

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
VETERANS CLUB, STEELE ND

September 13, 2018
1:00 PM

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

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Richard Belling	Trish Hodny	Murray Strom
Alan Fehr*	Gary Maddock	Jim Verwey
Roy Fillion	Dean Overby	Hal Weninger
Dave Hilleren	Dave Rice	Alan Wondrasek
	Marlin Schneider	

Absent - Excused:

Jim Haukedahl	Tom Ryan
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- *Alan Fehr arrived 3:22pm

Guests:

Laura Balliet, ND Attorney General's Office
Members of ND Veterans Legislative Council
ND Legislators

Chairman Overby welcomed Gary Maddock to the committee. He presented Gary with an ACOVA pin.

Chairman Overby stated that the Governor chooses one name from the two names each organization submitted; but once you're here on the committee you're working for the veterans of North Dakota.

Speakers:

Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner, ND Veterans Affairs

No open positions: 7 FTE's, 1 Experience Works and 2 VISTA's

Updates on Staff Outreach/Presentations

Staff toured the Healing with Hyperbaric Clinic in Fargo.

Chris Kratochvil, State Approving Agency. He presented to School Certifying Officials at a UND Conference and attended the National Association of State Approving

Agencies Conference. He is working on setting up Apprenticeships and On the Job Training (OJT) sites.

Commissioner toured the National Cemetery site in Fargo. Construction has started and it is hoped that it can be open by Spring 2019.

One Veterans Aid Loan Appeals Hearing set for today.

Loan Program: 66 current loans with an outstanding balance of \$158,798.93.

Update on Grant Program: 43 Dental, 23 Denture, 2 Hearing, 9 Optical and 2 Special grants have been approved.

Outline of Military Service Education Credit Research – Rick Voldseth – Year 1 Project Summary:

Need: Having an accessible and visible system to award veterans due credit for prior learning in the military and to attract returning veterans to attend ND institutions to achieve a high-quality education at home in ND is warranted.

Project Goal: Assist the ND Department of Veterans Affairs (NDDVA), ND University System (NDUS) and the Multi-state Collaborative on Military Credit in ND (ND, MCMC) to address the needs of military servicemembers and veterans to progress in their educational and career goals, with focus to facilitate the transition of military service to academic credit in ND (in support of advancing the NDDVA/NDUS MOU).

Year 1 Project Accomplishments: Researched and developed a strategic plan, providing project background and objectives; researched and determined top military occupations of separating servicemembers returning to ND. 9/2016-10/2017.

Year 1 Project Summary: All actions listed in the strategic plan have been accomplished. The Alignment Proposal is in the hands of the NDUS registrars, awaiting their review and decision on how they will proceed.

Year 1 – Year 2 Project Transition: The new Military Service Education Credit Research VISTA, Jonas Beymer, is on board now for year 2, term 8/2018 – 8/2019.

Sean Cleary, Governor's Office

He has been speaking with Commissioner Wangen and Chairman Overby to get an overview of the Department and ACOVA.

MG Al Dohrman, Adjutant General, ND National Guard

Attended the event at the ND Veterans Home. He was on the Veterans Home Governing Board so he is very familiar with the Veterans Home.

It is better for the Guard and the Department to be working together on legislation for the upcoming legislative session since there is similar legislation.

Updates on ND Guard activity; In Afghanistan, showing Secretary of Defense Mattis and other high-ranking officials the country. A cyber protection team has been set-up which will be deployed soon. Once they are back, they will be a tremendous asset to North Dakota, working with private and public entities. The parking lot at the Vets Club, Steele was built by the Guard.

ND Cares: working on initiatives, so many entities are engaged in delivering veterans services and how do we synchronize the services.

How do we prepare our communities for BRAC? How do we make ND military friendly? In Minnesota, retirement pay isn't taxed unlike North Dakota that does tax retirement pay. Some websites rank schools and ND schools don't come out well in ranking and that might be due to lack of data being submitted by ND.

