

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND

December 15, 2016  
2:30 PM

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	Dean Overby
Roy Fillion	Trish Hodny	Dave Rice
Ken Hasby	Myron Langehaug	Jim Verwey
Jim Haukedahl	Marlys Morgenstern	Hal Weninger

Absent:

Bill Peschel  
Marlin Schneider, excused  
Alan Wondrasek, excused

Guests:

Megan Carranza, U.S. Senator Heitkamp's Office  
Liz Hanson, U.S. Senator Heitkamp's Office  
Laura Baillet, Attorney General's Office  
Coordinating Council Members

Chairman Overby recognized Dave Rice who took over for Emery Fisher.

**Speakers:**

**Dale DeKrey, Associate Director, Fargo VA HCS**

- ▶ VA is funded for the 2017 Budget.
- ▶ Choice Program: VA has taken over the scheduling, etc. and it is going much better. Fargo became a pilot facility and other facilities will now be following its procedures.
- ▶ Grafton and Bemidji Clinics are open.
- ▶ My VA Access – same day access in certain areas
- ▶ Construction: Lab should be open in February 2017; 30 new exam rooms for primary care; brand new private rooms; Healing Garden is done; it's hopeful the plants will survive; new ambulance bay and entrance are the new additions under construction.

- ▶ Volunteers donated 38,000 hours to the VA. Over \$400,000 donated by organizations.
- ▶ TeleMed system is very helpful to smaller cities.
- ▶ Cured more than 1,200 veterans of Hepatitis C.
- ▶ Honor Escorts Program started within the VA. When a veteran dies, there is a group that stands at attention in the hallway when the veteran is moved from their room.
- ▶ Veteran Companion Program re-established to provide support for veterans who don't have family nearby.
- ▶ Recognized by Health Rights Campaign Foundation for its work with the LGBT community.
- ▶ Canteen recognized as one of the best for 2016.

**Mark Johnson, Administrator, ND Veterans Home**

- ▶ Foundation funded \$8,000 for Aroma Therapy Program.
- ▶ Kenmare \$145,000 for chapel windows, rehab equipment, bingo machine, tools and cabinetry for the workshop,
- ▶ Archer McDaniels funding nebulizers and oxygen items.
- ▶ Peterson estate donated about \$175,000 for programs. This enabled work to be started on the workshop.
- ▶ Legislative Session: it will be very tough. Governor's Budget cut Veterans Home General Fund \$1.2 million extra from special funds

**Colonel Harmon, National Guard**

- ▶ Providing safety for citizens of southern Morton County
- ▶ Amvets hosting Christmas Dinner
- ▶ Air National Guard received 18<sup>th</sup> Outstanding Unit Award
- ▶ Air National Guard went to the Veterans Home - brought gifts and interacted with the veterans
- ▶ Gave update on deployments
- ▶ Reviewed units who received awards.
- ▶ Happy Holidays on behalf of the General and ND National Guard
- ▶ Working with the hotel to get rooms over Christmas for the soldiers stationed out in Morton County. Their families can then come out and spend time with them.

**Cheri Giesen, Executive Director, Job Service North Dakota**

- ▶ Appointed by Governor Burgum to stay in her position for the next four years
- ▶ Legislative Session: there is a fund from penalties, Job Service wants to use that money to help with base budget

- ▶ Joe Hall – appointed by DAV State Commander to the 14<sup>th</sup> District Employment Committee and appointed to a National Committee for second year
- ▶ Marlys Morgenstern – appointed honorary chief of staff
- ▶ Success story: veteran who served in Marines now wanted to become a mechanic. Worked with veteran to gain employment and file a disability claim. Finally offered position as a trainer due to the military background.

