

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND

June 29, 2012
8:00AM

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	Dave Hilleren	Dean Overby
Richard Belling	Trish Hodny	Carroll Quam
Lee Finstad	Orletta Kilen	Lyle Schuchard
Mike Fisher	Mark Landis	Jim Verwey
Ken Hasby	Ron Otto	

Absent:

Jeff Hall

Guests:

Marlys Morgenstern, Job Service ND
LTC Davina French, NDNG
Steve Frojen, President, ND CVSO Association
Jeb Oehlke, Deputy State Treasurer

Motion to approve the March 30, 2012 meeting minutes, seconded. Motion passed.

Speakers:

Marlys Morgenstern, Job Service

Gave overview of Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP). VRAP offers up to 12 months of training assistance to unemployed veterans. The VA and Department of Labor are working together to roll out this new program on July 1, 2012. The program must lead to an Associate Degree, Non-College Degree, or a Certificate, and train the veteran for a high demand occupation. There are eligibility requirements for the program,

i.e. at least 35 but no more than 60 years old; be unemployed; not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program.

Gary Maddock, Secretary, ND Veterans Coordinating Council

The Coordinating Council met in Jamestown on July 28 for their reorganizational meeting. Legislation bills reviewed: Melvin Norgaard Bill - colleges maybe going in to work on the language since they receive donations from alumni so the Council may not have to work on this. They reviewed bills that they had endorsed last legislation session: HB 1178 – retired military income (endorsed); HB 1116 – property tax relief (endorsed); and PWTF Bill to add 2 million to the Fund (endorsed). Five resolutions from the DAV: Tuition waiver (endorsed), fishing license (endorsed), retired income (similar to HB 1178, did not get endorsed), and CVSO resolution did not get endorsement from the Council.

Ron Otto stated the admittance to State Parks disability requirements dropped from 100% to 50% due to the efforts of Mark Landis.

MG David A. Sprynczynatyk, ND Adjutant General

- ▶ May be sending helicopter to Colorado to help with the firefighting efforts.
- ▶ They still have 300 soldiers serving overseas.
- ▶ Troops will still be sent to other areas but the numbers being deployed are dwindling.
- ▶ Mentioned those that are retiring and those soldiers moving into different positions.
- ▶ Memorial Day attendance at the Veterans Cemetery was around 1,800.
- ▶ Fallen Soldiers Walk at Camp Grafton had 50 people participating
- ▶ July 13 & 14 is a Patriot Rider Event
- ▶ Lt. Davina French is working on legislative issues. If we all work together, we could have a very successful legislative session.
- ▶ Military Service Center opened in Fargo, 1400 people have come in to utilize the services offered.
- ▶ Involved in youth programs and camps.
- ▶ Spoke on the federal budget and the impact on the North Dakota Air Guard. The Air Force would cut the flying manned missions in Fargo and 5% of the personnel. North Dakota would be the only state without a flying manned mission. Congress put the budget on hold for a year so the Guard is looking at options to make sure North Dakota doesn't lose personnel or missions.

Mark Johnson, ND Veterans Home Administrator

- ▶ By the first of the year the facility should be full. They are getting applications every day.
- ▶ Finishing up construction items and putting in the irrigation system.
- ▶ Four different surveys have been conducted in the last 2½ months: For Cause Survey (a complaint survey) – no deficiency found; State Survey found one deficiency; VA Survey – deficiency free; and Audit Survey. The For Cause Survey was based on the VA wanting to place sex offenders at the Lisbon Home. In the Administrative Rules, the Home has a statement talking about moral turpitude. The Attorney General's Office issued a statement on that no admittance clause and the issue has gone away.
- ▶ Projects down the road include tree planting for a shelter belt and the Gazebo needs to have a fire alarm and have it wired into a building.
- ▶ Legislative issues include getting a house for the Administrator and building a workshop, take down and demolish a storage building and then establishing a new building.

Department of Veterans Affairs Report – Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner

- ▶ Update on Department activities (PowerPoint)
- ▶ Heartsprings looking at Cardinal Muench Seminary facility for possible site. Ron Otto questioned where the monies are going that the Committee gave to Heartsprings. He doesn't feel it should be going for a study. The money was requested to help move their project forward in securing a facility. Commissioner provided Ron with a copy of the January 16, 2012 request for funds from HeartSprings which stated the funds are for contracting with a non-profit consulting company to work out the legal agreements and to hire a grant writer.

