

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
CONFERENCE CALL
March 12, 1995 - 7:00 P.M.

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MAY 15 1995

ACOVA Participants:

John Mullen, Chairperson
Suzanne Kime
Kent Anderson
Joe Novak
Paul Aaberg
Kenneth Evenson
Tom Rainsberry
Al Huber
Mike Vandrovec

Joe O'Brien
Donald Weible
Dean Bayer
Gary Hoffman
James Johnson
Joe O'Brien
Ken Anderson)
Ray Harkema)
Keith Bjerke)

Copy Mailed _____

Date _____

- Ex-Officio

Guest Participants:

Richard Olek, President-Coordinating Council
Bob Evans, Secretary/Treasurer-Coordinating Council
Skip Wing, Stanley Veterans Home Representative
Curt Twete, Stanley Veterans Home Representative
Bob Martinson, Representative-49th District
Bruce Laughlin, Representative-23rd District
LeRoy Bernstein, Representative-45th District

ACOVA Members Absent:

Jim Groven

John Mullen: Issues that I think need discussion - To bring you up to date, SB 2033 failed and we have some ways that we may bring it back to life again or carry it to the next biennium. I think we need to discuss that. The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Home are going to have some budgetary shortfalls in this next biennium unless more money is given to them through the General Fund, and I think we need to have some discussion on that. And then, it appears that there is apparent pressure by the Legislature and OMB to coerce us or force us to use Post War Trust Fund interest to supplement General Funds to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Home. And then, we have some other possible use of the Post War Trust Fund interest, including, I have here before me a proposal from the Minot State University, a \$70,000 request, and there have been some suggestions that the Post War Trust Fund interest fund some FTE's either for the DVA or the Veterans Cemetery. And these issues all tend to tie together, so I think what we'll do first is that I want to lay a little ground rules. I've invited all these other people to join in with the Administrative Committee. I'm sure they understand that if we have a vote, that just the Administrative Committee will be voting on issues pertinent to the Administrative. But, I hope that they

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will feel free to join the discussion. I didn't invite anyone into this just to monitor this thing. I hope that everyone will get into it and give us some suggestions.

I want to go over first for discussion some of the things on the loss of SB 2033. Some of the possible alternatives that we have come up with in discussion among ourselves is to let it lie for a couple of years, bring it back in the next biennium, educate the veterans first, and the legislators second. Maybe attach it to a House bill, and bring it back to life this session, or to take it to the people by initiated measure. At this point, I think we're open to suggestions and discussion, and I certainly have invited the members of the Coordinating Council because, of course, no matter what we do, they're going to have to be in on this thing.

Bob Evans: Okay. First of all, I'm assuming, or I may be assuming wrong, that discussion of the veterans home project, has that been done by the Administrative Committee, or is it being done by outside members from outside of the Committee?

John Mullen: This is the first meeting that we have held since the loss of SB 2033. Much of the discussion that we have had has been, I might talk to Ray Stelmachuk, or Curt Twete might talk to a legislator, that kind of discussion. So we have not actually had a discussion among all of the members of the Administrative Committee until tonight.

Bob Evans: Okay, I guess my question is

(Phone call lost - all parties disconnected. Operator reconnected everyone.)

John Mullen: I think that everyone's back on again. I'm going to repeat what I said earlier. The operator earlier gave me a way for me to contact her by pushing star and zero, and I was able to contact her that way. So, if you get cut off again, don't hang up right away, just kind of hang on the line and we'll see if I can reconnect everyone by doing it that way. Twenty phones that we have out there, it's going to take a while before you get back on line.

Let's pretend we have everyone. Anyone know of anybody we don't. Why don't you go ahead, Bob.

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Bob Evans: What I was trying to ask, is the groundwork that's been put out in order to even introduce this, or suggest that this be amended to a House bill? Has this been by the Administrative Committee or has it been done by outside members or individuals?

John Mullen: I think the answer is outside members and individuals. In conference with very few members of the Administrative Committee.

Curt Twete: Do you want me to speak to this specifically, John?

John Mullen: Go ahead.

Curt Twete: Having visited with Representative Laughlin from 23rd District, he indicated his feelings on how he felt that the veterans have been treated on this home issue, and that there was perhaps a vehicle to bring it up on an appropriations bill in the Appropriations Committee. My comments to Bruce at that time were, "We'd certainly like to see it come back, but for the efforts that were put in on the Senate side, and having been told if we felt we got beat up bad on the Senate side, the House side was going to be worse, that we didn't want to go to all that work to lose by one vote again." And he indicated that Representative Martinson and himself had some thoughts and some ideas, and I think primarily my feeling on that was Bruce would love to have the help on that if we can swing it. You and Martinson tell us if we've got a chance on the House side. Bruce, if you see here any difference than what we talked about, chime in here, but I think that there was an indication that maybe it could be brought up on the House side. If we can win it on the House side, we'll then have one vote on the Senate side, ladies and gentlemen, and if we let federal monies, if we don't apply for them this time around, from what we're able to find out when we were in D.C., what's being cut on that budget, the likelihood of this thing ever coming to light, I think, are slim or none. But I think the key thing, other than what I've heard comments of people saying, tying one thing to another, I guess my attitude on this would be if Representative Laughlin or Representative Martinson feel that there is enough support, bipartisan support on the Senate side to work on this, I think we should put an all-out effort to work on it. If it's an uphill battle as we had on the Senate side, and we spend a lot of time and money to come up just a little short, than I think we're better directing our efforts otherwise. So, I say, Bruce, what do you know on it from that context.

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Representative Bruce Laughlin: Well, Curt, I would say that certain changes have to be made. I don't think we ask for any general money, that \$260,000, or whatever it was. I wouldn't ask for any general money. And I think there's a lot of resentment about the industry. They kind-of said they have vacant beds and next thing we're letting 40 beds be built in this town. I think that really was terrible the way you people got treated on that issue. Shelly Warner absolutely said there was room and empty beds and didn't need any more, and bingo, as soon as this bill got killed, then we announced more beds. And I think that the veterans got treated terrible. I'm worried about your funding. If you don't get it now, may lose that federal dollars. And I'm willing to put up a fight, and maybe Mr. Martinson has a different viewpoint, but it's going to be tough. It's going to have to be a lot of road work, spend time with the Governor, get his okay. But I think you've got money to afford to do this. It's your money, I think maybe we worry to much about using Social Services Go on to try and build a facility. Whatever you people decide. I'm not a veteran and I don't mean to be poking my nose in, but I think you got a poor rap and I think there's got to be some work done. Should be trying to keep it alive.

(Not Identified) We all agree with that, Bruce. The things we were trying to fight against Long Term Care, it was evident that correct facts and figures were not a requirement of testimony to the Legislature. But that's kind-of not here or there. What's our chances of getting... How many votes can we muster on the House side, gentlemen. Have you done any head counting on this issue?

(Not Identified) I haven't anyway.

Bob Evans: My feelings are that we won't have enough. And that's based on the fact that we just finished coming out of Committee with a license plate bill, which is a do-not-pass. And also the bonus is coming out and they are going to say that it's going to come out of the Post War Trust Fund. It will not come out of General Funds. And with that frame of mind in the State Legislature, I think it will be a cold day in hell before we can get anywhere with the veterans home. The mindset down there in Bismarck is anti-veteran from the word go.

Mike Vandrovec: I've got a question. You indicated this would be advanced to appropriations bill. What would be the main item in the appropriation bill? What kind of a bill are we trying to attach onto?

