

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
VETERANS HOME, LISBON ND

August 5, 2011  
9:00am

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

Absent:

none

Guests:

***Motion by Orletta Kilen to approve the May 6, 2011 meeting minutes, second by Jeff Hall passed. Motion passed.***

Introduction of New Committee Members:

Richard Belling – Us Army 1967-1970 Vietnam 2 tours 864th ENGR BN Co D Belong to VFW, Military Order Cooties, VVA, Am Vets. Post Commander 3363 Lisbon All State Commander, District 9 and District 10 Commander and District 10 Quartermaster. VFW State Commander 96-97 All American Dept Commander. National Council Member 98- 2000. Have held many State and National appointments. Currently serving House Committee VFW West Fargo 7564, VFW Dept ND Budget and Finance and Audit. Married Denise 2 Children Kim and Chris.

Chairman Schuchard reported he was renamed Chairman and Dean Overby named Secretary.

Chairman Schuchard thanked Ron Otto for service as Secretary.

**Speakers:**

**Mark Johnson, ND Veterans Home Administrator**

- ▶ Staff is busy setting up for tomorrow's Dedication Ceremony. Many community businesses and organizations have contributed items to help with the event. The curbing will be completed and the landscaping is progressing but will not be finished in time. A Flyover is planned at the beginning of the program.
- ▶ A holding pond will be built to help with the drainage coming from the sloughs. Another pump house will be added and another area will be designed to pump water into to help with the draining.
- ▶ A lot of concrete work is going on throughout the campus. After driveways are completed, footings will be poured into the ground for the Gazebo. It will be placed at ground level for better wheel chair access.
- ▶ Starting to develop a courtyard
- ▶ Discussion with Surplus Property on having an auction sometime next year for the items left in the old building.

If the ACOVA members have any ideas of what to do with the old building, the Governing Board would like to hear about them.

Chairman Schuchard recognized Norris Braaten, Chairman, ND Governing Board Mr. Braaten reported the Board met yesterday and they are moving forward to put in place a five-year Strategic Plan.

Chairman Schuchard recognized Steve Frojen. He is the incoming President of the ND County Veterans Service Officer Association and Dickey County VSO.

**General Spry, Adjutant General, ND National Guard**

Some of the updates included:

Memorial Day Ceremony attended by over 1,000 people even in inclement weather. Retired Captain Bob Wefald was the main speaker and he did a tremendous job in recognizing the sacrifices of North Dakota veterans during his speech.

"Hunting with Roosevelt" takes place in October. A group recognizes veterans who have served in Iraqi Freedom and takes them on a pheasant hunt. Roosevelt's great-great grandson is a part of this program. It is held in conjunction with the Bismarck Cancer

Center to help raise funds for the Center. The Veterans Deer Hunt at Camp Grafton will be held this year. Veterans from around the country participate.

Flooding – significant flooding in parts of the State. Comparison between 2009 and 2011 – 2009 (98 days of state active duty) and 2011 (108 days of state active duty) Still have some servicemen in Minot and Bismarck/Mandan area. Everyone involved has been volunteers and every unit was activated except for the 188<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company in Wahpeton. They are getting ready to deploy on August 21st. There will be a send-off Ceremony for them; The Guard filled many roles such as: traffic controls – security – manning sandbag filling sites – patrolling levees – search & rescue – water purification (Minot area) – debris removal. The Guard did a lot of publicity in helping to capture the magnitude of the event, especially using the social media such as youtube.com.

On behalf of the National Guard, the respect, the trust, the relationship between the public and military is at an all-time high. The men and women in uniform are truly outstanding people serving.

Camp Grafton has experience flooding in the past few years. The old officer's club is 18 feet below water. Problems with the entrance to the camp and they are working with DOT to raise the road.

**J. Brian Hancock, Chief of Staff, VA Healthcare System**

US DVA Secretary, General Eric Shinseki, visited North Dakota on July 5th. He spent time in Bismarck at the CBOC then flew to Fargo for a meeting at the main campus. He continuously interacted with individual veterans and the staff at the Fargo facility. The Secretary came back to Fargo on July 8th particularly focusing on the Homeless Program. Fargo has homeless shelter that was used primarily in the evening. The VA Homeless Outreach Team contracted with Fargo to use the facility during the day.

Over the past year, a committee has been working to establish a statement to articulate the mission of the VA There are five core values – “I CARE” I – Integrity / C – Commitment / A – Advocacy / R – Respect / E – Excellence and Core Characteristics – trustworthiness, accessibility, quality, integration, innovation.

