

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Minutes July 7, 1972  
Employment Security Bureau  
Bismarck, North Dakota

W. D. DEPT. OF WESTERN ENERGY

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The meeting was called to order at 1:15 PM by Chairman Bernard Wagner.

Members present were: Bernard Wagner, Clarence Welander, Art Ulness, James Morris, Stephen Groth, Earnest Schmit, Joe Novak, Orville Gullickson, Russ Crawford, James Rosendahl and Ken Habiger. Ex-officio members present were: Martin Gronvold, Executive Director of the North Dakota Employment Security Bureau; Alan Rice, Center Director of the Veterans Administration; and Walter Fiedler, Director of Institutions.

Absent were Don Sloan, and ex-officio member, General Melhouse.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and corrected to list the adjournment time as 11:45 AM, rather than PM. They were approved with this correction.

Chairman Wagner read a letter from Governor Guy stating that he had reappointed the same people to the committee for a three year term. These reappointments were: Bernard Wagner, Ken Habiger, Stephen Groth and Clarence Welander. He noted that so far they have not received any notification of the Chairman or the Secretary for the coming year. The committee agreed that Mr. Wagner and Mr. Schmit should continue to serve until they receive notification of a change. Chairman Wagner reappointed all members to the sub-committee they served on during the past year.

Chairman Wagner introduced W. M. "Bill" Williamson for a report on discussions and reactions at the state conventions of the four veterans organizations regarding a maintenance charge at the North Dakota Soldiers' Home.

Mr. Williamson distributed rosters of the North Dakota Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs, the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council and the Governor's "Jobs for Veterans" Task Force.

Mr. Williamson noted that there has never been a charge levied at the Soldiers' Home. Some years ago there was concern that some members were building up sizeable estates, and that a charge should be levied. In recent years it became a concern of the legislature, and at the last legislative session there was a charge from the legislature that the Soldiers' Home levy a maintenance fee on its residents. The veterans organizations promised to study the problem and come up with a proposal for a maintenance charge of the residents.

Mr. Williamson reported that there had been no criticism of the Soldiers' Home from the veterans organization conventions, although there had been some criticism of charging the residents at the Soldiers' Home. However, resolutions were passed at the conventions approving a maintenance charge. These resolutions further stated that disability compensation should not be included in the adjusted income figures, and gave their representatives on the Veterans Coordinating Council the latitude of a decision on the manner of charging. Their only stipulation was that it provide for equity and dignity in such charge, and that monies collected be placed in a dedicated fund to provide improved living conditions for the residents of the Soldiers' Home.

He further challenged the committee members to become acquainted with facilities and benefits offered by other retirement homes in the state which are available to all,

including the veteran. He stated that we should have a goal set in the future so that our North Dakota Soldiers' Home will remain attractive to veterans, and so that it will provide a real benefit to veterans wishing to reside there.

Discussion followed on the proposed method of charging residents of the Soldiers' Home which is as follows: \$0 - \$50 - No charge; \$50 - \$150 - a 50% charge, or a maximum of \$50; and Over \$150 - No charge. It was noted that one of the reasons for this proposal was an effort to keep the method simple so it would not require a lot of bookkeeping. Mr. Williamson noted that comments at Department conventions stated it looked like they were taxing the middle man.

Marvin Konrad noted the charges for residents at the Baptist Old Peoples Home in Bismarck. He stated residents were charged \$150 per month, and that they got \$13 back per month for personal spending money. If they are on Welfare, they are provided with medical care through Welfare.

It was noted that present income criteria for admittance to the Soldiers' Home is \$265 per month. Mr. Rice suggested that we write to other states having Soldiers' Homes and secure copies of their law concerning the Homes. Perhaps we could get some suggestions as to what is being done in regards to monies collected from these maintenance charges. It was also noted that the Legislature would like to return this money to the General Fund, and that it would be used for the Soldiers' Home general appropriation, thus reducing the amount they would have to contribute.

After further discussion, Mr. Williamson stated that he was not necessarily suggesting they come up with another proposal, but that he felt the entire proposal needed a lot more study to ascertain that it is equitable for all and at the same time provides a benefit to veterans.

In discussion it was noted that perhaps there should be some exceptions to the income criteria of \$265 per month, for example, for the man with excessive medical expenses, or alimony payments. It was stated that in order to have something concrete to present to the legislature, we would probably have to ask administration of the Soldiers' Home to set up a bookkeeping system that shows the monthly income and expenses which would be allowable as deductions. This would then permit us to present the legislature with figures on how much income would be derived from the maintenance charge.

Clarence Welander stated that he felt Mr. Williamson had done a good job in presenting this problem. He noted that the Soldiers' Home sub-committee in no way meant this formula to be final. They are interested in exploring all avenues so that what they present to the legislature will be what they want, and they will be able to document it. He agreed that we should advocate placing the revenues collected into a dedicated fund for improvements to the living facilities and recreational facilities of the Home. He suggested that perhaps Charles Code could, before the next meeting, come up with some figures showing the amount each plan would yield.

It was noted that the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council has not met on this formula, and that Mr. Williamson was only presenting reaction from the Department Conventions of the four veterans organizations.

Chairman Wagner stated that the Soldiers' Home sub-committee has several suggestions to work on prior to the next meeting, such as the amount of revenue to be derived from different formulas, and writing to states to secure copies of their laws regarding maintenance charges at their Homes.

Chairman Wagner called for new business. Mr. Habiger asked if there has been any thought given to changing the Bonus Law. Chairman Wagner noted that the Veterans Coordinating Council had tabled the proposed changes.

Joe Novak called the attention of the committee to #8 of their Administrative Guidelines, which states that both the Soldiers' Home and the Department of Veterans Affairs shall be reviewed to determine compliance with applicable Federal and State laws in their administration. Chairman Wagner charged the chairmen of the two sub-committees with this responsibility prior to the next meeting, and asked that they report on their findings at the next quarterly meeting of the Administrative Committee. ✓

Chairman Wagner noted that the next quarterly meeting of the Administrative Committee will be held in conjunction with the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council meeting sometime in September.

The meeting recessed at 3:20 PM for meetings of the two sub-committees.

At 4:15 PM the full committee reconvened for the purpose of acting on budgetary matters.

James Rosendahl, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs sub-committee, reported that the budget for the 1973-75 biennium, as presented by Commissioner Zander, was approved. In accordance with Section 3, Paragraph 3, S.B. 2089, "Powers and Duties of the Committee" which states in part, "The Committee shall determine the salaries paid the Commandant of the Soldiers' Home and the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs," the Chairman stated that Commissioner Zander's salary had been established at \$16,750.00 or \$33,500.00 per biennium. It was moved by Rosendahl that the report be accepted. Motion seconded by Ken Habiger, and carried. ✓

Clarence Welander, Chairman of the Soldiers' Home sub-committee, reported on a tentative budget. He also stated that Commandant Code's salary had been established at \$11,200.00, or \$22,400.00 per biennium. This amount is in addition to the home that is furnished, with attendant benefits. Orville Gullickson moved that the report be accepted. Motion seconded by Art Ulness and carried.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.

  
Earnest N. Schmit  
Secretary