

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
CAMP GRAFTON, DEVILS LAKE ND

July 30, 2015, 2015  
10:00 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	Trish Hodny	Bill Peschel
Roy Fillion	Myron Langehaug	Marlin Schneider
Jim Haukedahl	Marlys Morgenstern	Jim Verwey
Dave Hilleren	Dean Overby	Hal Weninger

Absent:

Emery C. Fisher (excused)	Ken Hasby (excused)
Carroll Quam (excused)	Jim Verwey (excused)

***Motion to approve March 12 & 13, 2015 minutes by Dave Hilleren, second by Richard Belling. Motion passed.***

Chairman Overby welcomed new members to the Committee meeting and asked members to introduce themselves:

Dean Overby: Wahpeton, American Legion. My goal is to help veterans of the state of North Dakota.

Roy Fillion: DAV, recently retired from Job Service after 14.5 years. Great committee to be on to help and serve veterans.

Bill Peschel: Wahpeton representing AMVETS. Recently retired as a county veterans service officer.

Richard Belling: VFW, serving 2<sup>nd</sup> term, from West Fargo.

Marlin Schneider: Reappointed to 2<sup>nd</sup> term, American Legion, from Bismarck.

Myron Langehaug: Representing AMVETS, from Bottineau. Renaming AMVETS Post to Carl J. Woods AMVETS Post, Carl Woods was shot down over North Vietnam, there will be a ceremony at 1:00pm Saturday.

Trish Hodny: From Grand Forks, work full-time at UND School of Law, representing Vietnam Veterans of America.

Jim Haukedahl: From Fargo, representing DAV, volunteer at VA.

Hal Weninger: Life long resident of New Town, representing VVA, filled out Lee Finstad term, starting 2<sup>nd</sup> term. Great to be here.

Dave Hilleren: New Town, representing VVA. Started on committee in 2005.

Maryls Morgenstern: Representing DAV, work at Job Service ND, retired Sargent-Major from ND Natl Guard.

Lonnie Wangen: Commissioner of Veterans Affairs. Looking forward to working with the Committee.

Cathy Halgunseth: Long time employee of the Department.

Guests:

Cathy Peterson – Senator Heitkamp Office in Grand Forks; member of ND Army National Guard 188<sup>th</sup> Artillery out of Grand Forks. Member of American Legion.

Chairman Overby said the veterans organizations put your name into the Governor's Office but once on the committee we work for the veterans of North Dakota.

Old subcommittees will meet to finish up any business. New subcommittees will be named this afternoon.

**Commissioner's Report** – Commissioner Lonnie Wangen [POWER POINT]

- ▶ State Approving Agency, through legislation, have been placed under Department of Veterans Affairs. The Bismarck office moved to new location on north end of Bismarck. Cathy helped with the office move and IT issues. Rhonda Schauer is the SAA Director. There is an IT intern working on website located in the Bismarck Office. A few states would like to adopt our website, they really like the information on ours.
- ▶ Update on staff training: Tom, Mike and Brenda attended National Organization of Veterans Advocates (NOVA), very good training. Webinars are being utilized. All office personnel attended "Creating a Culture of Excellence" seminar in Fargo.
- ▶ Update on staff outreach/presentations: Agent Orange Round Tables throughout state; providing assistance to Traill County; Outreach to MEPS Employees.
- ▶ Update on Commissioner's activities: testified before House/Senate GVA committees in Washington, D.C.; meeting with Director of Job Service; Highly Rural Transportation Grant program explained; attended veterans organizations conventions; still working on

veterans court in Cass County – the issue is funding (estimated \$200,000-\$300,000 yearly); met with new NDUS Chancellor; he is a big supporter of veterans.

- ▶ New Service Officers in Barnes and Stutsman counties.
- ▶ Loan Program – 97 current loans with outstanding principal balance of \$251,539.43 as of June 30, 2015
- ▶ Grant Program – total grants paid \$248,784.40; balance in Fund 410 account as of June 30, 2015 - \$51,707.41. Remaining grants to be paid - \$33,334.43.
- ▶ Transportation Vans – 2<sup>nd</sup> van delivered to Fargo VA in July.
- ▶ Applying for three interns: Information Technology, administrative, and public relations. Our last two interns worked out very well.
- ▶ Used agency website to show Legislation page: current Legislature and past sessions showing relevant bills is available for viewing. Commissioner discussed the agency budget bill (HB 1025) as to what was approved and not approved. Commissioner talked about other bills that were tracked during the legislative session.

