

**MINUTES**

**OCTOBER 24, 2003**

**1:00pm**

**COMFORT INN  
BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Brad Maasjo. Pledge of Allegiance said, followed by a moment of silence for the POW/MIAs and the men and women serving overseas.

Roll call:

Members **PRESENT:**

Brad Maasjo	Gerald Balzer	Daryl Beard
Gene Bernhardt	Carl Bloomquist	John Coyne
Larry Dakken	Rudy Jenson	Orletta Kilen
Ted Krogen	Rick Ryan	Gary Skarphol
Robert Volk		

Members **ABSENT:**

Paul Smathers	Ken Vatne
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**Others in Attendance**

Ray Harkema, Commissioner, Veterans Affairs	Eric Monson, NOVUS
Neal Asper, Administrator, Veterans Home	Joe Novak, Governing Board
Bob Hanson, President, Veterans Coordinating Council	
Becky Keller and Jason Wald, State Auditor's Office	

Minutes of July 18, 2003 meeting.

*Motion by Skarphol to accept the minutes as written, second by Beard. Motion carried unanimously.*

Chairman Maasjo spoke on an idea to create other subcommittees such as: Trust Fund, Legislative. This will be discussed later in the meeting. Appointments to the Appeals Committee are Gene Bernhardt and Rick Ryan, to replace outgoing committee members.

**Guest Speakers:**

Gordy Smith, State Auditor, Performance Report on the Department and the Administrative Committee. There are three phases: (1) preliminary – information gathering, interviews, surveys; (2) field work – testing to determine conclusions; and (3) report – includes commentary and recommendations. Becky Keller and Jason Wald are the auditors presently working on the audit and are halfway through phase one. The Department and Administrative Committee will be given a chance to respond when the draft report is ready. Chairman Maasjo requested a letter be sent to the committee when the two new performance auditors are hired.

Glenn Fogel, Compliance Officer, VA Regional Office. Update on activities at Fargo Regional Office. New toll-free numbers available: Fargo VA Hospital: 1-800-410-9723 and Ask-A-Nurse: 1-866-687-7382. Specialty care remains a problem. Committee requested information on the pharmacy hotline be distributed to CVSOs.

Maren Daly, Job Service North Dakota

Reported on Jobs for Veterans Act. Veterans employment reps are being decreased from 10.5 in 2003 to 8.5 in 2004. Ms. Daly extended an invitation to host a committee meeting at the Job Service facility.

Jerry Meske, Veterans Employment & Training [HANDOUTS PROVIDED]

Two new medals available but no guidelines on their impact on veterans preference eligibility.

Jerry Balzer, Report on 15 October Budget Section Meeting. [LETTER FROM STATE AUDITOR'S OFFICE]  
When the Strategic Plan is in place, all recommendations from the Veterans Home Audit should be completed.

Eric Monson, NOVUS

Presentation on status of strategic plans for Veterans Home and Department. A multimedia presentation the Minnesota Veterans Home Board uses to advertise their facilities was played for the committee. Chairman Maasjo is looking into cost and availability to do something similar for the Lisbon Veterans Home.

Chairman Maasjo spoke on the need to find funding for the cost of developing the Department's strategic plan.

### **Department of Veterans Affairs Report – Commissioner Ray Harkema**

- Loan Program Update [REPORT PROVIDED] The cash balance is steadily decreasing due to loans and administrative costs.
- Grant Program Update [REPORT PROVIDED]
- C.V.S.O. Conference Update. The conference was held September 22-23-24, 2003 in Fargo. Gene Bernhardt represented the committee at the banquet and assisted with presenting awards. The agenda and evaluations were circulated among committee members.
- National Conference of State Directors Update
- CARES Commission. Commissioner gave testimony on the importance of adding Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) in western North Dakota due to the rural nature of the state.
- Native American VA Claims Fair. The Claims Fair was held October 15 & 16 in Belcourt. Gene Kouba represented the Department and the American Legion.
- Transportation Program Information Paper [HANDOUT PROVIDED] The 15 passenger vans are being phased out due to rollover accidents. The Veterans Administration will be removing the back seats from the vans. This becomes a problem for the Stanley route because of the number of veterans using the van. Daryl Beard volunteered to work with the Commissioner and Skip Wing, Mountrail CVSO, to find an equitable solution.

