

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMFORT SUITES, ND

March 21, 2019
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	Tom Ryan
Roy Fillion	Dean Overby	Jim Verwey
Jim Haukedahl	Marlin Schneider	Alan Wondrasek
Dave Hilleren		

Absent - Excused:

Dave Rice	Hal Weninger
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Guests:

Laura Balliet, Attorney General's Office
Members of ND Veterans Legislative Council
ND Legislators
Chelsey Stoppeworth, Legislative Intern, NDNG

Chairman Overby introduced Bob Fode, Chairman, TaskForce on Veterans Affairs. Mr. Fode is retired from the Department of Transportation and a Retired Brig. Gen. ND National Guard.

Speakers:

Denise Harvey and Cynthia Goulet, ND Protection and Advocacy Project

Started out in 1970s as a means to de-institutionalize developmentally and disabled persons. Other programs have been added through the years: P&A for Developmental Disabilities, P&A for Individuals with Mental Illness, P&A for Individuals with Rights, P&A Protection for Assistive Technology, P&A for Beneficiaries of Social Security, P&A for Traumatic Brain Injury, P&A for Voting Access and The Client Assistance Program.

Teresa Larson, Director, tracks and testifies on bills concerning disability related issues; contact office if you want to be added to her list serve to receive the information. Denise and Cynthia provided information on the programs administered by Protection and Advocacy. There are ten offices throughout North Dakota: Williston, Minot, Belcourt, Devils Lake, Grand Forks, Grafton, Fargo, Jamestown, Bismarck and Dickinson.

One of the priorities is the Criminal Justice Program. This program advocates for supports and services for persons with disabilities involved in the criminal justice system where unmet needs have been identified. The committee was very interested in how this program could help veterans in legal trouble.

Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner, ND Veterans Affairs

No open positions: 7 FTE's, 1 Experience Works, 2 VISTA's and 1 volunteer
One Veterans Preference Administrative Hearing, no loan or grants appeals pending
Loan Program: 61 current loans with an outstanding balance of \$158,026.47
Update on Grant Program: 88 Dental, 34 Denture, 3 Hearing, 14 Optical, 3 Discretionary and have been approved with eight grants cancelled this quarter.
Updates on Patriotic License Plates, Funeral Honor Coins and Highly Rural Transportation Grant.

Dale DeKrey, Associate Director, Fargo VA Healthcare Services

Information given on the Mission Act and the Veterans Choice Program.

Million Veterans Program – The goal is to study how genes affect health. A medical database will be built by safely collecting blood samples and health information from one million Veteran volunteers. Researchers will study diseases like diabetes and cancer, and military-related illnesses, such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

Sanford Health and the VA are working together to provide pharmacogenetic testing for veterans using the VA. This partnership is to improve patient care and lower costs related to adverse reactions to medication, it will initially enroll cancer survivors. A pilot site will launch this year.

Since Minot CBOC moved from the base, there is an increase in veteran's visits. Up 4,000 from last year.

New patient dialysis opened, the old space will be renovated. Emergency Room is open but the old area is still being worked on and should be done by August.

Darcie Handt, ND National Guard

NDARNG: End Strength goal: 2942, Current: 2924 as of 18 Mar 19.

April 2019: Month of the Military Child

Race to Zero: 06Apr2019 (Bismarck) 28Apr 2019 (Fargo)

On-Site Commissary Sale (Bismarck) 7Jun2019 Open to everyone with military ID

NDNG Construction Projects:

Fargo Navy Security Upgrades - work continues at the Fargo AFRC
FY-19 Fargo Readiness Center MILCON - working to finish the Environmental Assessment which is behind, tracking a Spring bid opening. No update on potential impact of President's Emergency Declaration.

NDANG Strength Chart as of 18March2019:

Minot	64%
JFHQ	100%
Fargo	96.6%
Enlisted	98.1%
Officer	87%

NDNG Preparatory Flood Actions:

19-21Mar19 Planning meeting with DES, Coordinate with MEB & Wing on possible support for Fargo

NDCares:

22May19 – Regional Training in West Fargo VFW. Presenters are brought in to talk about their services.

Joe Faller will be retiring. Position will not be filled pending results of TF Veterans Affairs.

Strategic Objectives: 1.) Develop a single resource database that contains a list of resources statewide that supports our priorities and is shareable throughout the private and public sectors. 2.) Incorporate military culture training within selected professional programs of every NDUS institution

Joe Hall, Veterans, Veterans Employment Representative, Job Service North Dakota

Greetings from our Interim Executive Director Bryan Klipfel and our JVSG Program Administrator Jerome Billups.