Hal Weninger asked about the Tobacco Measure. Commissioner Wangen gave information on the tobacco measure and how it may possibly benefit veterans.

Recessed for lunch.

Committee reconvened

Emery C. Fisher in attendance.

### **Major General Sprynczynatyk, Adjutant General, ND National Guard**

- ▶ Welcomed Committee to Camp Grafton.
- ▶ Talked about the shootings that occurred in Tennessee which killed 5 servicemen. As a result, the military units across the country are reviewing; taking measures to provide more protection in certain facilities.
- ▶ Provided aerial firefighting support in March/April 2015 when fires threatened homes and University of Mary in south Bismarck
- ▶ 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Veterans Cemetery, 6700-6800 internments. Purchasing acreage from Parks to expand cemetery.
- ▶ Broke ground for new vehicle maintenance shop
- ▶ Welcomed home 15 soldiers that were deployed overseas.
- ▶ Completed southwest mission providing aerial support along border in Texas
- ▶ Three of the most relevant missions in the Air Force: predator mission, new cyber intelligence targeting mission, and nuclear security mission.
- ▶ AirSho in Fargo, tremendous success, provided support where we could.

- ▶ Congress authorized a commission on the future of the Army; the report is due out in February. Army National Guard impact unknown.
- ▶ ND Cares hired Retired Major Joe Fowler to be Executive Director.

Chairman Overby introduced Emery Fisher as a new member of ACOVA. Mr. Fisher spent 28 years in the military and is a past state commander for VFW.

**Cheri Giesen, Executive Director, Job Service North Dakota**

- ▶ Brad Aune received award from the DAV; he also received the Hometown Hero at Red River Valley Fair and was presented the award at the Craig Morgan concert. Susan Ogurek was the recipient of the 2015 American Legion National Economic Commission's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist Award.
- ▶ Marlys Morgenstern, Brad Aune and Andrew Nathan attended a Partnering for Veterans Conference in Washington, DC
- ▶ JSND met or exceeded all of its performance goals except for two: Entered Employment percentages show a slight decrease and Employment Retention shown a slight increase. These changes are likely attributed to the lower oil gas prices and ensuing personnel management strategies in the oil industry.
- ▶ The movement of the Jobs for Veterans State Grant to the control of the VA is not supported by our current administration.

Commissioner Wangen talked about the Disney Hire Vets Program. Disney decided to hire 5,000 vets and did it in less than a year. Because of the success of the program, Disney staff will go around the country to businesses that want to hire veterans and give them training how to attract and keep them as employees. Commissioner will send information to Marlys Morgenstern.

**Dale DeKrey, Acting Director, VA Health Care System**

- ▶ Severe budget shortages due in part to the directive "No veteran should wait more than 30 days to be seen at a VA facility" and the "Choice" program. Congress is trying to address the problem and free up the Choice money for VA use.
- ▶ VA is still working on the homeless issue and trying to eliminate it, but there will always be a few.
- ▶ Minot Vet Center & CBOC, Grafton CBOC, Bemidji CBOC, Fargo Vet Center and Bismarck Vet Center all will have to move within the next year. Contracts are all up and will have to be put out on bid.
- ▶ Update on construction in the VA facility.
- ▶ Media Day taking place on Monday, to talk about the good things happening at VA.

Mark Johnson, Administrator, ND Veterans Home couldn't attend the meeting due to prior commitments. Chairman Overby explained that Channel 11 Whistleblowers reported three families are making complaints about the Veterans Home. The Governing Board went into Executive Session to discuss the situation. A person can be discharged from a nursing home due to: they can't pay, the nursing home can't provide services the person needs or the person is a danger to themselves or those around them. The Governing Board gave the families each 5 minutes for their case and it had to be in writing. There were no new issues raised.

Trish Hodny asked about the Veterans Home doing some PR to help with the situation. Discussion on Veterans Home situation.

