

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK, ND

May 29 & 30, 2009
1:00pm

Meeting called to order by Chairman Jensen. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

Roll Call:

Present:

John Adolf	John Hanson	Orletta Kilen
Carl Bloomquist	Ken Hasby	Dean Overby
Jerry Goll	Dave Hilleren	Wayne Paulson
Jeff Hall	Rudy Jensen	Lyle Schuchard

Absent:

Lee Finstad	Mike Fisher	Dave Vandergon
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Guests:

June Veit, Senator Conrad's Office
Jerry Samuelson, President ND CVSO Association
Ron Otto, Morton County VSO
Mark Landis, Burleigh County VSO
Jim Hilzendeger, Logan County VSO

***Motion by John Adolf to approve February 4 & 5, 2009 minutes, second by Jeff Hall.
Motion passed.***

Speakers:

Ken Kadrmas – DOT

- ▶ Guidelines on naming highway
 - Memorial highways already designated
- ▶ 30" x 30" costs approximately \$55 sign
- ▶ D.O.T. provides the installation free of charge. It would cost around \$75-\$100 (includes post, foundation and manpower.)
- ▶ Entity providing the sign is responsible for maintenance and replacement.

Kelly Schmidt, ND State Treasurer

► Troy Nelson, Edward Jones Investments, introduced by the State Treasurer. He gave information on how the Fund is invested and its performance this past year. The Fund lost 27% but did better than many other investments. He recommends the Committee “tightens its belt” when obligating monies. It will take at least 1½ - 2 years for the Fund to rebound.

► PWTF Report distributed. An earlier Attorney General’s opinion on the Trust Fund and how its assets are calculated were explained by the State Treasurer.

Lyle Schuchard, Dean Overby and the Chairman will continue to work with the State Treasurer’s Office in analyzing the fund and how best to manage its assets. An Attorney General’s Opinion will be sought on the Fund and the merits of creating a separate Restricted Fund.

MG David Sprynczynatyk, Adjutant General, NDARNG

- Memorial Day events were well attended
- Legislation on Guard issues went well. A Gold Star license plate will be available soon as preliminary work with the DOT is in progress.
- Over 2,500 guard personnel were deployed to help with flood efforts throughout the State. There are still 150 guard in Jamestown.
- Information distributed on the “Memorial to the Fallen in the Global War on Terrorism”

Rob Keller spoke on the Military Service Center and the services provided to soldiers and their families.

Rob McDivitt, FACHE, Medical Center Director, VA

- The VA Hospital evacuated patients due to the flood during the period of March 20 – April 6.
- Innovis Healthcare facilities in Fargo were accessed by veterans during the flood.
- The Community Living Center remodeling finished.
- Fee Basis - \$18 million was spent last year to purchase outpatient care; \$19 million is budgeted for this year.
- Volunteer Van Drivers – only one physician is able to certify the van drivers. He is willing to travel to any CBOCs if enough drivers need physicals.

Maren Daley, Director, Job Service North Dakota, Bismarck

- \$9 million in stimulus money has been allotted to JS ND
- Veterans and eligible spouses will receive priority treatment under the Job Service’s “priority of service” commitment.
- Employer Tax Credit available when hiring eligible veterans

- Spoke briefly on veterans preference in county, city, or state employment

Norris Braaten, Chairman, ND Veterans Home Governing Board

- Legislative session - \$12 million needed to build home since the VA wants it to be modeled on the "Neighborhood Concept"; 25 more staff are necessary because of the concept, these were approved by the legislature; landscaping, irrigation and road projects received \$350,000
- Total beds in new facility: 98 basic, 52 skilled. Construction is underway. Completion target date is October 2010
- Geothermal heating system – stimulus funds will be used
- Flooding in Lisbon affected the grounds of the Home. Due to HESCO dikes installed north to south on property, the grounds and roads are in need of repair but there was no damage to main building.
- "Owners Representative" (monitors construction and contractors to make sure they are in compliance) is in the hiring process. It is a ½ time position for 18 months, selection to be made in June
- Would like a discussion on the Administrator's home, whether to keep and renovate it or give the Administrator a stipend for home in town.

Department of Veterans Affairs Report – Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner

Overview of Department business (Power Point presentation)

Commissioner questioned on the need for obtaining service officers' evaluations. Some counties do regular evaluations and some don't do any at all. The Commissioner will work with those counties who would like to set up a form and start doing evaluations. The evaluations will be filed in the Commissioner's office and the only thing included in the report before the legislature will be if evaluations are being conducted.

The Commissioner navigated the Department's website so committee members could see the changes that have been and the areas added to the website.

Discussion on IT technology that would enable the committee members to view and make changes to the Strategic Plan on a secured web page. Consensus of the committee members is for them to just view the Strategic Plan. This will be looked into further to find if it is cost effective to implement.

Subcommittee Meetings

Committee recessed until Saturday at 8:30am.

Saturday, May 30, 2009
8:30am

Committee reconvened.

