

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND

September 27, 2012
1:00PM

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

Roll Call:

Present:

John Adolf	Ken Hasby	Dean Overby
Richard Belling	Dave Hilleren	Carroll Quam
Mike Fisher	Trish Hodny	Marlin Schneider
Jeff Hall	Robert Olzweski	Jim Verwey
John Hanson	Ron Otto	

Absent:

Lee Finstad

Guests:

Richard Krajewski, ND DAV State Commander

Chairman Overby stated this is the reorganizational meeting and invited members to tell a little bit about themselves:

John Hanson – Glad to be back on Committee and ready to go to work. Member of various veterans organizations and has been retired for two years.

Trish Hodny – Member of various veterans' organizations and represents the V.V.A. on the Committee. Director of Career Services at UND School of law.

Ron Otto – Morton and Oliver CVSO. Starting his second term and belongs to all the organizations.

Marlin Schneider – Member of American Legion and 40 et 8. Retired from the National Guard. Worked for Emergency Services for the last 8 years.

Jim Verwey – Barnes CVSO. Belong to all the organizations and finishing his first term.

Jeff Hall – Represents the American Legion.

Carroll Quam – Representing the AMVETS.

Richard Belling – Second year on ACOVA representing VFW

Mike Fisher – DAV, serving his second term and last year on ACOVA.

Bob Olzweski – His first year and is glad to be here. Served in the Army & Army Reserves for about 40 years. Life member of AL, AMVETS, VFW, VVA and MOPH and member of the Bismarck Elks. First Vice of local AMVETS. Mike Fisher read letter regarding Bob's Purple Heart.

Ken Hasby – Represent DAV and is on his second term with two years left. He has enjoyed working on the Committee.

Lonnie Wangen – Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, Iraqi vet.

John Adolf – Fourth year on Committee representing AMVETS. Retired from working 40 years at the telephone company and is currently working with his son.

Dean Overby – American Legion, on Committee for eight years. Has enjoyed working with veterans and for veterans. Welcome to new members and everyone here.

***Motion by Jim Verwey to accept June 2012 minutes, second by Richard Belling.
Motion carried.***

New Subcommittee Assignments.

Chairman Overby explained he and the Secretary appoint the subcommittees. There have been changes made to the number of committees. Since there were five to six subcommittees, people would have to wait for their meetings since they served on two committees. Budget and Department of Veterans Affairs have been combined and have one member serving from each organization. Legislative Committee stands alone. Postwar Trust Fund and Appeals are combined also. Public Relations Committee is still in effect.

Department of Veterans Affairs – Dave Hilleren (VVA), Jeff Hall (AL), Richard Belling (VFW), Carroll Quam (AMVETS) and Ken Hasby (DAV).

Legislative Committee – Lee Finstad (VVA), John Hanson (VFW), Marlin Schneider (AL), Ron Otto (DAV) and John Adolf (AMVETS).

Post War Trust Fund & Appeals – Jim Verwey (VFW), Mike Fisher (DAV), Robert Olzweski (AMVETS), and Patricia Hodny (VVA)

Public Relations – Dean Overby, John Adolf and subcommittee chairs

The agenda of the meeting will change with the Speakers and the Commissioner's report heard on the first day then the committee breaking into subcommittees.

The subcommittees will choose their chairman when they meet. Chairman Overby reviewed the Century Code regarding the Administrative Committee. The work of the

Committee is for all veterans in the State, not just the organizations that members were chosen to represent or for personal agendas. This is a legislative year so we will be working on legislation to help the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Veterans Home and the veterans of North Dakota. The only way we can do that is to work together.

Mike Fisher asked if the full committee had to approve the changes made. Chairman Overby responded that the only subcommittee named in the Century Code is the Department of Veterans Affairs. All other subcommittees are at the Chairman's discretion.

Commissioner's Report – Lonnie Wangen
[POWER POINT PRESENTATION]

Commissioner Wangen gave an update on Department activities and financial programs.
▶ Brenda attended VFW Service Officer Training, Sept 16-21; Jeff attended the Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Parade, Steele, July 28 and SD Training Conference, Aug 27-29.

