

NORTH DAKOTA VETERANS COORDINATING COUNCIL  
 Veterans of Foreign Wars Clubrooms, Valley City, North Dakota  
 November 21 & 22, 1983

The meeting was called to order by President Milton Kane. Those in attendance were:

AMERICAN LEGION

Harry Moore, Rep. Dept. Cmdr.  
 Vern Useldinger, Dept. Adj.  
 Milton Kane, Council Rep.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Mike Vandrovec, Dept. Cmdr.  
 Joe O'Brien, Rep. Dept. Adj.  
 Greg Seurer, Council Rep.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

William Stepp, Dept. Cmdr.  
 Ken McGaughey, Dept. Adj.  
 Harold Utecht, Rep. Council Rep.

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Harold Schuh, President, County Veterans Service Officers  
 John Meyer, Secretary, County Veterans Service Officers  
 Jim Ziegler, President, Vietnam Veterans of America  
 Ron Zeller, Vietnam Veterans of America  
 W. M. Williamson, State Director, Veterans Employment & Training  
 Lloyd Zander, Commissioner of Veterans Affairs  
 Charles Code, Commandant, Veterans' Home  
 Jack Hilleboe, Chairman, N. Dak. Admin. Comm. on Veterans Affairs  
 Floyd Henderson, Veterans of World War I  
 Elmer Ekern, Dept. Adj., AMVETS  
 Bill Hill, AMVETS

The minutes of the last meeting were read. Mike Vandrovec moved the minutes be approved. Motion seconded by Vern Useldinger and carried.

Ken McGaughey presented a corrected treasurer's report for July 22, 1983.

He read the treasurer's report as of November 21 as follows:

Balance on hand at last Council Meeting		\$ 1,044.81
Passbook Savings - First National Bank & Trust	\$ 886.32	
Checking Account - First National Bank & Trust	<u>158.49</u>	
Receipts:		
DAV Dues	\$ 187.50	
American Legion Dues	337.50	
Interest on Savings Account	<u>11.73</u>	536.73
		<u>\$ 1,581.54</u>
Disbursements:		
Dakota Inn (coffee)	\$ 19.04	
Marlys Schuler (secretarial expenses)	50.00	
DAV Century Fund(memorial)	15.00	
Bank Charges	3.00	
Commercial Printing, Bismarck (stationery)	<u>64.60</u>	151.64
		<u>\$ 1,429.90</u>
Balance, checking account, November 21, 1983	\$ 531.85	
Balance, savings account, November 21, 1983	898.05	

Vern Useldinger moved the report be accepted. Motion seconded by Bill Stepp and carried.

Proposed by-laws changes were distributed. The change would include the AMVETS as voting members of the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council. Mike Vandrovec moved to accept the proposed change. Motion seconded by Bill Stepp and carried.

Vern Useldinger moved we include the criteria for voting membership in our constitution and by-laws in Article III, as the first part of the paragraph. Motion seconded by Bill Stepp and carried.

James Floyd, Veterans Affairs Officer of the Small Business Administration, addressed the meeting. He read a letter from the Small Business Administration to all members of Congress. In it, it was noted that veterans received 24% of the funds loaned by Small Business Administration. \$641 million was loaned to all veterans.

In North Dakota, during the last fiscal year, \$7,043,000 was loaned to veterans. This was 39% of all agency business loans made. Almost half of the loans made to veterans went to Vietnam veterans.

Mr. Floyd asked that anyone who might have questions, contact him. His office is located in the Federal Building in Fargo. The mailing address is P. O. Box 3086, Fargo, North Dakota 58108. The telephone number is 237-5771, extension 5131.

An editorial was distributed which was published in the Dakota Student, the University of North Dakota's student newspaper. It was insulting to both veterans and the Governor. Bill Stepp moved that the Commanders of the veterans organizations draft a letter and send it to the Dakota Student & all state newspapers, as well as a letter to Governor Olson, indicating our appreciation of what he did in observance of Veterans Day. Motion seconded by Mike Vandrovec. It was also felt a copy of the letter should be sent to Dr. Clifford and the Board of Higher Education. Motion carried.

It was noted that at our last meeting Lt. Governor Sands appeared before us and suggested that we might approve a proposal to raise money in the state, and nationally, in an effort to return a living prisoner of war from Vietnam. To date we have not received any further communication from the Prisoner of War Association.

