

Minutes of the NCVCC meeting of May 9, 1995
American Legion Club of Fargo, ND.

Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Roll call was taken. Present: Wes Martin, Dave Schmidt, Dennis Berg, John Mullen, Rick Ryan, Earl Redlin, Rick Olek, Ken Anderson, Elmer Ekern, Joe Litzinger, Glenn Mauer, AmVets, Tom Sorensen, Ray Stelmachuk, Kent Anderson (VFW St. Commander), Otto Evenson, Chuck Resch, Harold Tremor (AmVets), Jerry Crejci, Tom Rainsberry, Ray Harkema, Bernie Wagner, Joe Novak, Joe O'Brien (Adm. Committee).

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. Meeting is being held to discuss legislative issues. Adj. General office invited Col. Thilmony to update the committee on their views of certain issues at hand.

Update on Legislative Issues:

Budget bills for Vets Affairs - Ray Harkema stated he was satisfied with budget approved in the amount of \$177,000.00 for programs. \$100,000 used for grant programs, \$2,000 for transportation, \$4,000 for travel of chairman of administrative committee and the remainder used in operating. Ray also discussed different views on the funding of the position for grant administrator. It is stated, in a letter from Bob Hanson, that funding for the position is not suppose to be funded through the interest of the PWTF. Attorney General's office wrote a letter stating is was perfectly legal. During legislative hearing, is was decided the only way to keep position is to fund it through the interest on the PWTF. Discussion was held on the issue.

Veterans Home - Ken Anderson stated there was about a 10% cut in the state funds in governor's budget. Ken said they got just about everything they wanted. Funds from the general fund were never really recovered. Will leave the biennium with excess of \$100,000.00 in Vets home improvement fund. This source is generated from rent from the members of the home.

Vets Home accepting gifts and donations. It is stated that the spending of any gifts/donations to the vets home has to be approved through the administrative committee and emergency commission. This bill was rewored to avoid the approval process.

SB 2033 Vets home for the west - Discussion was held on different opinions on this bill. Earl Redlin gave his views on the bill. Stated he was very upset with the legislature. He feels veterans need to get more assertive. John Mullen feels a new home would probably cost more to run next time around beings the legislature didn't grant the first request. Ken Anderson said a lot of legislators were against a home in Stanley. He feels we need a person at the capitol as soon as session starts for 12 hours a day lobbying. Joe Novak gave his remarks on the issue.

Col. Thilmony passed on an invitation to the committee from Gen. Bjerke to come up to Camp Grafton in July for the reorganizational meeting with the new members. Cemetery is busy and stated that veterans from all around the state are being buried there, not just the Bismarck-Mandan area. Bonus claims are for the active duty is now starting to be processed. Additional funding was granted to continue the processing. Any of the monies not spent by July 1997 will go back into the PWTF.

Discussion was held on the issue of the guards helping support the license plate bill. It was suggested that the council send an official letter requesting the support of the guards in any future bills.

Cemetery Fund - Discussion was held among the members about how the cemetery is being paid for. It was stated that unless the guards give the veterans some type of ownership in the cemetery, it will be hard to raise the \$1,000,000.00. Members also stated their opinions to Col. Thilmony on the guards wanting to obtain \$1,000,000.00 from the veterans PWTF.

Discussion was held on the funding of the two positions needed for the cemetery. Questions were asked of Col. Thilmony on what is being done to help those guards on the welfare program.

Joe Novak brought up changing the name from the ND Militia Foundation to ND Veterans Cemetery.

Dave Schmidt brought up the fact that the national guard should not have the responsibility for administering veterans benefits and is not the responsibility of the guards to be running the cemetery.

SB 2309 Vets Preference Bill - Rick Ryan stated that the drafted version on this bill was passed in the Senate, went to the veterans affairs in the House and they amended everything out of it. There will be a Interim Comm. set up in June including representatives of both the agencies/veterans groups.

PWTF - John Mullen. Handouts were given to members regarding the history of the PWTF and where it stands. \$230,000.00 was appropriated for the tuition waiver or the FTE's at the cemetery. \$294,000.00 is left. \$177,000.00 goes to Ray Harkema for travel. \$117,000.00 is available for programs not in place. Significant amount was intended for the use of the Grafton/Stanley vets home. The amount will now be used in the next biennium towards the western vets home. Discussion was held on the statistics given on the handouts.

Tom Sorenson talked on giving coordinating council and administrative committee some publicity and making the public aware of issues. Dave Schmidt brought up an incident where publicizing an issue coming up backfired where the issues were

changed after veterans were told to contact their legislators. Rick Ryan gave some different strategies for the council. Some of these strategies included: information packets to let the people know that you won't stand for what happened this time in the legislature; press conferences to target people that you want defeated and so veterans are able to hear; letter to the editors; paid lobbyist; reactivate past members during legislation to promote and support decisions made by the council; legislative dinner. Rick stated the council needs to decide what strategies they want to use and work on them, especially now during the off year.

Discussion was held on the different strategies among the members. Elmer Ekern stated AmVets has a resolution in for supporting a paid lobbyist to donate \$500.00 each year for the lobbyist. DAV also wants a paid lobbyist. VFW will bring up the issue at state convention and they are having schools and will bring it up. Legion will bring it up at their convention. Earl suggested using the money that would've been used on a reform of a bill that was vetoed towards the paid lobbyist. The idea of paid lobbyist was in great support by the members. It was advised that the members talk to the legislatures before they are elected.

Explanations were held dealing with the PWTF. It was suggested that the council try to get the PWTF constitution amended. This would be the only way to safeguard the PWTF. It is also suggested that the council have someone write the amendments to the constitution and a petition with about 25,000 signatures would also need to be obtained. Discussion was held among the members related to the PWTF.

Motion was made by Rick Ryan to go on record to support a constitutional amendment to the PWTF. Second by Wes Martin. Discussion was held on the motion. Motion was withdrawn.

Earl Redlin stated he would like to meet where a press conference can be held and list all of the grievances the council has. Discussion was held on this issue.

It was discussed to ask Bob Wefald to draw up the constitutional amendment to the PWTF.

Dave Schmidt made a motion to ask Bob Wefald to serve as legal council for the coordinating council. Dennis Berg seconded the motion. Discussion was held on the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

It was stated that the American Legion would not target any legislatures.

Earl Redlin made a motion to hold the next meeting July 7 and

July 8, 1995, at 1:00 p.m. at Camp Grafton. Motion was seconded by Glenn Mauer. The motion was unanimously carried. Bob Evans will make the arrangements for the meeting at Camp Grafton. It was also discussed that taking over the funding of the cemetery from the guards must be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Dues are due. Elections to be held.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:20.