As we move into Legislative Session, there are views on ND Cares; what's the right way to do veterans services. It's time to stop talking about people and talk to people. If the trust and communication are there, the time will come when everyone will need to step up and start things moving forward together.

LaVonne Liversage, Director, Fargo VA Health Care Services

Robert Wilkie is now the VA Secretary.

Robert McDivitt, VISN 23 Network Director starts November 1st.??

All-Employee Survey, 62% of employees participated. VISN #23 selected #1 in the county and Fargo selected #1 in VISN 23.

Community Care Network (CCN) to set standards for veteran's care across the country. Fargo and Nebraska-Western Iowa first two facilities.

September is Suicide Prevention Month: VA will partner with community-based organizations and the armed forces.

Lisbon Veterans Home will offer Telehealth for mental health, other specialties coming soon.

Construction of ED – Drop off area now available, ambulance bay to be done soon.

Flu Shots – watch website for flu shot clinics: October 3, 10, 17, 25 & 30

Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment – Marilyn Quart and Melissa Seitz

Marilyn shared the story of her husband, his military service and his receiving a traumatic brain injury. Marilyn and Rusty went down to New Orleans for hyperbaric treatments. Rusty received two treatments a day for two months. When he returned, the family noticed the changes: he could walk without a cane and could talk. They had a fundraiser and Rusty went back down for another 40 treatments. After realizing how instrumental hyperbaric treatment were in Rust's recovery, they looked for ways to get a hyperbaric oxygen treatment clinic in Fargo.

A financial backer was found and there is now a clinic in Fargo.

Melissa explained how the hyperbaric treatments work on the body. Presently there are athletes with concussions getting treatment and some seeing results in three treatments. They are hoping to get veterans into treatment. For some veterans, cost is an issue, so they are asking for help in raising funds. The cost of a treatment is \$200.

Jerome Billups, DVOP, Job Service North Dakota

We have a change in leadership - Marlys Morgenstern has been selected replace Jerry Meske as the State Director Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL/VETS). Jerry will be assisting Marlys in the transition to her new role so his retirement will not be right away. Dustin Hildebrand, former DVOP in Grand Forks, was selected and hired as the Office Manager in the Grand Forks office. ND has under 1,500 jobs listed.

North Dakota has 14,446 jobs listed in our jobsnd.com labor exchange system since August 2018. Up +20.8% from one year ago. 73.5% of these jobs were posted in the past 30 days.

Veteran unemployment rate for North Dakota is 3.9%, slightly below the national average of 4.3%. Across the state, we have provided career services to over 800 Veterans in the past 12 months. The top occupations that Veterans were most often interested in – the number one occupation was truck driving, which for ND, has the 2nd largest number of open and available jobs (1,037) and has had the second over-the-year increase in the number of job openings (31.9%). The second most referred to occupational group was Installation, Maintenance, and Repair – electricians, mechanics, service technicians, and HVAC. This occupation ranks 6th in the number of open and available jobs in ND, coming in at 698 available positions.

JSND was host to or participated in over 600 Job Fairs last year. This includes large multi-employer events and single company office events held at a Job Service Office. The first half hour is for veterans to come in and talk with employers at job fairs. There will be continued outreach to incarcerated veterans also.

Henry Gerving, President, ND County and Tribal VSO Association

He met with Bryan to work on the training for CVSOs this fall; the organization will assume a bigger role. The training committee met and is planning the conference for the October 14 & 15th. Fifteen CVSO's attended training in South Dakota at the NACVSO session. Hopefully the organization can start working with the Guard as they do with the Commissioner, the Department and the ACOVA.

Mark Johnson, Director, ND Veterans Home

The Governor is requesting \$2.4 million dollar cut along with six FTE's in their 2019-2021 budget. This is difficult for a healthcare facility. The VA can stop paying per diem if the funding/staffing level is not at an acceptable level. Up to 3 vans going up to the VA weekly so the Telehealth will really help reduce the number of veterans having to travel. The 125th Anniversary event of the Veterans Home went very well. There were lots of families and activities for people to participate in for the day.

