

NORTH DAKOTA VETERANS COORDINATING COUNCIL
Barnes County Courthouse, Valley City, North Dakota
March 28, 1983

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Paul Aaberg. Those in attendance were:

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Paul Aaberg, Dept. Cmdr.
Ken McGaughey, Dept. Adj.
Bill Stepp, Org. Rep.

AMERICAN LEGION

Milt Kane, Dept. Cmdr.
Vern Useldinger, Dept. Adj.
Gerald Taylor, Org. Rep.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Jim Groven, Dept. Cmdr.
Robert Hannah, Dept. Adj.
Greg Seurer, Org. Rep.

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Lloyd Zander, Commissioner of Veterans Affairs
Charles Code, Commandant, Soldiers' Home
W. M. Williamson, State Director, Veterans Employment
Bill Hill, Dept. Cmdr., AMVETS
Elmer Ekern, Dept. Adj., AMVETS
Charles Barstad, VFW Service Officer
Jack Hilleboe, Representing the Chairman, ACOVA
Floyd Henderson, Veterans of World War I

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Wayne Tanous, Legislative Committee, DAV
Joe Novak, Legislative Committee, American Legion
Iver Iverson, Legislative Committee, VFW
Jim Zeigler, Vietnam Veterans of America
John Cameron, Vietnam Veterans of America
Melvin Oja, Vietnam Veterans of America
Allen Matties, Vietnam Veterans of America
Ron Zeller, Vietnam Veterans of America
Ralph Hamre, President, County Veterans Service Officers
John Meyer, Secretary, County Veterans Service Officers
Pete Helm, Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs
Harry Moore, American Legion
Mike Vandrovec, Disabled American Veterans
Keith Kiser, Department of Veterans Affairs
Jim Welder, Soldiers' Home
Bernard Wagner, Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs
Frank Gathman, Director, Veterans Administration
Dr. David Engstrom, Chief of Staff, Veterans Administration

Ken McGaughey moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes and that they be approved as distributed. Motion seconded by Milt Kane and carried.

Ken McGaughey presented the Treasurer's Report:

Balance on hand, January 12, 1983

Pass Book Savings, Fargo Nat'l Bank & Trust	\$ 863.69	
Checking Account, Fargo Nat'l Bank & Trust	<u>696.15</u>	\$ 1,559.84

Receipts:

Refund from Secretary of State	\$ 10.00	
AMVETS	<u>50.00</u>	60.00
		<u>\$ 1,619.84</u>

Disbursements:

Woodmansee's Inc.	\$ 5.78	
VFW Post #1326	342.19	
Marlys Schuler, mileage & exp.	130.00	
Bill Williamson, mileage & exp.	132.80	
Bill Williamson, Legis. exp.	<u>26.89</u>	<u>637.66</u>

Balance on Hand, 3/28/83		
Checking Account	\$ 118.49	
Pass Book Savings	<u>863.69</u>	\$ 982.18

Vern Useldinger moved approval of the Treasurer's Report. Motion seconded by Bill Stepp and carried.

Bill Williamson reported on legislative matters:

S.B. 2014 - is the appropriation for the Soldiers' Home. Part of the appropriation is taken from the interest from the Post War Trust Fund. The timing and amounts of salary increases for the next biennium will still have to be resolved in conference committee.

H.B. 1014 - Department of Veterans Affairs budget. This appropriation is also taken from the interest of the Post War Trust Fund. The issue of salary increases must also be resolved in conference committee on this bill.

H.B. 1111 - This bill allows us to use half of the interest from Veterans Aid Loans to collect delinquent loans. This bill has been passed and signed by the Governor.

H.B. 1117 - This bill states that fee charges not be paid for the aviation course of study to dependents of POW/MIAs. Tuition and fee charges, however, will be paid to these dependents for all other courses of study.

H.B. 1113 - Permits the spouse of a female veteran as a member at the Soldiers' Home. This bill has been signed by the Governor.

H.B. 1338 - This bill was killed. It sought to open admittance to the Soldiers' Home to peacetime servicemen.

It was noted that H.B. 1338 and others have caused the Coordinating Council much in problem in the legislature. The Veterans Coordinating Council has been chastised for not being able to get together on veterans' legislation.

Robert Hannah moved the constitution be amended to include the County Veterans Service Officers Association as counsel and resource on the Veterans Coordinating Council. Motion seconded by Vern Useldinger and carried.

