

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND

April 18, 2013
1:00PM

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

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

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

Absent:

John Hanson

Trish Hodny participated by conference call.

Maren Daley, Executive Director, ND Job Service

- ▶ The Job Fair held in Williston March 28th was very successful. There were 109 employers and over 1,300 job seekers. The job fair was opened an hour early just for veterans. There were over 200 veterans in attendance. Over 70% of the job seekers received a job offer on the spot. The “Hiring Our Heroes” partnership (Chamber of Commerce and Job Service) helped make job fair a success.
- ▶ Other Job Fairs have been held throughout the State, with great success for veterans. More are being planned, some exclusively for veterans.
- ▶ SkillBuild monies were used for Native Americans and veterans. The majority of the money is obligated; there are 164 enrollments in the program.

General Dorman, National Guard

- ▶ Water issues are happening out East so his presentation will be short.
- ▶ Deployments are going down.

- ▶ On April 22nd, names will be added to the Memorial in front of Fraine Barracks
- ▶ Possible Red River Valley flooding will keep the Guard busy
- ▶ Due to the Federal Government sequestration, the State of ND National Guard will be looking at a cut up to \$6.5 million in the budget. The furlough time for DOD members is 14 days but it could be reduced.
- ▶ Update on other areas of the Guard's activities.
- ▶ Legislative session is almost over and the support from the Department and others was much appreciated.

The Committee asked questions regarding possible flooding in Minot and Fargo. The General gave an overview of Guard support if there is any flooding. Preliminary meetings are starting in Fargo.

Mark Johnson, Administrator, ND Veterans Home

The Home is in the process of finalizing things around the Gazebo. It will be available for meetings soon.

Mark thanked the Committee for the different pieces of equipment the Committee approved. Its Never2Late is equipped with a 6 foot screen and is very successful at the Home. It is the first time the company has used a screen that large. It has had a good effect on the residents. The company is involved with the VA and is looking at tailoring programs for veterans. A recumbent bike was purchased. Bids went out on bikes and progress is being made on getting a bladder scanner.

The Legislature took away four vacant positions and \$100,000 from the operations budget. They also pulled \$450,000 in special funds that was to be used for equity money. Funding was kept in place for tearing down the former veterans' home.

He has been working hard with the National Guard on a grant for improvements to the Veteran's Home grounds.

Jim Verwey asked what the effect will be on removing four FTE's. Mark explained that because the facility is not at capacity, those positions weren't filled. The facility needs a certain staffing level to keep certified. Mark explained that losing positions could have a detrimental effect on the facility.

Ken Hasby asked about the status of the workshop. The House and Senate have funded it but it can't be built until the money is in place from the Melvin Norgard Trust oil wells. If all goes well, it could potentially be built next summer. Melvin Norgard had been a resident at the Home for over seventeen years. The workshop and the walk-way are an acknowledgement of Melvin and his love of the outdoors.

Chairman Overby asked Bob Krause, President, ND Veterans Coordinating Council and Ron Otto, ACOVA, go through legislation.

Bob reported the Coordinating Council was meeting going through the bills that are still alive in the legislature. He thinks they need to start the legislative process earlier. They should be finding out from candidates where they are on veteran's issues during election time. Bob feels they did a very good job of being at the hearings.

Ron reported the Agent Orange bill is in conference committee. The House and Senate are trying to agree on the funding level. The property tax exemption is still going forward.

A question was asked about the transportation van funding. It was taken out of H.B. 1439 with the promise from the House that it would go into the Department budget along with money for Stand Downs and veterans' preference only \$10,000 was put in for Stand Downs. The House decided we don't need vans for the next biennium after looking at the mileage of the vans in the program.

Commissioner's report [POWERPOINT]

- ▶ Overview of the legislative bills.
 - ▶ Jeff Hatzenbuhler resigned February 2013 for a position with the federal government.
 - ▶ Review of staff outreach and presentations throughout the State.
 - ▶ CVSO Conference held in Bismarck in March.
 - ▶ Update on loan and grant program.
 - ▶ Grant program has 7 applicants eligible and awaiting funding
 - ▶ Remaining funding from the \$210,000 general fund appropriation is for the new vans.
- Explanation given on the expenditures to date.
- ▶ Strategic plan is updated through April 15, 2013.
 - ▶ ITD is still working on the new website.

Chairman Overby reported that Lee Finstad resigned from the Committee. The Legislative Subcommittee needs to appoint a new chairman.

Committees recessed until 9:00am Friday morning.

Subcommittees met.

April 19, 2013

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

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

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

Absent:

Jeff Hall	John Hanson	Trish Hodney
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Motion by Ken Hasby to accept January 2013 minutes and March 2013 minutes, second by Jim Verwey. Motion carried.

Department of Veterans Affairs/Budget – Dave Hilleren, Chairman.

The committee reviewed the Department's budget as of March 2013. A motion was approved for a salary raise for the Commissioner based on legislative cap. No action taken on strategic plan at this time. Loan and grant limits were reviewed with no action taken.

Motion by Dave Hilleren to accept report, second by Richard Belling. Motion carried.