▶ Tom participated in the Walsh County Veteran Outreach, July 28; Brenda continues outreach to Turtle Mt., Ft. Totten, Ft. Yates and Three Affiliated Tribes reservations.

▶ Commissioner serves on Workforce Development Council, ISFAC, Mental Health Council

▶ ND CVSIO Training Conference held in Fargo, Sept 24-26

▶ Discharge Project – discharges from 8/1/1990 to present have been scanned into database.

▶ Loan Program – 190 current loans, available balance - \$140,471.26

▶ Strategic plan updated thru September 2012

Jim Verwey asked about the Loan Program and if there were many delinquent loans. Commissioner Wangen stated there are not many bad loans but the fund could use an influx of money. Richard Belling asked about the Fisher House situation. Fifteen million will be needed to fix up the Cardinal Muench seminary to use for rehabilitation for veterans.

Other information presented by the Commissioner included:

- The vans that go to Minneapolis are run by the DAV and VA.
- Upward Bound put in for a grant and found out they were not approved. It was a five year grant and they are in their fifth year so legislation may be submitted for the State to cover the cost of this program. It may turn out to be a good thing to turn it into a state program.

Chairman Overby talked about the subcommittees. He and the Commissioner have worked to put together binders for each of the subcommittees. Each binder has a form to record the minutes along with relevant information for each committee. There is a place for a mission statement and the strategic plan is included for the committees to update.

The Chairman, Secretary and subcommittee chairmen will meet at 8:00am tomorrow morning for the Public Relations Committee.

Subcommittees met.

September 28, 2012
Committee Reconvened
9:00AM

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

Roll Call:

Present:

John Adolf	Ken Hasby	Dean Overby
Richard Belling	Dave Hilleren	Carroll Quam
Mike Fisher	Trish Hodny	Marlin Schneider
Jeff Hall	Robert Olzweski	Jim Verwey
John Hanson	Ron Otto	

Absent:

Lee Finstad

Speakers:

General Dormann, ND Adjutant General

Updates on activities:

- ▶ A group of civil engineers returned from Kuwait back in August.
- ▶ The Predator mission continues to operate out of Fargo

▶ Suicide prevention and resiliency within the military is being pushed very hard. Army Nat'l Guard will stand down for one full day during training in October to address the issue.

Legislative Initiatives

- ▶ Requesting additional funding for the Bonus, which is based on the number of months of service.
- ▶ Tuition enlistment compensation package - asking for additional funding on top of regular funding. FY 2013 on the federal side should be okay, it's FY2014 that is causing funding concern.
- ▶ Requesting FTE's – Outreach Officers in the Military Service Centers are temporary workers and the Guard wants to make them permanent employees
- ▶ Requesting funding to institute a program that would recognize retiring National Guard members by giving them a flag
- ▶ Would like to institute an outreach program for Gold Star families
- ▶ Enable motorcycle riders to get a military motorcycle license plate
- ▶ State Active Duty Enhancement Package – so those that are called to state active duty don't suffer from financial hardships due to incidental costs. i.e. gaps in medical coverage.

Susan Gunsch, Job Service North Dakota

SkillBuildND North Dakota is a \$2 million grant that targets Native Americans and veterans to give them the skills necessary for jobs in oil fields, truck driving, HVAC and other building trades. Funding was received in July and they are trying to get the word out about the program. [HANDOUT]

Peggy Wheelden, Public Affairs Officer, VA Medical Center

- ▶ Lots of construction is still underway at the facility.
- ▶ Budget for FY2013 is sufficient; they are starting to work on FY2014 budget.
- ▶ Caregiver Support Program – the caregiver can receive a stipend to care for a veteran
- ▶ Awarded a contract of \$8.4 million for more outpatient treatment space
- ▶ Stand Downs scheduled: Minot Oct 18th, Fargo Oct 25th, Grand Forks Nov 15th
- ▶ Veterans can go to the CBOC in Bismarck and get photo ids instead of coming to Fargo
- ▶ Progressing with the Devils Lake CBOC; it usually takes about a year to put it in place.
- ▶ Native American Outreach scheduled at Belcourt on October 16 & 17. All veterans are encouraged to attend.
- ▶ Women's Health and Wellness Program schedule for October 16th.
- ▶ Flu shots are available.

