

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND

November 20, 2009
1:00pm

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

Roll Call:

Present:

John Adolf	Ken Hasby	Dean Overby
Lee Finstad	Dave Hilleren	Wayne Paulson
Mike Fisher	Orletta Kilen	Carroll Quam
Jeff Hall	Mark Landis	Lyle Schuchard
John Hanson	Ron Otto	Dave Vandergon

Absent:

none

Guests:

Senator Dick Devers
ND Veterans Coordinating Council
Jim Hilzendeger, President, ND Veterans Service Officer Association
June Veit, Senator Conrad's office
Jerry Meske
Wyman Roeder
Marlys Morgenstern

Motion by Dean Overby to accept the August 21 & 22, 2009 meeting minutes, second by John Adolf. Motion passed.

Motion by Mike Fisher to accept the October 9, 2009 meeting minutes, second by Mark Landis. Motion passed.

Speakers:

Captain Michelle Hagel, ND National Guard, Full-time Judge Advocate.

► Brings greetings from MG David Sprynczynatyk, Adjutant General, ND National Guard. He is attending an out-of-town function.

► Military Service Center still operational and doing well in providing services.

Margaret Wheelden, Public Affairs Officer, Fargo VA Medical Center

► Rob McDivitt, Center Director, is transferring to Ann Arbor Michigan in December. Mr. McDivitt sent along a letter that expressed his appreciation of working with the ACOVA on veterans' issues.

► FargoVA Homeless Program received a National Award for their outstanding work in helping veterans.

► CBOC in Grand Forks exceeding enrollment. Devils Lake will still be on board in 2010.

► The Fargo VA Medical Center has scheduled a H1N1 vaccination clinic on Wednesday, November 25 for eligible veterans

► The Fargo VA is serving over 29,000 veterans with the hospital and clinics.

Norris Braaten, Chairman, ND Veterans Home Governing Board

Overview given of the new Veterans Home along with a financial report.

Mark Johnson, Administrator, ND Veterans Home

► Nationally recognized as the first facility to be built in the household / neighborhood model. It is also the first veterans' home to have geothermal heating.

► Received two deficiencies in VA Survey.

► Lost three weeks of work in October and are now trying to make up the time in November. There are up to 80 workers a day on site.

► There has been some discussion on the 1990's addition being a VA CBOC for south eastern North Dakota.

► The Gazebo will be a stand alone structure.

Joe Hall, Chairman, Stand Down 2009

► Report on Central Dakota Veterans Stand Down and Project Homeless Connect.

Thanked the Committee for supporting the event. 135 veterans were served that day. The total expense of PWTF interest earnings was \$3,235.60, the total obligated amount was \$3,500.00.

► Stated that a Veterans and Community Job Fair was held Thursday, Nov 19, 2009. A more detailed report will follow showing the number of veterans participating.

Transportation Van Update – Mike Fisher

Provided a report of a meeting held at the Fall DAV conference. Mike Dobmeier, National DAV Judge Advocate, was invited to attend as he was instrumental in getting a van donated to North Dakota years ago. A phone survey of members of the PWTF subcommittee was conducted with the conclusion the donated van would be placed where it would be best utilized where in the State.

Chairman Schuchard recognized the ND Veterans Coordinating Council.

Gene Kouba, President, ND Veterans Coordinating Council, called the meeting to order. Business conducted: Jim Hapala elected President and Bob Evans elected Secretary. "Honoring All Korean War Veterans" Resolution presented to Council for consideration. Motion made and passed that the NDVCC ask the Governor to consider this resolution and ask that a signing ceremony be scheduled for publicity purposes. No business brought forward to the Administrative Committee. Meeting adjourned.

Chairman Schuchard returned the meeting to ACOVA business.

Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner, ND Veterans Affairs

► Women Veterans' Coordinator position advertised., The minimum number of qualified candidates was not reached after HRMS scored the applications. The position will be re-advertised.

► Commissioner attend NASDVA Convention in September at Asheville, NC and completed T.R.I.P. training

► Bismarck StandDown staffed by Gene and Betty; Fargo StandDown staffed by Cathy and Andrea. VA Annual Welcome Home staffed by Tom.

► New CVSO Training – Walsh County; Small Group Training held in November with Benson, Emmons, McIntosh, Richland, Sioux and Spirit Lake Nation Service Officer. December Small Group Training being planned.

► Spring 2010 Training scheduled for April 19-23, 2010 in Bismarck. Working with the Service Organizations on accreditations.

► A total of 4,646 discharges have been scanned into the database. The ability to generate the Welcome Home letters and CVSO notification is working.

► Since the last ACOVA meeting, 19 loan applications have been received with 14 approved for a total of \$56,500.

► There are 61 eligible grants pending approval for a total of \$64,750. \$200,000 has been budgeted with \$49,181.31 transferred.

► Strategic Plan is updated through November 2009.

► 15 laptops and software purchased and have been distributed.

Motion by Dean Overby that a plaque be given to Rudy Jenson in appreciation for his service on the Committee, second by Ken Hasby. Motion passed.

Subcommittee Meetings

Committee recessed until Saturday at 8:00am.

Saturday, November 21, 2009
8:00am

Committee reconvened.

