

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

September 18, 2025
1:00 PM

Meeting called to order at 1:00pm by Chairman Murray Strom. Pledge of Allegiance and a Moment of Silence observed for POW/MIAs.

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Steve Anderson	Trish Hodny (TEAMS)	Cynthia Schlosser
Brian Bartlett	Nathan Huntington	Murray Strom
Joe Best	Tom Newton	Jacob Volk
Dave Hilleren	Rick Olek	

Absent:

Jim Hapala	Jim Verwey – Excused
Tom Ryan – Excused	Hal Weninger - Excused

Guests:

Chairman Strom asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Motion to approve Agenda by Steve Anderson, 2nd by Jake Volk. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Strom introduced the three new committee members and asked that they give information on themselves. He presented Nate Huntington, Tom Newton and Rick Olek an ACOVA pins.

Chairman Strom then asked those present to go around the room and introduce themselves and state a few things about themselves.

ND DVA Report – Commissioner Lonnie Wangen
[Power point Presentation]
Updates on Department's activities.

Governor's Office – Al Dormann, Chief Operating Officer

Talked about changes regarding SB 2025 has on the Commissioner and ACOVA. The problem with the changes is that they were done without veterans input. On the plus side, having the weight of the Governor's Office on the department and policies is a good thing. ACOVA is now a policy committee to the Governor but still appoints members to the Veterans Home Governing Board. The Governor appoints the Commissioner.

Mr. Dormann plans to attend ACOVA meetings. He would like to start a discussion on how to make the changes work going forward.

Questions were raised on how the change impacts the Postwar Trust Fund. It is in Century Code that ACOVA determines policy regarding PWTF.

VAHCS-Fargo: Dr. Andrew Stasko, Interim Director

The Fargo VA Hospital is ranked #1 for a medium sized facility and has received a 5 star rating. The VA will be doing a reorganization but will not be downsized. No work yet on the Fisher House land purchase.

ND National Guard: Colonel Kuntz, Director of Plans and Policies for the Guard
Mission – 200 soldiers deployed both domestically and abroad. FY25 was difficult due to budget constraints, starting FY26 under a continuing resolution.
People – 4,300 total employees are comprised of soldiers and airmen, active guard reserve, state employees and tech employees.

Would like to work together more with Veterans Affairs during Legislative Session.

ND Cares: Michelle Gauvin-Panos, Director

Morton County became the newest CARES Community member. Stand Down Event in Minot on October 16th. Looking for ways to partner with entities to help veterans.

Job Service ND: Jerome Billups-director DVOP & LVRS

Most veterans they work with are looking at employment in healthcare and transportation. Gave information on services provided to veterans and data on veterans staying in employment after receiving services.

ND Assoc. of County & Tribal Veterans Service Officers: Chris Deery, President,
Cass County VSO
[Talking Points]
Cass County Veterans Facebook page

ND Veterans Home: Dane Grebel, Administrator

Curt Twete gave notice that he is done on the Governing Board. David Peterson has been contacted, and he decided he does not want to serve on the Board.

VA Survey completed, four items were cited. Dane went through those items, they were more on policy and paperwork. None had to do with care for the veterans at the facility. Finished building on site garages and storage units for residents. Relying on travelling nurses to provide coverage in the Home due to staffing shortages.

Chairman Strom noted that there are two openings for the Veterans Home Governing Board.

CAPND: Andrea Olson, Executive Director

Community Action Partnership of North Dakota. In North Dakota there are seven community action agencies, located in each of the major cities, which serve all counties across the State. They administer the SSVF program, Supportive Services to Veterans Families, that assists veterans and their families with homelessness or are on the brink of homelessness.

Commissioner Wangen spoke on the \$500,000 homeless grant the Department was given for the 2025-2027 Biennium.

Trish asked about some of the gaps in the federal programs that this grant could help with. Andrea talked about extending hotel/motel stays beyond 60 days, helping with rental arrears with previous landlords, transportation support – vehicle insurance and registration fees, emotional and support animals – pet deposit/rent, justifiable housing costs, court ordered fines, purchasing emergency supplies. These things are not allowable expenses in federal grants. Commissioner Wangen would also like to add surviving spouses, which is not allowable under the federal grants.

Andrea was asked about what percentage of the grant would go to veterans. She said the federal administrative fee is 10% and she would expect that would be the same for this grant. So, 90% of the funds would go directly to veterans and their families.

ND Attorney General's Office - Mark Openshaw, Assistant Attorney General
Open Records and Open Meetings, Roberts Rules of Order [PowerPoint Presentation]

Committee recessed for subcommittee meetings.

Committee reconvened at 9:15am 9/19/2025

Chairman Strom reconvened the meeting.

***Motion by Steve Anderson to accept May 2025 minutes, second by Brian Bartlett.
Motion passed unanimously.***

Discussion on next meeting:

***Motion by Rick Olek to have the next meeting November 14 & 15, 2025 in Fargo, ND,
second by Nate Huntington. Motion carried.***

Veterans Affairs Subcommittee – report by Joe Best, Secretary
Nate Huntington elected Chairman. Chairman appointed Joe Best as Secretary.

Reviewed Fund 410 revenue and expenditures.
Change to Policies #200, #230, and #231 to reflect legislative change of Veterans Aid
Loan from \$5,000 to \$8,000.

