

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
Minutes - October 29-30, 1971
North Dakota Soldiers' Home
Lisbon, North Dakota

Meeting called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Chairman Wagner.

Roll Call taken with 100% attendance, to include Ex-Officio members.

Minutes of September 10th Interim Study Committee meeting read and approved.

Chairman Wagner outlined agenda for meetings and then introduced North Dakota Adjutant General LaClair A. Melhouse, Ex-Officio member, who gave a report on the progress of the Vietnam Bonus, to include the following points:

- 15 million dollars of bonds were sold to Chase-Manhattan Bank of New York at an interest rate of 3.8652% for 12 years.
- Check writing would begin November 22, with mailing on December 7.
- As of October 28, 12,409 claims were received, of which 237 were deceased. 6,588 approved totaling \$2,791,740, one-fifth of total expected.
- Average claim is \$423.76. \$245,942.00 recovered from Education Assistance payments.
- Total claims expected - 36,000 - \$13,958,000.

Mr. Alan R. Rice, Director, VA Center, Fargo, Ex-Officio member, reported:

- That the N. Dak. Soldiers' Home was a solid operation.
- Read a letter received that day from Dr. Mark Musser, Chief Medical Director, VA, Washington, D. C., commending the Soldiers' Home as a result of an on-site inspection by inspectors from VA Central Office. The letter contained no recommendations for corrective action, which is indicative of a very superior report on operations of the Home.

Mr. Walter Fiedler, Director of Institutions, Bismarck, Ex-Officio member, reported:

- That his only connections with the Soldiers' Home thus far were with agricultural aspects. His recommendation had been to continue with their small agricultural projects.
- Only institutions continuing such projects would be the Penitentiary, State Hospital and Soldiers' Home.

- On plans for future of North Dakota institutions as well as report on general operations.
- That this was his first meeting with the Committee and expressed his pleasure at being present.

Mr. Martin Gronvold, Executive Director, Employment Security Bureau, Ex-Officio member, reported:

- That his was a Coordinator Agency to implement various programs.
- Two VietNam Veterans were recently hired to "Bird-dog" all Viet-Vets to get them gainfully employed.
- That an all out effort is going on to provide all types of jobs in the state. Progressing well with proper percentage of Viet-Vets, who have top priority.
- This emergency Manpower Program or P.E.P. (Public Employment Program) should offer 375 new jobs in North Dakota.

2:20 p.m. - Chairman Wagner explained the purpose and mechanics of Soldier Home Survey being made by North Dakota Veteran Coordinating Council.

2:25 p.m. - Sub-Committees met separately.

- All areas covered at September 10 meeting were thoroughly discussed and appropriate action taken.

4:30 p.m. - Adjourned until Saturday a.m.

- Social hour and Dinner

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30

9:10 a.m. - Committee met in Joint Session with North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council.

- Bill Williamson, Executive Secretary, Council, gave a resume of Soldiers' Home Survey:

- 109 out of 111 members interviewed, 75% willing to contribute to their maintenance and care according to their means.
- No one with excessive estate.
- 25% are service-connected (highest is 30%); most are in 10-20% range.

- One half had in excessive of \$100 income (\$265 highest).
- Social Security payments very low due to low income prior to admission to Home.
- Three have willed their estates to Home.
- All concerned about a Burial Fund.
- Information freely given.
- All members highly complimentary on operation of Soldiers' Home and the Commandant.
- Results of Survey will be cross-checked with Soldiers' Home records.

10:05 a.m. - Committee reconvened:

- Was decided that next meeting would be held in Jamestown, 1:00 p.m., Friday, February 11th, at First James River National Bank.
- Clarence Welander, Chairman, Sub-Committee on Soldiers' Home, urged the developing of current by-laws for each Sub-Committee. Purpose to spell-out definite areas of responsibility, such as budget, etc.
- Motion made and passed that a study committee look into this matter and report to next meeting.

Discussion was held regarding possible suspension of Veterans' Aid Loans pending initial payments of Viet-Nam Bonus; only strictly emergency type loans would be considered during this period.

In order to strengthen the position of the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs regarding the selection of County Service Officers, the following motion was made and passed:

Request that the Legislative Committee of the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council initiate legislation to amend that portion of the law to provide that the Department of Veterans Affairs pay half the salary of the County Service Officers.

That the same Legislative Committee initiate Legislation providing for the change of the name of the North Dakota Soldiers' Home to North Dakota Veteran's Home.

That we extend our thanks and appreciation for the meeting facilities to Commandant Charles Code and his staff.

The above action was accomplished in joint session prior to adjournment at 11:00 a.m., Saturday, October 30, 1971.

Earnest N. Schmit
Secretary

ENS:cjw