

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
EXPRESSWAY INN, BISMARCK ND

December 4, 2014
2:00PM

Meeting called to order by Chairman Dean Overby. Pledge of Allegiance said and a Moment of Silence observed for POW/MIAs and those serving overseas.

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Richard Belling	Myron Langehaug	Carroll Quam
Ken Hasby	Marlys Morgenstern	Marlin Schneider
Jim Haukedahl	Robert Olzweski	Jim Verwey
Dave Hilleren	Ron Otto	Hal Weninger
Trish Hodny	Dean Overby	

Absent:

Steve Volk - excused

Chairman Overby introduced Marlys Morgenstern and asked her to give some background on herself.

Marlys ó Was with the National Guard Reserves for 30 years and now works at Job Service North Dakota. She manages a grant that pays for eight veterans employment reps throughout the State.

Job Service North Dakota ó Marlys Morgenstern

Online job openings total 25,266 open and available positions in November 2014. They are in office and administrative support, transportation and material moving, and sales and related fields.

North Dakota unemployment rate is 2.1%

Two members of JSND Employment Team serve as Interstate Transition Representatives that connect with out of state veterans who register on the website. JSND staff began contacting out-of-state job seekers in six states: Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, California, Florida, and Texas.

The focus of these initiatives is to increase North Dakota's labor force by connecting with new out-of-state registrants and services to guide them towards making an informed decision to move to North Dakota. These initiatives complement the ND Department of Commerce Relocation Program and the Find the Good Life in North Dakota Initiative.

ND Department of Commerce Relocation Program: The Relocation Program offers non-financial assistance to individuals interested in coming to North Dakota for work.

Find the Good Life in North Dakota Initiative: This initiative by the North Dakota Economic Development Foundation was created to attract and retain permanent workers to North Dakota.

ND National Guard ó General Dornman

Was selected to serve on the ND Veterans Home Governing Board

ND Military Data Book by ND Cares ó information on Demographics, Employment, Housing, Behavioral Health, Resource Directory, Sources and About ND Cares. ND Cares is a öCoalition Dedicated to Strengthening an Accessible, Seamless System of Support for Service Members, Veterans, Families, and Survivors in North Dakotaö.

Only two units deployed at this time.

Weöve lost more soldiers to suicide than to combat and we need to do something about that.

Legislative bills tend to touch more than one agency. Contained in the Governorö Budget ó Veterans Bonus will continue with \$500,000; \$412,00 including one full-time equivalent to head ND Cares Program; Veterans Outreach Officer ó 5 temporary positions were put in as full-time; purchase another 36 acres for veterans cemetery; Criminal Court to make sure judges understand veterans have special issues/needs.

ND Veterans Home - Mark Johnson, Administrator

Handed out preliminary 2015-17 budget

Wrapping down summer, getting ready for winter

Demolition work will be starting inside the old veterans home sometime around February 2015.

Governorö Budget funded a workshop, walking bridge, and irrigation project but didnö fund an Administratorö house.

Chairman Overby congratulated Commissioner Wangen on becoming President of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs.

Commissionerö Report ó [POWERPOINT PRESENTATION]

Two interns ó one is working on loans and grants, the other intern is working to update the agency website.

Overview and navigation of agency website

Update on staff training and outreach/presentations

Digits to Digits is the electronic submission of claims to VA will be implemented soon. This can be done through VetraSpec software that the Department uses, along with many of the CVSOs, for claims tracking.

As President of NASDVA, Commissioner was on planning committee for Arlington Cemetery Veterans Day Ceremony and went to Washington DC for the ceremony. Asked to serve on Secretary of VA Advisory Committee for changes to the VA.

No veterans preference hearings. No grants or loans appeals hearings.

Update on Loans and Grant programs

Update on Postwar Trust Fund monies.

Transportation van ordered and will be delivered in Spring 2015. Cost of van to be \$1,000 more than appropriated for biennium.

By February 2015, the Department should be able to get DD 214s electronically.

