

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
DOUBLEWOOD INN, FARGO, ND

June 13, 2008
2:00pm

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

Roll Call:

Present:

Carl Bloomquist	Dave Hilleren	Wayne Paulson
Wally Buckingham	Rudy Jenson	Lyle Schuchard
Lee Finstad	Orletta Kilen	Gary Skarphol
Mike Fisher	Jerry Meske	Dave Vandergon
Jerry Goll	Dean Overby	

Absent:

John Hanson

Guests:

Jolene Garty, Staff Assistant/Caseworker, Senator Conrad's Office

Motion by Wally Buckingham to accept the March 14 & 15, 2008 meeting minutes, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed.

Speakers:

Rob McDivitt, FACHE Medical Center Director, VA

- ▶ Fargo is the fastest growing VA in the network.
- ▶ Four Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) have opened, three in North Dakota – Williston, Dickinson, and Jamestown.
- ▶ Over 2,500 combat veterans have enrolled with 1,500 receiving care.
- ▶ Future plans are to have a CBOC in Grand Forks, one has been already approved for Devils Lake. Will be looking at the southeastern part of the state for CBOCs including the Veterans Home in Lisbon.
- ▶ Recruiting for a Chief of Staff

Marlys Morgenstern, Job Service North Dakota, Bismarck

- ▶ Took over Tim Nolz's position
- ▶ Reiterated Job Service's commitment to the committee's mission of assisting veterans.

Mark Johnson, Administrator, ND Veterans Home

- ▶ Overview of the construction going on at the Home. Explained the different Guard units and the work they will be doing on the project.
- ▶ The Groundbreaking Ceremony held on Saturday, June 7, 2008, over 300 people attended. The Congressional Delegation and Governor Hoeven spoke at the event.
- ▶ Hope to have the new Home opened by July 2010.

Two appointments need to be made to the Governing Board. Not all the information on the applicants has been submitted. The decision is to postpone the appointments until the next meeting so the Chairman and Secretary have time to review the information before they make their recommendations.

Motion by Dean Overby to reappoint Norris Braaten as Chairman as the ND Veterans Home Governing Board, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed unanimously.

[MOTION #1]

Department of Veterans Affairs Report – Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner

- ▶ Spring Fall Conference – well attended, very good training for the CVSOs. 13 of 16 CEU's were met for accreditation with the NACVSO Association. The remaining CEU's will be completed at the Fall Conference.
- ▶ New Office Space – Open House held today. Able to receive a good rate per square footage with the lease locked in for five years.
- ▶ Overview of Department budget.
- ▶ Looking to update the Department's website, make it more as a resource for the public and CVSOs.

Women's Veteran Coordinator – Betty Helmer

Spoke on the activities she has been involved with since taking the position seven months ago. Developed a registry card and a survey to gather statistics on North Dakota female veterans. Hopefully this information will provide the committee with ways to assist these veterans.

Legislature Interim Committee

No letter was sent to Senator Porter as discussed at the last meeting. Instead a meeting at the Governor's Office was scheduled with the five State Commanders, ACOVA Chairman, ACOVA Secretary, and the CVSO Association President. It lasted over an hour and was very productive. Ryan Bernstein, Governor's Legal Counsel, is to follow up on the information provided.

Lee Finstad spoke on the draft bill and its effect on the Committee and the Department. His letter will be distributed to the rest of the committee for information.

Overview of June 11 hearing in Dickinson.

Senator Porter asked why someone from the ACOVA, NDVCC, NDCVSO, or the Commissioner were not included for input on the second bill draft. His response was the bill draft is done only by the people who submitted it.

Gordy Smith, State Auditor's Office, gave a good presentation on how well the Committee and the Department are doing in implementing the audit recommendations and turning things around. They should be looked at as an example for other agencies to follow.

Further discussion on the second Bill Draft and the Dickinson meeting.

Motion by Lee Finstad to oppose the second draft bill, Sections 1 thru 14 in their entirety, second by Jerry Meske. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION #2]

Motion by Wayne Paulson for the Commissioner to take the Committee's proposals opposing the bill and present them as a solution at the next Public Safety Committee meeting, second by Dean Overby. Friendly amendment offered by Wayne Paulson for the Legislative Committee to do this instead of the Commissioner, accepted by Dean Overby.

Motion failed, 1 – yea, 13 nays – Bloomquist, Buckingham, Finstad, Fisher, Goll, Hilleren, Jenson, Kilen, Meske, Overby, Schuchard, Skarphol, Vandergon
[MOTION #3]

Subcommittee Meetings held.

Committee recessed until Saturday at 8:00am.

Saturday, June 14, 2008

8:00am

Committee reconvened.