The Veterans Home is tracking with every state on census of residents on the basic side. The facility is governed by regulations from the VA. The Veterans Home admits veterans and their spouses, no general population. Other nursing homes have no restrictions on who they can admit.

Chairman Overby asked the legislators to stand and introduce themselves:
Senator Donald Schaible, District 31; Representative Vernon Laning, District 8; Senator Howard Anderson, District 8 and Representative Jeff Magrum #28.

Senator Anderson: The budget is tight; legislators are always interested in good ideas.

Sandra DePountis, Attorney General's Office

Training on Open Records and Open Meetings.

Tara Brandner, Attorney General's Office

Training on HIPAA

Subcommittee meetings held

September 14, 2018

9:08 am

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

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Richard Belling	Trish Hodny	Murray Strom
Alan Fehr	Gary Maddock	Jim Verwey
Roy Fillion	Dean Overby	Hal Weninger
Dave Hilleren	Dave Rice	Alan Wondrasek
	Marlin Schneider	

Absent - excused:

Jim Haukedahl	Tom Ryan
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Guests:

Members of ND Veterans Coordinating Council

ND Veterans Legislative Council – Ron Matthews

Discussed 14 bills on agenda:

- #1 Funding for StandDown events
- #2 Funding for Service Dogs/ND Veterans with PTSD
- #3 Funding for DAV Vans
- #4 NDDVA to accept and expend funds for Funeral Honor Coins
- #5 NDDVA to accept and expend funds on continuing basis
- #6 NDDVA to work with/apply for benefits with private entities
- #7 ACOVA to set goals, objectives and asset allocation of PWTF
- #8 NSO/SSO funding \$50,000 each organization
- #9 Military Sacrifice License Plate
- #10 Military retirement exempt from income tax
- #11 Veteran Vehicle License Plate and Tax
- #12 Military and veteran children to receive in state tuition rate
- #13 Military spouse resident fishing license
- #14 Definition of "Dishonorable:

Council's action – Passed the following bills:

Combine Bills #1,2,3 (StandDowns, Service Dogs, DAV Vans) & 8 (NSO/SSO Funding)

Combine #4 & #5: to accept and expend funds for Honor Coins and on a continuing basis

#6 NDDVA to work with/apply for benefits with private entities

#7 ACOVA to set goals, objectives and asset allocation of PWTF

#10 Military retirement exempt from income tax (work with NDNG and other groups)

Council's action - Voted No on the following bills:

#9 Military Sacrifice License Plate

#11 Veteran Vehicle License Plate and Tax

#12 Military and veteran children to receive in state tuition rate

#13 Military spouse resident fishing license

#14 Definition of "Dishonorable:

Subcommittee Reports:

Legislative Committee – report by Trish Hodny

After training sessions, the subcommittee joined the Council meeting.

This morning, Friday Sept 14, 2018, a meeting was called to order. Alan Wondrasek is the chair of the newly formed Legislative and Strategic Planning Committee.

There is disappointment in having a small committee, Tom Ryan has been absent for one year now. It's hoped that the organization that nominated him will review the viability of his serving on the committee. Reviewed the Audit and the responses, requested individual copies to discuss at our November meeting.

Tabled #7: Discuss Council and ACOVA approved Legislative actions and who will carry, 8: Discuss additional legislative proposals and 10: Council lobbyist for 66th Legislative session (2019) to discuss them in November.

Motion to accept report by Trish Hodny, second Dave Rice.

Chairman Overby agrees with the subcommittee on Tom Ryan's ability to serve. There has been no response to attempts to contact him for this meeting.

Motion passed.