**Commissioner's Report** – Commissioner Lonnie Wangen [POWERPOINT]

- ▶ State Approving Agency position filled by Chris Kratochvil. Chris was the Walsh County VSO.
- ▶ Highly Rural Transportation Grant applied for and received along with funding for a position. The position has been filled by Laurie Vagts.
- ▶ PR Intern will be done soon. She did a lot in setting up the Department on social media outlets.
- ▶ Approval for Education Intern and will work with SAA and veterans services on campus.
- ▶ Chris started September and has gone to training in Kentucky. Done compliance with Minnesota SAA person. He will be deployed in March for one year and will be stationed in Washington, D.C.
- ▶ Update on staff outreach and presentations.
- ▶ CVSO Fall training in Fargo was well attended
- ▶ Tom Webb was hired in August as VSO and has been working at the VA office. He finally got his PIV card so he can access programs and will be able to work more closely with veterans.
- ▶ Provided backup in Traill County as the VSO was out on maternity leave.
- ▶ Update on social media: twitter, Facebook, etc.
- ▶ Update on Grant and Loan programs.
- ▶ Budget update.
- ▶ The Department received a donation of 10 video conference set-ups that will be connected to the VA system. Two have been setup in our office, one for the Commissioner and one for training. The remainder will be set up through out the State for CVSO use. One will already go to Dickey County.
- ▶ Kuwait sent books Every public library has one; National Guard and every county. First book went to Norris Olson and his wife, their son Jeffrey Olson was the only casualty from North Dakota. The family was very touched.

Break into subcommittees.  
Committee will reconvene until tomorrow morning.  
December 16, 2016

9:00 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	Trish Hodny	Bill Peschel
Roy Fillion	Myron Langehaug	Dave Rice
Ken Hasby	Marlys Morgenstern	Marlin Schneider
Jim Haukedahl	Dean Overby	Jim Verwey
		Hal Weninger

Absent:

Bill Peschel  
Myron Langehaug  
Alan Wondrasek, excused

Guests:

Members of NDVCC  
Ron Otto, Morton County VSO

**Russ Stabler, President, ND Veterans Coordinating Council**

- ▶ Looked over the ND DVA 2017-2019 Budget, the Council will support items.
- ▶ Bills were reviewed, #1-5 can be supported, Bill #6 – Child Abuse Reporting – NDVCC will remain neutral [see below]
- ▶ Will have another reception for the Legislators during session. Dave Johnson is working on it.
- ▶ Brochure will be updated from last session.

Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner reviewed possible 2017 Legislative Bills:

NDDVA Budget breakdown, showing optional budget requests.

Bill#1 – Veterans organization gaming income to be used for veterans organization programs. Senator Dever, author

Bill #2 – Veterans organization gaming income to be used for veterans programs, to help veterans home. Unknown author.

Bill #3 – Funeral Honor Coins, 1 per family. Senator Sorvaag, author

Bill #4 – Alternative Gold Star Plate, for families of veterans/military members who die but do not qualify for Gold Star Plate.

Bill #5 – Employment Protection during state-sponsored activation. DOD

Bill #6 – Child Abuse and Neglect ID and Reporting. DOD

Trish Hodny reported the Legislative subcommittee reviewed the bills and will bring them to the full committee for action.

### **Committee Reports:**

**Legislative Subcommittee:** Ken Hasby reported.

Committee feels we need better coordination with the ND Veterans Coordinating Council. When they have special meetings, they will inform the subcommittee. They could possibly participate by conference call. Subcommittee will defer to the full committee for bill action. Subcommittee discussed passed past and present legislation. Recommends ACOVA work with ND Veterans Coordinating Council and the National Guard. Subcommittee would like to be informed on the date and time of the NDVCC legislative reception.

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

Marlys Morganstern asked if the committee will receive a listing of all the bills, Chairman Overby said information will go to the committee. She also wondered how we can support the Guard with their bills and if ND Cares Coalition will be submitting legislation.

Commissioner Wangen will be tracking the bills and posting the information on the Department's website.

Trish Hodny said they asked for better coordination with NDVCC with regards to their meeting.

***Motion passed unanimously.***

**Postwar Trust Fund & Appeals Subcommittee:** reported by Marlys Morgenstern Appeals Subcommittee met. Dave Rice is a new member and will need an Appeals Book.

***Motion by Marlys Morgenstern to accept report, second by Trish Hodny. Motion passed unanimously.***

**Trust Fund Committee:** reported by Marlys Morgenstern  
Review draft of memo to State Treasurer. Recommendation that letter be signed by Chairman. Update and trained Dave Rice on his committee duties.

Reviewed request for Stand Down funding for \$2,151.50 from Bismarck AMVETS,

Two vans will need to be replaced. Legislative request should be made for \$30,000. That has been done. It will be monitored during session.

*Motion by Marlys Morgenstern to accept report, second by Trish Hodny.*

Dave Hilleren read the letter that is to be sent to State Treasurer Kelly Schmidt.