Roll Call:

Present:

John Adolf
Carl Bloomquist
Jerry Goll
Jeff Hall

John Hanson
Ken Hasby
Dave Hilleren
Rudy Jenson

Orletta Kilen
Dean Overby
Wayne Paulson
Lyle Schuchard

Absent:

Lee Finstad

Mike Fisher

Dave Vandergon

Guests: Ron Otto, Morton County VSO

Reconvene 8:30am

Department of Veterans Affairs - Dean Overby, Chairman

The Fall CVSO Conference was changed to a week in September 2009 since the Spring Conference was cancelled due to flooding throughout the State. Residency requirements for the Grant and Loan program and changing some amounts in the Grant Program were discussed. No changes made to any of the policies.

Lyle Schuchard and Dean Overby will be conducting the Commissioner's evaluation. If it is a satisfactory evaluation the committee recommends the Commissioner receive the pay raises appropriated by the Legislative Assembly.

Motion by Dean Overby that upon a good evaluation the Commissioner is to receive the legislatively appropriated pay raises of 5% for July 1, 2009 and 5% for July 1, 2010, second by Jerry Goll. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #1]

Budget Committee – John Hanson, Chairman

Discussion on current budget. The committee will reconvene at the next meeting to review the budget again. A transfer \$500 from the grant program to the transportation was approved with a phone call vote of the committee members.

PWTF Committee – Dave Hilleren, Chairman

The tabled request from the ND Veterans Home for activity monies was brought back for discussion. Based on budget shortfall, motion made, seconded and passed to deny request as submitted.

Request for StandDown funds from Bismarck. Request tabled until next meeting.

Motion by Dave Hilleren to approve committee recommendations to deny ND Veterans Home request and table the StandDown request, second by John Hanson. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #2]

A letter from Chairman Jenson will go the Veterans Home and the Stand Down Committee about the ACOVA's actions on their requests.

Appeals Committee – Wayne Paulson, Chairman

Five appeals held on Friday, May 29, 2009. Appeals held by conference call with members meeting at the ND DVA Bismarck Branch office.

The committee upheld the Commissioner's decision on all appeals..

Motion by Wayne Paulson to accept committee's report, second by Ken Hasby. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #3]

Legislative Committee – Lyle Schuchard

Lyle Schuchard reported Chairman Finstad was unable to attend the meeting. HB 1017 may be brought back in the next legislative session. The ACOVA will work with the Coordinating Council in preparing bills for the next legislative session. The Committee is already looking at possible legislation such as naming highways, leave for state employees serving on Honor Guards, and waiving ND state taxes for retired veterans.

Motion by Orletta Kilen to accept subcommittee reports, second by Carl Bloomquist. Motion passed.

Chairman's Report – Rudy Jenson

Chairman Jenson spoke on the Postwar Trust Fund. Committee understood the Reserve Fund totaling \$450,000 would be available when the market took a downturn. Kelly Schmidt, State Treasurer, had reported that there could not be a fund within a fund. Therefore, the Reserve Fund monies are unavailable to help maintain the programs. This issue will be looked into for further clarification.

Governing Board members have assured the Chairman that any rate increase will be brought to the Administrative Committee. A bill was passed that only the Governing Board has the authority to increase rates.

Plaques given to three outgoing members, Gary Skarphol – plaque given at American Legion Mid Winter Conference; Wally Buckingham and Jerry Meske have been unavailable to receive their plaques. A collection was taken up from committee members to contribute to the cost of the plaques.

The next meeting will be held in July with the ND Veterans Coordinating Council since it is the reorganizational meeting for both organizations. The Governor's Office will try to have incoming members named in time for the July meeting.

ND Veterans Home Governing Board Appointments:

Chairman Jenson and Secretary Schuchard recommend DuWayne Ternes be reappointed to the Governor Board. Mr. Ternes was named chairman of the Building Committee for the new Veterans Home. He has proven to be a valuable member of the board with his construction expertise.

Motion by Dean Overby to reappoint DuWayne Ternes to the Governing Board, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #4]

Chairman Jenson and Secretary Schuchard recommend naming Norris Braaten as Chairman of the Governing Board.

Motion by Orletta Kilen to reappoint Norris Braaten as Chairman of the Governing Board, second by John Hanson. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #5]

Chairman Jenson and Secretary Schuchard recommend naming Dean Overby to the Governing Board. Brad Maasjo's term is up as of June 30, 2009. Dean has a background in road construction which will be useful during the building process.

Motion by Dave Hilleren to appoint Dean Overby to ND Veterans Governing Board, second by Jeff Hall. Motion passed: 11 yeas, 1 abstain (Overby). [MOTION #6]

Chairman Jenson will send letters informing Ternes, Braaten and Overby of their appointments, which take effect July 1, 2009. A letter will also be sent to Brad Maasjo thanking him for his service on the Board.

Ron Otto spoke on two issues in need of legislative action: (1) property tax relief for DIC recipients and (2) SB 2082 - tuition and tuition waivers for veterans and their dependents.

Discussion on separating the Department's budget and the Veterans Home budget into two bills during the legislative process. The Department has requested OMB separate the budgets for the last three to four legislative sessions but it still ends up with both budgets contained in one bill.

Dave Hilleren reported that the Vietnam Veterans convention will be held in Mayville July 17-19, 2009. The John Coyne Golf Tournament will be on July 17, 2009.

.Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Lyle Schuchard
Secretary