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

Roll Call:

Present:

John Adolf
Lee Finstad
Mike Fisher
Jeff Hall
John Hanson

Ken Hasby
Dave Hilleren
Orletta Kilen
Mark Landis
Ron Otto

Dean Overby
Wayne Paulson
Carroll Quam
Lyle Schuchard
Dave Vandergon

Absent:

none

Guests:

Joe Schmaltz

Subcommittee Reports:

Appeals Committee – Orletta Kilen, Chairman
Three Appeals hearings held, all decisions upheld.

Budget Committee – Ken Hasby, Chairman

Ron Otto gave committee's report. Budget Report given to committee. The funding for software and laptops for the counties have been expended with \$726.80 remaining. The next big expenditure should be the accreditation training in April 2010.

Legislative Committee – Lee Finstad, Chairman

Discussion on definition of a veteran

Veterans Preference

Income could be generated by a veterans license plate

Create a stream of income from a game of chance dedicated for veteran's use

Review other states home loan programs

Provide for a statutory leave for honor guard

Property tax abatement for widowed DIC beneficiaries

Political developments relating to HB 1057

Veterans Affairs - Dave Hilleren, Chairman

Commissioner Wangen gave report (see above). No further business conducted.

PWTF – John Hanson, Chairman

Report given by Mark Landis, Secretary

Subcommittee recommends reducing the dollar amounts of the grants, motion to go to Emergency Commission died for lack of a second, and the subcommittee also recommends going to the Attorney General for an opinion if ACOVA can set-up an account.

(Mike Mullen, Attorney General's Office, contacted regarding the possibility of either ACOVA or the Department setting up a separate account. He is researching the issue and will hopefully have an answer by the next meeting.)

Previous grant categories amounts reviewed by committee for comparison against current amounts.

Motion by Dean Overby to reduce the grant category amounts to the 2006 levels, second by Dave Hilleren.

Mark Landis questioned when there would be an answer of the committee getting the \$450,000 in the Reserve Fund. Perhaps the committee is acting premature in deciding this issue. Commissioner questioned on the impact of reducing the amounts based on the applications pending. Chairman Schuchard stated there may be more money available depending on the stock market and the Treasurer's Office is guaranteeing \$200,000 for this biennium. Dean Overby brought up the fact there are more veterans who need assistance now than there has in the past. This has to be balanced against the money available to provide them with service.

Chairman Schuchard asked if the amounts are changed, will it be retroactive to the pending grants.

Friendly amendment to include, "and it be retroactive to the pending grants."

Motion to read, "To reduce the grant category amounts to the 2006 levels and it be retroactive to the pending grants." Motion passed; 13 yeas, 1 nay (Landis), 1 absent from vote (Hasby). [MOTION #1]

Motion by Dean Overby to approve all the subcommittee reports, second by Lee Finstad. Motion passed.

Daryl Beard, ND Veterans Home Governing Board

The Governing Board is working on updating the administrative rules at the Veterans Home.

- ▶ Priority listing for admittance to Home
- ▶ Admissions Board composition is an area of contention.
- ▶ Limiting the number of spouses in the Home, Title 38 states 25% may reside. For every spouse in the Home, there is a loss of income.

Chairman's Report:

Chairman and Secretary will continue to meet with the Treasurer's Office on the PWTF issue.

An Attorney General's Opinion on the relationship between ACOVA and the Governing Board has been issued. The Governing Board handles the day-to-day operations of the Veterans Home but still needs to give reports to ACOVA on what they are doing. ACOVA still has the authority to step in if there are problems. Legislation from the Veterans Home will go through the ACOVA and Coordinating Council.

TriCare will not be affected by the new healthcare bill working its way through Congress.

Chairman spoke on getting the subcommittees more involved between meetings and corresponding more with the subcommittee chairmen. Chairman and Secretary had a meeting in the Fargo Office with the staff. Dave Hilleren, Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs Chairman, was able to attend also.

Chairman Schuchard recognized Mike Fisher.

Motion by Mike Fisher that the DAV State Adjutant be contacted to pursue the possibility of getting a van through the Colorado Trust Fund, second by Mark Landis. Motion approved unanimously. Ron Otto will follow-up on this.

Chairman Schuchard asked if any of the local auto dealerships have been approached about donating vans. Mike Fisher and Mark Landis will pursue this idea.

Mike Fisher asked if a condensed version of the ACOVA minutes be sent to the service organizations so they could publish it in their newsletters. The Commissioner will follow through on getting this information to the service organizations' headquarters.

Commissioner asked if it was possible to request funds from the service organizations to help pay for the transportation vans. This is a possibility that can be looked into later.

Lee Finstad spoke on a letter he was to write to the Governing Board defining the relationship between the two entities. This brought up how others view ACOVA. There is still talk of reducing the number of members on the committee or disbanding it altogether. Each member represents a service organization and it is everyone's responsibility to keep their organization informed of what the committee is doing. Members also need to know what is going on in their organizations. Perhaps there is a need to do press releases on the positive things the committee is doing. Mike Fisher talked about being team players once a decision has been made.

Wayne Paulson would like to see a press release regarding the action taken on reducing the grant category amounts.

Dave Vandergon expressed concern on the CBOC planned in Devils Lake. It is in the process but nothing substantial has taken place.

Lee Finstad questioned why there was no representative from the State Treasurer's Office. There appeared to be a scheduling conflict. Mike Fisher stated there is a news article from the State Treasurer's Office that there will be monthly reports on the PWTF on their website.

Motion by Dean Overby that the next meeting be held February 19 & 20, 2010 in Bismarck, second by Mike Fisher. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Ron Otto
Secretary