North Dakota's January 2019 unemployment rate was 3.0 percent. The state continues to be lower than the national rate. The national unemployment rate was 4 percent. Job Service had a total of 14,001 open and available online job openings in February 2019, a

change of +15.0 percent (+1,823) from the prior month and +0.9 percent (+128) from the same month one year ago. Burleigh County had 2,002 openings at the end of February, Morton County had 259, and Stark County reported 590.

Subcommittee meetings held.

March 22, 2019

9:00 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
Alan Fehr
Roy Fillion
Jim Haukedahl
Dave Hilleren

Trish Hodny
Gary Maddock
Dean Overby
Marlin Schneider

Murray Strom
Tom Ryan
Jim Verwey
Alan Wondrasek

Absent - excused:

Dave Rice

Alan Wondrasek

Guests:

Members of ND Veterans Legislative Council
Laura Balliet, Attorney General's Office
Chelsey Stopplesworth, Legislative Intern, NDNG

***Motion to accept November 2018 minutes by Alan Fehr, second by Murray Strom.
Motion passed, one abstain (Hodny).***

Chairman Overby asked the Legislative Council for a report on bills. Ron Matthews stated some bills failed since they were included in the Department of Veteran's Affairs budget. Some bills haven't passed and one – Hyperbaric was changed into a study.

Commissioner Wangen gave a demonstration on the Department's website on following the bills as they go through the legislature.

Chairman Overby asked Chelsey about the Guard bills. She said they are doing well with their bills.

Alan Wondrasek asked if it would be a good time to go over 11 bills that were being tracked:

HB 1054	Powers and duties of ACOVA - waiting for Governor's signature
HB 1128	Service Dogs – failed, put into the Department of Veterans' Affairs budget
HB 1129	Duties of the Commissioner - waiting for Governor's signature
HB 1130	Authority of ACOVA - Failed
HB 1131	Memorial Coin – passed House
HB 1168	Vans – failed, put into the Department of Veterans' Affairs budget
HB 1177	NSO Grant Program - Failed
HB 1178	Stand Down– failed, put into the Department of Veterans' Affairs budget
HB 1248	Income Tax contribution – amended to go into the Postwar Trust Fund
HB 1316	Maintenance of records – passed House
SB 2314	Accreditation of CVSO - waiting for House to vote

Tom Ryan asked about the Tribal and County Training. The counties will be paying a fee to cover the cost of their training.

Subcommittee Reports:

Appeals Subcommittee – report by Alan Fehr.
No appeals.

Motion by Alan Fehr to accept report, second by Jim Verwey. Motion carried.

PWTF Subcommittee – report by Alan Fehr

Motion for the Commissioner to check whether license plate dollars are invested for spendable income. If not, Commissioner to write letter to Treasurer's Office to respectfully request funds go to spendable income, seconded. Friendly amendment "If the income tax check-off bill passes, the Commissioner to request these moneys also go to spendable income. Amendment passed. Motion passed.

Reviewed status of 410 Account
No requests for trust fund dollars
Discussed concern for paramutual horse betting, how that would impact veterans' groups.

Motion by Dave Hilleren for the Commissioner to check whether license plate dollars are invested for spendable income. If not, Commissioner to write letter to Treasurer's Office to respectfully request funds go to spendable income. If the income tax check-off bill passes, the Commissioner to request these moneys also go to spendable income., second by Jim Verwey.

Question whether the letter should be sent by the Commissioner or Chairman of Subcommittee. Trish Hodny stated since the full board is voting, the letter should come from ACOVA Chairman Overby.

Motion amended to read ACOVA Chairman to write letter. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Alan Fehr to accept report, second by Jim Haukedahl. Motion carried.

Legislative Committee – report by Alan Wondrasek

Reviewed legislative bills.

Worked on strategic plan. Time needs to be set aside for full committee to go through the plan and provide additional input.

Subcommittee needs to have a separate meeting time with Legislative Council. Since both groups meet together briefly then separate to have their own meetings, the subcommittee can't meet with the Legislative Council to go over issues.

Motion by Alan Wondrasek to accept the report, second by Tom Ryan.

Chairman Overby asked how much time would be needed for the strategic plan. Trish Hodny thought it would take a couple of hours. She suggested at the next meeting in lieu of speakers the ACOVA use the time to go through the strategic plan. It would be updated before new members are on the board.

Alan Fehr suggested starting at noon and have a working lunch hour.

Chairman Overby stated that the next meeting instead of speakers, work will be on the strategic plan.

Motion carried.

Department of Veterans Affairs – report by Murray Strom

Grant usage fund is being used to it limits.

Grant income and asset limits were discussed. We will leave alone until deficit spending occurs in grant program. Numbers are in line with other programs.

Suggestions to find out how to invest in private banks at a higher interest rate.

Updated Loan Program Policies, Laura Balliet, Attorney General's Office attended meeting to provide legal input.

