

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND

July 25, 2013
1:00PM

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:

John Adolf	Dave Hilleren	Dean Overby
Richard Belling	Trish Hodny	Carroll Quam
John Hanson	Robert Olzweski	Marlin Schneider
Ken Hasby	Ron Otto	Jim Verwey
		Hal Weninger

Absent:

Jeff Hall	Jim Haukedahl
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Chairman Overby introduced the new committee member, Hal Weninger. Mr. Weninger said it was indeed an honor to be among the committee and truly an opportunity in helping veterans. He is a member of the American Legion, D.A.V. and V.V.A. He hopes he has something to contribute.

The committee members introduced themselves and welcomed Hal to the committee.

Motion by Richard Belling to approve the minutes of April 2013, 2nd by Ken Hasby.

Trish Hodny wanted to clarify the section of the Appeal Subcommittee minutes on what the Service Officer said. She wants to review the subcommittee minutes before approving the minutes. She wasn't at the meeting and had someone read the subcommittee minutes for her.

Motion by Trish Hodny to postpone approval of the minutes until further review, second by Ron Otto. Motion passed.

Lt. Col. Davina French, ND National Guard

► Thanked Commissioner Wangen on his 20+ years of service with the ND National Guard and wished him well. Mr. Wangen recently retired from the Guard.

- ▶ Since the War on Terror, over 50% of the army side personnel has been deployed twice. The mental health side is being addressed due to the high suicide rate in ND.
- ▶ 6.5 million dollars cut from budget due to the sequestration, active military will be furloughed once a week over the next 10 weeks. A little over 2,000 in ND will be affected. The impact will be seen in 3-5 weeks.
- ▶ In May, two more soldiers were inducted into Memorial that were KIA in December 2012.
- ▶ Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors; ND raises money to send as many military fallen family members, as possible, to Washington D.C. This year 39 persons were able to travel there.
- ▶ State partnership with Ghana is going really well. Representatives from Ghana came to Bismarck and learned some procedures at Sanford Medical Center.
- ▶ Legislative Session:
 - Would like to partner with ACOVA on the studies coming out
 - KIA book - all KIA's since the inception of the State and forward
 - Starting 1974 - all veterans that have served in ND. They are looking to partner with other agencies. \$50,000 budgeted for the book.
 - SAMSHA – ND selected to participate in writing strategic plan and gathering information on services and benefits available to better serve the veterans and family members (including KIA and suicide family members)

Maren Daley, Executive Director, ND Job Service

- ▶ Currently ND has a 3.2% unemployment rate, almost everyone who wants a job has a job. Out of state job seekers are keeping the job service offices busy. In the Williston office alone, there are 140 walk-ins daily, 10% being veterans
- ▶ Veterans are using on-line access, Virtual One Stop, before they come to the State. 400-500 veterans continue to set-up and access their accounts
- ▶ The typical veteran is arriving homeless and uncertain how to translate their military skills into usable skills for the oil industry. To help resolve the homeless issue, Vet Reps work closely with the Salvation Army, local homeless coalitions and shelters, and VA homeless personnel. They are able to make recommendations to fit the veterans in a shelter that best suits their needs. Staff continues to aid them in their journey for self-sufficiency, i.e. give guidance on labor market, facilitating a job search, walking them through the interview process.

Trish Hodny asked what the typical age group of the veterans coming to Williston is. Ms. Daley thought it was between 35-48 but she can't site that as being statistical. Job Service is seeing quite a few coming up from the Southeast and typically male.

John Adolf asked where the wage scale is at for jobs available in the Williston area. Ms. Daley reported that the typical wage is \$20 an hour and up.

Chairman Overby introduced Norris Braaten to make the Veterans Home report since Mark Johnson, Administrator, is unable to attend the meeting.

Norris Braaten, Veterans Home

He is finishing his term as chairman of the Governing Board and it has been a very pleasurable experience.

- ▶ Upkeep on the dikes including the removal of tree stumps.
- ▶ General grounds clean up: National Guard has been clearing out the stumps and leveling out the land for better drainage.
- ▶ The nursing home side has 52 beds and is fairly consistent in keeping the beds filled.
- ▶ Basic care is slowly being filled.
- ▶ June 30th end of fiscal year with a turn-back of close to a million dollars because of staff positions not filled.
- ▶ The Melvin Norgaard fund is being contested by his heirs. It has been turned over to the legal department.
- ▶ Litigation has started on some construction issues.
- ▶ Two new board members - Gary Skarphol, Williston, and Judy Lee, Fargo.

