

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND

October 1, 2015
10:00 AM

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

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Richard Belling	Dave Hilleren	Carroll Quam
Roy Fillion	Myron Langehaug	Marlin Schneider
Ken Hasby	Marlys Morgenstern	Jim Verwey
Jim Haukedahl	Dean Overby	Hal Weninger

Absent:

Emery Fisher (excused)	Trish Hodny (en route)	Bill Peschel
------------------------	------------------------	--------------

Guests:

Megan Carranza, U.S. Senator Heitkamp's Office
Laura Baillet, Attorney General's Office

Approval of July 2015 minutes postponed until tomorrow, Friday, October 2, 2015.

Chairman Overby introduced Claire Ness, ND Attorney General's Office
Ms. Ness conducted training on: Open Records and Meetings along with HIPPA Issues
for ACOVA [POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS]

Committee in recess.

Committee reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

Trish Hodny is in attendance.

BG Dohrmann, ND National Guard

- ▶ One goal is strengthening the National Guard community; suicide prevention is an important component. ND Cares will more than likely come and speak to ACOVA. The Guard is an effective steward of their resources but at some point you end up doing less with less.
- ▶ Mobilizations are down.
- ▶ Demobilizations – Freedom Salute. At the Freedom Salute, an Officer from Fort Bragg told the families that North Dakota was the best guard unit he's seen in the nine years he's been involved with the mission.
- ▶ Secretary of Air Force visited Fargo Air National Guard. Air Force is looking at buying land at Camp Grafton for some of their initiatives with the nuclear program.
- ▶ Deliberate engagement with tribes in North Dakota; to increase Native Americans in the Guard.
- ▶ State Partnership Program – have agreements with Togo and Benin; already in partnership with Ghana. Since the Guard can provide stable leadership, it can develop a relationship with these countries for years.

BG Dohrmann answered questions regarding other Guard activities throughout the State.

Ryan Skor, Director of Finance, State Treasurer's Office [HANDOUT]

Clarified the classification of trust fund receipts into either principal or income.

- ▶ Total earnings for the Veteran's Postwar Trust Fund for the 2013-2015 biennium were over \$952,000. By law, \$274,575.96 funds were distributed to ACOVA, the remaining \$677,510.34 increased the principal of the fund.
- Prudent Investor Rule – not prudent to put all funds into one type of investment.

Commissioner Wangen asked what percentage was invested to grow principal and what percentage was invested to earn interest income? Mr. Skor replied that is a question for the State Treasurer and Edward Jones Investment Company.

Carroll Quam asked about the small amount of interest Fund 410 pays. Fund 410 is required to be invested at the Bank of North Dakota. The money market fund pays .05%.

Chairman Overby asked why all the money (\$274,575.96) is put into Fund 410 instead of having it invested and drawn down as needed. Mr. Skor was unaware that the Commissioner is only allowed to spend a designated amount of money per quarter. He understands why the committee would only want a portion transferred at a time and will bring that back to the State Treasurer.

Mark Johnson, Veterans Home Administrator, asked for information on the Melvin Norgaard Fund.

Roy Fillion asked if there was a goal for the PWTF. Commissioner Wangen explained that the goal was for the fund to grow to six million and then be ahead of the inflation growth.

The Committee as the investor would like more money available from interest earnings and less money for principal growth for the next biennium. Their goal was to have the PWTF grow to six million and it is there now.

Dale Dekrey, VA Health Care System Acting Director, FACHE

- ▶ Ross Tweeten is the new Public Relations Officer.
- ▶ Choice Act. Veterans should contact the Clinical Resource Management Group at 701-239-3700 for assistance.
 - ▶ Removed the 60 day limit on the episode of care, can extend longer than 60 days if needed.
 - ▶ People can keep enrolling rather than having a hard date for enrollment.
 - ▶ On November 1st, VA is to present a plan to have one way to give care to veterans but it will not be implemented until 2017.
 - ▶ Eligible for Choice if the veteran is 40 miles or more from VA facility or their wait is longer than 30 days.
- ▶ Construction: Community Living Center – 38 beds transitional care should be done summer of 2016; remodel urgent care/emergency room; remodel of imaging and lab area to be done summer of 2016; remodeling ICU and dialysis; implementing outdoor rehab area
- ▶ Events: get flu shot – times and dates are on website; placed 150 homeless veterans in permanent housing.
- ▶ More services and better atmosphere for women veterans
- ▶ Healing touch, aromatherapy and other methods to try and cut back on the amount of drugs people are taking to control their pain.
- ▶ “Like” the Fargo VA on Facebook. www.fargo.va.gov
- ▶ Hepatitis C vaccine has come out and is a cure. The cost is \$60,000 per patient.

