

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
COMFORT INN, BISMARCK ND

June 22, 2017  
2:00 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	Myron Langehaug	Marlin Schneider
Roy Fillion	Marlys Morgenstern	Jim Verwey
Jim Haukedahl	Dean Overby	Hal Weninger
Dave Hilleren		
Bill Peschel	Alan Wondrasek	
Trish Hodny	Dave Rice	

Absent:

Ken Hasby, excused

Guests:

Laura Balliet, Asst. Attorney General, Attorney General's Office  
Megan Carranza, U.S. Senator Heitkamp's Office  
Ron Otto, Morton CVSO

**Speakers:**

No Speakers

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

► Pots and Pans donated by EuroCast. Brand new as they are overstock, returned or used in their promotional programs. The Department was contacted by the company to

distribute them to veterans in need. The Department has received about five pallets and is working with the West Fargo VFW to get them out in communities. They are mainly going to veterans transitioning from shelters to their own apartments. The Commissioner will be dropping some off at the Ruth Meier's House in Bismarck.

- ▶ Open Records Requests – showed committee the amount of paper to comply with requests
- ▶ Lost 2 FTE positions. Peggy had already retired and Joanne will be done as of June 30. Losing the HRTG temporary employee due to the legislature taking \$100,000 from the federal grant to fund two positions in department. Office of General Counsel hasn't made a response yet, the funding could be pulled from North Dakota. If we can't use the \$100,000, another position may have to go since there's no money in the budget to cover the cost.
- ▶ Joanne did a tremendous job in helping veterans find alternate or additional funding to help with their needs. She is truly concerned about how veterans are going to be taken care of. With the cuts, it will now be up to the CVSOs to do more in assisting veterans with their grants.

Trish asked if she was the one who was hired due to an Audit issue. The Commissioner responded no she wasn't. We will always have an Audit issue because we don't have enough people to separate out duties.

Trish asked how we're making sure that we're doing our due diligence with the manpower we have.

The Commissioner responded that duties will be split between Bryan, Cathy and himself. It will take longer and timelines will be strictly followed. It will be up the CVSOs to work directly with the veterans to get things done or grants will be canceled. We'll do our best to keep the core things going.

- ▶ Updates on staff presentations and outreach. Commissioner and Bryan went to training and are now officially Vista supervisors; working on getting Vista workers.

Sanford Hospital will have someone work with the veterans regarding their medical appointments when the VA outsources veterans. This should help with conflicts that come up with the billing. Marlys asked that we publish the number of the Sanford Veterans Outreach individual.

Trish asked about training. Commissioner responded that training was on hold due to the budget cuts at the beginning of the biennium. There was funding available the second year to send staff to training. It isn't looking like there's money available in the next biennium for staff training.

- ▶ Update Social Media – Twitter and Facebook accounts.

- ▶ Update on Commissioner's activities.
- ▶ Update on Loans and Grant programs

Not able to get statistical information on the loan program for Trish but will work on it.

Commissioner Wangen reported that he serves on the Oral Health Coalition. The Coalition wants to help provide veterans with dental assistance and possibly piggyback with our Grant Program.

We won't know what the total spending is for the 2017-2019 biennium until later in July. The Treasurer's Office should have the number available by the next meeting.

- ▶ Update on License Plates
- ▶ Update on Strategic Plan - will need to be worked on for the next biennium.
- ▶ Update on DAV Vans.
- ▶ Update on Legislative Bills (agency website)

Bill Peschel asked about the Legislature passing a mandate for the funeral coins but no funding. Commissioner Wangen reported the Legislative intent is to use PWTF monies and other funding to purchase 4,000 coins. A coin would be given to the family and if family members want coins, they would need to purchase them.

Alan Wondrasek is bothered by the fact that the money needs to be raised by donations. The State should have provided funds.

#### **ND VSO Chain of Command – Alan Wondrasek**

Alan talked about five years ago a group of veterans in Bottineau asked him to get involved with the VSO office. The Bottineau office wasn't being properly funded and they worked to get the county to support the office.

He spoke on having a strong feeling about the chain of command. The Bottineau county commissioners said the VSO doesn't work for them. Chairman Overby stated that throughout the State the CVSOs work for their county commissioners. Bottineau county commissioners agreed to put a veteran on the hiring committee when the present CVSO leaves the position. Alan feels the CVSO should report to the Commissioner and evaluations should be by the Commissioner.

Chairman Overby stated the county hires the CVSO and that's their responsibility. ACOVA is staying out of that area.

Bill Peschel talked about the 53 counties and 3 tribes all having different job descriptions. When Bill was a CVSO, the Auditor talked to Lonnie and Lonnie said Bill isn't required

to go to all the (Veteran Service Organization State) conventions. Because of that Bill's budget was cut. The Auditors are in charge and not the county commissioners.

Trish spoke on her experience being a County Veterans Service Officer. You can run into inconsistencies in the offices. The county commissioners are liable for that person in the office being able to do the job. We're almost doing a disservice to our veterans by not taking a more hands-on approach. She talked about Social Services is in the process of leaving the counties and coming under the State, the same as the Child Support. If this continues, it may be something we need to look at.