Construction projects are underway. Putting up buildings to house the non-clinical staff which will increase space for medical purposes.

CBOC's are doing well. There are nine throughout the State. Jamestown CBOC is located at the former Jamestown Hospital. The Hospital had moved but will still support the CBOC as long as possible. Bismarck CBOC is nearing the end of their contract and will be looking for bigger office space. Devils Lake CBOC may not be a possibility due to the expense of running a clinic and the small amount of veterans that would be serviced. It may turn into a pilot program of Telehealth service.

The VA is continually reviewing services that are offered and services that are not offered.

**Maren Daley, Director, Job Service North Dakota**

Flood maps of Ward County from FEMA were overlaid with the location of employers and work force within the flood zone. This helped Job Service determine the extent of the flood on the economy of Ward County; 283 employers with 4,842 employees and quarterly wages of over \$36 million dollars. Job Service is working with veterans impacted by the flood.

**Department of Veterans Affairs Report – Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner**  
(power point presentation)

- ▶ Bismarck Branch Office – Brenda moved office to new location: 925 Basin Avenue, Suite 6, Bismarck. The phone and fax numbers remain the same.
- ▶ Brenda attended: Nat'l Assoc. of Women Veterans Coordinators in Madison WI; PTSD and MST in Las Vegas with Representative Bette Grande.
- ▶ Training – Brenda and Peggy attended NACVSO training
- ▶ Marketing Piece went out around July 4<sup>th</sup>. Department did get calls from it so we may try it again.
- ▶ Department Logos
- ▶ Tom visited with Eddy County Commissioners to provide support for the new CVSO. The new CVSO will be coming to Fargo for training.
- ▶ Commissioner attended: ND Legal Services – provided presentation on Veterans' Court; ND Auditors/Treasurers Conference – gave information on changes to veterans' preference and property tax; meet with group called Heartsprings which will help veterans with TBI, and attended AMVETS, VFW, American Legion and VVA Conventions.
- ▶ Received a call from VA Secretary Shinseki's Office that the Secretary wanted to specifically to meet with Brenda about working with the Tribes on veterans services.
- ▶ Veterans Preference – one pending and one settled without a hearing and the veteran was offered the position.
- ▶ Appeals Hearing – one was reconsidered by the Commissioner and two were cancelled by the applicants.
- ▶ Funding for the Loan Program is at a low of \$20,412.27
- ▶ Updates on the Hardship Grants Program.
- ▶ Updated Strategic Plan. Commissioner working with Veterans Affairs subcommittee for goals for Department and Commissioner
- ▶ Transportation Vans: - the Williston van is for sale; Golden Valley CVSO has recruited volunteers and a van will be placed in the area once they receive VA training.

Mark Landis asked how much the Impact Foundation fundraiser collected and the status of the license plate project. Commissioner Wangen reported \$10,000 was raised for

veterans and the license plates project still needs about a dozen applications to get the plates printed. The PIQ for the position in Bismarck is being re-evaluated to include training rather than claims experience. Hopefully the position will be advertised later this month.

The Fall CVSO Training Conference is scheduled for September 19-23 at the Bismarck Comfort Inn. NVLSP trainers will be presenting material for two days at the conference.

Jim Verwey asked about the new CVSO in LaMoure County, Al Ulmer. He will be at a full-time position. Al is also coming to Fargo for training.

Mike Fisher questioned the Commissioner on the status of the Department of Transportation vans that seemed available for veterans to use for getting to medical appointments. The bids came in very costly, the vans are not part of DOT but contracted with private entities. The Commissioner will be attending a rural transportation summit that may help address this issue.

Commissioner talked with VA personnel about a problem for veterans who have no family to assist them regarding surgery. If a veteran from the Fargo-Moorhead area is scheduled for same day surgery and they have no one to accompany them, they will not be getting the surgery. Cass County does have volunteers who are willing to accompany veterans. The Readi-Wheel program may be a solution to this problem.

Recess for lunch.

1:25pm Meeting reconvened

**Budget Committee** – Ken Hasby, Chairman

2009 – 2011 Budget reviewed. There will be a turn back of \$7,395. The budget committee oversees the funding of the Department and its various projects.

***Motion by Lee Finstad to approve report, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed.***

**Veterans Affairs** – Dave Hilleren, Chairman

Minutes of the May 6, 2011 passed. Commissioner presented his report and overview of Department. *Recommended approval of a minimum of \$1,500 per biennium to support the same day surgery proposal and the totes for carrying extra equipment.* Discussion on driver's license indicator "V", the office has received many positive calls on it. Discussion on veterans court its additional issues, these will be included in the Strategic Plan. Public Relations committee met.

