

NORTH DAKOTA VETERANS COORDINATING COUNCIL  
Minutes of the 1991 Reorganizational Meeting  
Carrington, North Dakota

The reorganizational meeting of the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council was held Monday, July 15, 1991, at the Chieftain Inn, Carrington, North Dakota. The meeting was called to order at 9:03 am by Council President Kenneth M. Evenson. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was given for the POW/MIAs.

Roll Call

President Evenson asked each organization to stand and introduce themselves.

American Legion

Harry Moore, Commander

Dave Schmidt, Adjutant  
Earl Redlin, Org. Rep.

Disabled American Veterans

Robert Evans, Commander

Robert Hannah, Adj (absent)  
Julius Wedman, Org. Rep.

Honorary Members

VVA - absent

Milton Kane, DVA Commissioner, present

Leo Swenson, VETS Director represented by Adrian Crowfeather

Donald Colston, VA Director, absent

Pershing Carlson, Ex-POWs, absent

John Meyer, CVSO President represented by Dennis Berg

John Berge, AmLeg DSO, absent

Greg Seurer, DAV NSO, absent

Auxiliaries Presidents/Commanders

Ardel Ingwalson, Amer. Legion, absent

Sylvia Bossoletti, DAV, absent

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Otto Evenson representing

Jerome Bixby, Commander

Ray Stelmachuk, Adj/QM

Dean Bayer, Org. Rep.

AMVETS

Gary Maddock, alt., representing

John Adolf, Commander

Elmer Ekern, Adjutant

Kenneth Evenson, Org. Rep.

Bernie Wagner, ACOVA Chair, present

Frank Gathman, Commandant, present

Adj. Gen. A.P. Macdonald (1:00 pm)

Cassius Hawley, WW I, absent

by Dennis Berg

Chuck Baarstad, VFW DSO, absent

Elmer Ekern, AMVETS NSO, present

Adeline Guy, VFW, absent

Dotty Evenson, AMVETS, present

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Motion by Ray Stelmachuk to dispense with the reading of the minutes and accept them as printed, second by Julius Wedman, carried.

Treasurer's Report

Income: None Disbursements: \$241.72 Balance 7/12/91 \$2,201.41

Motion by Harry Moore to accept the treasurer's report. Second by Ray Stelmachuk, carried.

Bills

No bills were presented. Ekern asked if Liaison Joe Novak had any bills to present from the Legislative session. Mr. Novak only smiled.

Communications - None

Introduction of Guest/Guest Speakers

Harry Moore was called on to introduce Mr. Bill Williamson for his remarks concerning the origin, intent, past work and future hopes for the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council. (The text of Mr. Williamson's discussion is on file with the Council Secretary.)

Highlights of Mr. Williamson's address:

The Council was formed in 1964 because the governor's Veterans' Advisory Committee was ineffective. The purposes of the Council are:

1. To develop legislation for the benefit of all veterans.
2. Concern for general programs for all veterans, principally hospital, labor and social needs.
3. Develop a public information program on behalf of all veterans, dependents and veterans organizations.

The Council developed the idea of the Administrative committee on Veterans Affairs to implement, supervise and govern services of the state Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans' Home. The ACOVA was to be subservient to the NDVCC. The Council would develop, promote and plan legislation and services to veterans. The ACOVA was not to be political.

Two day meetings of the Council were scheduled so that the representatives of the member organizations could have fellowship and dialogue and to get to know one another. NOT SO TODAY.

Agendas were sent out at least a week ahead of time. Guests were invited to stay for fellowship. Officials were oriented. Now there is no planning, preparation and time given to meetings.

The ACOVA is not coming to the Council for ideas on how to spend the Trust Fund moneys.

You are not what the Council used to be. The veterans organizations do not have the reception of the public and legislators. A quote from an individual, "I have never seen a more disoriented organization in my life."

Mr. Williamson's recommendations to the Council:

1. Two day meetings to reestablish in-house relations.
2. Plan detailed meetings and send agenda out ahead of time.
3. Take back the control of the affairs of the veteran.
4. Orient membership on purposes of the NDVCC and the ACOVA and keep the public informed.