Motion by Trish Hodny to send a letter of concern to the DAV Commander that Tom Ryan hasn't been to a meeting in one year and as there has been no contact from Tom to consider a replacement, second by Alan Wondrasek.

DAV has fall conference in October. All the ND chapters should be in attendance.

Motion passed.

Trust Fund & Appeals Subcommittee: Alan Fehr

Appeals Subcommittee – report by Alan Fehr

Hearing held at the school. There were two concerns: loan was to be used to consolidate loans and there was no documentation as to additional income.

Motion by David Hilleren to accept report, second by Marlin Schneider. Motion passed.

PWTF Subcommittee – report by Alan Fehr.

Reviewed all agenda items; no requests for PWTF monies.

Motion by Dave Hilleren to accept report, second by Richard Belling. Motion passed.

Department of Veterans Affairs – report by Hal Weninger

Richard Belling elected chair of the committee.

Discussed PWTF usage and there are still funds available.

Veterans Aid Loan:

Committee waiting for underwriting guidelines completion from Bank of ND and Attorney General's Office.

Collection policy: recommend change in delinquency policy. Letters are to go out 30, 60, 75 and 90 days with the account turned over for collection after the 90th day.

Committee feels the Commissioner should have ability to re-negotiate the interest owed and/or payment schedule with applicant

Committee still waiting for information from ITD.

Hardship Assistance:

Committee recommends dental grant to be used toward denture grant

Committee recommends \$4,000 a year for two years with no carryover funds.

Committee recommends cancelling Policy 450 – Cancelling a grant

Committee no recommendations on ITD objectives for Hardship Grant Program (software)

Expending private funds: waiting for clarification of expending private funds.

Oversight Structure - no recommendation

Invited Auditor to attend meeting – not coming to meeting

Travel/Meeting – still as discussed before

DAV Van – to be determined with 2019-2021 budget

Strategic Plan – no action.

Motion by Hal Weninger to accept report, second by Alan Wondrasek. Motion passed. Motion passed.

Motion by Hal Weninger that delinquency letters will be issued at 30, 60, 75 and 90 days, second by Alan Wondrasek. Amend motion to read: contact will be completed at 30, 60, 90 days. Motion failed.

Motion by Alan Fehr to a Delinquency Policy that states the Department will have contact within 30 days of non-payment and if there is no response in 90 days they will be turned over to collection, second by Trish Hodny. Motion passed.

Motion by Alan Fehr, it is the intent of ACOVA to give the Commissioner authority to re-negotiate with an applicant to provide a structured plan to recoup the loan, second by Hal Weninger. Motion carried.

Motion by Hal Weninger that a Dental Grant can be used towards Denture procedures, second by Richard Belling.

Commissioner Wangen explained the procedure now is to get a dental grant so the applicant can start the dental process and if dentures are needed, a denture plan is submitted and a denture grant can then be approved. The dental grant is then used in conjunction with the Denture grant.

Committee recommended \$4,000 per calendar year for two years with no carryover.

Discussion on granting dentures at \$8,000 for a two year period and then waiving the ability to apply for any grants for two years.

Motion by Trish Hodny that the Commissioner and Department be tasked to draft a denture policy taking in consideration it can be an \$8,000 grant to cover two years with a waiver not to apply for other grants for a two year period, second by Jim Verwey. Motion passed.

Motion by Hal Weninger to cancel Policy 450, second by Richard Belling. Motion withdrawn.

Discussion on how often and the circumstances when grants are cancelled.

Motion by Trish Hodny to change Grant Policy 450 - Cancellation to read, "Commissioner or Authorizing Agent may cancel a grant when there is a change in circumstances warranting cancellation or the grantee is non-responsive after reasonable attempts have been made to contact the grantee, second by Alan Fehr. Motion carried.

Murray Strom asked if a report could be given to the committee on how many grants were cancelled and why. Commissioner Wangen will include this in his report to the committee.

Motion by Jim Verwey to approve June 2018 minutes, second by Alan Fehr. Motion carried.