Veterans Aid Loan Program Policies:

Policy 200: Purpose and Authority

Policy 201: Application Requirements

Policy 202: File Access

Policy 204: Loan Underwriting – new policy per Performance Audit

Policy 205: Appeals- Veterans Aid Loan

Policy 210: Applicant Eligibility

Policy 211: Administrative Committee and Employee Eligibility

Policy 212: Payment Priority Disbursement

Policy 230: Terms and Limits

Policy 231: Restructured Loans

Policy 232: Interest Refunds

Policy 250: Late Fees

Policy 260: Delinquent Loans

Policy 261: Collection

Policy 262: Charge Off

Motion by Murray Strom to approve Loan Policies as discussed, presented, and changed, second by Alan Wondrasek. Motion carried unanimously.

Laura Balliet felt the Committee should also be making rules as well as having policies. This is a long process and may take a year. She will go through the policies (loan and grant) and determine which ones should be rules and work with the Committee through the process. A rule creates a legal obligation and gives more authority to the Committee's actions.

Motion by Richard Belling to direct Laura Balliet to start drafting rules for the loans and grants programs, second by Trish Hodny. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussed how to invest CD's in a private bank, currently the CD's are getting 1% at the Bank of North Dakota. Private institutions are paying better rates.

Travel budget is at a negative, salary line is at 24%.

Motion by Murray Strom to accept report, second by Alan Wondrasek. Motion carried.

Meeting originally scheduled for May 16 & 17, 2019. This is during AMVETS convention.

Meeting scheduled for May 23 & 24th, 2019, either Bismarck or Steele.

Correspondence from Mary Vetter, Vice-President, Association read by Commissioner Wangen:

52 of 53 counties and the Four Tribal Nations are all members.

We just completed our biannual training with the North Dakota department of Veterans Affairs. This training included the required hours of compensation and pension, appeals and ethics. Supplemental training included VA question and answer session, PIV card's, centralize mailing and VA fiduciary program.

Social Security administration provided information as well as the Department of Health medical marijuana division. Military Outreach and Family Assistant Specialist were also present.

We have a member of the Association who is on the Governor's task force and we also continue to move forward with being actively involved with the North Dakota Association of Counties. We will have a presence at the October convention.

We had direct contact with local legislators at our conference and we discussed our testimony for House Bill 1025 and Senate Bill 2314, with good response.

The fall conference has been scheduled for October 6 -9th, 2019 in Fargo

Round table:

Trish Hodny: spoke on a North Dakota Behavioral Training Peer Support Training. It is a weeklong process

Alan Fehr: Open mike for public at end of meeting input, gripes etc. Emergency services fund for all to put into, to help all.

Jim Haukedahl. Last meeting. Thanks for everything

Richard Belling: Celebrating VVA Day March 30 at VFW West Fargo. Golf tournament to benefit Veterans Home Foundation set for June 14th at Mapleton Golf Course.

Marlin: enjoyed meeting, thanked Laura for helping with the loan policies, thanked Lonnie for his work

Roy: thanked Laura, Lonnie and Cathy, a lot of work was done on the policies.

Jim: good meeting, March 29th Vietnam Veterans Day in Valley City; Mayor does a declaration. Excellent job by committee working on policies.

Murray: nice to go through a legislative session without a lot of bickering.

Alan: thank Legislative Council for meeting with ACOVA, excellent meeting this morning, lots of knowledge in this room. Jim Nelson, Legislative Council, has done a

great job this session. Agrees with Murray, far better atmosphere at the Capitol than two years ago. Ending his term on Committee, AMVETS working on getting names together. Dave Hilleren: great meeting. Gives credit to Chairman Overby for his work. Vietnam Veterans have their National meeting in Spokane from July 15-20, 2019. VVA.org has information. His chapter will assist in getting veterans to the national meeting.

Gary Maddock: very good meeting – really liked the P&A presentation. March 29th, Vietnam Veterans Day ceremony at Capitol at 11am – Noon. May 4-10th is Vietnam Veteran Week at Fargo Air Museum; Elks are putting on town hall meeting for Vietnam Veterans regarding Agent Orange.

Tom Ryan: Iraq Iran veterans – talked about incorporating younger veterans. Golf Tournament in Williston, dates are pending. DAV Dept Convention is in Williston last weekend in April. He is on an advisory committee with regarding the VA – it's a quarterly meeting done by conference call.

Chairman Overby: Thanked the Legislative Council for their work on legislation; thanked Commissioner Wangen for his legislative work also. Organizations are working together and getting bills passed. There is a different attitude than in the past and it makes it pleasant to attend meetings and hearings at the Capitol.

Commissioner Wangen: Working on Fisher House for a long time, found out why it hasn't been going forward, need land for the House then you can do fundraising. He met with people in Fargo and may get land donated. National Cemetery work going forward, vaults are going in at this time.

Motion to adjourn, second. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted

Jim Verwey
Secretary