Mark Johnson, ND Veterans Home Administrator

- ▶ The Gazebo has been moved and the concrete is finished around that area
- ▶ Occupancy rate is 52 for the skilled side, and 81 for the basic side.
- ▶ 2013 – 2015 submitted the basic budget is at \$21.1 million. The optional package contains funding for the demolition of the former building and a steel building to house items from the former building.
- ▶ Melvin Norgard fund is starting to receive more oil revenue
- ▶ The National Guard has been contacted for assistance with some projects such as removing tree stumps from various areas of the grounds and the possibility of putting in a bridge.

Administrator asked about the status of replacing his home on the Veterans Home grounds. There has been discussion of bringing in another home but it shouldn't be the Veterans Home doing it, it should come from another source according to Office of Management and Budget. It may have to wait for another session unless the ACOVA and/or ND Veterans Coordinating Council want to put it forward in a legislative bill.

Laura Bearfield, Attorney General's Office

Ms. Bearfield introduced Dave Schaibley who will be our new attorney from the Attorney General's Office. He is a Desert Storm veteran and is moving here from Minneapolis. Mr. Schaibley is originally from Bismarck ND.

Joint Meeting with Coordinating Council

Chairman Overby called on Bob Krause, President, ND Veterans Coordinating Council and John Hanson, Legislative Committee to give a report on legislative issues.

Bob Krause reported the following actions by the Coordinating Council:

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| Bill #1 – Melvin Norgard Trust | Priority 1 |
| Bill #2 – Remember our Veterans Plate | Priority 3 |
| Bill #3 – Remove 50% from Property Tax Exemption | Priority 2 |
| Coordinating Council amended it to remove “five thousand four hundred dollars” | |
| Bill #4 - \$2 Million for PWTF | Priority 1 |
| Bill #5 – Removed PWTF biennium restriction | combined with Bill #4 |
| Bill #6 – Change Tuition free from 100% to 50-100% disabled | Priority 2 |
| Bill #7 – Funding for NSO's at Fargo RO | Priority 1 |
| Bill #8 – USERRA for SAD Orders | Off List |
| National Guard addressing this issue | |
| Bill #9 – FTE's for NDDVA | Not supported by Council |
| Bill #10 – Veterans license plate fees-reduced | Priority 3 |
| Bill #11 – CVSO as Conservator | Priority 3 |
| Bill #12 – Tuition for Dependents – 100% at time of death | Priority 2 |

Bill #13 – ND Legal Services funding for Veterans Preference	Priority 2
Bill #14 – Improved CVSO Accreditation & Training	Not supported by Council
Bill #15 – Veterans Flag	Not supported by either group
Bill #16 – Income Tax exemption for military retirement pay	Not supported by ACOVA
Bill #17 – Free Annual Council voted to include hunting	Priority 2
Bill #18 – Free reduced tuition for veterans	Tabled
Bill #19 – HeartSprings- PTSD/TBI Treatment	Priority 2
Bill #20 – Veterans Upward Bound	Priority 1

The Coordinating Council should have a lobbyist but they haven't found anyone to take the job.

Chairman Overby reported there are two openings on the Veterans Home Governing Board. The Chairman and Secretary recruit people to fill those positions and make recommendations to the full committee. Duane Ternes' term is over and will not be returning. Dean Overby's term is also over but he would like to serve one more term.

The Chairman and Secretary recommend Steve Frojen and Dean Overby for the two positions.

Motion by Richard Belling that the Committee approves the recommendation of Steve Frojen to serve on the Governing Board, second by Jim Verwey. Motion carried

Motion by Carroll Quam that the Committee approves the recommendation of Dean Overby to serve on the Governing Board, second by Ken Hasby. Motion carried

Norris Braaten is currently Chairman of the Governing Board and has stated he would continue the chairmanship.