Commissioner Wangen explained the new county service officers are required to come to the Department for training for a week. That's improved the CVSOs a lot. It's the people who have been around longer that were trained by the CVSO before them or the CVSOs who tell their commissioners what the job is. We've brought in a lot of people for training. We give them all the tools before they leave our office. We tell them they need to take our training, TRIP training, NACVSO training and get their accreditations.

Trish asked about the mil-levy. Her county used the unspent mils for other purposes.

Alan just wanted to get people to think about the oversight of county veterans service officers. He doesn't see how we can't be involved.

Chairman Overby brought up time and place for the next meeting. He received email from Laura Balliet for training on Open Records and Open Meetings and HIPAA. Commissioner Wangen requested HRMS provide training on Robert's Rules. Training is set-up for August 3 & 4, 2017 in Lisbon. The Committee will be staying at the Veterans Home. Thursday night the Watford City American Legion will be providing a meal for the veterans.

Break into subcommittees.  
Committee will reconvene 8:00 tomorrow morning.

June 23, 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	Myron Langehaug	Marlin Schneider
Roy Fillion	Marlys Morgenstern	Jim Verwey
Jim Haukedahl	Dean Overby	Hal Weninger
Dave Hilleren	Dave Rice	Alan Wondrasek
Trish Hodny		

Absent:

Ken Hasby, excused  
Bill Peschel, excused

Guests:

***Motion by Dave Hilleren to approve the March 30 & 31, 2017 minutes, second by Richard Belling.***

Dave Rice state there should be a correction on the last page, it should be 95 veterans on an Honor Flight.

**Committee Reports:**

**Department of Veterans Affairs – Hal Weninger**

Grant Policy 410 – Applicant Requirement – Hardship Assistance:

- 1) The Applicant must be either a Veteran as defined in N.D.C.C. 37-14-01.1, a spouse of an eligible Veteran or an un-remarried widow/widower of an eligible veteran.

**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.

Discussion on expanding the definition of a veteran to include “had service-connection with VA”. This would only be for hardship grant purposes. Motion was made, seconded and passed to accept additional definition:

- 1) The Applicant must be either a Veteran as defined in N.D.C.C. 37-14-01.1, had service connection with the VA, a spouse of an eligible Veteran or an un-remarried widow/widower of an eligible veteran.

Commissioner reported there were 11 rejections of applications even though they had service-connection, the applicants didn't meet the definition of a veteran as outlined in the policy.

Commissioner's evaluation was completed and reviewed by the committee.

Reviewed audit report.

Approved \$50,000 to clearing account for the Department's programs for the first quarter (July-Sept 2017), motion approved.

Hal Weninger requested Commissioner Wangen explain the difference between the Postwar Trust Fund and the clearing account.

Commissioner Wangen: ACOVA and Commissioner have no control or access at all to the PWTF. The State Treasurer transfers money to the clearing account – Fund 410. The ACOVA and Department can access those funds. Two transportation vans were sold and the money went into the clearing account. ACOVA determines what happens with those funds. These vans were bought by PWTF monies so when they are sold, the money goes back to the PWTF account. There are three options the federal government can decide when the vans under the Highly Rural Transportation Grant are to be replaced: return to Federal Government surplus, sell van and return funds to Federal Government, and to deem it disposable and have State decided what to do with it. It will depend on the surplus rules at the time of van replacement.

***Motion by Jim Haukedahl to accept change to definition of a veteran, seconded by Richard Belling.***

Discussion on creating a subcategory.

The federal VA recognizes injuries during training, the state does not. The applicant would still need to qualify under the definition.

***Friendly amendment offered "to develop change to definition of Veteran, based on Laura Balliet's pending writing and review at the next meeting."***

***Amendment accepted. Motion approved as amended.***

***Motion by Jim Haukedahl to authorize \$50,000 to the Department when available from the Treasurer's Office, second by Richard Belling. Motion passed unanimously.***

[Motion #3]

***Motion by Hal Weninger to accept report, second by Trish Hodny. Motion passed.***

**Postwar Trust Fund & Appeals Subcommittee:**

**Postwar Trust Fund** report by Alan Wondrasek

Motion made and passed to move remaining funds from the Department programs at the end of the biennium to the grant program.

Discussion on Funeral Honor Coin, strongly recommend not using PWTF. We should look at other sources.

Marlys clarified that the money from the sale of the two vans would go back into the clearing account.

Talked about strategic plan and will review at August meeting.

Talked about the success stories of the PTWF. Marlys clarified her statement about success stories. On the Department website, the PTWF is talked about but not about the veterans we help or what we do with it.

The vans were sold for \$1,868 and \$4,400. Committee recommends the money goes to the grant program.