Next meeting schedule for November 15 & 16, 2018 at the West Fargo VFW.
Richard Belling will work with Cathy to find hotel close to the meeting

Round Table Discussion:

Trish Hodny: Pleasure to serve on ACOVA. The committee has come along ways since she first started. The issues the Guard is putting forward are important and ACOVA should work to support them as much as we can. Evidently there was something on Facebook that Trish was for abolishing the CVSO structure, that isn't true. She wants to be on the record that she doesn't want to abolish the structure but there are probably ways to improve it.

Dave Hilleren: good debate on things at the committee and would like to see that continue. Hal and I will be going South to visit a man that was with a classmate when he died in Vietnam. We still need to remember suicides are happening among Vietnam veterans.

Roy Fillion: All dedicated people here and wanting to do good things. Very interesting and moving presentation in using the hyperbaric treatment for her husband. General Dohrmann is right on the money about taxes and school.

Richard Belling: great group of guys on subcommittee to work with and he will be working with Commissioner. Looking forward to showing new VFW post in November. Service dog Whopper got promoted and is in more intense training at the State Penitentiary.

Murray Strom: Thank you all for coming to Steele. Jeff Magrum is a classmate and will be assisting with bills.

Hal Weninger: Extends welcome to Gary Maddock for joining committee. Classmate's name to added name to moving wall. Regarding the Audit Recommendations, we know how best to serve our veterans. Very productive meeting.

Alan Wondrasek: Always enjoy coming to the meetings. The first day of having speakers, that's our link to what is going on in other places. Getting the legislators here is great and we need to keep that relationship open. They learn and we learn. He saw the information about Trish on Facebook and didn't believe it. He does agree with Trish in oversight for the CVSOs. On the bottom of the agendas, could the subcommittee's and their members be listed for reference.

Gary Maddock: Oldest new man on the block. Learned a lot at the meeting. Liked the speakers that presented.

Jim Verwey: Hyperbaric presentation was great. Thanked Murry and the Steele Vets Club for their great hospitality. Had a Veterans Home Foundation meeting at the WF VFW, nice facility.

Alan Fehr: Going back to Audit, like to see matrix of their recommendations, department response and status. Build into agenda an open mike for people to make their complaint with a limited time. Apologized for missing some of the meeting.

Marlin Schneider: Every meeting is more very informative and I enjoy them. Good to see legislators here, they seem interested in what's going on here.

Dave Rice: Enjoyed both days, Council did an excellent job going through the bills.

Honor Flight leaving September 30 and be back October 1st and will continue fundraising, holding golf tournament to raise money.

Lonnie Wangen: Auditors have made mistakes, not sure why they didn't use current policy instead of going back to 2004 minutes to find obscure information with no policy number. Appreciate everything the committee does and the Council for what they do.

Chairman Overby: Thanked everybody for the time you give for the committee. Attended budget meeting and had an opportunity to speak with Senator Deaver and Representative Meier on the trip. When we go to West Fargo, the legislators in that area will be invited to the meeting. If anyone has a speaker they would like to invite, just let Lonnie know.

Chelsey Stoppeworth, serving in National Guard and is a law student at UND. She signed up to do legislation and is excited to work with veterans. She will be working primarily with the Guard.

The Committee has always tried to work with the National Guard on legislative bills. Chairman Overby has only one goal on this committee and that is to take care of North Dakota veterans.

He challenged the Legislative Subcommittee to look forward to the next generation of veterans so we can take care of them.

Trish Hodny: Hyperbaric oxygen treatment is \$200, is there a way to give a grant for a veteran so they could do five treatments. It would be the same cost as a dental grant if we could add that category.

She also asked since the Veterans Home doesn't advertise because they don't have the money, is there a way for ND Cares to partner with the Home and do some advertising.

Motion to adjourn, second. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted

Jim Verwey
Secretary