

**ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**MINUTES**

**1:00PM**

**JANUARY 27, 2006**

**COMFORT SUITES, BISMARCK ND**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Jenson. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

Roll Call:

Present:

Daryl Beard	Dave Hilleren	Dean Overby
Carl Bloomquist	Rudy Jenson	Rick Ryan
Wally Buckingham	Orletta Kilen	Lyle Schuchard
Larry Dakken	Arnold Maier	Gary Skarphol
	Jerry Meske	Dave Vandergon

Absent:

John Hanson

***Motion by Wally Buckingham to accept minutes from September 30/October 1, 2005 meeting, second by Larry Dakken. Motion passed unanimously.***

Speakers:

MG Michael Haugen, Adjutant General, National Guard

- Update of the troops overseas and in-state troops.
  - Aviation unit is in Bosnia
  - Air guard is in Iraq and Kuwait
  - About 400 ND will be activated
  - Discussed ND Air Guard's new flying mission and new role in unmanned aircraft program

Maren Daley, Director, Job Service North Dakota

- Update on opportunities through Job Service such as medical, housing, unemployment benefits.
- Gave examples of two veterans that they have helped in the past year.
- Fargo Job fair will be open to veterans
  - Focus is to assist veterans
  - Scheduled for Saturday February 18, 2006
  - Approximately 20 employers interested in participating

Committee recessed for break

Meeting reconvened

**Report from the Veterans Home Governing Board – Chairman Braaten**

- Meeting with the staff went well

- Will be addressing staff at least once a year
- Neal Asper will be resigning as of June 30, 2006
- Issues at the Home
  - Budget is right on
  - **Veterans Home Report** - Neal Asper, Administrator
    - Review of governing board meeting
    - State Survey
    - Received one level G deficiency
    - Prescriptions went up \$1.00 just like the VA
    - Medicare part D did not effect Home
    - Due to VA per diem revenue, skilled care resident bill reduced by \$20 per day.
    - Medical Service contract will be out for bid next week, effective March 1, 2006

**Stand Down 2005 Report** - Jerry Meske,

- Held on September 23, 2005
- Approximately 43 veterans, 4 spouses and 1 child were assisted.
- Jerry thanked the committee for all its help.
- PWTF money should be reimbursed by the end of next week.
- Plans are to do a Stand Down next year but will need more volunteers

June Veit, Senator Conrad's Office

- Veterans Stand Down was very good. Says she was very "moved".
- Just thanked everyone for the opportunity to work with the veterans

Chairman Jenson reviewed a letter from Job Service.

Discussion on whether PWTF should be used to help move veterans out of state.

***Motion by Jerry Meske that a committee be appointed to develop guidelines on PWTF dollars used by Job Service, second by Skarphol. Motion passed unanimously.***

Rick Ryan, Lyle Schuchard, and Jerry Meske will serve on the committee.

Chairman Jenson announced Governor Hoeven appointed Lyle Schuchard as a non-voting member on the Workforce Development Council. Mr. Schuchard spoke about how companies are having problems keeping workers in ND because of pay.

Congressman Earl Pomeroy spoke on the following:

- the federal budget and war in Iraq
- commended the active troops and all who have served in the Iraqi war
- presented John Jacobson with a flag, plaque and letters from himself and Senators Kent Conrad and Byron Dorgan.

Ron Otto, Morton/Oliver County Veterans Service Officer, spoke about the grant program. Suggested grant program income guidelines mirror the pension program income guidelines and asked the committee to research this issue. Mark Landis, Burleigh CVSO, spoke about the possibility of grant program matching the income and the pension limits, as well as reviewing the assets amount allowed. Daryl Beard pointed out the pension program income is less than the grant income limitations.

Chairman Jenson announced full committee meeting would resume at 9:00 am Saturday, January 29, 2006.

Committee recessed for subcommittee meetings.

January 28, 2006

Meeting called to order by Chairman Jenson. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

Roll Call

Present:

Daryl Beard	Dave Hilleren	Dean Overby
Carl Bloomquist	Rudy Jenson	Rick Ryan
Wally Buckingham	Orletta Kilen	Lyle Schuchard
Larry Dakken	Arnold Maier	Gary Skarphol
	Jerry Meske	Dave Vandergon

Absent:

John Hanson

ND Veterans Coordinating Council - Bob Evans

- Donated \$1500 to the veterans history **project** in July.
- Waiting for response from D.O.T. about getting the word “veteran” put on license plates.
- Looking at a number of different state programs for veterans through the different organizations.
- Purple Heart Memorial. There is an unpaid bill for the ground/cement work. The Council will send a letter to the organizations’ adjutants asking for donations.
- Next meeting scheduled for March 24, 2006.