***Motion by Alan Wondrasek to accept the report and second by Dave Hilleren. Motion passed.***

***Motion by Richard Belling to give \$1,800 to Service Dogs of America, second by Jim Verwey.***

Trish Hodny asked about the shortfall for the grant program. There will about a \$46,000 shortfall at the end of the biennium. Shouldn't we put the \$1,800 and \$4,400 towards the grant program. Commissioner Wangen stated we don't use the new biennium funds to pay the previous biennium's expenses. Trish wanted to make sure we don't have a need for the \$1,800. Commissioner stated there are outside sources who will pick up the expenses. Marlys would like to show the Treasurer's Office that we do have a need for more funds. The PWTF is not producing enough to cover the needs of the programs.

***Motion passed, 12 yeas, 2 nays*** [Motion #5]

**Appeals Subcommittee** – report by Alan Wondrasek

No committee action at this time. There may be a pending appeal.

***Motion by Alan Wondrasek to accept the report, second by Dave Hilleren. Motion passed.***

Commissioner Wangen asked if there had been any motion to move the remaining funds PWTF from the other programs to the grant program.

***Motion by Marlys Morgenstern to authorize the Department to use any remaining funds from the other programs, i.e. Sweatlodge, Unmet Needs etc., to transfer to the Grant Program, second by Trish Hodny.***

It was made clear the \$4,400 from the van sale would go toward the grant program.

***Motion passed unanimously.*** [Motion #6]

**Legislative Subcommittee** report by Trish Hodny

No review of Coordinating Council minutes as they were not available.

ND Century Code 37-29-03, sections 1,2 &3. That's the statute that protects our ND Military that get activated and receive job protection but it doesn't give job protection to those that get activated by an out of state unit but work in North Dakota.

Laura Balliet thought it was taken care of last session. She felt it was changed but didn't include an emergency clause. Laura will follow-up on the issue.

Committee would bring it forward unless it has already been taken care of legislatively.

Discussion on the centralization of all CVSO's under the State of North Dakota. It would depend on the funding climate and looking at having the next legislative committee put together a proposal using the child support model. This would ensure consistency and excellence for service to all our veterans no matter what part of North Dakota they reside.

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

**Round Table Discussion:**

Dave Rice: Handed out an Honor Flight brochure. Trying to get another flight going this fall and they're short \$13,000. Asking if organizations can help them out with funding.

Trish Hodny: Looking forward to going to Lisbon. Marlys' idea on marketing on the website is good idea.

Marlys Morgenstern: minutes last time said there would be an info packet on how to read spreadsheets. Asked about the DAV van, Commissioner Wangen said funding is all there and it will be ordered.

Myron Langehaug: Thank everybody for their efforts.

Alan Wondrasek: Thank you. Figured he said enough.

Marlin Schneider: Honor flights are good. Discussion about where the veterans are coming from.

Jim Haukedahl: VA Care Teams are combined. Different Departments are moving around as stages of remodeling get completed.

Dave Hilleren: Vietnam Vets Picnic is coming, I handed out cozies. I have all kinds of raffle tickets. July14-15-16 are the dates for the picnic. Shuttle to POWWOW as well. Everyone is invited



Richard Belling: Thank you for the money to the Service Dog Program. Will be stopping in Jud, ND to visit the site. Home Depot may support fixing up the kennels adding insulation and drainage. Program is quite the deal. State Commander is using it as his Project. I have a Dog named after me.

Jim Verwey: Thanked Myron and Marlys for all the work they've done on the board.

Commissioner Wangen: Good Meeting. I enjoy hearing and sharing what we are doing. You guys are in charge of a lot of stuff. If you hear negative stuff clear it up or contact me. Bring it up at this meeting. Legislature doesn't trust me, it doesn't trust the ACOVA. Talked about the DAV situation. State pays for 7-8 Vans in the State with no "Thanks" but one Van not funded and a big problem and complaints. PWTF issue, Auditors came in looking for the issue and it was there and already corrected.

Marlys Morgenstern: You said you don't toot your horn but I do think we should be tooting our horns and get the word. Didn't we once have a PR Committee?

Commissioner Wangen: We all should be PR

Roy Fillion: I have learned a lot watching, I am glad to hear about SDA, I'm glad we are going to Lisbon. Thank you for coming out to the Golf Fund raiser. Thank the commissioner for the explanation of things. Before people fly off the handle they need to call him.

Richard Belling: June 8<sup>th</sup> Next year at Mapleton is the Vets Home Golf Fundraiser Event

Hal Weninger: Thank everyone for their commit to veterans. Budget stuff is disheartening.

Trish Hodny: Legion Summer Convention coming up this weekend. I am working on finding an intern with the Department VSOs. I am looking for funds to get a stipend to pay the intern.

Dave Hilleren: It's been a year since Emery Fisher passed away while serving on ACOVA.

Dean Overby: Interesting year. Legislation didn't go our way. We visited with ND Representative Chet Pollert and proved the things he heard were not true. We are not here to run everything we are here to support ND Veterans. We are working for the Veterans of ND. Governor hasn't made appointments of committee members to the board. Waiting for 1 July, if you haven't heard anything you are still on the Committee.

Chairman/Secretary changes are unknown.

Myron Langehaug and Marlys Morgenstern were recognized by Chairman Overby and Commissioner Wangen.

***Motion to adjourn, second. Motion passed.***

Respectfully submitted

Jim Verwey  
Secretary