Roll Call:

Present:

Carl Bloomquist	Dave Hilleren	Wayne Paulson
Wally Buckingham	Rudy Jenson	Lyle Schuchard
Lee Finstad	Orletta Kilen	Gary Skarphol
Mike Fisher	Jerry Meske	Dave Vandergon
Jerry Goll	Dean Overby	

Absent:

John Hanson

Subcommittee Reports:

DVA Subcommittee – Dean Overby, Chairman

Recap of meeting (see Minutes)

Dean Overby reported all members were present.

- ▶ CVSO's spring training was good.
- ▶ Discussed CVSO services, County commissioners need to be more involved.
- ▶ Womens coordinator position going well.
- ▶ New office space leased.
- ▶ Discharge project: waiting on software. NDDVA will hire temporary position when software is ready.
- ▶ Discussed Budget. ITD, Collection process going good.

Motion by Dean Overby to extend the contract, second by Lee Finstad. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION 1]

- ▶ Discussed website update. Believes this would be beneficial.
- ▶ Will send chairman of subcommittee to NASDVA conference.

Motion by Dean Overby to send chairman of DVA subcommittee to NASDVA Conference in September, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed. [MOTION 2]

- ▶ Sold one transportation van for \$7,000; one more for sale.
- ▶ Discussed potential legislative items.

Discussed the \$5,000 retired pay deduction in North Dakota

Discussed definition of Veteran. Federal definition vs. NDCC definition.

Commissioner will contact attorney generals office for an opinion on this.

► Commissioner happy with staff. Will be setting goals and expectation for employees in next few months.

Motion by Dean Overby to accept subcommittee report, second by Dave Vandergon. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION 3]

Discussion by Mike Fischer on where money from sale of van was to go.

Discussion by Jerry Meske on veteran status. Suggested to look at DD214 for title 10 or 32.

Appeals Committee – Gary Skarphol

Dave Vandergon reported.

Two conference call hearings on April 15, 2008. Both decisions were upheld.

Office is doing good job of making decisions. Committee is doing well

Motion by Dave Vandergon to accept subcommittee report, second by Jerry Goll. Motion passed. [MOTION 4]

PWTF Committee – Wally Buckingham, Chair

Request for \$1000 for improvement of Lounge room at VA for van volunteers. Carried.

Request for \$5000 for stand down. Motion passed.

Request for \$50,000 to be transferred to restricted fund. Carried.

Motion by Wally to accept subcommittee report, second by Mike Fischer. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Mike Fisher to deny the request for \$1,000 for a lounge room for volunteer van drivers, second by Wally Buckingham. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION 5]

Motion by Dave Hilleren to obligate \$2,000 and use the remaining \$3,000 from the previous event for a total amount of \$5,000 for the Bismarck StandDown, second by Mike Fisher. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION 6]

Motion by Carl Bloomquist to transfer \$50,000 to restricted fund by June 30, 2008, second by Orletta Kilen. Motioned passed. [MOTION 7]

Jerry Goll asked why it is transferred. Rudy explained the money is transferred to ensure we have funding in low market years.

Budget Committee – John Hanson, Chairman

Gary Skarphol reported.

Everything is on track. Money is being spent wisely. Getting more for the money. Staff is doing good job with money.

Will be looking at 2009-11. Postage defrayed by faxing and e-mail. Website and file cabinets all under budget.

Committee and staff deserve credit for well balanced budget and commend Lonnie and Staff for keeping good budget.

Motion by Gary Skarphol to accept budget committee report, second by Dean Overby. Motion passed unanimously. [MOTION 8]

Legislative Committee – Lee Finstad, Chairman

Lee Finstad discussed proposed letter from ACOVA to legislation.

Lee motioned to update and editing be done and letter be accepted.

Motion to accept by Lee Finstad, second by Dean Overby.

Discussion by Carl Bloomquist- will this be a resolution by whole committee? Lee pointed out the last part of letter is asking to work together to get best service for veterans (ACOVA and Legislation). We are trying to reach all veterans, those with current claims to update and those not in system. There is a need to get all CVSO's to work with the NDDVA and other agencies to reach all veterans. Feels the draft will set up back years.

Jerry Meske: Commended National Guard for the 30/60/90 re-integration. Getting information out to these individuals is really important.

Lee suggested using the media, newspapers etc. Pamphlet for all veterans in state.

Gary Skarphol commented on the fact that the letter is for stopping the legislation and need to focus on that so we can focus on service to veterans or this will cause too many problems.

Motion passed. [MOTION 9]

Gary Skarphol spoke to the committee as this is his last meeting as a member. He commented on the true caring and concern of the members of this committee and is impressed at how well this committee has evolved. Department Of Veterans affairs office is working very well together. Money is being spent very wisely. "Thank you and good luck in the future."

Respectfully submitted

Lyle Schuchard
Secretary