S.B. 2414 - provides for a memorium to be given to the family of a POW upon his death. His license plate will be retired and also presented to the family, however, it may not be used again. The plaque will also include a replica of the license plate.

S.B. 2075 - This bill asked that Memorial Day be returned to the original date of May 30. The bill was killed.

S.C.R. 4009 - Was a resolution asking Congress to change the date of Memorial Day and that it be returned to the original date of May 30. This bill was also killed.

Ken McGaughey moved that resolutions be presented to all Department Conventions, stating that Memorial Day be returned to May 30. If these are all passed, the Council will pursue legislation to this effect in the next session. Motion seconded by Jim Groven and carried.

H.B. 1538 - At our last meeting we came to an agreement to have H.B. 1538 and S.B. 2121 amended so they were identical, both to include the Vietnam Veterans of America and the AMVETS on the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs, with one member each in 1983, two members each in 1984, and three members each in 1985. However, the Senate saw fit not to amend H.B. 1538, and it was killed. S.B. 2121 has been amended, and is now in the Senate, awaiting concurrence with the amendments added in the House.

Bill Stepp moved we continue support of S.B. 2121 until it is passed and signed. Motion seconded by Robert Hannah and carried.

Copies of H.C.R. 3043 were distributed. Joe Novak reported on the study to be made of all veteran benefits. He noted that probably the study committee will be made up of some legislators who are not familiar with the veterans programs and benefits. It was noted that this study should be a topic of discussion at Department Conventions, because this study will be made before veterans organizations will have another convention. He urged everyone to approach this study with an open mind.

Bill Williamson noted that the unemployment problem in the State of North Dakota is getting worse. We have triggered into supplemental extended Unemployment Insurance benefits for those who have exhausted their benefits. In the state there are now 3,886 veterans unemployed and registered at Job Service offices. This results in an unemployment rate of approximately 5.9%. There are 1,872 registered Vietnam veterans who are unemployed. This results in an unemployment rate of 11%. It was noted that veterans organizations fought long and hard and did get GI Bill education extended for vocational training and OJT.

Mr. Williamson reminded the Council that Wayne Tanous is a member of the Governor's Employment and Training Forum, representing veterans. Bill has contacted Ron Deitz to see if he has any CETA money left. He stated that if every Job Service office in the state had one extra person to contact Vietnam veterans and refer Vietnam veterans on job orders received, it would do much to alleviate the unemployment problem. He noted he would like to ask for sufficient funds to hire six additional Vietnam veterans, in addition to the DVOP staff, to go to work in this capacity. After further discussion, Milt Kane moved the Veterans Coordinating Council send representatives to the Governor offering an employment and training proposal to resolve the high unemployment rate of the Vietnam veteran. Motion seconded by Ken McGaughey and carried.

A proposed constitutional change was distributed. This change would include the Vietnam Veterans of America on the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council as counsel and resource. A letter from the VVA was also distributed, which states that they would like voting membership on the Council. Opinions were expressed that the VVA should not feel it a defeat to be offered membership as counsel and resource, rather than voting membership. It was also stated that the VVA should gain more experience, increase their membership, and have more input into the Council before being granted voting membership. Robert Hannah moved we change our membership on the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council to include the Vietnam Veterans of America as counsel and resource. Motion seconded by Gerald Taylor and carried.

Bill Williamson gave notice of his resignation from legislative activity effective July 1, 1983. He noted he will be turning over all books to Mr. Zander on that date. He also stated that as of January 1, 1984, he will resign the position of Executive Director.

Discussion followed on what plans will have to be made for the future. President Aaberg directed the appointed committee to come up with some definite proposals for Executive Director and Legislative Director by the reorganizational meeting. This committee is composed of Department Adjutants, along with four committee members from the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs.

The opinion was expressed that it is imperative that someone be placed in Bismarck to represent the Department of Veterans Affairs and to provide continuity on legislative work.

Joe Novak reported that he and Wayne Tanous have been directed to contact the Governor and ask him to appoint a non-partisan committee to study the feasibility of using the John Moses Hospital for purposes benefiting veteran population of the state. He has visited with Lt. Governor Sands and Representative Haugland. Their only suggestion was that we be sure the Governor is aware that the Council isn't asking for the Governor's endorsement, only appointment of a committee to study the feasibility. Otherwise, they felt our idea was well worth the effort. Mr. Novak noted he and Mr. Tanous will proceed with this effort.

