

NDVCC Minutes: July 7, 1995

Joint session with administrative committee on veterans affairs was called to order by president Rick Olek.

Pledge of Allegiance was said.
Moment of silence for POW/MIAs.
Roll call of organizations.
Introduction of NDVCC, NDACVA, and presenters.

PRESENTERS

Bob Hanson, St. Tax Director: History of PWTF

A history of the PWTF was handed out to the members. Please refer to handout #1. Stated during his term, the trust fund was being raided, money was taken out, and improper actions taken against PWTF. A measure in 1988 stated that the PWTF was a permanent trust fund to be used for veterans and their families. This was approved but the legislature still invades the trust fund. Please review handout.

Highlighted Points of handout:

- *Total bonuses was just under 13 million dollars
- *Adj. General National Guard 11 million dollars
- *PWTF needs to be used strictly for veterans
- *Legislature has stated that they will go for the full PWTF next session.

Bob suggested to the council to put the PWTF into the constitution. This will be the only way to protect the fund.

Kathi Gilmore, St. Treasurer: Status of PWTF

Rundown of PWTF was given. Please review handout #2. Explanation of earnings of PWTF given. Kathi stated that is legislature reinstates the interest earned section of the PWTF, it will be dramatically cut. The fund needs to be protected. Kathi stated she feels that the legislature will take the whole PWTF next session. The only thing to do to protect the trust fund is to put it into the constitution.

Gen. Keith Bjerke: ND National Guard

Information was handed out on Camp Grafton. Explanations given on the two main goals of the ND National Guard. These goals are state funding for labor required to run the cemetery and the tuition assistance program.

Discussion was held on feelings towards the PWTF - intentions are not to raid the fund. Gen. Bjerke stated he wants to reconcile differences of the PWTF. Review was given on the cemetery handout #3. Gen. stated he wants to work together with veterans. He would like to propose to have an advisory committee for the veterans cemetery. Discussion was held on the presentation.

Doug Kenyon: VAMC/RO Director

The Fargo VA has several new doctors. They have signed a contract with the University of ND to find an additional anesthesiologist and cardiologist. There is 113 acute care beds with a census of 90%. They would like to add 50 restorative beds.

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Out-patient is rising 10% each year. The hospital is looking for new efficient ways to improve the facility. They would like to begin renovating the ambulatory care space by 10/1/95 and would be done by 1999. Would also like to have a new out-patient area. The hospital is now sharing doctors with the Grand Forks and Minot AFB. They are currently using orthopedics division of the Minot AFB. The clinics at the AFB will also see veteran patients.

The legislature would like to make a proposal for straight line budget for the next six years for the hospital. If this happens, it would be devastating for the hospital. If there is a cut in budget, the hospital would have to look at closing facilities, elimination of state nursing home funds, higher co-pays, or looking at treating just service connected veterans not non-service connected veterans. Discussion was held by members on the Fargo medical center.

Sen. Harvey Talleckson: Grafton

Sen. stated he was 100% in favor of protecting the PWTF. Stated in order to put the trust fund into the constitution they need a 2/3 vote in the legislature and that has not been done. That's why nothing has been done in the last seven years with the PWTF. Sen. said that the legislature is less responsive to the wishes and needs by the veterans towards the PWTF. The people are the ones who are more kinder.

Sen. talked on the long term care homes for veterans. Suggested to go through the initiate measure route for getting a long term care facility. 125,000 plus signatures are needed in order to amend the constitution. 12,766 signatures are needed for an initiate measure. The veterans need to make it permissible to create a long term care home in the west. Also needed is a 25 member committee. Now is the time to go after the plans beings there is until March of 1996 to get petitions signed. Discussion was held on the subject.

Skip Wing: VSO-Stanley

First off, Skip stated that he feels that a perception of a united organization needs to be put forth towards the people. Talked on the term "on line" - being hooked up with new information. Stated we need to be more proficient so that when something happens, like last legislation session, we can be addressing the issue at once. Bottom line - veterans need to promote veterans.

An audio visual aid of Stanley was given by Skip. Talked on the west veterans home in Stanley. Some comments included: Stanley had lots of support from the people, they had an EDA grant for area improvement, there is still the determination to have a western veterans home, and there is now three clinics and a hospital in Stanley. Overall, it was a good package and the funds are still there and may even improve. Discussion was held amongst the members.

John Muller: Chairman

The veterans needs is still there for a home. Stated that the

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Grafton facility has lots to offer. The facility has low start off costs because the home is already built unlike Stanley. Briefed on some other benefits of the Grafton facility.

John gave some ideas towards the initiated measure issue. Stated the measure could include both sites for the home with a possibility of passing or failing. Also could include separate measures for each site with a chance of passing/failing both. If a measure would be passed, the problem of federal funding is still out there. Stated 125 million dollars is needed next year for a new home. Right now the basic care facility is not a high priority. Start off costs are lower with the Grafton facility. It was stated that there would be a need to have the operating costs included in the initiated measure. If this is not included, the legislature could pass the home measure and not have to worry about helping fund the operation of the home. Discussion was held on the initiated measure issue.