The AMVETS reported that at their national convention, they felt we should work with the National League of Families. They fear that with some type of bounty, and if one prisoner of war is brought out alive, possibly the next day the rest of them might be dead. Mr. Ekern noted that he would oppose a bounty system as suggested.

Vern Useldinger noted that the American Legion is concerned about the prisoner of war situation, but with the need for very delicate diplomacy, the American Legion feels we should work with the National League of Families. It was noted that the National League of Families could use funding support to help with their work in this area.

Bill Stepp noted that this matter was discussed at the national convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They felt that the one attempt to try to bring someone out actually set back negotiations several months. The League of Families is working through diplomatic channels attempting to get return of prisoners of war. They strongly support this action as opposed to any bounty system.

Jim Ziegler stated the Vietnam Veterans of America have very mixed emotions on this subject. They tend to support the publicity that this bounty proposal is bringing. They feel something needs to be done, and some very strong action taken soon. They feel the publicity is very important. He noted there are 17 people from North Dakota who are listed as prisoners of war.

Mike Vandrovec noted that at the last national convention of the Disabled American Veterans, they had a representative of the League of Families talk to the convention. They took the same position as the other veterans organizations.

Bill Stepp stated that in our initial discussion we asked for a resolution from the POW organization, which has not been forthcoming. He moved we table this subject until the next meeting, at which time we invite a representative of the POW association and a member of the League of Families to come in and give us a definite proposal. Motion seconded by Ken McGaughey and carried.

Bill Williamson noted that he will research what awards are available from the state for potential awards to be presented to Floyd Henderson, and report back at the next meeting.

Bill Williamson reported that the Emergency Veterans Job and Training Act of 1983 has now been partially funded. These jobs will be available for Vietnam and Korean veterans only. The veteran must have been unemployed for 15 of the last 20 weeks. If he meets all of the criteria and we find an employer willing to train, we can bring them together. The employer will be paid up to \$10,000 to put this veteran into training, up to nine months in duration. A disabled veteran may be put into the training program for up to 15 months. Not all employers can participate. Those who are eligible are those who are in growth occupations, or employers offering highly technical positions, or those who have occupations where there is a shortage of available applicants. It was stressed that veterans organizations should have an article in their newspaper on this new training program in order to get the word out to veterans and employers who may be interested or eligible. This program is run through a partnership of the Veterans Administration, Job Service North Dakota, Veterans Employment and Training Service, and an employer committee. There will be \$300,000,000 available in the next two years for this program.

A veteran appeared before the Council presenting a problem he has. The business where he worked was burned, so he is out of a job. He filed for unemployment compensation and was determined eligible, but was then informed that his military retirement would be deducted from his unemployment insurance payment.

Gerald Balzer, State Director of the Unemployment Insurance Division, appeared before the Council and answered questions. He noted that it is a state law that deals with the reduction of military retirement from Unemployment Insurance benefits. Following discussion, Mike Vandrovec moved that Bill Stepp work with Bill Williamson and Jerry Balzer in preparing two resolutions; one dealing with federal law regarding the eligibility of a serviceman for Unemployment Insurance upon leaving the service, and the other with state law regarding the deduction of military retirement from Unemployment Insurance, and that these be presented to the Department Conventions for their action. Motion seconded by Harold Utecht and carried.

The Administrative Committee met with the Veterans Coordinating Council. Chairman Jack Hilleboe asked Bernard Wagner to report for the Veterans Home subcommittee.

He noted they presently have 123 members at the Home. Seven are women, with two of them being veterans. They have accepted four more applications, and three are pending. They just put into effect new criteria on the leave policy at the Home.

They stated that the maximum amount of leave would be thirty days. Since this time, they have found that several have been in the hospital for this period of time, and are now ready to come back to the Home, and have to reapply for admission. They are now changing this limitation on leave time to sixty days.

They received many donations, and have purchased a lawn sweeper, cassette tape recorder, and a wide screen television, as well as many other smaller items.

He noted there will be a hearing tomorrow in connection with a lawsuit that has been filed against them by a veteran who was denied admission to the Home.

Pete Helm, Chairman of the subcommittee on Veterans Affairs noted that their committee had been mandated to place someone from the Department of Veterans Affairs in Bismarck by July 1, 1984. A committee was appointed at this meeting to look for space, equipment, secretarial help, etc. On this committee are Curt Twete, Joe Novak, Lloyd Zander, and Pete Helm.