Lee Finstad reported that Grand Forks County is looking into an agreement with the State Department of Veterans Affairs so the State will provide oversight to the Veterans Service Office.

Discharge Project: The Commissioner is soliciting bids for a company to come in and scan all the discharges. The bid process should be ending soon.

Chairman Schuchard reported Commissioner Wangen received the American Legion Department Commander's Award at the American Legion Conference.

Subcommittee reports

Legislative Subcommittee-Lee Finstad

Commissioner Wangen reviewed the legislation issues: expanding USERRA to cover state activated Guard members; FTE position for Department; changes to license plates, i.e. removing fees on license plates; removing language that allows CVSOs to serve as conservators; free tuition for dependents; state funding for NSO officers and funding for Legal Services.

Jim Verwey commented that the POW designation is not on the discharge so there have been some problems verifying that information. The Commissioner will look into the situation.

Lee Finstad spoke on the letter from the Attorney General's office regarding litigation against a county veterans service officer; funding for Veteran's Court and the need to hire a judge; and the possibility of purchasing a park in Grand Forks County. The cost of the park is \$5 million and is a full year round park.

Motion by Lee Finstad to proposal legislation for the purchase of Fordville Recreation and Park for veterans to use, second by Richard Belling. Motion passed unanimously

Discussion on who would have ownership and oversight on the facility. The park is fully functional for camping and fishing. North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department would probably take it over.

Lee spoke on the need for legal services to assist veterans with their claim appeals and his discussion with North Dakota Legal Aid.

Motion by Lee Finstad to support the concept of asking the legislature for funding for Legal Aid services strictly for veterans and funding for a judge for the Veterans Court, second by Richard Belling. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Jim Verwey to approve report, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed.

PWTF – Ken Hasby

The Committee talked about the 410 account, there is \$64,000+, available. Of the \$210,000 given by the Legislature, \$52,000 is allocated every month.

Special meeting: Unmet Needs Program received \$1,500 to start. The committee recommends an additional \$1,500 be allocated to the program.

Motion by Mike Fisher to approve report, second by Richard Belling. Motion passed.

Appeals – Orletta Kilen, Chairman

No appeals heard.

Motion by Ken Hasby to approve report, second by Dave Hilleren. Motion passed.

Veterans Affairs – Dave Hilleren, Chairman

Department update given by Commissioner Wangen.

Motion by Carroll Quam to approve report, second by Ron Otto. Motion carried.

Budget Committee – Ken Hasby, Chairman

Budget reviewed. The \$210,000 is disbursed between transportation lodging, van repairs, and grants. Committee questions were answered by Cathy.

Motion by Orletta Kilen to approve report, second by Mike Fisher. Motion passed.

Chairman's Report – Lyle Schuchard

Chairman Schuchard spoke on the Top Ten Reasons document. The Commissioner is not a bureaucrat and was surprised to see that on list. The Commissioner is hired by the Committee and is held accountable by the Committee. A veteran should fill the position of Commissioner, nobody should be appointed. Chairman Schuchard believes in the system in place and would not want to see it changed.

Chairman Schuchard spoke on how he seldom sends out emails. As explained to him by the Attorney General's Office that if there are enough responses to emails it could be construed as a quorum. He preferred to have items/information sent through the Commissioner's office.

When the subcommittee makes its report, the committee votes on all the items as a whole. If someone has a problem with an item, they should ask it be voted on separately. Also, when the ACOVA approves anything, that's the message the members should all carry out. Everybody has to go out and give the same message.

It is his last meeting and he thanked the committee for their support. It's been a great experience for him.

Motion by Mark Landis to commend Lyle Schuchard for his service on ACOVA, second by Jim Verwey. Motion passed.

Orletta Kilen, Mark Landis and Lyle Schuchard are coming off the committee. They were thanked for their service.

Next meeting to be held August 2 & 3, 2012 in Bismarck.

Motion to adjourn by Carroll Quam, second by Lee Finstad. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Dean Overby
Secretary