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Representative Laughlin: At this time we don't know. Late bill, or attach it to something and see if the amendment flies. One of those things that you have to do some roadwork for, and I still think there's a chance.

(Not Identified) What we're going to try to attach to would be a major bearing on whether it passes or not.

Representative Laughlin: Doesn't have anything to do with that.

Joe Novak: It was my understanding that if all signs had been green and go on this situation, that the budget impact for 1995-97 would be zero, because nothing would get off the ground before the first of July 1997.

John Mullen: I need to explain that then, so that we know what we're talking about. In the original bill, there would have been a financial impact in '96 because Grafton could have gotten off the ground by that time. That impact would have been fairly minimal. I don't have that figure right off the top of my head here. Maybe you do, Ken. What it would have cost in '96 for that. And that there would have been no financial impact from the Stanley home. But I think that we need to make clear too that most of us in these private discussions have felt that the Grafton deal is dead. That that got the worst response in vote, and if we go back again, we go back for 60 beds in Stanley. And anyone out there that disagrees with me, I wish you would say so now because this may be news to some people, but in the discussions that we have been holding, that's the way it's been.

Suzanne Kime: Some of the same facts that I found too in some of the general discussions that I have had, John. I don't know whether this is appropriate for me to actually say, Chairman, but after 2033 went down, prior to its going down, I had been advised by a senator that we had to get to Governor Schafer. So after it went down, I did write a letter and sound off. If I may, I would like to read a paragraph from the response that I got back, and then maybe this will help us with some of the decision, I don't know.

John Mullen: Go ahead.

Suzanne Kime: "From the introduction of this legislation, my administration was up front and fair on our position. The Office of Management and Budget was concerned about the cost to the State

to continue operating the facility after the initial construction. The Health Department was concerned about the number of beds already available to North Dakota veterans in a number of different type of nursing facilities across the State. The bill had an extensive hearing in the Senate Committee and went through two floor debates and votes. As you know, the second vote came a day after the initial vote when all the senators had ample time to review and reconsider their stand on this proposal. And it failed in the reconsideration effort. I feel the issue had a fair and open hearing and I stand by the decision of the Senate on this bill. That across the state will continue in their efforts to secure additional facilities. Perhaps the issue should again be examined in two years if it is the wish of the Legislature. Please remain in contact with your local legislators on this issue."

(Not Identified) There was no mention then though that they were going to approve two additional 40-bed units.

Suzanne Kime: Nope. They didn't say a thing about that.

Joe Novak: Sue, who signed that letter?

Suzanne Kime: Governor Ed Schafer.

(Not Identified) What's the date of it?

Suzanne Kime: February 14.

(Not Identified) In relationship to the other two new homes? Before or after they were announced.

Suzanne Kime: February 14th, I'm going to say it was before. Cause my letter to him was prior to the

(Not Identified) The Minot one was the very next day after the vote, though, was it not?

Skip Wing: The vote was on the 10th. Right? And then the following Monday, the 11th, 12th or the 13th, the following Monday is when the Edgewood in Minot was announced in the Minot Daily News. I doubt if he would have known or been aware of all that when that letter was written and dated.

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John Mullen: I called Fred Larson, and I had a discussion with him on this issue, and all that he could tell me is was that there would be no more surprises. So if there are, then we've got three representatives sitting out there somewhere... That's what I'm reporting from Fred Larson.

Joe Novak: Where have I heard that before? About two years ago, one year ago, six months ago, three months. I sat in on the meetings that got the same message a dozen times. They're of very little value as far as I'm concerned.

Skip Wing: I just want one thought here. Initially we thought about this thing and said, well, we're going to go lick our wounds and come back in two years. That's kind-of what we did three years ago and it seems like they say if you guys really want this you'll fight for this. And then when we come back every two years, we get kicked down again. Are we going to have to come back, for instance this time, and fight right down to the last day, win or lose, in order to even have a chance two years from now if we don't get it this time?

Joe Novak: You know, three years ago we had two concurrent resolutions. One was to study Veterans Preference because we felt that was a screwed up piece of legislation, and we needed to get it before the legislative body.... And we also had one on the long term care situation. Because of the..... the one that was selected was this one. And the interim committee spend a great deal of time, a great deal of time and effort, and we spent a great deal of resource in this situation coming up with this. For us to put our tail between our legs now and go away and suggest that if we come back in two years that we're going to get another study, to repeat the study that we just had or to come without it, it looks like an exercise in futility to me. Not to mention the fact that apparently the money that is now available will not be available. Another thing that bothers me is that the reference continues to be nursing beds throughout even some of the correspondence come out recently from the Governor's office. We're not talking about nursing beds. We're talking about basic care beds. That's enough, thank you.

Paul Aaberg: I think we should go ahead and give it another run because, well, with that coming out with those additional 80 beds approval, well, it will show that they were not truthful in their hearings with the information they gave to the Senate Committee and to the senate, as far as information they gave out from the Long Term Care Association.

Curt Twete: I agree with you, Paul. My concern is, and again I would like to have the legislators kind-of address this. How do we get that point across to them? How do you get the audience to sell that point with them? We didn't do a good job of selling in the Committee hearing in the Senate. I don't say that to criticize individuals. I'm saying I think that's where our short suite was. But, Skip, you went through an exercise at the Legion trying to get their attention, and we got beat on facts and figures that were not accurate, without an opportunity to challenge them.

Bob Evans: Until you have legislators that are not in employment situations that are going to be opposing us on any type of legislation we introduce, we're not going to go anywhere. And I'm talking about the Chairman of the Senate Committee meeting being on the Board of Directors of whatever on the Trinity Nursing Home. And also any of the State Senators or State Representative who are either state agency employees of supervisors, or department heads, it's not going to happen. I see that happen on every piece of legislation we've introduced. We've been beat to death by legislators who are either state employees or employees of our opposing forces. Period.

Skip Wing: If I can address a question to the legislators that are on the line here. What do you think of like just exactly what Bob has just said now? How is it stacked for us? Would we have at least an even break of talking to people, or is there some people over there that are going to be automatically against us?

Representative Laughlin: I think some people are going to come in and talk to them simply haven't told them. I don't think the story was put over very good cause we've had a problem now that more beds have been put in these two towns and I think the story is changed. I really don't think the people have been informed that you're using your own money and that you're using a lot of federal money. What do you think Bob or Leroy.

Bob Martinson: Just a couple of thoughts. First of all, I appreciate you getting this call together. The three of us had asked General Bjerke to try and set something up for a couple of reasons. First of all, the National Guard really needs your help. Secondly, to answer your question, I don't think you have a chance unless you use your own money. And thirdly, to put you on alert and maybe to startle you a little, I think you ought to at least start thinking about how you're going to spend your money in

your Trust Fund, because my gut feeling is it's going to be on the chopping block next session. So you may start thinking in terms of how you might like to use that money for the best benefits for all military and veterans, or face the possibility of losing it entirely. I don't know all the details on the home that you're looking for or the cost, but you may want to look at using the principle that you have there, and maybe if you would be kind enough to help us a little, and that would be the end of your fund.

Bob Evans: Representative Martinson, this is Bob Evans in Williston. This is exactly what we have been doing. We had an intended use for the Veterans Post War Trust Fund and the legislators just thumbed their noses at us.

Joe Novak: The interest, Bob.

(Not Identified) They're going to borrow on the principle, Joe.

Joe Novak: Okay, borrow on the principle. But it will be a pay-back.

(Not Identified) There's an intended use for the Trust Fund and programs that we've introduced that we've gotten thumbed at too. Now you said the National Guard is going to ask us for help, what kind of help are they looking at?