The County Veterans Service Officers meeting in Fargo was well attended. He noted that as of July 1, 1983, the cash balance in the Veterans Aid Loan Fund was \$296,158. Since that time 39 loans have been granted, for a total of 66,400. A total of \$72,984 has been collected. Including the interest collected, and that refunded, the present cash balance is \$303,153. Accounts receivable total \$274,795, for a total of \$577,948.

Mr. Helm noted that the Department of Veterans Affairs has requested space in the new Veterans Administration Regional Office building. He also reported that the committee is thinking of having Mr. Zander spend four days a week in Bismarck, until such time as someone can be moved here permanently.

Discussion followed on H.C.R. 3043. The interim committee is considering a possible change in veteran status. They have met, but have not yet covered this subject. A committee has been appointed to serve as counsel to the interim committee on possible effects of changing the law to include all servicemen as veterans. Those serving will be: VFW - Bill Stepp or Neil Fricke; DAV - Greg Seurer or Mike Vandrovec; American Legion - Milt Kane; Vietnam Veterans of America - Jim Ziegler or Allen Matties; AMVETS - Dennis Thompson or Gayle Severson; and County Veterans Service Officers - John Meyer or Harold Schuh. Greg Seurer moved that Milt Kane serve as chairman of this committee. Motion seconded by Bill Stepp and carried.

Frank Gathman reported that they are presently constructing a clinical addition at the hospital. He noted that they have more veterans seeking hospitalization at the hospital than they have money to serve. He noted that the clinical addition will cost a total of \$20.4 million. Bids for the construction will be opened on January 19. A ground breaking ceremony will be held in February. A regional office will also be constructed and all people will be brought back to the hospital so that everything will be together again. This will be constructed in Fiscal Year 1985.

Mr. Gathman stated that they need help in the recruitment of physicians. They are hoping that possibly veterans organizations may be able to help by donating to a fund that can be used for new physicians for research, as an inducement for them to come to work for the Veterans Administration.

Discussion followed on the fact that those veterans who have service-connected disabilities, but are non-conflict veterans, are not eligible for loans. It was also noted that dependents of those who were KIA or MIA during periods of other than conflict, are not eligible for benefits. There is a great deal of attention needed to correct the inequities of the law. It was felt that these are two areas

that should be looked at by the Interim Study Committee of the Council. It was suggested that this committee should meet in early January and become familiar with all sections of law dealing with veterans, as well as any inadequacies that might be in law. The committee will meet on January 13, 1984 at the Lewis and Clark Hotel in Mandan.

A letter was read from Governor Olson, asking the Council for their suggestions regarding use of moneys available under the Job Training Partnership Act, Part IVC.

After considerable discussion, Vern Useldinger moved that we suggest to the Governor that he let Job Service North Dakota write a proposal to utilize the \$50,000 for promotion and implementation of the Emergency Veterans Job Training Act of 1983. Motion seconded by Greg Seurer and carried.

The proposed letter to the editor in response to the editorial in the Dakota Student was presented. Mike Vandrovec moved that the letter to the editor be mailed to state newspapers, and that a letter be mailed to the President of UND and the Governor. Motion seconded by Bill Stepp and carried.

Following are dates of Department Conventions: Disabled American Veterans, April 26-28, Doublewood Inn, Fargo; World War I, May 26 & 27, Minot; Veterans of Foreign Wars, June 1-3, Holiday Inn, Jamestown; American Legion, June 16-19, Kirkwood Motor Inn, Bismarck; Vietnam Veterans of America, July, Minot; AMVETS, June 22-24, VFW Club, Grafton; County Veterans Service Officers Association, October 22-24, Biltmore Inn, Fargo.

Vern Useldinger moved the Council authorize payment of \$50 to Marlys Schuler for her expenses in connection with taking minutes of the meeting. Motion seconded by Bill Stepp and carried.

It was suggested the next meeting be March 22 & 23 at Jamestown, starting at 1:00 p.m.

Jim Ziegler distributed copies of an article from the National paper of the Vietnam Veterans of America. It was reported that the Chapter of the VVA has started working jointly with the other veterans organizations and had excellent results.

It was noted that World War I membership in North Dakota is 64% of the potential for the state. This is the highest in the nation. Floyd asked that if anyone has a World War I veteran in their community who is not a member, if they would send his name to Floyd, he will send a complimentary membership card to him.

Vern Useldinger moved the meeting be adjourned. Motion seconded by Bill Stepp and carried.