Commissioner's Report [POWERPOINT PRESENTATION]

- ▶ Reported on the exercise bikes that the committee authorized and have been bought. They are very popular among the veterans at the Home.
- ▶ ACOVA Logo designed, lapel pins distributed.
- ▶ Department logo has been put on the Transportation vans.
- ▶ OMB received over 100 applications for the position in Fargo, they have never seen that many for a state job – ever. Over 50 applications were received for the Bismarck position.
- ▶ Commissioner and Brenda will be serving on many mental health committees
- ▶ Update on outreach activities and presentations given by Department personnel.
- ▶ Military Affairs Committee (Chamber of Commerce) testified during the legislative session. They are very committed to veterans. Working on getting that relationship going throughout the State.
- ▶ The Department received \$50,000 for grants to the Service Dogs of America for veterans with PTSD. He is presently working on a grant process. They have quite of few qualifying veterans already. The dogs take two to four years of training. It's quite amazing what they can do.

- ▶ Coordinating senior transportation program. Received a \$5 million grant for veterans transportation throughout the State. Working on getting transportation in every county to the nearest CBOC or VA Medical Center and flat rates for travel throughout the state.
- ▶ Veterans Upward Bound: the Bill changed so it was taken away from the Department and put it under NDUS at the end of the legislation session. Typically, 30% comes off the top for administrating the funds. Working with Higher Ed, there will be no commission fee. Applied for Vista grants so full-time vista program workers will be on the NDSU and UND campus.
- ▶ Four new service officers received training: Barnes, Burke, Pembina and Walsh
- ▶ update on loan and grant programs
- ▶ \$38,016.89 is the balance of the PWTF clearing account as of 6/30/2013.
\$111,020.93 transferred to clearing account on July 15, 2013. This is the interest earnings for the fiscal year 2012 per Treasurer's Office. Treasurer's Office should have fiscal year 2013 interest earnings available sometime in July or August 2013.

Commissioner Wangen doesn't know why the money was transferred. He sent an email to the State Treasurer's Office requesting the reason for the transfer.

Ron Otto said that it was by law the transfer needed to be made.

Commissioner Wangen stated the money from two biennia ago is still available. The Department comes to ACOVA with how much we need and ACOVA budgets it. ACOVA will budget today off the \$111,000.00. Normally, the Department will say how much is needed per quarter and ACOVA approves us to request it from the Treasurer. The Department then sends that request to the State Treasurer and transfers would be made with the remaining money still earning interest. The State Treasurer moved \$111,000 into a non-interest bearing account.

Chairman Overby said the State Treasurer's Office transfer was not authorized by ACOVA. The Commissioner's office hasn't gotten the authority to spend any of that money.

Ron Otto said the Treasurer is administrator of the Fund and she can move it based on legislation.

Trish Hodny stated she sent an email asking how much money was available for budgeting purposes. Reading part of the response from the State Treasurer, another transfer will be made in July or August. Trish thought maybe there was some miscommunication and it needed to be cleared up to be sure we're all on the same page.

Commissioner Wangen stated the Treasurer always made the point that the clearing account is a non-interest bearing account so don't move money into it until you need it. There will soon be \$200,000 in a non-interest bearing account if another transfer is completed.

Commissioner Wangen reported he has contacted OMB and questioned if the money can be moved to an interest bearing account. OMB and the Auditors may not want to set-up another account. The State Bank of ND was contacted as to why the clearing account doesn't get interest. The money needs to be somewhere secure but still earn interest.

Ron Otto asked about getting an Attorney General Opinion with regards to setting up our own account. Commissioner Wangen didn't think it would be a good idea for the committee to do that based on the past legislative session. The question becomes what to do with the funding.

- ▶ Stand Downs: only \$5,000 of the \$20,000 available used for the 2011-2013 biennium. The 2013-2015 budget includes \$10,000 for Stand Downs.
- ▶ ITD is still working on the Department's website. It is estimated to be done by July 2013.
- ▶ Wrap up on the legislative session

Ron Otto asked about the discharge project. Commissioner Wangen explained the process of importing / exporting the discharges between Filenet and VetraSpec. The idea is to provide a way for CVSOs to have instant access to the discharges.

