

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND

August 3, 2017  
1:00 PM

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

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Richard Belling	Trish Hodny	Marlin Schneider
Roy Fillion	Marlys Morgenstern	Jim Verwey
Ken Hasby	Dean Overby	Hal Weninger
Jim Haukedahl	Bill Peschel	Alan Wondrasek
Dave Hilleren	Dave Rice	.

Absent:

Myron Langehaug, excused

Guests:

Laura Baillet, Asst. Attorney General, Attorney General's Office  
Members of ND Veterans Coordinating Council  
Members of ND Veterans Home Governing Board  
County Veterans Service Officers

Introduction of Department of Veterans Affairs staff by Commissioner Wangen:

Cathy Halgunseth  
Mike Conklin, VSO  
Calie Lindseth, VSO and Womens Veterans Coordinator  
Tom Webb, VSO  
Bryan Watters, VSO Supervisor  
John Johnson, Interim SAA Director (he was not able to attend)

**Trainers:**

**North Dakota Open Records & Meeting Law** [Powerpoint]- Sandra DePountis, North Dakota Attorney General's Office

**HIPAA Issues for ACOVA** [Powerpoint] – Tara B. Brandner, North Dakota Attorney General's Office

**Roberts Rules Training** [Teleconference] – Tricia Bartell, HRMS Training Officer

Break into subcommittee meetings.  
Committee will reconvene 9:00am Friday morning

August 4, 2017

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	Marlin Schneider
Roy Fillion	Dean Overby	Jim Verwey
Ken Hasby	Bill Peschel	Hal Weninger
Jim Haukedahl	Dave Rice	Alan Wondrasek
Dave Hilleren		

Absent:

Myron Langehaug, excused  
Marlys Morgenstern, excused

Guests:

Karen Meier, State Commander American Legion

Commissioner Wangen explained the Strategic Plan. At the end of the biennium, once goals are met, they are dropped off the strategic plan and new ones added. It is a living document so each biennium starts with an updated strategic plan. ACOVA and the

Department are undergoing a Performance Audit and one area they will look at is the strategic plan. It should be maintained and updated every meeting.

Jim Verwey asked about scholarships posted on the Department website. Commissioner Wangen said information about scholarships can be sent out over Twitter, Facebook, and news releases.

Chairman Overby stated the Governor wants representatives from other organizations to be involved. Contact information for organizations will need to be gathered. Governor's Office is looking for younger people to be included on ACOVA. Organizations struggle to get young people to join and be involved.

Jim Verwey talked about ways Valley City tried to get younger people involved, but none were successful.

Chairman Overby stated that to get young people involved, organizations have to have ways to involve the whole family. When he became Department Commander, he did it when his kids were young. He was able to bring the family with when he traveled the State.

Jim Haukedahl said most people wait to get involved until their kids are grown and they have more time.

Alan Wondrasek talked about getting young people to join in Bottineau is very difficult. AMVETS is doing okay, it's a younger crowd but the VFW and American Legion are losing members. You need to keep trying though.

Ken Hasby stated that they will pay the first year's membership to help get new ones in the organization, they've gotten some young guys and a few women.

Commissioner Wangen said getting other organizations in as ex-officio would be a good first step.

***Motion Ken Hasby to approve the minutes of June 22 & 23, 2017, Jim Haukedahl second. Motion passed.***

Chairman Overby discussed setting ACOVA meetings for the upcoming year. He proposed the second month of each quarter and the third Thursday and Friday of that month. Meeting dates can be changed if there's too much conflict with the member's schedules.

Committee discussion on what schedule would work best for meetings.

Poll of committee members if the first or second Thursday & Friday would work best. The third Thursday & Friday of the second month of each quarter will be set for a meeting date:

November 16 & 17, 2017

February 15 & 16, 2018

May 17 & 18, 2018

August 16 & 17, 2018

Next meeting will be scheduled for November 16 & 17, 2017. The Guard will be contacted to find out if the committee can meet at Camp Grafton.