*Motion by Carroll Quam to approve report, second by Ken Hasby. Motion carried.*

**Appeals Committee** – Jeff Hall, Interim Chairman

No appeals were heard. Committee adjourned.

*Motion by Mike Fisher to approve report, second by Ron Braaten. Motion carried.*

**Postwar Trust Fund Committee** – Orletta Kilen, Chairman

There is a \$10,000 discrepancy between the amount the State Treasurer's Office states is in the Fund 410 account and the amount the Department has in their paperwork. The Commissioner has contacted the State Treasurer's Office and they will send copies of vouchers in an attempt to try and reconcile the difference. Discussion on the amount paid for consulting fees for investment purposes, which the State Treasurer has previously said is less 1%.

*Motion by Lee Finstad to approve report, second by Ron Braaten. Motion carried.*

**Legislative Committee** – Lee Finstad, Chairman

Committee recommends the following legislation

- ▶ To enable the Nygaard Trust Fund monies to go directly to the Veterans Home rather than going thru the legislative process.
- ▶ Legislation passed HB 1468 and it conflicts with the ND Constitution, they changed how the PWTF interest can be expended.
- ▶ To clarify wartime dates for veterans preference to Gulf War veterans.
- ▶ To enable Legal Services of ND to provide legal representation to claimants with a Veterans Preference appeal.
- ▶ Tuition – extend to disabled veterans who reach 100%. Not thru Individual Un-employability
- ▶ Propose legislation for ND DVA training position
- ▶ Grave markers, expense of placing on burial plots
- ▶ Relates to transportation regarding single veterans and same day surgery.

Jim Verwey questioned why the money from the Nygard Fund couldn't go to the Veterans Home Foundation. The committee determined that could be one option to be looked at when legislation is being written.

*Motion by Dave Hilleren to approve report, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed.*

**Governing Board Appointments**

Chairman Schuchard and Secretary Overby recommend John Adolf be reappointed to Governing Board.

***Motion by Carroll Quam to appoint John Adolf to another term the Governing Board, second by Jim Verwey. Motion passed unanimously.***

Chairman Schuchard and Secretary Overby recommend that Norris Braaten remain as Chairman of the Governing Board for one year.

***Motion by Carroll Quam that Norris Braaten remain as Chairman for one year, second by Jim Verwey. Motion passed unanimously.***

Darryl Schroeder will not be requesting another term on the Board, so another name will need to be brought forward. The Chairman and Secretary will work on this for the next meeting.

### **Chairman's Report – Lyle Schuchard**

Chairman Schuchard spoke on the fact during legislative session there was confusion on how ACOVA and the Coordinating Council were different. He talked on the Public Relations committee duties and the press release prepared announcing the new appointments and some background on ACOVA. Legislators need to be contacted during the interim to keep them apprised of veterans' issues. The mission of the Public Affairs Subcommittee is "to engender positive relationships with various public, civic and governmental entities to make aware the activities of the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs which promote the delivery of veteran benefits to all North Dakota veterans." The subcommittee will meet prior to ACOVA meeting as do the other subcommittees. Jim Verwey mentioned the TAG meets with legislators and has an excellent relationship with them, perhaps the subcommittee could be included in that.

The Chairman and Secretary will be travelling to Fargo to work with the Commissioner on the Strategic Plan. Dave Hilleren said it doesn't need updating but a complete reworking. Chairman Schuchard asked for input from the committee members.

Chairman Schuchard reported on a conversation with someone who was very happy with the service her family received from Tom Sumers at the Department. Her husband is now working and is doing well.

September 1, 2011 is the Bismarck StandDown. Mark Landis and Ron Otto always have a booth to assist veterans.

A letter requesting an Attorney General's Opinion if there is a conflict of interest on CVSO's serving on ACOVA was sent. The opinion is still being reviewed and is not ready for publication yet.

Break for Subcommittee Meetings

Subcommittee Reports:

**Legislative Subcommittee Report**

Lee Finstad elected Chairman

**Budget Subcommittee Report**

Ken Hasby elected Chairman

**Appeals Subcommittee Report**

Orletta Kilen elected Chairman

**PWTF Subcommittee**

Jeff Hall elected Chairman

**Veterans Affairs Subcommittee Report**

Dave Hilleren elected Chairman.

*Motion by Jim Verwey to approve all reports, second by Ken Hasby. Motion carried.*

**Time and Place:**

November 17 & 18, 2011 in Bismarck.

*Motion to adjourn by Rick Belling, seconded by John Adolph. Motion passed.*

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Dean Overby  
Secretary