bialke proposed the Committee look at a Retention Bonus for the Commissioner since there is more flexibility in the amount that could be given. Lonnie goes above and beyond a 9 – 5 job in being Commissioner and he doesn't have a Deputy Commissioner to take some of the workload.

The committee discussed the merits of a Performance Bonus and Retention Bonus.

Motion by Joseph Bialke to approve a Performance Bonus of \$1,500 and a Retention Bonus of \$8,500 for a total of \$10,000 to be effective June 1, 2023, second by Hal Weninger. This be considered a bonus of \$5,000 for FY22 and FY23 as no bonuses were given the first year of the biennium.

The rationale for the bonuses is as follows:

The Commissioner's evaluations for FY 22 and FY23 show performance elements that Exceeds Standards.

His work ethic is reflected in the outstanding job he does for the veterans of North Dakota. He has worked tirelessly on bringing a Veterans Court to ND and securing federal funding to help veterans in rural communities get transportation to medical appointments (Highly Rural Transportation Grant). He is presently working on getting funding for a Fisher House to be built near the VA Hospital. This all is in addition to his daily duties in the office.

The compensation for the Commissioner's position is inadequate for the workload and duties expected to be performed. The Committee is aware that Mr. Wangen could easily secure another position at higher pay if he should choose to do so. They would prefer to keep him as Commissioner. They also know that they would be unable to hire a new Commissioner at the current salary who would be of the same caliber as Mr. Wangen.

Roll call vote taken, motion passed.

Motion by Tom Ryan to adjourn, second by Mamie Havelka. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted:

Jim Verwey
Secretary