(Not Identified) We desperately need some money for our tuitional waiver program and for the cemetery.

(Not Identified) Okay, now let me answer you on the cemetery. We had a bill that was introduced that would fund the cemetery on a volunteer basis, and that was the veterans' license plate. It would have been, over the period of time it would have run, it would have been a break-even at the least for the Department of Transportation. It would have put approximately \$150,000 to \$175,000 annually into the cemetery fund. The legislators thumbed their noses at us again. That was the Senate Transportation Committee with their amendments, and from there it went downhill. What more can we do to try and do the things for the veterans across the state without getting thumbed at every time we do something.

Bob Martinson: The three of us in here, we weren't even aware of that part of that bill, were we.

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(Not Identified) No, that's news to me. That's on the Senate side. I knew it was over there, but I didn't realize it was going to have such a tough time. Somebodies really going to have to lobby a lot to get this veterans

(Not Identified) We asked for National Guard support on the license plate bills and we didn't get any.

General Bjerke: I don't think that's quite true. I was testifying before another committee the day that that was up before your committee, so I couldn't be over there. But I told you from the beginning that we would support the bill, and we have no problem with it whatsoever.

(Not Identified) But there was no word. But there was other individuals in the Guard that I feel could have come in and offered some moral support in that regard though.

Joe Novak: I was there that day because of the foggy and overcast sky that kept Bob Evans out of the hearing. But unfortunately, we stood alone throughout the entire thing. Just for what that's worth.

Skip Wing: Where we've run into on all these bills, as we come up, and everybody's got kind-of an interest that they're looking at, and they're each pursuing their different interests, and they say well, we support you on this, and we support you on this, and we support you on this. But I tell you gentlemen, when we're going in for a bill, unfortunately too many times the guys that are supporting that bill are standing alone. The other guys that say we support you, aren't there. We need to get more numbers down there. We need to get more people into the legislature. We need to get angry and more pro-active. I think that's in a nutshell. I don't know if everybody agrees with that or not.

Joe Novak: I think about the time that it becomes apparent that they're going to take the Post War Trust Fund. I've got another comment too. My representative Mr. Martinson, Bob, I've known him for a long time, 49th District, but we in all seriousness, and our Veterans Preference Bill and government employment on the line, we invited participation from state agencies, from county municipalities, had an open forum at the Bismarck Library, got all of that input. Went to the legislature, reduced the Veterans Preference eligibility for North Dakota veterans from \$48,000 down to \$4,800. We came out of the Senate with unanimous vote for a

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bill that not only reduced it from 100 percent, to 10 percent, but then knocked out 90 percent, and left it down to one. It's not a friendly environment.

(Not Identified) Wait here. What happened to the hearing on that in the House side on Thursday.

Joe Novak: We had to ask to have it killed because it was such a disgusting issue.

Ken Anderson: It went through though, didn't it, Ray.

Ray Harkema: Only with the amendment, Ken. On the definition of a chief deputy and private secretary.

Ken Anderson: I thought they took out that ten years and that other stuff too. They doghoused it.

Ray Harkema: They added the amendment and killed the original bill. The engrossed bill.

(Not Identified) So the bill is dead.

Ray Harkema: Yes.

(Not Identified) So what they'll have is a 49 nothing in the Senate and whatever it is in the House, zero to zero. So the bill that serves Veterans Preference does absolutely nothing. It changes two definitions. But our concessions were monumental at that time. It isn't that we can't make a logical position, but we're not having a very receptive audience.

Ken Evenson: I would like to clarify one thing. Maybe I can ask Bob Martinson. When we had that referendum on that Post War Trust Fund to get that back, is there a time limit that we have to use that or we're going to lose that again? Is that my understanding?

Bob Martinson: No, this is Bob. I've been involved in these trust funds. We had one ourselves, the National Guard did on tuitional labor, and that was one of our problems. We had 3.5 million in trust. Really the legislature can take that any time. It would take a two-thirds vote to do it now, and next session it will take a simple majority. My feeling, in visiting around the capitol, that if we're short of money next time, as we are now, that that's going to be a tough issue for you.

(Not Identified) And we're going to lose it, aren't we.

(Not Identified) And they tried to take it once, are they going to try it again?

(Not Identified) They took it once and we got it back.

(Not Identified) November of this year. And if we don't act on it now, we're going to lose it next year. They're going to take it again.

Joe Novak: Simple majority. Chairman Mullen, I have a comment. The reference was made to the need of the Guard for Post War, I mean of the tuitional labor. History will show, and one advantage of being my age and being around as long as I have, is I remember anything happening 50 years ago. But the Coordinating Council and the veterans of North Dakota, totally endorsed the tuitional labor program at the time it was in jeopardy. When it was a matter of transferring a residual amount from another trust fund situation into that Post War Trust Fund to make it viable, and, yes, it isn't that we haven't supported it, and don't support, and wouldn't support, cause I think this is one of the reasons that it's there now, and was there successfully for all these years, that we did have that kind of support.

Bob Evans: Joe, we really appreciate that. I've got a history of that fund, and you all remember, or some of you may, working with General Murray on that trust fund, and with the land that we got for Camp Grafton South. All of that money came out of the original trust fund and we will always be grateful for that. So you're absolutely right that we've worked hand-in-hand on those issues, and I guess that's why we're trying to see if we can't work together on a couple of things now.

Joe Novak: Maybe this is the appropriate place to bring it up. You can see that there is some tremendous lack of communications so I would suggest... I won't be on the Administrative Committee after the first of July, so that part of it is retirement time, but if the General would concede as has happened many times in the past, to have the reorganizational meeting of the Coordinating Council and the Administrative Committee in early July every year at Camp Grafton as we did before, perhaps we can rejuvenate some of those communicational lines that the Guard and the veterans of North Dakota enjoyed for so many years. I don't want to put him on the spot.

General Bjerke: I'd love to have you there.

Joe Novak: If you would like to make that a formal request, I would think that the Council and the Administrative Committee would be very pleased to consider. That was a preliminary always. We knew where the Guard was and the Guard knew where we were, because we had that sharing every time at Camp Grafton. If it's doable, it might be a real asset to both parties.

General Bjerke: I'll get the invitations out this week.

Ken Anderson: I was at the capitol on Friday. I had a bill that went through that same committee. First of all, Senator Krebsbach from Minot said to me, "What have you been up to, Ken?" And I said, "I've been hiding." And she said, "No, I think I'm the one who should be hiding." Later in the day I talked to Chris Christopherson, state representative from Fargo, and I also talked to Dave Monson from Osnabrock. I've known both of these people for a while. I brought up coming back with it and I got a very negative response from both of those people. So I just thought I'd let you know if we go in there, it's going to be an uphill battle. But I agree with Curt Twete, and I guess I've said it before, I think if we're going to do this, we got to do it now, because I don't think if we go in two years from now and ask for federal money, I don't think we're going to see it, because the V.A. has gone from funding from \$80 million over a five-six year period down to this time they funded \$42 million and still \$210 million short of what's requested. So, if we're going to do something, we go to do it now or I don't think it's going to happen. Because I think we'll just be going through a lot of motions and there won't be federal funds.

John Mullen: Let me pose you a question then, anyone. The one other possibility here that we really haven't come up in discussion much is the initiated measure route. My understanding would be that with the initiated measure, we would still end up in the next biennium before we would be applying for money. By what you say, Ken, would that indicate in your mind that you would prefer to see it attached to a bill rather than go initiated measure? And is there any feeling among the legislators out there whether we are going to create more resentment than it's worth with initiated measure or whether that would be a good way to go?