Administrative Committee was dismissed at this time.

Roll call was taken of council members.

Election of new officers:

Ray Stelmachuk nominated Kasy Schmaltz for President, no opposition and he was unanimously elected. Dave Schmidt nominated Earl Redlin Vice-President, no opposition and he was elected.

Dave Schmidt nominated Robert Evans Secretary, there was opposition but to no avail. He was elected.

Minutes of the previous meeting were handed out, Joe O'Brien moved to accept them, 2nd by Dave Schmidt, passed.

Treasurers report was handed out for review. Motion by Glen Maurer to accept the report as presented, 2nd by Jerome Krejci, passed.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT:

Veterans Preference: A letter written in regards to an interim study on Veterans Preference was read. Written by Rep. Rich Wardner.

Veterans Home - West - no action was taken at this time.

Persian Gulf Bonus - no action was taken at this time.

Veterans License Plate - no further action at this time.

NG Tuition Waiver - no action at this time.

FTE Veterans Cemetery - Rick Ryan offered remarks that the Veterans License Plate issue should be kept up front in future dealings on this issue. He felt that the plate had merit. He also felt that we could get support from the N.G. It was noted that we didn't want anything like the University's wanted.

It was noted that we need to become stronger in dealing with the legislature in the future. We are setting up a fax link for future use.

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PWTF - Discussion was held on what we are going to do in regard to protecting the Trust Fund. It was felt that we need to educate the general public as to the intent and action of the state legislature in their dealings with the PWTF. Earl Redlin discussed the history of the legislative action on the PWTF and the action of the state legislature this past year.

P.W.T.F. discussion was held. Rick Ryan presented a copy of the Initiative Petition for protecting the Trust Fund. It was tabled for further consideration.

Organization resolutions were handed out for review and discussion for Saturday AM.

There was extensive discussion on the + and - of veterans preference in North Dakota. Remarks were heard from Bob Hanson State Tax Director and Rick Ryan Director VETS, US Dept. of Labor.

Meeting was recessed until 8:00 am Saturday.

8:00 AM Saturday July 8, 1995

Meeting was called back into session by President Kasy Schmaltz, he asked if everyone had read the resolutions that were handed out the previous day.

PWTF - Joe Novak presented the Initiated Petition and also offered remarks on the happenings this last legislative year. There was much discussion from most of the Council members present and Bob Hanson urged the Council to keep the program running and not let it drop. Discussion was also held on the financial needs of this drive.

Motion by Joe to do the preliminary work on the petition. 2nd by Elmer, motion passed.

Dave Schmidt motion that the next meeting of the Council following the Fall organization meetings the Council vote as to launch the petition drive. 2nd by Glen Maurer. Discussion was held and Motion passed.

Elmer motion to select three individuals for the strategy committee for the petition drive. They may be individuals note presently on the council. 2nd by Earl, motion passed. Rick Ryan urged the council to look outside the Bismarck area for membership on this committee, as the Bismarck veterans are picked to work on all committees.

Joe Litzinger and Bob Evans on behalf of the DAV Dept. of N.D. pledged \$2500 as seed money for the petition drive.

Motion by Joe Litzinger to use wording with recommended change for submitting petition. 2nd Sue, passed.

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Duties of the strategy committee were discussed. It was recommended that they be responsible for the following: setting strategy, budget, procedure, help from the N.G. (help in setting up ads and use the guards resources as to history items, etc.) It was also recommended that we establish the following: 1. talking paper, much like the one used for the last petition. 2. Petition use with corrected wording.

General Bjerke addressed the council on the operation of the Veterans Cemetery, he felt that the Veterans Organizations should be more involved in the overall operation, based on a previous suggestion. He then asked for the council to setup a committee to work with his staff in regard to the cemetery.

Motion by Dave that each Commander and Auxiliary President be urged to appoint an individual to sit on the Cemetery Advisory Committee, this committee will meet with the General to improve the overall operation of the cemetery and help in suggesting ways to raise money for the cemetery. 2nd by Evans, motion passed.

Resolutions:

#1 Lobbyist for Legislative year.

Motion by Dave to increase annual dues \$500, to total \$800. \$500 is set aside for use in obtaining a lobbyist. This increase becomes effective today. 2nd Trimmer. passed.

Veterans Preference.

Motion by Evans to respond to Representative Wardner's letter, stating that we have already made suggestions in changing Veterans Preference. 2nd by Dave. passed.

Time And Place: Next meeting is scheduled for November 17, 18, 1995, in Bismarck.

At this time the Council allowed a Bismarck veteran Dominick Velesky to voice his grievance on veterans preference.

Good of the Order: Motion to recess and wait for the Administrative Committee to report. 2nd by Glen, passed.

Meeting was reconvened and we were notified that the Administrative Committee would be in session for at least two more hours. It was decided that we should go ahead and adjourn at this time.

Motion by Sue for Adjournment. 2nd by Jerome Krejci, passed/