Ross Tweeten:

Born in Grafton, North Dakota and raised in Detroit Lakes; Air Force veteran; worked in Public Affairs in Air Force and at UND.

Mark Johnson, Administrator, ND Veterans Home

- ▶ Last six months have been hectic at the Home with surveys.
- ▶ As of September 1, the old Veterans Home is no longer on the campus. The Governing Board is discussing the possibility of an amphitheater; decided to work on a master plan for the campus.
- ▶ Over 500 people for Family Day at the Veterans Home.
- ▶ Settled on land distribution regarding the Norgaard Fund. Initially funds were coming in at \$26,000 per month, now it is down to \$2,000 a month due to the downturn in oil prices.
- ▶ Six residents from the Home will be on the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.
- ▶ Moving forward with the workshop/studio project.
- ▶ KVLV Whistleblowers made a visit to the Veterans Home regarding a 94 year old veteran discharged from the Home. Mark did a twenty minute interview but only the last few questions were aired on the broadcast. The discharge was based on federal and state guidelines. The Home is getting a lot of support from the Governing Board.

Job Service Report by Marlys Morgenstern

The agency is short in funding so they are looking at voluntary separations. Cheri Geisen, Executive Director, wanted to reassure the committee that the DVOP is exempt from the plan to make up for the shortfall. The DVOP is under a federal grant.

Commissioner's Report – Commissioner Lonnie Wangen [HANDOUT]

- ▶ VSO/Women Coordinator position still open.
- ▶ ND DVA authorized three interns: Public Relations, IT, and Administrative.
- ▶ Claims division using webinars for training opportunities.
- ▶ Update on outreach and presentations by staff.
- ▶ Information on the presentations at the NASDVA Conference attended by Commissioner and some of his staff.
- ▶ Loan program: 96 loans, outstanding principal balance \$245,057.10.
- ▶ PWTF 2013-15 ending balance was \$44,497.24. This money is obligated to pay for grants approved in the 13-15 biennium, billing statements haven't been received.
- ▶ Highly Rural Transportation Grant – submitted for renewal grant for next year.

Break into subcommittees.

Committee reconvened at 4:07 p.m.

David Hunter, ND State Retirement and Investment Board.

There are questions concerning Fund 410 and who has control of that fund. State Treasurer Schmidt has stated the fund belongs to the Department but the Bank of North Dakota states the fund is under the State Treasurer's Office.

The Committee is looking to invest the funds to get a better investment rate rather than the .05% the money market (Fund 410) earns. According to Mr. Hunter, the Investment Board or the Bank of North Dakota could invest the money.

Mr. Hunter is willing to assist the Commissioner in working with the Bank of ND and the Office of the State Treasurer. Legal counsel could provide information to make sure the committee can invest the interest earnings.

The State Investment Board uses thirty-seven investment entities, Edward Jones isn't one of them.

Committee reconvened until tomorrow morning.

October 2, 2015

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

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Richard Belling	Trish Hodny	Carroll Quam
Roy Fillion	Myron Langehaug	Marlin Schneider
Ken Hasby	Marlys Morgenstern	Jim Verwey
Jim Haukedahl	Dean Overby	Hal Weninger
Dave Hilleren		

Absent:

Emery Fisher (excused)	Bill Peschel
------------------------	--------------

Guests:

Megan Carranza, U.S. Senator Heitkamp's Office

Motion by Dave Hilleren to approve July 30 & 31, 2015 minutes, second by Richard Belling.

Corrections:

Chairman Overby stated on Page 8, he meant the Postwar Trust Fund Committee instead of the Legislative Committee to meet with Ryan Skor, Treasurer's Office.

Secretary Verwey stated that State Treasurer Kelly Schmidt and Deputy State Treasurer Sheri O. Haugen-Hoffart be listed as Guests.

Motion passed.

Robert's Rules Presentation, Tricia Bartell, ND OMB Human Resources. [HANDOUTS]
"Robert's Rules Simplified" basically tells why you do what you do during meetings.

Committee Reports:

Postwar Trust Fund Subcommittee: reported by Marlys Morgenstern

Discussed the tobacco tax, issue turned over to Coordinating Council. Review strategic plan, no action taken. Presentation from Treasurer's Office well received. Commissioner or Commissioner's Office to give a sheet on where the PWTF money is spent, how many veterans helped, how many grants given, etc., so it can be given to legislators.

Motion by Marlys Morgenstern to accept minutes, second by Dave Hilleren.