Agency Reports

Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs

Chairman Bernie Wagner commented on Mr. Williamson's remarks and then introduced Committee members present: Paul Aaberg, Ken Anderson, Frank Gathman, Chuck Godke, Milt Kane, Jim Riden, Adrian Crowfeather and Sue Kime. Other guests were Curt Twete, Glen Maurer and Bob Hanson.

Bernie stated that the Administrative Committee has no input into who is appointed. The veterans organizations present names to the governor who makes the appointments and selects the chairman and secretary. The Committee used \$196,000 from the Post War Trust Fund for the Veterans Home and \$10,000 for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Dedication of the nursing home addition will be October 5, 1991 with the ACOVA meeting there at 10:00 am.

Commissioner Milt Kane commented on the DVA subcommittee meeting. HB1106 allows funds to be used to assist veterans in veterans' preference

hearings, capped at \$500. Kane stated that he is surveying the county service officers for veterans needs for the use of the Trust Fund. These suggestions will be presented to ACOVA and the Council.

Commandant Frank Gathman gave the Veterans Home report. Regular beds have been reduced to 112 to make room for the skilled care beds which will number 38 beds. The first beds will be used at the time of the dedication. Construction is going well. Curt Twete asked where the proper starting point would be to have someone admitted to the nursing home. Mr. Gathman stated they should make application with their county service officer as is done for regular admission.

On questions by Earl Redlin, discussion was held on the spending of Trust Fund money for the Vets Home, NDDVA, bonus payment advertising and other uses.

State Treasurer Bob Hanson gave the Trust Fund report. June 30, 1991 balance was \$1,792,876.39. Mr. Hanson suggested needs for the fund be prioritized and used and that the state treasurer, as custodian of the fund, be included in all meetings. Harry Moore stated he felt we have been well served by State Treasurer Bob Hanson and moved for commendation from the Council, second by Julius Wedman, carried.

Earl Redlin added comments and stated that the fund is safe until Sept '95 and the law could be changed in '97 by a 2/3 vote of the legislature.

Motion by Dave Schmidt to support Bob Hanson's efforts and allow him to seek other ways of investment, second by Bob Evans, carried.

#### Service Officers

Dennis Berg reported that the County Service Officers would meet in Medora this week and also have a training seminar in Fargo October 21-22. Milt Kane stated a new legislative book would be coming out.

Auxiliaries - No report.

#### Legislative Liaison Director

Joe Novak stated that the Legislative Committee needs leadership. Some members are not so willing to serve leaving a vacuum and too much work for a few. He also stated a watch needs to be done on veterans preference. He asked to appear before the state Personnel Committee headed by Heidi Heidtkamp who is overlooking veterans preference in her hiring. He again emphasized the need for a Liaison to stay in touch with government and the legislature. Motion by Harry Moore that Joe Novak will represent the veterans organizations at State Personnel Board meeting, Thursday, July 18, 1991, second by Bob Evans, carried.

#### Committee Reports

Ekern asked of Bill Williamson what the purpose of the three committees, legislative, programs and public information. Mr. Williamson explained the purpose of each committee and suggested that they be activated. Legislative proposes legislation, programs develops programs of service and benefits for veterans, and public relations informs the public.

The meeting was recessed for lunch.

The meeting reconvened at 1:00 pm.

#### Old Business

President Evenson brought up the status of the Vietnam Veterans of America. Ekern stated he sent letters twice to known VVA officers and that he even offered to introduce a resolution to reduce the membership number requirement if that would help. He had not heard from any of them.. Bob Evans stated he also contacted them and got no response. He understood they were planning a special reorganization meeting in September. Evenson said they have had two years to get reorganized. Harry Moore stated they had only 10 people at their state convention meeting. Williamson said legislation would have to be prepared to remove them from the ACOVA but a letter from them would be needed wherein they state they are no longer active voting members of the Council and would also like to be removed from ACOVA. Schmidt felt we need to allow them to have their reorganization meeting before we take any action to remove them from ACOVA. Ekern stated they are still eligible to be Counsel and Resource non-voting members of the Council. The Council C&BLs had been changed to make it easier for them to make quorum at Council meetings but no one has been representing them. The issue was tabled until the next meeting.