*Motion passed unanimously.*

*Motion by Marlys Morgenstern to approve Bismarck AMVETS StandDown request of \$2,151.50, second by Dave Rice. Motion passed voice vote unanimously.*

Chairman Overby asked Russ Stabler if all the Coordinating Council members will be registered as lobbyists. Russ replied that yes, they would be.

**Department of Veterans Affairs & Budget Subcommittee:** by Hal Weninger.  
Reviewed PWTF expenditures. ND DVA 2015-2017 budget. Discussion on increased travel coming up for the legislative session and reiterated ideas for savings cost, such as car pooling.

*Motion by Hal Weninger to accept report, second by Jim Haukedahl. Motion passed.*

Chairman Overby asked Ron Otto, Morton County Veterans Service Officer to give the Committee an update on how the pipeline situation impacted his office. The issue became one of security; the building is now a secure building. He developed a policy on how to

handle incoming veterans – if they came with a DD214 discharge and a driver’s license with a Morton or Burleigh County address they were helped. If they didn’t have those documents, they weren’t allowed in the office. The office is doing humanitarian aid for cases such as the need for medications, etc. There are veterans who are supporting the “blue”.

Jim Verwey asked about the Guard members that are serving out there. The CBOC is very accommodating.

***Motion by Ken Hasby to approve July 28, 2016 minutes, second by Richard Belling .***  
50 year Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Plaque given to Lavonne Liversage

***Motion passed.***

**Round Table Discussion:**

Richard Belling: will start working on getting veterans to contact their legislators.

Ken Hasby: might be a time when we need manpower to get support for the bills.

Trish Hodny: busy session, hoping that someone does research on the sitting legislators if there are any veterans or connection to a veteran (son, father, brother).

Marlys Morgenstern: wants to be able to speak on the bills so she’ll need lots of information. Wondering if some of the speakers could be over interactive video instead of them traveling.

Roy Fillion: enjoyed the Coordinating Council meeting, bills need to be supported.

Jim Haukedahl: good meeting. Wishing everyone safe travels. Hope legislative session goes well.

Laura Balliet: will put together information on what committee members can and can’t do regarding the legislative session. She will send it to Lonnie for dissemination.

Hal Weninger: welcomed Dave Rice to the Committee. Never fail to learn something when he comes here. Even though there are three subcommittees, they are all integrated together on issues. Everyone needs to be talking the same story when dealing with legislators.

Lonnie Wangen: because of the tobacco measure, there have been ramifications already. Not sure how it’s going to play out for veterans. Need to be vigilant to support a good bill and any bills that may hurt us. Will get a “The Liberation of Kuwait” book to Trish Hodny.

Hal Weninger: has disc “Fires of Kuwait” and will share that with anyone who wants one.

Jim Verwey: Meeting with Coordinating Council was great. May need to adjust meeting time so Legislative Subcommittee doesn't miss any of the ACOVA meeting. Looking forward to a good legislative session.

Marlin Schneider: Wish everyone a merry Christmas and happy new year.

Dave Hilleren: had discussion with Trish Hodny. New Governor has asked for initiative people to get together. Let new Governor know who we are and we are a unified group. VVA convention will be in New Town, possibly July 14-16, 2017. VVA will try and utilize the Department's website.

Dave Rice: Interesting and informative meeting. Spent four years on veterans Coordinating Council. Filling remaining term of Emory Fisher.

Dean Overby: Thank everyone on the committee for the work that you do. Having one person from each veteran's organization on each committee seems to work out great. Put in request to Governor Burgum to meet with him to let him know who we are and the ND Veterans Coordinating Council. Wants to make sure every veteran in North Dakota is being taken care.

Chairman Overby asked Dave Johnson, American Legion, about the Legislative Reception. Dave stated the Reception is booked at the Ramkota on Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 – 8:30.

Discussion on who will attend the reception from ACOVA. They need to be mindful of the open meeting laws. A brochure will be given with information about ACOVA, NDVCC and the bills.

Commissioner Wangen will work with the Guard on their legislative bills and get the information to the committee members.

Chairman Overby talked about scheduling the next ACOVA meeting. He feels right around crossover time would work best. It will be a good time to go over the actions of the legislature.

Next meeting scheduled for March 2 & 3, 2017 at the Comfort Inn, Bismarck.

***Motion to adjourn by Hal Weninger, second by Jim Haukedahl. Motion passed.***

Respectfully submitted

Jim Verwey  
Secretary