Chairman Overby named new subcommittees:

Postwar Trust Fund and Appeals Subcommittee: Emery Fisher, Dave Hilleren, Marlys Morgenstern, Carroll Quam

Legislative Subcommittee: Jim Verwey, Bill Peschel, Roy Fillion, Trish Hodny, Ken Hasby

Department of Veterans Affairs & Budget Subcommittee: Jim Haukedahl, Hal Weninger, Myron Langehaug, Marlin Schneider, Richard Belling

Meeting recessed so subcommittees can meet.

July 31, 2015

Meeting reconvened.

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Richard Belling  
Roy Fillion  
Emery C. Fisher  
Jim Haukedahl  
Dave Hilleren

Trish Hodny  
Myron Langehaug  
Marlys Morgenstern  
Dean Overby

Bill Peschel  
Marlin Schneider  
Jim Verwey  
Hal Weninger

Absent:

Ken Hasby (excused)

Carroll Quam (excused)

Jim Verwey (excused)

Guests:

Kelly Schmidt, State Treasurer  
Sheri I. Haugen-Hoffart, Deputy State Treasurer

**Committee Reports:**

**Department of Veterans Affairs & Budget Subcommittee:** Report by Myron Langehaug. PWTF - \$50,000 approved for 1<sup>st</sup> qrtr of 2015-2017. Between PWTF and Impact funding, grants will be covered for 2013-2015. Final budget numbers will be available at next meeting. Audit report reviewed: loan program policies changed by ACOVA to comply and subcommittee chair will review Commissioner's purchasing card transactions. Commissioner's evaluation needs to be revised. Richard Belling and Trish Hodny put together commissioner's evaluation which was reviewed by Chairman Overby. Evaluation was satisfactory.

***Motion by Trish Hodny to accept report, second by Myron Langehaug . Motion passed.***

**Postwar Trust Fund & Appeals Subcommittee:** reported by Marlys Morgenstern Appeals Committee: appeals folders and procedures reviewed and discussed. An appeal is pending and will be scheduled for the new committee.

***Motion to accept report by Marlys Morgenstern , second by Hal Weninger . Motion passed.***

**Legislative Subcommittee:** no quorum for a meeting.

**Department of Veterans Affairs & Budget Subcommittee:** Report by Myron Langehaug. Richard Belling elected chairman and Myron Langehaug is Secretary. Revision to ACOVA guidelines regarding organizational meeting, "The Committee Chairman will select time and place of the first meeting which ~~must be held during the month of July. This meeting~~ will also be designated as the re-organizational meeting. Motion to change current wording to revised wording, motion passed. Discussion held on expenditures for next 2 qrtrs, \$30,000 per qrtr for biennium depending on Treasurer's Report. Motion to approve, motion passed. Final budget will be available at the next meeting.

***Motion by Myron Langehaug to accept changes to the ACOVA Guidelines, "The Committee Chairman will select time and place of the first meeting which will also be designated as the re-organizational meeting.", seconded. Motion passed.***

***Motion by Myron Langehaug for \$30,000 per quarter for the biennium if funding is available, second by Jim Haukedahl. Friendly amendment for the \$30,000 beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the biennium, second by Hal Weninger. Amendment accepted. Discussion on amended motion. Amended motion passed.***

***Motion to accept report by Myron Langehaug, second by Richard Belling.***

Trish Hodny clarified the subcommittee doesn't need to have a Secretary since the Commissioner serves as Executive Secretary.

***Motion passed.***

**Appeals & Postwar Trust Fund Subcommittee:** reported by Marlys Morgenstern  
Appeals: Marlys Morgenstern elected Chairman. Received training on appeals. Will work with Cathy to set-up pending appeal hearing.

***Motion to accept report by Marlys Morgenstern, second by Richard Belling . Motion passed.***

**Postwar Trust Fund:** Marlys Morgenstern elected Chairman. Reviewed discussion on tobacco tax. Reminded committee that Kelly Schmidt, State Treasurer, will be presenting on Friday.

***Motion to accept report made by Marlys Morgenstern, second by Dave Hilleren. Motion passed.***

**Legislative Subcommittee:** Trish Hodny reported. Trish Hodny elected Chairman, Jim Verwey elected Secretary. Commissioner discussed issues that subcommittee may want to consider: (1) move ACOVA from N.D.C.C. to ND Constitution; (2) requesting funds from tobacco tax; (3) supporting a tobacco tax measure; and (4) review results from 2015 legislative session. Subcommittee discussed possible ramifications of ACOVA supporting tobacco settlement/tax.