Motion by Harry Moore that Joe Novak be reimbursed for expenses to attend this meeting, second by Julius Wedman, carried.

Moore asked how Trust Fund moneys got transferred someplace else. Kane said the DVA got \$10,000 for equipment which was in the budget and the Council approved it. Bernie Wagner said the Council, through the Legislative Committee, approved the expenditure and the \$196,000 that went to the Veterans' Home. Moore felt we were spending money we did not have. Kane stated we had more interest than was shown because not all of it had been received yet. Otto Evenson asked who had the authorization to spend the money. Wagner said they could by law. Williamson said the Council needs to get the Trust Fund money committed before the Legislature and OMB spends it all. Wagner said if we don't commit it the Legislature will and OMB will. Stelmachuk said when the legislation was set up it was the intent not to use the money for general fund purposes of DVA and the Veterans' Home. Ekern said he always understood that the money could not be touched until the entire fund had been restored by the Legislature. Redlin said this is true but we've been good guys in the past and not challenged it. The Council should be the first to approve spending the money. The Administrative Committee can then go to the Legislature to get permission to spend the money on these prioritized items.

Kane stated that the VA now has an outreach person in Bismarck serving Reservations an the Minot Air Force Base. Another person will be hired to serve eastern North Dakota and northwest Minnesota Reservations and Bases.

#### North Dakota National Guard

Adjutant General A. P. Macdonald spoke on Desert Storm, the Veterans Cemetery, and Guard issues. He has a list of members who now would be eligible for veterans organizations. Progress on the Cemetery is good, money is needed, dedication is set for the fall of '92. Cutbacks in the Guard in North Dakota could be 1,200 out of a strength of 4,000 and a Force level 10% lower. At present there is not a big push for Air Guard reductions. A strong Guard would serve defense purposes as well and at less expense than

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a large active military. The General suggested we send a note to our Congressional delegation thanking them for their continued support of the National Guard.

### Old Business Continued

Curt Twete asked that Legislative Committee people come to Council meetings. Also, we need to coordinate with other agencies, etc. a year prior to the Legislative session. We need to be pro-active. We need to work for all veterans, not any particular organization. Williamson said the Legislative Committee used to come but the by-laws were changed so that Department and National Service Officers could come, and now they don't anyway. He suggested one representative of the Legislative Committee be paid to come to our meetings.

### New Business

Bob Evans moved to earmark \$500,000 from the Veterans Post War Trust Fund interest money to be used for the maintenance and operation of the North Dakota Veterans Cemetery over the next two years. Second by Julius Wedman. Otto Evenson and Ray Stelmachuk questioned the need of such a large amount. Redlin questioned if this was truly a need of veterans as defined by law. Motion defeated on a voice vote.

Harry Moore passed out a resolution from the American Legion to use Trust Fund money for transportation of veterans to VA Medical Centers serving North Dakota veterans.

### Appointment of Committees

Legislative Committee within the Council - Otto Evenson nominated Earl Redlin and Ken Evenson, second by Stelmachuk, carried.

Programs Committee - Otto Evenson suggested the four Department Commanders - Harry Moore, Bob Evans, Otto Evenson representing Jerome Bixby and John Adolf. Motion by Dave Schmidt, second by Otto Evenson, carried.

Public Information Committee - Otto Evenson suggested this be the four Department Adjutants. Motion by Bob Evans that Dave Schmidt, Ray Stelmachuk, Bob Hannah and Elmer Ekern serve on the PIO committee. Second by Julius Wedman, carried.

Legal Counsel - Motion by Harry Moore that Chuck Gilje be appointed legal counsel, second by Wedman, carried.

Legislative Liaison Director - Joe Novak nominated by Harry Moore, second by Otto Evenson, carried.

### Resolutions

Otto Evenson felt the Legion resolution and the prior cemetery motion should be ideas for the use of Trust Fund money and we should not be obligated now. Twete said we need to get many ideas and act on them on a priority basis. These should come from Milt's CVS0 survey.