Ken Anderson: I never mentioned initiated measure. And as far as the other thing that we've talked about today, I think is that if

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the Post War Trust Fund is going to be up next biennium for grabs, I think then we've got to look at this project. If we're going to go in with it now, we're going to have to use the interest earnings from that fund once this gets up and going, as a big part of the funding for it, and not ask for General Funds. And the rents will be considerably higher than what they are now here for sure. And so I think if we're going to go for it, I think we have to make a decision here. We're running out of funds here to keep financing this thing, I'll tell you that right now. Because we never had any plans in the beginning of our budgeting process last time to go through what we've already gone through. But if we're going to do it, we better look at somehow using the Post War Trust Fund. Maybe not even look at using a loan from it at that time, but a straight outright million 200 thousand to build the building and then the residual, the interest, to run it. I think that's the only feasible... Punching out the numbers otherwise, it don't come out. We got to have that little extra. If we can get that so there's no payments to the building, we're looking a lot better. But if we're looking at having to make payments on the building, it's going to be pretty hard to do on self pay. I don't mean to be a defeatist, but we have to look at it realistic. But I think if we're going to do this, I agree with Curt Twete. We've got to do it this biennium or we'll never get funding federally. And then we'll just be chasing ourselves around.

Curt Twete: Ken, having said those comments, how do you propose to run all of this stuff next biennium? I mean that's got to be the question that a legislator is got to be putting through his mind. It costs no money today, but now you've spent your Post War Trust Fund, which incidentally goes into General Fund, a big chunk of that money anyhow. If you're having trouble getting that money out of interest earnings that's going into General Funds, how are you going to get your budget next biennium with that Post War Trust Fund dollars gone as well.

Ken Anderson: You mean my budget or Stanley?

Curt Twete: Well, once you've got it there, it's all your budget, Ken.

Ken Anderson: Well, right now my budget don't have any Post War Trust Fund money in it. Although they've kind-of been trying to force the issue.

Curt Twete: But the reality of it, there's interest money from Post War Trust Fund that goes into General Fund. Is that not true?

Ken Anderson: No. Right now there's a lot of it hanging out because projects we had we were going to spend the interest on are no longer there.

(Not Identified) But then I think part of the question that is coming into this discussion now is what's all that money going to be spent for? Be cause the next thing you're going to hear, is there money there for FTE's for the cemetery? Is that not a true statement?

Ken Anderson: That's a true statement. And I don't know how many bienniums the General needs these FTE's. If he's looking at one biennium or two bienniums, or however long. That's another question in here. It's a very worthy cause by all means too.

General Bjerke: I don't know how long it's going to take us to get enough money in the militia foundation to be self-sufficient. I know now if I don't get any general fund help or any help from the legislature, I'm going to spend half of my principle in this next biennium to operate that place. And that means two bienniums from now, if I don't raise any more money, I'm broke. And then we all got a problem.

Gary Hoffman: Mr. Mullen, I think we have the same thing going here, General Bjerke, if we spend our principle, we don't have anything to go on either.

General Bjerke: I totally understand.

Ken Anderson: Even if we spent a million of it, to build a building in Stanley, there's still going to be a little over \$3 million which will be gaining interest during this whole time as long as no other principle is touched. But Curt's question is exactly what Dave Monson said to me. He said, "Ken, that is all fine and dandy, but what about eight years from now. How are you going to operate it if you don't have General Funds?" And it's going to be damn hard, I'll tell you that.

Gary Hoffman: Mr. Mullen. In the discussion of the committees and the was the administrative dollars asked to be appropriated by the General Funds for the Home. Was that also ACOVA CONFERENCE

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discouraged by those in the committee. You know, we're looking at \$4 million here that we can spend to initiate some kind of action at Stanley and build this structure, and get the structure going, and get the clientele to come in. Is the administrative dollars that we asked for originally, is that also being discouraged by the legislators? Maybe I should ask the legislators that question.

I mean is there any hope that they're going to provide some kind of support for us after the initial expenses have been supposedly covered by the principle?

(Not Identified) That's really tough to answer. I think the only chance that you'd have, is if you agree to use some of the principle.

Joe Novak: To build it.

(Not Identified) Yes.

Joe Novak: Still would have the problem of eight years from now, as Ken Anderson the Commandant has just indicated, sooner or later if you build it, there will be a point and time that you take the Post War Fund, and if the general revenue is not committed, as it has for the last 100 years, to provide the administration of a Veterans Home, we would have a veterans home with no administration. No question on that.

Al Huber: Kind-of the feeling I'm getting over here from our District 13 is that people here that are voting in Bismarck don't like the idea that we've got that \$4 million laying there. And they can't get at it. And that money, I agree totally, the next time around, that money is going to be gone after just as fast as it can be. So I think that if we are going to do something, we're talking about not spending the whole \$4 million, but we're talking about maybe spending a fourth of it, but I think that somewhere down the line there has to be some show on our part that we are going to spend some of that money in order to get some back again.

Suzanne Kime: From what you just said, Al, you are talking about spending the principle, not just the interest money?

Al Huber: Right. Part of the principle on that. I don't know who brought it up before, but that money is going to be up for grabs in two more years, and we are going to be backed the way we were seven years ago. We're going to have to have an initiative out

there, a referendum. We're going have to go back and get that money put back in again because it's going to be gone in two years. Whether we spend it or somebody else spends it, that money is a very, very good chance it's not going to be there in two years anyway.

Ken Anderson: Who has the authority to spend that?

John Mullen: The Chairman again. The law clearly states that the interest from the Post War Trust Fund is to be used for the benefit of veterans. And that the Post War Trust Fund principle is to be invested by the State Treasurer. Unless we get into that \$4 million in such a fashion that we are not spending it, but are indeed borrowing it and paying it back with interest, I don't see how we can access that money.

Ken Anderson: I don't think we can access it.

Bob Evans: Let me reiterate what I've said before. Every time we've suggested or tried to implement a program, the legislature thumbed their nose at us. They've never given us support on anything that we've introduced yet for use on the Trust Fund, whether it be interest or principle.

(Not Identified) Well this suggests to me a "Catch 22".

Bob Evans: You bet. They're making us ride it until the next session so that they can yank it. And that's the way it will be.

Al Huber: I guess maybe I wasn't saying it clearly, but that's what my point is over here. It seems like that there are people out there that that's exactly what the plan is.

Bob Evans: You betcha. That's the underlying plan.

Joe O'Brien: I concur with that. The observation I have made in the legislature is that they are just waiting till that time period is up and then everything under the sun will come out of the Veterans Post War Trust Fund.

Bob Evans: Let me ask Representative Martinson. Again, the General stated that the cemetery, and I'm saying this just to maybe put you on the spot or to try and make it sink in, but the General is asking for help with the cemetery. What are your feelings on the license plate bill? You know, we were looking

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realistically at \$150-\$175,000 a year, and we have no way of getting that now. What are your feelings on that? Were we wrong in doing it that way?

General Bjerke: No, you weren't. I have to tell you honestly, and I think I speak for the other two guys here, we just didn't know anything about that. You know, unless you guys contact us, we don't have time to follow the bills that are in the Senate until they come across. We're so busy with our own bills. So I was not aware that you even had that bill in.

Joe Novak: We had it in. At the time of the hearing it was overwhelmed with an amendment by the Chairman of the Transportation Committee in the Senate. And it just absolutely destroyed it. And that's what went over in the House.