Motion by Carroll Quam that the Committee approves the recommendation of Norris Braaten as Chairman of the Governing Board, second by Richard Belling. Motion carried

Subcommittee reports

Veterans Affairs & Budget – Dave Hilleren, Chairman

Minutes from previous meeting accepted. Dave Hilleren elected chairman, Richard Belling elected Vice-Chairman and Carroll Quam elected Secretary. Mission statement

adopted: “To provide insight and oversight to the Commissioner and the Department of Veterans Affairs.” Subcommittee recommends the establishment of a “small money” grant fund of \$1,000 a month not to exceed \$12,000 a year. The fund will be disbursed at the discretion of the Commissioner. This would cover small incidentals that come up and are not covered by other sources. The trial period would be 10 Oct 2012 thru 30 Sept 2013 based on the Attorney General’s Office approval. Reviewed the 2013-2015 Budget and the expenditures as of June 30, 2012 and accepted the reports. Strategic plan reviewed with no changes planned. Commissioner’s evaluation was completed.

Motion by Ron Otto to approve the small money grant fund as outlined in the committee minutes, second by Mike Fisher. Motion carried.

Motion by Carroll Quam to approve the minutes as submitted by Carroll Quam, second by Ken Hasby. Motion carried.

PWTF & Appeals – Trish Hodny

Trish Hodny elected chairman. The subcommittee decided to keep the committee meetings separate and hold the PWTF meeting followed by the Appeals meeting.

PWTF subcommittee met. Mission statement adopted, “The committee reviews and makes recommendations to the full committee on requests from entities wishing to use the postwar trust fund interest earnings for projects benefitting North Dakota veterans and their dependents.”

There was discussion and a recommendation by the committee to have a Commissioner’s discretionary fund in the amount of \$12,000 a year, \$1,000 a month limit starting October 1, 2012. This is contingent on the Attorney General’s Office ruling. Meeting adjourned.

Appeals subcommittee meeting held. The committee adopted a draft mission statement, “To hear appeals of the department’s decisions on its financial assistance programs taking into consideration the North Dakota Century Code and the ACOVA Policies and Procedures.” Meeting adjourned.

Motion by Carroll Quam to authorize a discretionary fund of \$1,000 a month, \$12,000 a year out of the PWTF general fund allocation contingent on the Attorney General’s Office, second by Jim Verwey. Motion passed.

Motion by Ken Hasby to accept the two subcommittee reports, second by John Hanson. Motion passed.

Legislative Subcommittee – John Hanson

Lee Finstad elected chairman. Lee was contacted by telephone. Mission statement adopted, "To present, advocate and support legislation that is advantageous to all veterans, especially disabled veterans." Current proposed legislation discussed.

Motion by Jim Verwey to approve report, second by Richard Belling. Motion passed.

Chairman Overby asked John Hanson to address the changes the ND Veterans Coordinating Council made to Bills #3 and #17.

Bill #3 – Legislators will be tasked to give some type of property tax relief. The Council voted to strike the \$5,400 stated in the bill.

Motion by Trish Hodny to accept the amended version of Bill #3, second by Carroll Quam. Motion carried.

Bill #17 – The Council voted to include hunting.

Motion by Carroll Quam to accept the amended version of Bill #17, second by Trish Hodny. Motion carried.

Chairman Overby thanked the subcommittees for their hard work. He dropped in on the subcommittee meetings and noted everyone was working on mission statements and there was a lot of good discussion. He stated the need for everybody's support on the legislative issues. "We go up to the Legislature as one voice, united with the Coordinating Council and other veterans, these bills will get passed. Legislation works better if everyone works as one."

Discussion on the next meeting date, sometime in November. The format of the meeting will change with the full committee meeting on Thursday afternoon. Speakers will come in on Thursday and the Commissioner will give his report that afternoon also.

Mike Fisher asked that the Freedom Riders and other veterans' motorcycle groups be put on call for legislative meetings. They have quite a presence at the Legislature.

Public Relations Subcommittee – John Adolf, Chairman

John Adolf elected chairman. Mission statement adopted, "Promote awareness and issues of ACOVA to disseminate information of veterans issues to the media and to the veterans organizations and auxiliaries." Motion on investigating the cost of putting notices in county newspapers.

Motion by Jim Verwey to approve report, second by John Hanson. Motion passed.

Motion by Ron Otto for ACOVA meeting to be held November 29 & 30, 2012 at the Comfort Inn, Bismarck, second by Bob Olzweski. Motion passed.

A joint meeting will be held with the ND Veterans Coordinating Council on Friday, November 30.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

John Adolf
Secretary