***Subcommittee recommends the following motion made by Cynthia Schlosser, second by
Joe Best regarding the \$500,00 Homeless Veterans' Services (SB2025 section 2-one
time funding):
In order to administer homeless veterans service one time funding to prevent
homelessness and/or becoming homeless we recommend the following parameters. To
partner with CAPND and administer in house by NDDVA to serve all 53 counties and
tribes of the state of ND to ensure low administrative costs. To provide counselling***

services in conjunction with monetary grants and maintain good records to identify program successes or weaknesses, using policies already in place by the NDDVA for housing needs and to offset previous use of IMPACT grant funds, the limits of grants shall match the current caps in policy 403 (PWTF policy). This shall become policy 903. All relevant ACOVA appropriates to NDDVA the full amount of legislative appropriations of \$500,000 which is not to exceed 50% of total appropriations before end of first state fiscal year. Remaining 50% invested as allowed by OMB/State Treasurer's Office recommendation. This shall be reviewed at ACOVA quarterly meetings.

The Subcommittee recommends approval.

Discussion on policy #903.

Motion by Nate Huntington for the full ACOVA to vote on the Subcommittee motion as modified through discussion, second by Joe Best. Motion carried.

Review current and past audits.

Motion by Joe Best to accept subcommittee report, second by Nate Huntington. Motion carried unanimously.

Legislative Subcommittee – report by Jake Volk, Secretary.

Brian Bartlett elected Chairman, Jake Volk appointed Secretary.

Strategic planning is no longer necessary by legislative action.

Reviewed

Motion by Jake Volk to approve subcommittee minutes, second by Rick Olek. Motion carried unanimously.

PWTF & Appeals Subcommittee

Appeals Subcommittee – report by Dave Hilleren, Secretary

Trish Hodny elected Chair and Dave Hilleren appointed Secretary

Four appeals were heard by the subcommittee.

Appeal #1 – appellant did not attend, appeal upheld by subcommittee

Appeal #2 - appellant did not attend, appeal upheld by subcommittee

Appeal #3 – appellant did not attend, appeal upheld by subcommittee

Appeal #4 - appellant did not attend, appeal upheld by subcommittee

Motion by Dave Hilleren to accept Appeals subcommittee report as accepted, second by Jake Volk. Motion by Trish Hodny to amend the Subcommittee minutes regarding one of the appellant's financial situation, second by Dave Hilleren. Motion carried unanimously. Motion to accept subcommittee minutes carried unanimously.

PWTF – report by Dave Hilleren, Secretary
Trish Hodny elected Chair and Dave Hilleren appointed Secretary

See subcommittee minutes.

Motion by Steve Anderson to invest the 2023-2025 PWTF interest earnings allocated to ACOVA for the 2025-2027 biennium as outlined by the subcommittee, second by Trish Hodny.

Motion by Trish Hodny to accept PWTF report as presented, second by Steve Anderson. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Strom stated the North Dakota Veterans Home Governing Board needs to members. He thought Chris Deery may be a good person to serve on the Board. Rick Olek will talk to a few other people. Trish Hodny sent in a few names of people she thought might be interested. Commissioner Wangen will talk with Chris Deery about the Governing Board

Commissioner Wangen will work with Dane Grebel to put together an application for people interested in the Board.

Roundtable Discussion question: Where would you like to have the meeting at?

Cathy Halgunseth: Thanked the committee, it's been a pleasure working at the Department for the past 45 years.

Dan Thorstad: Please respond to emails that are sent.

Commissioner Wangen: Website – About Us – will give information on ACOVA. Veterans Home is a good place to have a meeting. For the Fargo meeting, he would like to have staff do some presentations. North Dakota has a pyramid and that would be interesting. It would be good for ACOVA to have meetings at military sites in ND.

Dane Grebel: Thanked the Commissioner for everything he does for veterans. Would like the committee to consider Veterans Home as a site.

Rick Olek: Worked with Schneider on getting the Homeless Bill started, very glad Legislature provided funding. Places for meetings mentioned are good, Medora may be a place.

Tom Newton: First meeting, learned a lot. Looking forward to working with committee members. Likes the idea of the Air Force base.

Cynthia Schlosser: So much to learn, appreciate all the help everyone is giving.

Steve Anderson: Medora and the Air Base sound great.

Nate Huntington: Very grateful he was selected to be on ACOVA. Like to rotate the meetings, if we could go to smaller towns that would be good.

Joe Best: Going to National Guard facility in Dickinson would be good. New Town would be another one.

Dave Hilleren: Nice to go to smaller towns, ACOVA would be welcome at Four Bears Casino. If we go in the summertime, we could go out on the lake on a boat that is available. The Vietnam Veterans of America is looking for an organization to take over their POW/MIA program when the time comes that the VVA is no longer viable. Some families still need closure. Remains are still being found and identified. Welcome to the new members.

Jake Volk: Good meeting. Everyone has addressed different places, Medora would be a good choice.

Brian Bartlett: Next June, military remains are being returned to a farm around Dahlen ND. That might be something the committee could consider.

Commissioner Wangen stated he heard from Chris Deery and he would like to serve on the Governing Board.

Motion by Joe Best, second Rick Olek to appoint Chris Deery to the North Dakota Veterans Home. Motion carried unanimously.

Trish Hodny: Welcome to the new members. Plans to be in person at meetings going forward. Great experience at the Veterans' Home, has been to Camp Grafton. Would like to go to the Grand Forks Air Base, keeping contacted with the Tribes and small communities.

Murray Strom: We are veterans helping veterans. Next year, let him know if you would like to serve on a different subcommittee. It's good to serve on the other committees

Motion to adjourn by Joe Best, second by Jake Volk. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 11:04am.

Respectfully submitted:

Jim Verwey
Secretary



Chairman