Motion by Ron Otto to accept Commissioner's Report, second by Trish Hodny. Motion passed.

Chairman Overby named the new subcommittee members:

Department of Veterans Affairs & Budget: Ken Hasby, Carroll Quam, Trish Hodny, Richard Belling and Marlin Schneider.

Postwar Trust Fund & Appeals: Jim Verwey, Dave Hilleren, Jim Haukedahl and John Adolf.

Legislative Committee: John Hanson, Robert Olzweski, Ron Otto, Hal Weninger and Jeff Hall

Subcommittees need to meet with the first order of business electing a chairman.

Committees recessed until 9:00am Friday morning.

July 26, 2013
9:00am

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

John Adolf	Dave Hilleren	Dean Overby
Richard Belling	Trish Hodny	Carroll Quam
John Hanson	Robert Olzweski	Marlin Schneider
Ken Hasby	Ron Otto	Jim Verwey
		Hal Weninger

Absent:

Jeff Hall	John Hanson	Jim Haukedahl
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Motion by Ron Otto to approve April 13, 2013 minutes, second by Richard Belling.
Trish Hodny reviewed the Appeals Subcommittee minutes and they were read as they were written.

Motion passed.

Department of Veterans Affairs/Budget – Carroll Quam

Ken Hasby elected Chairman, Carroll Quam elected Secretary.

The 2011-2013 Department budget report with the turn-back dollars was reviewed. The Committee reviewed proposed spending for grants, drivers housing and unmet needs for 2013-2015. The Committee grants the Commissioner authority to request up to \$25,000 per quarter from the PWTF interest account for authorized programs. Reviewed the Commissioner's Discretionary Fund and recommended it be made a permanent program with a maximum of \$12,000 per year starting July 2013. The Commissioner will bring forth a policy for this program to the committee. No action taken on strategic plan.

Motion by Ken Hasby to accept report, second by Richard Belling.

Ron Otto asked for more explanation about the Discretionary Fund. The subcommittee approved the theory of the program and policy will be acted on at next meeting. The subcommittee wants the program to continue. It is currently in effect until September 2013 on a trial basis.

Motion carried.

Motion by Trish Hodny to extend the Commissioner's Discretionary Fund pilot program until the next ACOVA meeting at which time we will entertain the Commissioner's policy and procedures, second by Ken Hasby. Motion carried.

PWTF/Appeals Subcommittee – Dave Hilleren

Jim Verwey elected Chairman. Verwey appoint Dave Hilleren as Secretary. The subcommittee reviewed the PWTF and the balance carried forward in the 410 Fund account. After discussion, it was recommended getting an Attorney General Opinion on the transfer of the \$111,000 from an interest bearing account to a non interest bearing account by the State Treasurer which was made without request or approval of Administrative Committee. There was discussion on how to get more money into the PWTF; have CVSOs and veterans address this concern to the Governor and legislators. Strategic plan reviewed, no action taken.

Appeals subcommittee convened. A closed appeal hearing was held, no information available.

Chairman Overby stated that if there was a request for an Attorney General's Opinion, he would like it in a separate motion.

Trish Hodny would like to go further than an Attorney General's Opinion because of the time frame. She is concerned there will be another deposit made and she would like a letter sent to the State Treasurer that we want to know the amount available but not transferred into Fund 410.

Commissioner Wangen sent an email to State Treasurer asking why the transfer was made. He received a response from Jeb (Treasurer's Office) citing NDCC 37-14-14 interest earnings are made available on a continuing basis to ACOVA. The Commissioner will check with Auditor's office on their audit procedures on Fund 410. He suggested submitting written questions to State Treasurer before requesting a formal AG Opinion.

The intent of the committee is to stop the transfer at this time.

Chairman Overby would like to visit with the State Treasurer on this issue. He would like Commissioner Wangen and Jim Verwey to accompany him.

The Department hasn't been given the authority to spend any PWTF monies. The Commissioner cited NDCC 37-18-12 that ACOVA has to give the Department spending authority.

Trish Hodny wondered where the \$111,000 was before it was transferred. Obviously it was somewhere for an entire year and gaining interest. Once the Treasurer took it out, it had to be put into Fund 410.