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

- ▶ RIFs took place effective July 1, 2017: Admin Assistant I and Office Assistant III positions. Full-time Temp-HRTG position also gone. Trying to get VA Workstudy along with AmeriCorp Vista workers in the office.
- ▶ Updates on staff training and outreach/presentations. Bryan Watters delivered video tele-conference systems to some counties that will allow for direct contact with the VA.
- ▶ Public Relations: Facebook – 11,000 people reached in last 7 days; Twitter – 887 followers, 1,300 people reached in last 7 days. Calie Lindseth oversees Social Media for the Department.
- ▶ There are issues with HB 1090 (veterans preference-notificaitons), the electronic notice isn't implemented yet. A Read Receipt is needed for documentation. The issue of how to do it electronically with the electronic system hasn't been figured out yet.
- ▶ Update on PWTF 410 Account. Subcommittee will need to recommend how much the Department will receive quarterly and how CD's will be set up.
- ▶ DAV van should be arriving any day now. This is the van that many veterans' organizations including the Coordinating Council donated money to cover the cost. HRTG van: last van will go to Bottineau. Three Affiliated Tribes – Fort Berthold is the only van not up and running yet. Commissioner Wangen will be working on issues going on there. VA hasn't decided on the funding switch made by OMB for Department budget.
- ▶ Patriotic Plates: first month since issued (July 1-31, 2017) 71 flags and 52 Eagle. 14 Boonie Stomper were issued last year. \$15 per plate goes to the Postwar Trust Fund.
- ▶ Performance Audit started August 1, 2017 on ACOVA and NDDVA. Commissioner Wangen welcomes the audit; he feels it will show ACOVA and the Department are going in the right direction

Bill Peschel asked if the Governor's Office plans to replace members with younger people, how are these people supposed to get to meetings?

Discussion on reality of younger people serving on the Committee. Most won't have the vacation time to take Thursday and Friday off, they won't be able to attend evenings or on weekends.

Trish Hodny said she's a female, a Gulf war veteran and the youngest committee member but that didn't seem to matter to the Governor's Office when they wanted to replace the entire committee.

Commissioner Wangen explained the Postwar Trust Fund spreadsheet that is posted on the State Treasurer's website.

### **Committee Reports:**

#### **Legislative Committee – Ken Hasby**

Committee attended joint meeting with ND Veterans Coordinating Council. Committee decided to take no action on any agenda items and wait for the new legislative committee to meet.

*Motion by Dave Hilleren to approve report, second by Trish Hodny. Motion passed.*

#### **Postwar Trust Fund & Appeals Subcommittee:**

##### **Appeals Subcommittee – report by Alan Wondrasek**

Committee had an appeal hearing yesterday, spoke with applicant. Committee upheld decision of Commissioner to disapprove a loan. Official notification with decision will be sent within 72 hours to applicant.

**Postwar Trust Fund** report by Alan Wondrasek

Dave Rice was nominated as Chairman, however, due to possible committee membership changes, this was put on hold. Reviewed PWTF account. Discussed ways to raise money, veteran gaming may be a possible avenue.

Commissioner Wangen spoke on veteran gaming issue. There may not be a need to go to legislation to get a scratch off ticket, it may be the Gaming Committee. Other states have the tickets and make a lot of money for veterans. The Commissioner talked with the ND Veterans Coordinating Council about looking into this issue.

***Motion by Dave Rice to accept the report and second by Trish Hodny. Motion passed.***

### **Department of Veterans Affairs – Hal Weninger**

Discussed Policy 410:

Grant Policy 410 – Applicant Requirements – Hardship Assistance

1) To be eligible, an applicant (Applicant) must meet one of the following criteria:

A. Be a Veteran as defined in N.D.C.C. 37-14-01.1 “Definition of a veteran. As used in this chapter, “veteran” means an individual who served in the armed forces of the United States on federal active duty for reasons other than training and who has been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.”

**Change policy to read:**

A. *Be a Veteran as defined in N.D.C.C. 37-14-01.1 “Definition of a veteran. As used in this chapter, “veteran” means an individual who served in the armed forces of the United States on federal active duty for reasons other than training and who has been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.”; or,*

B. *Be an applicant to whom the United States Veterans Administration has assigned a service-connected disability rating; or,*

C. *Be a spouse of an Applicant who qualifies under “A” or “B” above; or,*

D. *Be an un-remarried widow or widower of a deceased individual who, at the time of death, met the requirements of either “A” or “B” above.*

Committee recommends approval of changes to Grant Policy 410.