Bob Evans: Representative Martinson, is there a way on the cemetery funding bill to offer an amendment to initiate the veterans license plate to do that, or is that a "no go"? You know, you're looking at a volunteer system here.

Representative Martinson: I couldn't tell you that right now. What's the number of that bill?

Bob Evans: 2474.

Representative Martinson: I think we just voted on that one Thursday or Friday. All I can do is get back to somebody. I couldn't give you an answer right now.

Joe Novak: Representative Martinson, given at this group tonight we'd say, well we'd like to see this thing revisited. Where would we go with it. We can't get it reintroduced. We can't get it attached to anything. As an amendment it would take someone in the vets place to do that. Is that an exercise we should continue..... It looks to me like we're a far reach right now from having an opportunity to get something out of it, but I'd like to see it happen. But I just don't seem to be very optimistic at this point and time without your support or somebody standing up and saying, yes, we'll help you do it.

Representative Martinson: Just a couple of thoughts. I would say you've got to use your principle. And I know this really upsets the cart, but there is a lot of legislators that didn't ever think it should be at Stanley. Not that they have any more knowledge,

they probably have less than any of you do. But I know there was a lot of interest in using Heartview, and I know that that was offered to you. If you decide to go for something, you may want to change your site too.

John Mullen: I need to respond to that. I have to respond to that.

Representative Martinson: Now that isn't coming from me personally so don't get me....

John Mullen: I understand what you're saying. But because we've heard this and we're afraid that this will come back to life again. Heartview and the money it would have taken to modify it to make it suitable for veterans use would have been more expensive than to built in Stanley. Furthermore, if you look at the demographics of this situation, Stanley, geographically, was much the ideal location to put the next veterans home in. So we feel very comfortable that we made the right decision there. And we certainly gave Heartview every chance to make their case and they didn't.

Jim Johnson: I live in Mandan and I hear a lot of that. " Why put it way up in Stanley? Why not here in Mandan?" and so on. And I think that if.... I agree that Stanley was the best choice. I was part of that decision-making process. But I think that the public needs a lot of education if we're going to convince a lot of people that Stanley is the proper place for the facility. I'm convinced, but I hear it a lot of times, "Why not Mandan?"

Ken Anderson: Can I interject something.

John Mullen: Yes.

Ken Anderson: I think that the Committee was very open. We had 19 or 20 applications that were looked at very carefully. And when the whole thing slimmed down, there were six different places that went to Carrington. The Administrative Committee's job was to do exactly what was done, and that was to select a site. And at that time Mandan was on an equal footing as everybody else, and they didn't do a good job of selling it, and maybe that's unfortunate, but you know I think the Committee did exactly what they should have done. And I think if we went out and supported Mandan now, why did we bother going through all this work in the beginning?

Gary Hoffman: I was on the Committee too. In fact, I went touring with John Mullen and Paul Aaberg, and Mandan is a very fine facility. But the problem we had at the final presentation in Carrington was that there was no money available to tie this thing together so that we could say, "Yes, this is the facility that would do the trick. This is what we need, etc." We didn't have the finances to be wielding that kind of power at the time. We went on what the legislators told us that we should look for, and the Coordinating Council and that was that. I think to be fair to that Committee that was in Carrington, we need to recognize that, yes, the public needs to be educated. And, yes, maybe there's some legislators who need to be educated exactly what took place at that Committee.

Paul Aaberg: You know, Mandan and Bismarck want that facility. And yet they never gave us any incentives to the Committee at that meeting in Carrington.

(Not Identified) That's right, Paul.

Ken Evenson: We didn't even know who owned that place. All there was was a Realtor there, and service officer from Morton County, and Ray Appelt. And all they were trying to do was get rid of a "dead dog". They never give no incentives, nothing else, we didn't even know who owned that place.

(Not Identified) We didn't even find out what the amount was against it.

(Not Identified) Basically, they said, here's the building and here's the town. Put it here.

Joe Novak: Let me add to that too. I talked to the Committee from Mandan three or four days before the meeting, before they made their presentation, and they came to that particular presentation site at Carrington before the 15 members of the Administrative Committee, and they didn't even have a lock-in on the price of the building. They were just picking numbers out of the air. They didn't have an option, they didn't have a price, they didn't even have a commitment. How can you go to the legislature with that kind of an open bag. In addition to that, it was not a good location.

(Not Identified) It was in a residential area, and we couldn't use all that office space, and then we couldn't have it there either.

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Joe Novak: It was very limited..... With the city code you can't do anything. That was one of the hang-ups too.

Kent Anderson: Administrative Committee, we done a lot of hard work on that, and I don't think we should be dancing around, talking about Mandan. If we're going to do something, let's stick with Stanley, and lets go full bore. But on this Veterans Trust Fund, if we're going to use that money for the home, and then the Guard needs some for the cemetery, and then they want to take the money out for the bonus. My understanding is the number one priority was the veterans home and I think that's where that money should go first, myself. And I do think too, if we would have dropped Grafton before this session started, we would have had a better chance to get Stanley.

(Not Identified) Harvey Tallackson screwed that up for us.

Bob Evans: My representative from Williston said the same thing. He says we should have never went in with Grafton on that. We should have taken the "bull by the horn" and pulled it out of there and introduced just one location. Period.

Ken Evenson: So I think we better go ahead and decide what we're going to do and I'll go along with Curt. If we're going to go, we've got to go full force. But let's not be talking about different things. Let's start with the veterans home and then go from there and get this thing done with. And I don't know if we can get on. Isn't this session done the end of April?

John Mullen: Well, Ken, part of the reason for this phone call, I think, was the conversation that was had with Representative Laughlin and the fact that he was working with Representative Martinson, and I think for us to have any decisions as to which way to go, I think it requires those guys, you know, they're offering to find a vehicle to put this onto. They're asking where we're going to go with this thing. I think we ought to be graciously accepting their help if they can tell us that we have a chance of doing it. If it's an exercise in futility, I think each and every one of us have got better things to be doing. But we've got a Democrat there, we've got a Republican there, both of these gentlemen sit on the Appropriations Committee. They're going to have to tell us that they need our body count, but that they can make that work. And I think that's what I hear those gentlemen offering to do. I think it's above and beyond the call of duty from what their particular jobs are, but I think we ought to be

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prepared to take their advice and council, whichever way it would go here. Realizing, legislators, that we were basically told when we left Bismarck, that if we thought we got beat up in the Senate, wait till you get to the House, because of what Long Term Care had done in their homework, and they did it early on. Having said that, we're wide open to advice from council from Martinson and Laughlin, and pardon me, I skipped a name here, but the other gentlemen on the House Appropriations Committee there. If you guys think it's there, I think you'll get a lot of support out of the veterans in making it work. But we have really had our toes stepped on a lot of times and we haven't been beat up on facts and figures, we've been beat up on rumors and innuendos. And that's what has this group really upset.

Richard Olek: This is Olek from Fargo, Coordinating Council President, and I understand we've got Representative Bernstein there with us.

Representative Bernstein: Yes, that's right.

Richard Olek: Representative Bernstein, I guess on the Senate side we really got beat up in the Fargo area, and you being from Fargo, we only had one Senator, Mathern, that went our way. And is that the feeling among the Fargo representatives, or do you have any read on those at all. Because that's where we really took the hits from. If you take a look at the votes, we really got hit pretty hard in the metropolitan areas, Bismarck, Fargo, and Grand Forks area. And, of course, they have a great number of representatives too. Has Long Term Care really went after you people?