Legislative Subcommittee – Ron Otto, Chairman

Ron Otto elected chairman due to Lee Finstad' resignation. Committee discussed legislation specifically the funding for vans and other programs, along with the Agent Orange bill. They also discussed the fact that the Veterans Home will be turning back money at the end of the biennium and why they came to ACOVA for equipment purchases.

Motion by Marlin Schneider to accept report, second by John Adolf.

Mike Fisher asked for more information on the Veterans Home turn-back money. Chairman Overby explained because they didn't fill positions, they will be returning

salary dollars and the heating costs were less than estimated. Mark Johnson, Administrator, could provide more detailed information at a later date if needed.

Motion carried.

PWTF Subcommittee – Jim Verwey

Meeting conducted by Subcommittee chairman Patricia Hodny via conference call. Commissioner Wangen gave update on the PWTF balance. He also updated the committee on outstanding obligations of the Grant Program. The Commissioner is working with the Veterans Home on the equipment approved by the ACOVA. Commissioner Wangen is also working on other funding sources, such as the sale of two transportation vans, to help with any remaining eligible grant requests that come before July. Legislator concerns regarding the Veterans Home purchases were brought up by the Commissioner. The Committee will take these concerns into consideration when they work to develop a strategy, and develop and evaluate the budget to set priorities for the PWTF into the next biennium.

Appeals Subcommittee – Jim Verwey

Meeting conducted by Subcommittee chairman Patricia Hodny via conference call. A general discussion on appeals hearings ensued. Commissioner commended committee on their work during the hearings. The committee takes the time to hear the applicant's concerns and strategize and recommend alternative solutions. There have been seven hearings since November. The Committee discussed the concerns of Les Ashe, Traill County VSO, such as regarding his dislike of having money be set aside for a burial CD to be sheltered from the cash assets and the 90 day average balance rule.

Motion by Bob Olzweski to accept report, second by Mike Fisher.

Ron Otto wanted to discuss the CVSO concerns regarding an applicant's assets. The Appeals committee explained to Ron that the applicant had over the asset level to qualify for a grant. The Committee recommended the applicant put some money away in a burial account to meet the asset criteria and counseled the service officer on the requirements. Ron agreed that the service officer should have been better aware of the criteria.

Motion carried.

Chairman Overby reported there are three people coming off the Veterans Home Governing Board – Lee Finstad, Daryl Beard and Norris Braaten. He and John Adolf have searched for candidates to serve on the Board.

The names they are putting forward are Gary Skarphol, Williston, and State Senator Judy Lee, Fargo.

Motion by John Adolf to appoint Gary Skarphol and Judy Lee on the Veterans Home Governing Board, second by Carroll Quam. Motion carried.

Ron Otto put forward the name of Bob Wefald to approach for possible interest in serving on the Board. Mr. Wefald is a former ND Attorney General and already serves on many boards pertaining to veterans.

Chairman Overby reported that Norris Braaten will remain as Chairman through the litigation process.

Jim Verwey gave background information on Keith Hovland, Valley City, as a possible candidate. He is retired, a Vietnam Veteran and is a member of the VFW. Mr. Hovland has a good background in finance. Chairman Overby has talked with Mr. Hovland and requested he send in a resume. It will be forwarded to the Committee for review.

Chairman Overby would like to have the next meeting in Lisbon possibly July 25 & 26. The Committee could either stay in Lisbon or Enderlin. The Commissioner's office will check on dates available in Lisbon. If the Governor hasn't made appointments by meeting time, it will have to be rescheduled.

Chairman Overby thanked everyone for being at the Capitol during hearings. He felt it was the most interesting session ever. It works best when everyone works together.

Ron Otto mentioned that the legislators are talking a deficit with all the spending bills that haven't been decided yet.

Bob Krause, ND Coordinating Council, said we need to stay on top of the bills. Nothing is for certain.

Commissioner Wangen reported that H.B.1306 will pass without the study and the PTSD dogs. H.B. 1289, Upward Bound Program, might be reduced down to \$325,000, anything less will kill the program. H.B. 1405, Agent Orange, the Senate and House will probably settle on \$50,000. The department budget meeting today was cancelled.

Commissioner Wangen reported a conversation he had with Representative Delzer that there is some distrust of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the ACOVA. Some of the issues are from prior years and have already been addressed. One of the issues is the \$50,000 that went to the Veterans Home. Some legislators didn't agree with the decision.

The Commissioner didn't feel that is a matter of distrust. They had a long conversation on how to do legislation. Rep. Delzer recommended that any items requiring money be put into our budget when we submit it to the Governor's office or bring it to the Appropriations Committee. Another issue is Representative Grande has a problem with the way the Fargo Stand-Down was handled. It was geared more toward the homeless with the veterans in the back area. The Commissioner explained the Stand-Down is put on by other entities and it didn't receive any funding from the State. We don't control how it is set-up but he will bring up her issues to those involved in the Stand-Down. He will be speaking to Rep. Grande on any distrust issues she may have with the Department or ACOVA.

Ron Otto spoke on his conversation with Senator Dever and how important the Agent Orange bill is for veterans. If Vietnam veterans can be reached and helped, many can become service connected; even spouses and widows can benefit from speaking with service officers.

Motion to adjourn, seconded. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

John Adolf
Secretary