Committee reiterates sharing rooms and carpooling to save on travel costs.

Chairman Belling brought up an issue concerning Commissioner Wangen and accreditation, the issue has been taken care of.

Commissioner Wangen explained the reasons for the policy change. There were about 10 grants that would have been allowed under the new language. The VA recognizes these veterans and gives them care. An example is a veteran who needs surgery for service connection. The veteran's teeth have to be extracted first and dentures may not be covered by the VA and we're unable to help the veteran. This doesn't affect Century Code or the Loan Program.

***Motion by Dave Hilleren to accept changes to Grant Policy 410, second by Hal Weninger. Motion passed unanimously.***

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

Commissioner Wangen spoke on the Post War Trust Fund for this biennium. The amount given by the State Treasurer minus the \$50,000 for the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter would be broken down to roughly \$27,000 per remaining quarter. Discussion also needs to be on how CD's should be tiered.

***Motion by Dave Hilleren to purchase CD's at \$25,000, second by Richard Belling. Friendly amendment to have it divided equally between 7 quarters to equal \$24,052.72. Motion carried unanimously. [Motion #1].***

**Round Table Discussion:**

Hal Weninger: Going through strategic plan and realized how far they have come.

Bill Peschel: Nothing

Trish Hodny: Nothing

Alan Wondrasek: This organization is very professional. With the legislature and the latest rounds of email, need to be professional. It has hurt veterans through the State. He has talked with County Commissioners and still believes that oversight of the Veterans Service Officers should be with the NDDVA Commissioner. Veterans Service Officers are very important to the State and this committee is important to the State.

Marlin Schneider: Still finds it interesting to hear about Robert's Rules and the other training.

Ken Hasby: Wants to thank each and every member of the committee that he has worked with through the years, you do a great job for veterans. Commends Dean for carrying on as Chairman of the committee and working with the legislature.

Jim Haukedahl: Another good meeting. Concerned about getting other organizations on the board, be good for ex-officio.

Roy Fillion: Learned more and more about the importance of the board. Appreciated Commissioner's explanation of P WTF and Strategic Plan.

Dave Rice: Good meeting, first time been through an appeal hearing. Marlys really helped with the hearing. Training was good.

Jim Verwey: Good training, the speakers were great. Thank Lonnie and Cathy and staff. New members should go through the Coordinating Council before they come onto the Board.

Jim Haukedahl: Stated he was on the Coordinating Council before coming on the board, and it was very helpful.

Dave Hilleren: Thanked the Chairman and Trish for attending the VVA convention.

Thanked the Commissioner and his staff. Good information on the strategic plan.

Wondered about emailing Commissioner with ideas on strategic plan before meetings.

Richard Belling: Another good meeting. Great time at Veterans Home. Thank Dean for the great job he's done this year.

Commissioner Wangen: Audit coming up, I will keep Chairman and Richard Belling up to date. Will be 3 – 9 months and will be a good thing. Thanked Ken Hasby for his many years on the board. Very good board, productive working committee.

Chairman Overby gave Ken Hasby a coin for serving on the Committee. Thanked him for being on the committee. Ken wasn't afraid to say what he thought.

First year Dean served there was a performance audit and it wasn't good, but a strategic plan came out of it. After the first audit when we made the changes and implemented things, the auditors started using us (ACOVA) as an example for change and working with them. If the audit says we need improvements that will be fine. If they can find a better way for us to provide service to veterans of North Dakota, we welcome that. Thanked Mark Johnson (Administrator) and his staff for the great stay at the Veterans Home.

When the new appointments come in, members may be moved around on the subcommittees.

Mark Johnson thanked everyone for coming. PBS is touring the building and is doing a special on the Veterans Home. They want to interview Vietnam Veterans for the special. They are working on the dates when interviews will be held at the Veterans Home.

Mark will be giving tours for members who want to see the Veterans Home.

Family Day is planned and Mark will give the date to Commissioner Wangen to disseminate.



*Motion to adjourn, second. Motion passed.*

Respectfully submitted

Jim Verwey  
Secretary