Representative Bernstein: You know which way Donna Nalewaja went?

(Not Identified) She voted against us.

Representative Bernstein: Well, what you gentlemen have got here tonight is a financial situation and what it is in North Dakota, if fellows would be willing to help out like with the cemetery and that kind of the "stick in the carrot" thing, I would say that your chances of doing something would be a little bit better if you yourself show that, well, we're going to give a little bit and maybe it will help. Now that's just my own feeling and comments though.

Joe Novak: What I heard Representative Martinson say was that this has little, or any, opportunity to get through, unless we ask them to turn over the Post War Trust Fund. But even given that, to do it in this legislative session, it still would take two-thirds vote. Isn't that right, Representative Martinson?

Representative Martinson: Well, I didn't say you had to give it up. I just said that you would have to take that million dollars out of the Post War Trust Fund. That's my gut feeling.

Joe Novak: Wouldn't that take two-thirds vote?

Representative Martinson: Well, there's some talk it can pass with a simple majority as long as the bill doesn't take affect until next November.

Joe Novak: Well, that would be a question that isn't yet answered.

Representative Martinson: Well, it probably isn't going to be a problem if you wouldn't fight it. You know, the opposition would come from you guys and ladies.

Joe Novak: And if Long Term Care Association doesn't give a damn whether we get it out of there or where we get it, then the issue still remains if they have the same influence they've had for the last four years with the legislature, then it really is an exercise in futility. And we would be actually asked to provide 25 percent or half of the Trust Fund, whatever is necessary, and open that gate, and then turn around and get beat all to hell with Long Term Care Association, cause that isn't going to change their minds any.

(Not Identified) Let me ask a question, and I don't want to "open a can of worms" like I did on the deal with Mandan to keep you on for another 15 minutes. But just a yes or no would probably work. Did you look at the possibility of buying an existing nursing home?

John Mullen: The answer is yes. We went around and we looked, not only at the possibility of buying, but also of leasing. And when you get down to basic care, the problem is that we would need to essentially buy a skilled care unit and turn it over into to basic care function. And that most of the skilled care units would not meet V.A. code. So we did extensively went around and took a look in many facilities around the western part of the state, and

really, the only facility that we have looked at that we could get into in any economical fashion was the Developmental Center in Grafton. And that's because it was made right in the first place.

Suzanne Kime: There was one comment made a little while back that indicated that gave me the impression our senators and our other representatives perhaps are feeling that the veterans aren't willing to give. Well, our veteran community is the one that was willing to build. We weren't asking for any money at that time to build a facility. Is that my misunderstanding or someone else's?

John Mullen: No, it's not your misunderstanding. The bill stated that no money for construction would come from the General Fund. We never got the opportunity to make our case in the House, so that may be one reason why the bill isn't as clear to everyone as it might be.

Suzanne Kime: Well, that's what I think we have to do is make things really clear, because I really feel if we're going down, we might as well go down fighting. But with all the accurate facts known instead of the inaccurate ones that were placed against us because of the skilled nursing home.

Al Huber: Getting back to the bottom line of this thing. If we want to get it back in there to get revoted on again, is there a chance to do that?

John Mullen: By attaching it to another bill.

Al Huber: But is there someone willing to attach it to another bill or are we here talking about what we could have done or should have done or would do. But can we do it?

Representative Laughlin: That's why we're here tonight. We will attach it to something, but we have to have a lot of roadwork from you folks and we got to do some work ourselves. It can be done. That's why we're here tonight. To change the subject, can we talk on cemetery for a while?

(Not Identified) Yes, please.

Representative Laughlin: Is there any support of putting some money in a trust fund on the cemetery?

Gary Hoffman: Legislative Laughlin, are you talking principle here or interest now?

Representative Laughlin: Principle.

John Mullen: You're saying take like a million dollars of the principle and transfer it to the cemetery foundation?

Representative Laughlin: Yes, and that would make that sound. And you will have a showplace out of this world in North Dakota. That would really improve that fund. And I don't know what your intentions are. I think we give some time to that idea instead of just talking nursing homes tonight too. I'd like to talk that a little bit.

Joe Novak: I'm in agreement with the idea of resources for the veterans cemetery, but the veterans license plate bill is still alive and very doable and, you know, suppose even raise that from \$5 to \$10 a plate. But before we start to dip into the Post War Trust Fund for cemetery and hand over veteran waiver for education, I would like to see that veterans license plate go because of nonissue as far as the veterans are concerned. It's just permitting us to do what isn't going to cost the state anything. Generate money for the veterans cemetery. Why not?

Representative Bernstein: What was just proposed would have to go through Transportation and what we're talking, even with a building of the Home in Stanley, could go through appropriations, whether the bill is still alive yet.

John Mullen: Bob Evans, do you want to respond to that. You seem to be closest to the license plate bill.

Bob Evans: I just can't bring to my mind the black wall that we're running up against on our original bill. What would your feelings be Representatives, if there was a million dollars placed into the cemetery fund. Would you then create a veterans license plate for \$5? We could have a veterans license plate like the National Guard license plate.

Representative Martinson: We spent ten years trying to get a National Guard license plate. And then it was by a couple of votes. But let me just ask you something. You may be trying to get this to a close. We need to know, the three of us anyway, if you're willing to go into your principle. If you're not, then

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it's a dead issue. If you are, we can get back whoever you designate in a couple of days and tell you how it might go in the House. You've got to make that decision.

(Not Identified) Representative Martinson, let me mention one thing. That right now you're talking to the wrong group when you're talking dealing with the Post War Trust Fund. You need the full Coordinating Council to back it also.

Suzanne Kime: Correct.

(Not Identified) And you only have a couple of the members from the Coordinating Council present.

Representative Martinson: What's your group called?

John Mullen: We're the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs and we're the governing body for the Veterans Home and the Department of Veterans Affairs. And further, we administer the money from the Post War Trust Fund. But I would run back into the same problem. Could I go to Kathi Gilmore and say that we want to take a million dollars in principle out? She has never been sympathetic to that idea before, nor has any other state treasurer. Not the way it's written into the Century Code.

(Not Identified) It's against the law.

Representative Martinson: That's my point, folks. Kathi Gilmore has nothing to do with it.

Suzanne Kime: She's following the law up there.

(Not Identified) Yes, but we're talking to the people, or some of the people, that make up the laws.

Representative Martinson: If your group or groups say that you want to give us a million dollars of your Trust Fund, for the nursing home, it's our job to get the votes to pass it. That's just how it is. Like I said, we used to have 3 and one-half million dollars in the National Guard tuition waiver trust fund and it's all gone because it was taken away. So if you want us to look at that, we'll do it. But you have to make a decision if you want to go into the principle.

John Mullen: You're saying if we are willing to go into the principle for a veterans home in Stanley, that we also must express a willingness to dig into that principle, say for the cemetery foundation, and then it will be used much more sympathetically. You're asking, in effect, our opinion as to whether we would be willing to do that then.

Representative Martinson: I don't want to be in a position cause I can't trade votes like that. It wouldn't be appropriate. But you have to make that decision first if you want to give up some of that principle.

Joe O'Brien: We do not have the authority to give up part of that principle. But one of the positions that the cemetery probably could be funded out of the Army from Post War Trust Fund.

Curt Twete: Let me ask you again the question in case I missed it. The interest from the Post War Trust Fund, how is that all being spent at this stage of the game?

Ken Anderson: Right now, to my knowledge, there's nothing being spent out of interest, unless the Commissioner has, he probably will refund that \$100,000 in emergency grant money, I would assume. And other than that, Commissioner, do you have any other use for that money?