The Grant Program information is provided to the committee on a quarterly basis thru the Commissioner's Report and will be included in the PWTF portfolio. Trish Hodny stated the program criteria should also be included in the information so legislators can see the low income threshold. Dave Hilleren asked for a history of how often the income amount has been raised and lowered depending on the funds available. Marlys also suggested a footnote to include the cost of dentures or hearing aids so the difference can be seen between what can be paid and what the applicant will have to pay.

Motion passed.

Appeals Subcommittee: reported by Marlys Morgenstern

Appeal hearing heard Friday morning and the Commissioner's decision upheld.

Committee recommends a change in the notification procedure so the appellant could receive an electronic notice with proof of read receipt if the hearing is held in a short time period. Language will be discussed by committee and brought forward to the next committee meeting.

Motion to accept report by Marlys Morgenstern, second by Carroll Quam. Motion passed.

Legislative Subcommittee: Jim Verwey reported.

Committee assigned to look at legislative bills and come back with recommendations on department bills. Some discussion on tobacco tax.

Motion to accept report made by Jim Verwey, second by Trish Hodny. Motion passed.

Jim Verwey asked what the ACOVA can and can't discuss regarding the tobacco tax. Commissioner Wangen replied that it's not an issue for the ACOVA but the Coordinating Council is moving forward with it. Commissioner Wangen spoke on what the Council's discussion has been regarding the issue. The Council decided to go with the "Raise it for Health" coalition for now.

Department of Veterans Affairs & Budget Subcommittee: by Richard Belling.

Reviewed 2013-15 PWTF Biennium Report and 2013-2015 Budget Biennium Report. \$4,755.80 in IT website funding has been carried over to 2015-2017 Biennium. No other business brought forward

Motion by to accept report by Richard Belling, second by Marlin Schneider. Motion passed.

Round Table Discussion:

Carroll Quam: training was very good. Treasurer's Office did a good job.

Richard Belling: good meeting, good speakers, suggested different speakers at meetings.

Trish Hodny would like some of the young leaders of recently started veterans' organizations. Marlys Morgenstern would like a speaker from ND Cares.

Dave Hilleren: Follow-up on fact sheet to give to legislators and county commissioners.

Local Post VVA #290 & #487 are collaborating on a VVA 50th year commemorative program - October 19 at New Town.

Marlin Schneider: Really enjoyed this meeting, it was informative.

Myron Langehaug: Happy to hear Coordinating Council going along with coalition; has ACOVA considered going paperless. Understands why young people are starting their own organizations.

Commissioner stated he can do some research about getting committee members their own laptops.

Hal Weninger: Glad to be here; went over budget numbers and can see there isn't money for computers. Learned a lot this time.

Jim Haukedahl: Reiterate, it's been great. Clay County had second annual training at Armory.

Roy Fillion: Learning more and more about committee; really appreciated the training; really appreciated listening to Ryan from Treasurer's Office. Suggested the Young Professionals for a possibly speaker.

Trish Hodny: bringing in the younger vets organizations; some members have been CVSOs so they have more of a background so perhaps other members would want to sit in on the CVSO training. Commissioner Wangen invited the members to the Department CVSO training at the Cambria Suites in West Fargo starting Monday. There is also spring training in Bismarck. Marlys asked for the conference agenda to be sent to the committee

Megan: ACOVA meetings are the best kept secret in the State; loves being at the meeting. Chairman Overby stated that Senator Heitkamp is always welcome to attend.

Marlys Morgenstern: Echoed Trish's idea on training on the loans and grants. Invite member of Coordinating Council to come to the next meeting for an update. Chairman Overby said the Council does like to have joint meetings with ACOVA. Would like an ND Cares speaker to come to meeting. VA talks about functional zero on homelessness; she would like to invite a VA homeless coordinator and a member from the Homeless Coalition to talk about the realities of homeless veterans. Commissioner Wangen explained functional zero is having the services available but no one using them. The committee could do a better job of inviting people/other groups to meetings.

Commissioner Wangen: taking care of requests as members speak. Went over conference agenda.

Cathy Halgunseth: Been around for a long, it's a good committee, lots of engagement in issues by members.

Jim Verwey: Appreciate Megan being here. Requests copy of subcommittee agenda be sent before the meeting. He was asked by someone how many homeless veterans there are in North Dakota; this person said he could write a grant.

Chairman Overby: Hears that members want different training and different speakers. Question is how much time do members want to commit to the meetings. Likes the round table discussion since it opens up new ideas. Schedule training on claims, loans and grants. Notify groups of the meeting.

Trish recommended speaker on suicide prevention and in-patient treatment program at a VA facility also.

Megan said that not everyone is able to attend the meeting since it is during the day.

Next meeting tentatively set for January 21 & 22, 2016.

Motion by Richard Belling to adjourn, second by Jim Verwey. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted

Jim Verwey
Secretary