### Payment of Dues

Ekern received revalidation forms and dues from the VFW and AMVETS. Dave Schmidt presented the American Legion form and dues. Bob Evans said the form and check from DAV would be sent by Bob Hannah.

#### Budget

Ekern requested the Council consider adopting a budget that would cover a two year period. He read his proposed two year budget and explained the main change would be that it would allow for funds to be expended for those who work as Legislation Liaison Director and Legislative Committee. The Director would receive \$500 for expenses, etc. and each Committee member would receive \$50 for expenses. Motion by Harry Moore to accept the budget, second by Ray Stelmachuk. Twete felt more dollars were needed for Legislative Committee expenses. Ekern said he was trying to stay within our present dues structure but felt more money should be made available for the Legislative Committee and Liaison Director. Some expenses could be paid through the individual Departments. Motion to adopt the budget carried.

#### Election of Officers

President - Otto Evenson, VFW, was nominated by Ray Stelmachuk, elected.  
Vice President - Earl Redlin, American Legion, was nominated by Harry Moore, elected.

Secretary/Treasurer - Elmer Ekern nominated Ray Stelmachuk, VFW, who declined. Ekern nominated Bob Evans, DAV. Motion by Harry Moore that nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for Bob Evans, carried.

President Ken Evenson gave his closing remarks and asked the Council to work together as is intended. We are all equal on the Council regardless of membership. He then turned the gavel over to elected President Otto Evenson.

President Otto Evenson thanked the members and explained that he has been appointed to represent VFW Department Commander Jerome Bixby on the Council. He stated we can do a better job but, as Ken Evenson said, we are not individual veterans organizations, but we are the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council.

#### Time and Place

President Evenson said we were tied into the October 5 date of the dedication of the Veterans Home addition. Ken Evenson explained that AMVETS have a SEC meeting that day in Wahpeton and Ekern stated that the by-laws have a November meeting for the Council unless at least two commanders request a special meeting. Harry Moore said the Korean Veterans organization is meeting at that time in Jamestown. He also felt a two day meeting should be set in November.

Evenson proposed having the meeting over two days at the American Legion in Valley City. Ekern stated that a two day meeting can be a strain on some members. Otto asked if it could be set so that they could come the day when the most important business was acted on. An informal meeting will be set Friday, November 22, beginning at 4:00 pm with final action done at the next day's meeting beginning at 9:00 am. Baskets would be served at 6:00 pm at the VFW.

#### Good of the Organization

Schmidt suggested we change the titles of the Legislative Committee and the in-house legislative committee. We could call it a legislative team. Ekern also felt we should change our by-laws to have the first five articles as the Council Constitution and the last five as Council By-Laws.

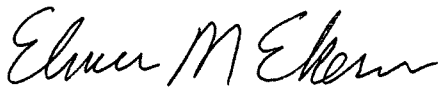
Stelmachuk said we may need a new way to select the Council president

Instead of on a rotation basis because it would always fall on the Legion or AMVETS during a Legislative year. Dave Schmidt suggested a two year term starting in the non-legislative year.

Ekern stated the "agenda" issue. He said he used a generic one because everyone would always be included. If the Council needed a detailed agenda sent out ahead of time they need to communicate with the secretary so that an agenda can be planned. Too often the Council president and secretary were the last to be contacted about Council business or concerns. President Evenson urged all members to communicate.

President Otto Evenson adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by



Elmer M. Ekern  
Outgoing Secretary/Treasurer  
(THANKS BE TO GOD!)

1991-1992 NDVCC Officers

President - Otto Evenson  
Vice President - Earl Redlin  
Secretary/Treasurer - Bob Evans

Legislation Subcommittee

Earl Redlin  
Kenneth Evenson

Public Information Subcommittee

Dave Schmidt  
Robert Hannah  
Ray Stelmachuk  
Elmer Ekern

Programs Subcommittee

Harry Moore  
Robert Evans  
Otto Evenson  
John Adolf

Legal Counsel

Chuck Gilje

Legislative Liaison Director

Joe Novak