Ray Harkema: No, I'm looking at the way the budget session is going right now. I'm going to be short \$184,000; \$100,000 of that is the grant money.

Ken Anderson: Okay, \$184,000 is taken. There's probably about another \$200,00 left when it is all said and done. So if we want to fund the general for \$110,000, I think that's the other question here.

(Not Identified) Right. And my comment would be if you've got enough money in that Post War Trust Fund interest that is not designated for something, that it would fund two FTE's for the cemetery. And the bottom line, gentlemen and ladies, is this is a veterans cemetery. Let's not put it all on the General. This is a veteran cemetery. If we want to spend some of that Post War Trust Fund interest money for that, I would think that would be an awfully good use for that money. Does that answer your question, Representative Martinson?

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Representative Martinson: That's really a good start. And then you still have to decide what you want to do with regards to your home.

(Not Identified) General, the two FTE's, are we talking approximately \$100,000.

(Not Identified) \$130,000 is the total bill for the two FTE's.

Ken Anderson: Boy, I'd like to work for the Guard.

Joe Novak: I hear what you're saying about \$130,000 two FTE's, that's fine. But at the same time we're talking about eliminating the Post War Trust Fund. Right? That goose that's laying that golden egg every two years isn't going to be there any more. And so what we're talking about for the cemetery is a one-time shot. He'll have two FTE's this time, and next time the General will have to go to the Appropriations Committee and ask for two additional positions, and then that will be a problem. If they'd just do the license plate deal, this thing would be a self-perpetuating fund. You know, the minute you kill the goose, the interest available dollars are going to be gone. And so you're going to have two positions for one biennium and that's it.

(Not Identified) Joe, wait again. Are we not talking on that Post War Trust Fund the fact that we would be using principle money that would be a form of the law?

Joe Novak: No, no. That's never been done before, but I'm thinking as long as we borrow our own money and pay it back. As money now, the Post War Trust Fund, is being money borrowed by the money market. And our logic was why not loan it to ourselves, make our own commitment, and pay it back through the rank or the fees of the Veterans Home. The principle that we had borrowed, the part that we borrowed from principle would be used to build a home. Correspondingly, Curt, what we could do is we could, I suppose, borrow money from the Trust Fund, to fund the positions for the cemetery, but still it would have to be paid back. Once you start to talk about getting rid of the \$4 million, then you automatically get rid of the potentially \$400,000 every two years for the interest. And in a way of a \$100,000 grant program that the legislature did not appropriate out of general revenue, this was very, very effective, very productive. We were told that we would lose the interest if we didn't find a need for the interest. Well, we've done that, the part that the legislature let us have,

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that they didn't put into general appropriations for the Veterans Home and the administration. But first, it was the interest that we had a hell of a time legislating to get permission to use. And that will all be done when you get rid of the Veterans Post War Trust Fund. Then it will be all general revenue. This is all it is is a propaganda deal...

Ken Evenson: What I've been hearing now is either do or die. And if we don't use the money now and try to get this stuff going, we're going to lose it the next session anyway. So let's go forward. And I'll go for using that interest on the Veterans Cemetery and I'll go for putting that \$5 thing on the license plate because then that can generate itself function. But to get it going then to help the gentlemen at the capitol to get this bill back on the target for Stanley, I'll go along with it.

Dean Bayer: I'll go along with Ken on the interest off the Post War Trust Fund money to go for a veterans cemetery. But I'm not against taking money out of the Post War Trust Fund to put in... If we use that up, then we're done with it cause we won't have nothing left after that's all gone.

Joe Novak: You know, gentlemen, that this meeting today is of the Administrative Committee. It is not our responsibility to make recommendations on the Post War Trust Fund. The Post War Trust Fund was the responsibility and the effort of the Veterans Coordinating Council. Now you might approach it this way, because the conversation will cost us more than the state appropriations is going to spend on this telephone conference call, but until we find out what kind of reception we would get. We have three legislators here, let them talk it over in the legislature. Delay some of our comments, and in a few days get back to the President of the Council, who is on this telephone conference call, Rick Olek, and Bob Evans, who is the secretary-treasurer of the Council, and see if they think it is viable. Then let the Council consider it. I am a little reluctant to have a Council take action first, and then not have anything productive happen in the legislature, which very likely may not happen. In that giving, you've done one essential things. You've said, "Well, we admit that the Trust Fund is up for grabs and we're sorry we didn't get some of it." And I'm against that. I think they know where we're coming from. If they want to make a presentation and they find sympathy, and I know they're not particularly going to be able to have this happen. They have talk to the hierarchy of both caucuses and then find out if it is doable. And if they tell us

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how it is doable, then it won't take long to get the Coordinating Council to address it. But we don't have the responsibility nor the authority to make a decision to deal with the Trust Fund.

Skip Wing: I was just going to interject here too. Another thing that isn't being brought up, is there some other funds on the table for the Stanley home? I don't know if you want to bring that up. I don't know if these other legislators are aware of that.

John Mullen: I think that that clearly is an issue. Clearly is an issue, especially in light of the Heartview situation where those funds were not available. Certainly I think, Skip, go ahead and run with that ball a little bit.

Skip Wing: Okay. I'm not on the Administrative Committee but I have served with them before. I'm from Stanley. I gave the Stanley presentation and I'm kind-of their point man on this with the legislature. There's a bunch of surrounding areas, Stanley area, and the city of Minot through their Magic Fund, city of Williston through their Star Fund, that brought in some funds into this thing. And there's, if you look at certain type of developments, and so on, but originally we were looking at about \$421,000 for developing the area and for having some funds put toward furnishings or whatever needed to be done to finish the home. And, depending upon how you build this thing, and depending upon what you do, there could be several hundred thousand dollars there that would be available to put against either the principle, or to help with the interest, or whatever you wanted to do with it. But that needs to be addressed too. And that could be brought forward if we have to say, hey, where is the veterans commitment. We can start bringing forward money in hundred thousand dollar lots that way. And that doesn't include some funds that would be available from veterans across the state once the thing got up and running. But those are phantom dollars. But there's some firm dollars here.

Suzanne Kime: Thank you for your input on that. That sounded good.

Joe Novak: Let me make a motion, because that's the nature of our business here, but I want to make a motion that we do., Like I said before, let's ask the representatives that are sitting in on this telephone conference call tonight, to present our feelings, cause they're from the legislature, and in the next few days give

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us some perimeters that they feel are necessary for the Council to act liaison to make this doable. And then let the Council, through Rick Olek, the President of the Council, bring it to the Council and then they can act on it.

(Not Identified) Joe, why should we let those legislators do our leg work. Well, John Mullen, don't you think we should have a meeting out in Bismarck as soon as we can. Could we get everybody together. How about you, Rick? Could you get the Coordinating Council members together and the Administrative Committee and then meet with some of our legislators on this too?

Rick Olek: I can certainly get on the phone and basically set a date. Whether everybody could make it, I couldn't say, of course. If you wanted to have a meeting...

(Not Identified) How about you, John?

John Mullen: Our group is here tonight.

(Not Identified) Yes, I know that.

John Mullen. And I will...

(Not Identified) Don't you think we should do that rather than let these guys do our leg work for us. Let's get out there and show them that we mean business and talk to our legislators and make some kind-of decision.

(Not Identified) Now we've got to propose a motion, incidentally.

Suzanne Kime: That's right.

John Mullen: Second on the motion?

Mike Vandrovec: Second.

John Mullen: Discussion on the motion. And apparently we're already in discussion.