Ron Otto brought up that the Auditor's office needs to be part of the discussion in addition to the Attorney General's Office and the State Treasurer's Office. They need to get together and find a vehicle for the money to be put into and still be able to earn interest.

Dave Hilleren pointed out the Committee just wants the money to continue to earn interest. He thought the State Treasurer has several different devices and accounts that she utilizes for this money and it could have been kept in an interest bearing account.

It was noted the State Treasurer's website hasn't been updated to show current financial information on the PWTF.

Discussion by members on how in previous years, the Department would request a certain amount each quarter and only that amount was transferred. The remaining balance was still earning interest until it was needed. They would like to see the 2013-2015 interest earnings accumulate more interest for the upcoming biennium.

It would have been informative for the State Treasurer to have attended the meeting, even by speakerphone so the committee could be getting answers instead of speculating.

Motion by Dave Hilleren to approve the minutes along with the recommendation on requesting an Attorney General's Opinion if needed, second by Trish Hodny. Motion passed.

Motion by Carroll Quam that the Commissioner be authorized to draw up to \$25,000 per quarter and utilize that on veterans programs, second by Richard Belling. Motion passed unanimously. Motion #1

Chairman Overby asked the committee what is the total amount of the PWTF. The subcommittee didn't have the information available. Commissioner Wangen will ask the State Treasurer's Office what the principal balance of the Fund is and whatever else the committee would like to ask.

Legislative Subcommittee – Ron Otto

Ron Otto elected Chairman. Ron appointed Hal Weninger to record minutes. There was discussion on the objectives of the committee and the need to make veterans more visible to everyone. Committee discussed the need to start early in preparing for the next legislature.

Motion by Ron Otto to accept report, second by Hal Weninger.

A study will be taking place in the interim and Ron suggested that when the study committee meets, ACOVA members should in attendance.

Chairman Overby said we came out better than the previous legislative session. Everyone went in with one voice and it worked out so much better. We just need to change their (legislators) thoughts and minds on veterans.

Commissioner Wangen reported he received a lot of compliments from legislators regarding the bills that went forward. He did learn that requesting money for the PWTF should be included in the Governor's budget rather than a separate bill.

Ron Otto asked the Commissioner about the transportation grant available in highly rural areas. Commissioner Wangen replied he will be applying for the grant for the qualifying counties. He went into his plans for how the program would work.

Chairman Overby stopped discussion until after the vote on the motion on the floor.

Motion carried.

Discussion continued on the Commissioner's plans for the transportation grant. Ken Hasby asked how it would work in some areas. The grant is available for the State and the veterans' organizations. Ron questioned if the organizations have started to work on the grant. Commissioner Wangen will be contacting the organizations. Chairman Overby asked the members if the subcommittees were working okay. Everyone was comfortable serving on their subcommittee.

Trish Hodny reported Equal Justice Works received money to establish a Veteran's Court. In the next three years, lawyers and law students will provide assistance to low income and homeless veterans. Trish wondered if ACOVA could go back to the veterans' organizations and get support in March 2014 for monies. North Dakota missed the opportunity to get involved in the program but there is a small chance of getting onboard the next go around (March 2014). Ron Otto asked Trish to do an outline that the members could bring back to their organizations. Chairman Overby asked Trish to send that information to the Commissioner's office for dissemination.

Next meeting is scheduled for October 17 & 18, 2013 at the Comfort Inn, Bismarck. It will start the morning of the 17th. Chairman Overby is working on getting Mary Kae Kelsch , AG's office, for a joint meeting with the ND Governing Board. HIPAA and Board training will take place Thursday morning. The ACVOA meeting will start in the afternoon of the 17th.

Trish said there is poor signage on the roads directing drivers to the Veterans Home. She wondered if there is a way to correct this. Chairman Overby said the DOT will put up signs but the organization has to provide them. Chairman Overby asked the committee to allow the Chairman, Secretary and Commissioner to schedule a meeting with DOT regarding this issue and bring back information to the next meeting. The committee consented.

Commissioner Wangen reminded the subcommittees to leave their binders and if they need further information to let him know.

Motion to adjourn by Richard Belling, seconded Hal Weninger. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Jim Verwey
Secretary