

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
VETERANS CENTER, STEELE ND

September 5, 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	Dean Overby	Jim Verwey
Dan Brown	Dave Rice	Mark Wagemann
Roy Fillion	Tom Ryan	Glenn Wahus
Dave Hilleren	Marlin Schneider	Hal Weninger
Gary Maddock	Murray Strom	

Absent - Excused:

Alan Fehr

Guests:

Chairman Overby introduced the three new ACOVA members: Dan Brown, Glenn Wahus, and Mark Wagemann. Chairman Overby talked about the work ACOVA does on behalf of the 60,000 veterans of North Dakota. He stated, "Leave your organization hat at the door because you are now working for all veterans". He also gave an ACOVA pin to the new members.

Speakers:

Brad Aune, Veterans Representative, Job Service ND

He works in the Disabled Veteran Employment Program which is regulated by the Federal Labor Department. He has counterparts located throughout the State. Interestingly, the veterans' unemployment rate for the past 11 months has been lower than the general unemployment rate. It is at 3.4 % which means more veterans are finding employment. Recently Federal law opened up to include Vietnam era veterans (1961-1975) so the DVOPs can assist more veterans.

Trades – if someone drove a truck in the military, they can get a CDL license with a waiver; same with those in military police, they can get a certificate for security positions. The Federal TAP program made some changes starting October 1st. It will now

start working with separating service members a year before their end date and will separate service members into 3 Tiers depending on their transition status.

Lonnie Wangen, Commissioner's Report (powerpoint)
Letter from State Treasurer, PWTF reports

Major Sheldon, National Guard Adj. Gen Office:

The Guard has a shortfall of 300 soldiers and 100 airmen, roughly 10% of total force. There is discussion on some of the proposals in the National Defense Authorization Act – (1) the state's ability to do things on our own and (2) pulling authority from the State and Governor and placing it with federal government. The VISTA educational credit for military service is focused on 100 or 200 level courses. There is a downside to that, if you've been in the military long term since it doesn't relate to upper courses. Commissioner's S.A.V.E. Challenge is being circulated throughout the Guard, especially to the servicemembers. A new Reserve Center will be in Fargo, it is 75% federally funded. New website: ndguard.nd.gov

Nicole Berman Behavioral Health Division, Dept of Human Services
Allison Traynor, Behavioral Health Division-Suicide Prevention, Dept of Human Services
They talked about Behavioral Health Initiatives within Human Services and partnering with other entities such as NDCares.

Bob Fode, Governor's Taskforce:

The Taskforce is looking at Governance Models: 57% of veterans are represented by the big 5 organizations and 43% are not represented. The Governor's Office looked at models for 50 states; every state is different. They looked at veterans' groups and how to get young people involved. Eighteen additional applications were sent into the Governor's Office for appointments to the ACOVA. These were people who sent in applications not from the veterans' organizations. One of the discussions of the taskforce is creating a membership-at-large position. Does ACOVA really represent veterans of ND, and that is yes. Should the 43% be a part of the big five organizations and that

answer is no. Three models were reviewed: 1.) Maybe reduce the size of ACOVA and have nine members: 5 members, one from each organization; and 4 from at large. One should be Native American and one should be female. Maybe a veteran from the Senate and one from the House for the other two at large positions; 2) Keep 15 members but designate one to be Native American and one to be female; and 3) keep things the same.

The question the Task Force is asking is how to get young people involved? There is no real answer for that, the veterans' organizations have been struggling with that issue for quite some time.

ACOVA members voiced their opinions on the proposals presented.

Mark Johnson, Administrator, ND Veterans Home

Attended the Governor's Taskforce and spoke at the Legislative Study. The VA says the State can do other things at the Veterans Home but since the VA paid for geo-thermal heating system, all the roads and other items, the State would have to pay part of the costs of those items. The Legislature took out all marketing funds so it's difficult to get the word out about the Home.

Chairman Overby explained the Subcommittees will meet and will at least designate a Chairman for each Subcommittee.

Committee recessed until Friday morning

September 5, 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:

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Roy Fillion

Dean Overby
Tom Ryan
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Jim Verwey
Mark Wagemann
Glenn Wahus

Dave Hilleren
Gary Maddock

Murray Strom

Hal Weninger

Absent - Excused:

Alan Fehr

Dave Rice

Legislative Subcommittee: Reported by Tom Ryan.

Dave Rice, Chairman, Mark Wagemann Secretary. Subcommittee met with Legislative Council and went over the recent legislative session. They also met with Commissioner Wangen on possible Legislative items for 2021 such as Full-time positions: VSO Training, Womens Veterans Coordinator and Loans and Grants were to be a priority. CD Rates for PWTF were discussed. Governing Board looking at ways to address the 96 hours a veteran can leave the Home without any monetary cost.

Motion to accept report, second. Motion carried.

PWTF and Appeals Subcommittee: Dan Brown reported. Gary Maddock voted in as Chairman. Heard from David Rogers on benefits of hyperbaric therapy. Reviewed the 410 Account and status of PWTF. Recommendation \$33,067.83 for quarterly CD's. Experience Works made a request for funds, the committee will assist in contacting gaming programs to request money. Recommendation for funding of up to \$16,000 for hyperbaric chamber for ND Veterans pilot program.

No Appeals came before the committee.

Motion by Dan Brown to accept report, second by Jim Verwey. Motion approved unanimously.

Motion by Dan Brown to allocate up to \$16,000 for hyperbaric pilot program for ND Veterans, second by Gary Maddock.

Funds would go to the facility in Fargo. Four veterans would be eligible for the program and their income & assets would not be considered. Per policy 435 any treatable issue. Understands that through Healing with Hyperbarics-Fargo the dive cost would be reduced to \$100 instead of \$200 and they would each get up to 40 dives. Discussion on how veterans would apply and be selected.