Jack Hilleboe stated that he feels the stewardship on the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs has been excellent. They have had only four absences during the last year, and they were all excused. He impressed upon the veterans organizations that if S.B. 2121 passes, it will be very important that they nominate someone to the Governor who is truly willing to serve, and realizes there is some personal sacrifice to the position. Don't make it a popularity contest, but pick someone who is truly dedicated and willing to give of themselves.

The Council was reminded that they must have nominations sent to the Governor before June 1, for appointment to the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs. There must be two names submitted for every nomination to be made. Joe Novak suggested that the veterans organizations prepare a job description of what the person on the Administrative Committee must do. The nominee can then determine if he wants to be nominated and the veterans organization can determine if they want to nominate the particular veteran. It was suggested that Jack Hilleboe, with the help of some of his members, compile a list of requirements to be used for this purpose.

Pete Helm reported that a lawsuit has been filed against the Administrative Committee from a veteran who was turned down for admittance to the Soldiers' Home. The Attorney General suggested that they not discuss the case until it is settled. It was also suggested by the Attorney General's office that they seek a change in law regarding admittance to the Soldiers' Home to make the policy easier to administer. This will be submitted as a delayed bill. It will protect the committee in its responsibilities.

Dr. Tom Johnson visited Mr. Williamson at his office. He noted that the Governor had asked for an additional \$4.5 million cut by Higher Education. The Board of Higher Education proposes to make cuts by phasing out the medical school. Dr. Engstrom noted that we used to have a two year medical school in North Dakota. They had to get their third year of training out of state, and most of them did not return to the state to practice. After the four-year program was developed, most of the students stayed in North Dakota for their total education, and continued to practice in North Dakota. He also noted that the Fargo Veterans Administration would not go out of existence if the affiliation with the medical school were discontinued or phased out, however, they would return to the level of care they had previous to the beginning of the four-year medical school. Jim Groven moved that the Veterans Coordinating Council send a letter to the Commissioner of Higher Education, with copies to the Appropriations committees. Motion seconded by Greg Seurer. Motion carried.

Paul Aaberg distributed a copy of H.R. 1961 which relates to Agent Orange. He was asked to get a resolution on this matter into our legislature, however, it was received too late.

Charles Code reported that they presently have 135 members at the Home. Their top membership during the winter was 140. The construction and remodeling program is about completed. The new heating system is complete and in full operation. He noted they

still continue to receive support from the charity programs of the service organizations. They appreciate all the Veterans Coordinating Council did on their appropriation during this legislative session.

Lloyd Zander stated that he wanted to express his appreciation to the Council and the Legislative Committee for their work on the bills this session. Their cash balance at present in the Veterans Aid Loan Fund is \$474,898, and accounts receivable is \$305,029, for a total of \$577,927. We granted 266 loans in the amount of \$417,271 from July 1, 1981, through March 31, 1983.

We have a new County Veterans Service Officer in Divide County. He spent a couple days in the office of the Department of Veterans Affairs last month getting a briefing on his duties.

Elmer Ekern, AMVETS Department Adjutant, noted that their membership is presently at 958. They hope to have 1,000 members by April 15. If that happens, a resolution will be presented to their convention in June to get their feelings on asking for voting membership on the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council.

Jim Zeigler noted that April 9 is National POW/MIA Day. Recognition of this will be held in Dickinson. He also noted he hoped everyone would call and support S.B. 2121. Frank Gathman, Director of the Veterans Administration, also noted that they are holding a POW/MIA Day at the Veterans Administration on April 9.

Milt Kane moved the Council return the check to Senator Meyer with a letter stating we appreciate her concerns. Motion seconded by Ken McGaughey and carried.

Floyd Henderson noted the convention of the Veterans of World War I will be held in Valley City on April 23 and 24. He stated it will be one of the most unusual conventions ever held. The veterans organizations in Valley City are hosting the Veterans of World War I. Basically, the only cost of coming to their convention is transportation and housing.

Vern Useldinger moved to pay Marlys Schuler \$60 for her expenses in taking minutes of the meeting. Motion seconded by Jim Groven and carried.

The Council agreed to hold the next meeting in Jamestown on July 21 & 22, 1983.

The meeting was adjourned.