**Postwar Trust Fund Committee Report** – Wally Buckingham, Chairman  
Committee recommends a “No” on the request for funding of the Purple Heart Memorial.

***Motion by Gary Skarphol to accept the committee report, second by Orletta Kilen.***

***Motion passed - 13 yeas, 1 nay – Beard.*** [MOTION #1]

**Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs Report** – Gary Skarphol, Chairman  
Overview of committee meeting.

Hardship Grant Program

Mr. Skarphol told committee commissioner's office surveyed CVSOs for their input on the grant amount. Department received responses from over 70% of the counties. Majority responded to increase dental grant to \$750 and hearing grant to \$1000.

***Motion by Rick Ryan to accept the proposed grant increases: raise income level for veteran +1 to \$1,200; and increase dental to \$750 and hearing to \$1,000, second by Daryl Beard. Motion passed unanimously.***

Department Policies

***Motion by Carl Bloomquist to revise Bill Consolidation policy to read, "Veterans Aid Loan is not to be used to consolidate credit card bills", second by Dave Vandergon. Motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion by Rick Ryan accept Payment Priority Disbursement policy, second by Wally Buckingham. Motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion by Rick Ryan to accept Service Charge – Veterans Aid Loan policy, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion by Rick Ryan to accept Number of Active Loans Allowed – Veterans Aid Loan policy as revised, "A new veteran's aid loan may not be used to pay off a current unpaid veteran's aid loan" and to bring the policy back to the next meeting as an agenda item open for discussion, second by Dean Overby. Motion passed – 10 yeas, 4 nays – Beard, Bloomquist, Dakken, Kilen***  
[MOTION #2]

**Suggested Response to Audit Recommendation 2-5:**

Information obtained from various states which have conservatorship programs appeared to indicate costs associated with such a program require substantial additional funding and staffing.

Information was given to Attorney General's office for review and possible inclusion in their proposed 2005 guardianship legislation, as such would appear to make the best use of resources, both financial and human. We were told it would not be specifically included in the legislation, but if proposed bill became law, efforts would be taken to include conservatorships through policies and rules.

A substantially reduced version of the bill was adopted. We were told conservatorships would probably not be included in any policies or rules at this time. We were further told conservatorships may possibly be included in future legislation.

It is the position of the Administrative Committee on Veterans' Affairs that the Department of Veterans' Affairs not implement a conservatorship program, but instead, continue efforts to include such a program in the state's guardianship program.

It is further the policy of the Administrative Committee on Veterans' Affairs that no employee of the department, including the commissioner, may serve as a conservator or guardian.

Committee recommends adoption of this policy on conservatorships.

***Motion by Daryl Beard to adopt the suggested response to Recommendation 2-5, second by Dave Vandergon. Motion passed unanimously.***

### **Strategic Plan / Operational Plan**

Updates given by Commissioner Hanson.

Report of annual evaluation of Commissioner Hanson was accepted and approved by the committee. Evaluation has been agreed upon by the Commissioner and signed by Chairman Jenson.

***Motion by Arnold Maier to accept the evaluation of Commissioner Hanson, second by Wally Buckingham. Motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion by Arnold Maier to accept committee report, second by Wally Buckingham. Motion passed unanimously.***

### **Department of Veterans Affairs –**

Commissioner Hanson discussed the following:

- Potential nursing home project with Long Term Care to identify and work with veterans in long term care facilities
- National Guard and Department's cooperative program
- Trip training
- Mitch Olson hired as state veterans' benefit specialist in Fargo office
- Potential cooperative program regarding eyewear
- Jerry Meske thanked Commissioner for the good work done in getting information on veteran's preference out to the different employers.

### **Postwar Trust Fund**

Chairman Jenson went through the data on the Postwar Trust Fund report from the State Treasurer's office.

Next meeting

Scheduled for March 24 & 25, 2006 in Bismarck, ND, starting at 1:00 pm.

BJ Brazil, President, CVSO Association, thanked the committee for the opportunity to attend these meetings.

Motion to adjourn, seconded, passed.

Submitted by

Rick Ryan  
Secretary