Representative Martinson: Let me interject something here. I think that Leroy and I can check with Republicans, Bruce can check with the Democrats. We can have a pretty good idea for you tomorrow on how... We just need to talk to a couple of key people, and if they aren't going to go with us, you don't need to

come to Bismarck, cause it wouldn't make any difference. But if you could just.. we could just call one person some time tomorrow and give them a thought on it. We can get a drift in a hurry.

Gary Hoffman: I think that one person should be Olek, the Chairperson of the Coordinating Council, being the Coordinating Council has to make the decision anyway.

(Not Identified) Our motion is on the floor right now is only a recommendation, nothing else.

Joe Novak: In defense of a motion. The point is I was proposing in the motion about an option to bring to the key people. Without that you can hold a dozen meetings in Bismarck at this point and time and all you'll do is spend a lot of Council and Administrative Committee money. So I stand with a motion. And I think that we have a generous offer from Representative Martinson and Representative Laughlin and the other representative. I don't know the other gentlemen's name, he's not one of my representatives. But if they will do what they have indicated now in this conference call, I think it's an opening that we ought to encourage and give them an opportunity to work on.

(Not Identified) I think that's a very good idea.

(Not Identified) I'll go along with that, Joe, if they're willing to do that. I just thought we were asking an awful lot of them guys to do our leg work for us. But if they're willing to do that, I'll go along with that.

Curt Twete: That's one of the reasons for the phone call. These people are willing to do that. They put these fellows on the line to work for us, and I think we ought to at least utilize their volunteerism on this one.

Ken Evenson: I'll call for the question. I think everybody's in favor or it.

Joe O'Brien: I just have one question on that.

John Mullen: Go ahead.

Joe O'Brien: Are we asking these gentlemen and go in and say that maybe we're willing to give some of our principle on this thing for something in return, or are these gentlemen going to go in and

say, well, there is a license plate issue, there is money from Stanley and from Williston, from Minot, and so forth. Is it just going to be an either or and come back that either you guys spend the money or we're not interested. Or how is this thing going to come down now then?

Joe Novak: Al Huber, the motion was that they bring the feeling of this particular telephone conference call, and then let us know what the minimum standards would be before the legislature may even consider a reintroduction or ...

Al Huber: Okay, but the motion said that everything all encompasses. My feeling I was getting there was that these gentlemen were going to go back in and just say, hey these guys were compromising. What do we want them to do?

Joe Novak: I think that it's just a matter of them telling us what the perimeters need to be for them to consider it.

Al Huber: All right.

John Mullen: For the legislators present, does that discussion that was just held pretty much hold up with the way you feel on that?

Response: Yes.

John Mullen: Okay. I'm going to call a question. Those in favor of the motion signify by saying "aye".

Response: Aye.

John Mullen: Opposed? Hearing no opposition, the motion has passed.

Bruce Laughlin: Is Curt still here yet?

Curt Twete: Yes, I'm still here, Bruce.

Bruce Laughlin: Late Friday afternoon when I went to.... I heard that there was some rumbling that Tallackson is working on billing it on the senate side. Have you heard anything?

Curt Twete: I think he mentioned that at that forum the other day. I haven't been close enough to that to know. I'm sure it's

probably not dead. But that comes in and out of his pocket many times.

Bob Evans: I'm hearing the same thing.

Skip Wing: Can I address that a little bit? I spoke with Senator Meyer Kinnoin Saturday at his home here, and he talked a little bit about this bill that Senator Tallackson is putting in. And what he is trying to get put in is using the Grafton facility for assisted living, basic care, and so on. It is not related, as I understand it, and Senator Kinnoin understood it, it is not related to the veterans. It's a separate facility, not related to the veterans issue whatsoever.

John Mullen: I'd like to interject on that too. That is also, by my reading of the bill, is the way I read the bill. Did you not find that to be the same, Ken, that they would be working in cooperation with, but not under control of, the Administrative Committee?

Ken Anderson: I didn't see that part of the bill. All I saw was a draft from the 14th.

John Mullen: Well, that's what I'm talking about is the draft from the 14th.

Ken Anderson: I'll see if I can find it here.

Rick Olek: On this call-back from the representatives, now that the motion was made, and it passed. I am going to be in South Dakota for the next three days so it would be difficult for them to get a hold of me. I would suggest that they possibly call you back and relay this information, or Bob Evans, I guess.

John Mullen: I was going to suggest Bob Evans. Even when you're around, Rick, you're not the easiest guy to get a hold of all the time. And, of course, Bob has both a home and office number that he's fairly accessible at. I'd be glad to give my number as well. But I just don't want to end up being put in the position of doing independent negotiation on issues that I have not had direction from the Administrative Committee on. And I think I said that to you guys before, I just don't want to be put in that position.

(Not Identified) Have we put that issue to bed? Can we move on to the next?

(Not Identified) I think so. Yes.

Joe O'Brien: I want to thank the legislators for the generous offer to investigate this matter again. Thank you.

John Mullen: I thank you, too.

Joe Novak: The old memory comes back again. But this was the same Bruce Laughlin, if I'm not mistaken, that received a recognition award from the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council a number of years ago for his exceptional efforts on behalf of the veterans of North Dakota. I think his credentials are well known for those of you who weren't around then. Am I right, Mr. Laughlin?

Representative Laughlin: Yes, that's right.

Joe Novak: All right, that's the close of my comments.

(Not Identified) I think we're going to check out now.

(Not Identified) Thanks there, guys. We appreciate it.

Ken Anderson: John Mullen, do you want to hit that Washington issue real quick.

John Mullen: You explain your position. I didn't get in on much of this.

Ken Anderson: Every year we have our annual conference in Washington, DC, Midwinter Conference of the National Association of State Veterans Homes, and we've gone every year. I just need for the audit purposes, I need permission to go.

Ken Evenson: This is Ken Evenson, Subcommittee Chairman of the Veterans Home. I make the motion that we allow our Commandant to go to this.

John Mullen: Second?

(?) Second.

John Mullen: Discussion on the motion?

Joe Novak: You said, "we", that "we" go. Meaning he and his wife?

Ken Anderson: No, no. Actually I'm getting big enough for two of us. It's just me.

Joe Novak: Anyhow, I wasn't sure what "we" meant.

Ken Anderson: Just me.

John Mullen: Okay. Any other discussion on the motion?

Reponse: (None)

John Mullen: Those in favor, signify by saying "aye".

Response: Aye.

John Mullen: Opposed?

Response (None)

Ken Anderson: I can go.

John Mullen: Ray, do you have anything you would like to discuss on your budgetary shortfall that you think is pertinent to the..

Ray Harkema: It's still in Committee. I was up there again Thursday and Friday. Same as the \$50,000 bonus. When they testified that it's illegal for the legislature to do this and that. And they appointed a committee to look into this on who can really make the decision on the Trust Fund. The committee is still meeting on it, but on Friday, Legislative prepared a draft of the Post War Trust Fund. And they had included in there to the Adjutant General's office, veterans compensation \$60,000, that's Senate Bill 2475. So that's the indication of the intentions what they're going to do. We can fight for that, On my bill, we don't seem to be getting any where. Joe and I have gone up to OMB a couple of times and we talked to everybody until we're blue in the face. They just don't want to hear it. Now I'm at the point where I'm begging just to get the FTE back that they took away. And I stayed at the part that I could get partial funding. My intention there was that we're being in the.....

(Tape ran out)

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Conference call adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Approved By: 
Ken Anderson, Commandant

/sf