***Motion to accept report made by Trish Hodny, second by Bill Peschel . Motion passed.***

Discussion on ACOVA supporting measure on tobacco tax.

**Kelly Schmidt, ND State Treasurer (Handout)**

Brought answers to questions posed to her. Treasurer Kelly asked that her handout be posted to the website for reference by committee members and others. She also asked if there are some committee members that don't use email, please let her office know so information can be delivered in another form. Sheri Haugen-Hoffart is the committee's and the department's contact at the Treasurer's Office.

The Treasurer's Office has to abide by the Uniform Principal and Income Act.

Commissioner Wangen asked for clarification on the Fund 410 account. Treasurer Schmidt stated it belongs to the Department; the Treasurer's Office can only make deposits to it. The Postwar Trust Fund is up net to date 1.2% this year, State Treasurer tries to manage risk.

Discussion on realized and unrealized gains and how it pertains to the PWTF.

Chairman Overby would like the Postwar Trust Fund Subcommittee to work with Ryan Skor, Treasurer's Office, to get better understanding of the PWTF Investments.

***Motion by Trish Hodny for Commissioner to work with OMB and the Bank of North Dakota, using the funds in the 410 account, purchase \$30,000 CDs so the last CD comes due three months before the end of the biennium, second by Emery C. Fisher. Motion passed.*** [MOTION #1]

### **Round Table Discussion:**

Trish Hodny: Asked for thoughts on the tobacco issue.

Jim Haukedahl: Needs time to think about the tobacco issue. Likes being at Camp Grafton for the organizational meeting; able to get better acquainted with people.

Hal Weninger: Sees more cohesion from this committee than in the past. Need to make more people aware of the needs of veterans.

Dave Hilleren: Concerned about tobacco issue; could be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Marlys Morgenstern: Worried about communication within ACOVA; need to have the same message. How will the Legislature will feel about it (tobacco issue). Would like to see a Homeless Coalition Forum at a future meeting to find out the reality of the situation and have an ND Cares member to come to a meeting for information.

Emery C. Fisher: Good to have the meeting at Devils Lake.

Roy Fillion: Watching and learning and getting to know everyone on committee.

Tobacco issue concerns him and everyone needs to be on the same page.

Bill Peschel: How angry could the (veterans) membership get if the tobacco tax goes through and they don't understand the purpose behind ACOVA's support.

Richard Belling: Talk with legislators and ask why they voted against our bills. Thanking them for what they did...

Marlin Schneider: Concerned about tobacco tax; we need to get something started.

Myron Langehaug: Exciting concept for raising funds; all for it. Be very specific if going with an initiated measurers. Wanted to thank this group for the van that he is bringing to Bottineau through the Highly Rural Transportation Grant.

Dave Hilleren brought information on number of WW II veterans estimated population.

He also talked about the V.V.A. National Convention and Dan Stenvold receiving most votes for his Region. Best Region in the nation.

Marlys Morgenstern asked about Open Records regarding information between committee members and Coordinating Council.

Commissioner Wangen advised the committee members to not hit "Reply All" when he sends out information. If someone hits "Reply All", the correspondence becomes an open record. Open Records training will be provided by the Attorney General's Office. Brenda Bergsrud, from our Bismarck Office, resigned from the Department.

Chairman Overby wants to have Open Records and Roberts Rules training at an ACOVA meeting. He asked Commissioner Wangen to get a representative from the tobacco tax coalition come to the next meeting. The Committee has addressed the homeless issue at a previous meeting. It is an issue the committee will continue to address. Chairman Overby thanked the new members for stepping up to help our veterans

Trish Hodny wondered if the committee couldn't meet with legislators to have a conversation regarding veterans' issues. The next meeting may be too busy but it is something to think about for future meetings.

Next meeting tentatively set for October 1 & 2, 2015 in Bismarck.

***Motion by to adjourn, second by Dave Hilleren. Motion carried.***

Respectfully submitted

Jim Verwey  
Secretary