### **Veterans Home Governing Board Report by Brad Maasjo, Chair**

- A “Board Team Handbook” was given to all the committee members for their use.
- An attempt will be made to renegotiate the contract with Sharehouse regarding substance abuse services.
- The next board meeting is scheduled for December 1 & 2, 2003.

### **Veterans Home Report – Neal Asper, Administrator**

- Admissions – working on new policy
- Basic Care Rates [RENT INCOME POLICY 40, KEY POINTS CONCERNING PERFORMANCE AUDIT] Discussion on impact of new rates on residents and audit recommendations.

*Motion by Beard to approve Rent Income Policy 40, second by Skarphol. Motion passed; 12 yeas, 1 nay – Balzer.* [SEE VOTING RECORD, MOTION 1]

- Events at Home include new bingo machine, donated by ND AMVETS Department Commander and Auxiliary President Project 2002-2003, and visits by Congressman Earl Pomeroy and the American Legion National Commander.
- The 8 basic care beds will not be converted into 8 skilled beds. There is a waiting list for basic care and there is too much involved to make the change.

**Coordinating Council Report – Bob Hanson, President.** The Council will be working on veterans preference legislation. The Council is meeting November 15 at the Bismarck VFW at 9:00am.

Post War Trust Fund Report – Jerry Balzer [REPORT PROVIDED]

Post War Trust Fund Requests – Chairman Maasjo

***Motion by Krogen to deny request for V-12 Memorial Project, second by Dakken. Motion passed; 7 yeas, 6 nays – Beard, Bloomquist, Dakken, Jenson, Ryan, Maasjo*** [SEE VOTING RECORD, MOTION 2].

***Motion by Balzer to obligate \$10,000 to Department for attorney costs associated with veterans preference cases, second by Jenson. Motion passed unanimously.*** [SEE VOTING RECORD, MOTION 3].

***Motion by Jenson to obligate \$50,000 in November 2003 and \$50,000 in November 2004 to the Reserve account, second by Dakken. Motion passed unanimously.*** [SEE VOTING RECORD, MOTION 4]

No action taken on seed money for North Dakota Veterans Home advertising grant. Discussion only.

### **Administrative Issues**

- Schedule of Official Events – Jerry Balzer [HANDOUT PROVIDED]

***Motion by Balzer that the Coordinating Council be requested to organize a trip to Washington, D.C. for participants to attend the World War II Memorial dedication, second by Bloomquist. Motion passed unanimously.***

- Flu shots will be given on October 30 & November 6, from 8:00am to 1:00pm both days at the Fargo VA walk-in clinic. Appointments need to be made for flu shots at the CBOCs. This is for enrolled veterans only.

- Meeting schedule as follows: (Try to let the Chairman know of any conflicts in advance)

January 16 & 17, 2004	Bismarck
April 16 & 17, 2004	site to be determined
July 16 & 17, 2004	Lisbon
October 15 & 16, 2004	Fargo, possibly at the VA Regional Center

- Chairman Maasjo spoke on the Commissioner's letter that was sent to the Cass County Commissioners regarding Jim Brent. 50% of the committee felt the Commissioner should be able to handle such situations autonomously and 50% felt the matter should have been brought to the committee's attention. Gary Skarphol, Commissioner Harkema, and Chairman Maasjo will meet with Jim Brent and Dr. Bennett, Cass County Commissioner, to try and resolve the issue.

- Administrative Committee subcommittees: Veterans Affairs, Appeals, Governing Board, Trust Fund, Strategic Plan Implementation, and Legislative Affairs. Chairman Maasjo will send a letter to committee members on forming subcommittees and asking for volunteers.

***Motion by Ryan to adjourn meeting, second by Kilen. Motion passed unanimously.***

Submitted by

Rudy Jenson  
Secretary