Motion approved unanimously.

Department of Veterans Affairs Subcommittee: Hal Weninger reported. Richard Belling elected Chairman and appointed Hal Weninger Secretary.

Fund 410 discussed. Recommendation to create a Veterans' Legacy PWTF, it would be a contingency fund for emergencies. Any remaining funding from bienniums could go into this fund. CD's to be purchased at \$30,000 for the remaining seven quarters. ACOVA is following the guidelines from the audit regarding the Loan Program. We could lower the

credit score to help secure more loans. Recommendation to invest Loan Fund in six CD's of \$50,000 each to mature each of the next six quarters. The 2019-2021 budget was reviewed. Recommendation that Commissioner Wangen contact the Legislative Interim Committee to request a clarification on the legislative intent on one full-time position that was not funded. The subcommittee will continue to review policies as needed.

Motion by Hal Weninger to accept report, second by Richard Belling. Motion approved unanimously.

Discussion on purchasing CD's at Bank of North Dakota which is getting 1% versus purchasing CD's at other financial institutions with better rates. These CD's are for Fund 410 monies.

Legacy CD would be for two-years, coming due at the end of the biennium. The Committee would then review the funds and again dedicate funding for another two-year Legacy CD.

Discussion on the amount CD's should be purchased for this biennium. Commissioner Wangen felt \$30,000 each CD would be adequate for the grant needs. CD's should be done quarterly.

Motion by Murray Strom to recommend starting a Legacy Fund with a \$30,000 two-year CD and to purchase seven CD's at \$30,000 to come due every quarter, second by Dan Brown. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Overby spoke on the ND Veterans Home Governing Board. There is no policy that states the Governing Board Chairman is appointed by the ACOVA. Chairman Overby is requesting the committee formulate a policy for ACOVA to appoint the Chairman and that there is always one ACOVA member on the Board. After discussion, the Committee is inclined to have a veteran as Chairman.

Motion by Richard Belling, second by Glenn Wahus to recommend a policy for ACOVA to appoint the North Dakota Veterans Home Governing Board Chairman, who must be a veteran, and that there is always one ACOVA member on the Board. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Wangen will work on a policy for the next meeting.

Chairman Overby asked for approval of the May 2019 meeting.

Motion by Jim Verwey to approve minutes of May 23-24, 2019, second by Tom Ryan. Motion carries unanimously.

Time and Place:

November 21 & 22, 2019. Quality Inn Bismarck.

Secretary Verwey read a letter from Association of County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers: Oct 7-9, 2019 is the Fargo Training Conference with an invitation to ACOVA members to attend any of the training sessions and/or the social.

Round table:

Roy Fillion: overall the meeting was very good, interesting stuff going on in the Department subcommittee. Good idea by Murray on creating a Legacy fund.

Tom Ryan: Bob Fode presentation, felt there were a lot of unasked questions and what is the real intent of the Task Force

Richard Belling: good meeting, welcomed the new members

Dave Hilleren: Subcommittee is doing good. Vietnam veterans of ND attended the National Convention in Spokane. Attended the V.V.A. convention in Mayville, New Town selected as the convention site in 2020. Making progress with issues facing veterans.

Hal Weninger: good to be able to provide funding for all the things we want to do. Welcomed new members to committee. Spoke with Bob Fode and will be sending him information on V.V.A.

Marlin Schneider: It was a really good meeting, especially in the subcommittee. Glad to have the entire committee do the policies instead of the subcommittees trying to do it. Disagreed with the recommendation of mandating which people should be on the committee, i.e. female, Native American

Glenn Wahus: Good meeting, very informative. Last year I was the American Legion Commander and served on the Legislative Council. Honored to sit on this committee and serve the veterans of this State. Feels there may be an effort to try to politicized this committee.

Dan Brown: Thanked everyone for being so welcoming. Good meeting. Interested in mental health, they need to help out more in western North Dakota.

Jim Verwey: Welcomed new members, thought they all jumped in and started working on the issues. Dave Rogers was very interesting talking about how hyperbaric treatments helped his life.

Murray Strom; Working on hyperbaric therapy and happy to finally get it started. Memorial Day AMVETS Legendary Ride at Washington DC, formerly known as Rolling Thunder. Stated that while seven or eight members have shown up at the Task Force meetings; ACOVA typically has one or two members absent.

Mark Wagemann: Thanks for being so accepting. Very informative session. I'll continue to do the best I can.

Gary Maddock: Welcomed new members. This is a very important meeting since it sets the finances of Fund 410.

Commissioner Wangen brought up at the Executive Order establishing the Task Force for Veterans Affairs. Only four people knew about the ACOVA before serving on the Task Force.

Chairman Overby told the new members he wants them to be involved, if they have a question or an opinion to bring it forward. The Committee is here to take care of veterans throughout the State.

Dave Hilleren reported that Ken Hasby, former ACOVA member, is in a nursing home for rehabilitation. Ken always asks what the Committee is doing and is still interested in veterans' issues.

Chairman Overby commended the members on setting up a Legacy CD to have in case of emergencies. The veterans of North Dakota are being taken care of by this committee.

Chairman Overby spoke on the Melvin Norgaard Fund at Veterans Home. Legislators can't spend monies from the Fund but the Governing Board has to get the authority from the Legislature to spend the money. During session, it appears the Legislature appropriated money from the Melvin Norgaard Fund even though they have no authority.

Commissioner Wangen is putting together an exploratory committee on implementing a Veterans Court. He is also working with the VA on securing a Fisher House, the first step is to secure 1 ¼ acres of land to start the project.

Motion to adjourn, second. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted

Jim Verwey
Secretary