Break for subcommittee meetings

Committee reconvened at 9:08am

Meeting called to order by Chairman Dean Overby. Pledge of Allegiance said and a Moment of Silence observed for POW/MIAs and all service people.

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Richard Belling
Ken Hasby
Jim Haukedahl
Dave Hilleren
Trish Hodny

Myron Langehaug
Marlys Morgenstern
Robert Olzweski
Ron Otto
Dean Overby

Carroll Quam
Marlin Schneider
Jim Verwey
Hal Weninger

Absent:

Steve Volk - excused

Motion by Ken Hasby , to approve the minutes of September , 2014, second by Richard Belling. Motion Carried.

Postwar Trust Fund & Appeals Subcommittee: read by Myron Langehaug

Reviewed PWTF balance. Subcommittee will request that someone from Treasurer's Office attend a future meeting to explain trust money, principal money, what is earned from investing, how much from interest earnings and how each fund is computed. Discussed ways to raise money for PWTF. Recommends \$1,000.00 be allocated to DAV van. Reviewed the strategic plan.

Motion to accept subcommittee report by Carroll Quam, second by Hal Weninger. Motion passed.

Legislative Subcommittee: read by Dave Hilleren

Gary Maddock, ND Veterans Coordinating Council joined meeting. The following bills will be resubmitted with different bill numbers:

H.B. 1205 ó fees for veterans plates

H.B. 1219 - disability of veterans for tuition of dependents;

H.B. 1254 ó income tax deduction for Military Retirement Pay

H.B. 1306 ó Property tax exemption - recommended no action

H.B. 1308 - Melvin Norgard Memorial Fund - tabled until litigation is settle

H.B. 1323 ó Patriotic License Plates, will do follow up with DOT

ND Veterans Coordinating Council will hold a reception for legislators on January 13th at the Ramkota. ACOVA members invited to attend. A pamphlet will be put together by NDVCC to be distributed to legislative members. It describes the NDVCC and ACOVA.

Motion to accept subcommittee report by Dave Hilleren, second by Ken Hasby. Motion passed.

Motion by Carroll Quam to pay the extra \$1,000 for the DAV transportation van, second by Myron Langehaug. Motion passed.

Department of Veterans Affairs & Budget Subcommittee: read by Trish Hodny
Reviewed subcommittee duties; incorrectly appointed a secretary as the Commissioner is the subcommittee's Executive Secretary. The subcommittee is not responsible for the managing the day-to-day operation of the Department. Speaker at meeting presented her complaints against the Department. Commissioner spoke on the situation and how he handled the situation. Recommend that Commissioner again look into situation and see if situation warranted more than a verbal reprimand. Commissioner requested that the subcommittee take over correspondence with Burleigh County concerning the download of his personal records by the Burleigh CVSO. Chairman Overby at that time said a committee was already in place which consisted of himself, Subcommittee Chairman

Hodny and the Attorney General's Office. There is some issue with National Association of Service Officers accreditation of ND CVSOs; this was put into law in 2009. The National Association is having internal problems they are working on so the subcommittee won't be doing anything for now. Subcommittee recommended that the Commissioner look into professional development training for his staff. Subcommittee recessed and reconvened December 5th at 8:00AM. Discussion on budget.

Motion by Jim Haukedahl to accept report, second by Bob Olzweski. Motion passed.

Discussion on recommendations made by subcommittee.

Laura Balliet, A.G. Office, spoke on personnel issues and she supported the Commissioner's action.

Chairman Overby expressed how disappointed he was during the last three months concerning the complaint. It was mailed to many stakeholders but not the Commissioner. It has taken too much of the Commissioner's time and the Committee's time away from working for veterans. Instead of being able to talk with legislators about bills, we are doing damage control. Same group seems to want to cause problems.

Ron Otto agrees that it doesn't do anybody any good. Part of the reason behind the issues brought forward has to do with the accreditations of the CVSOs. Ron talked about the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers and their by-laws concerning membership/accreditation status. There are three categories of membership: voting, associate and affiliate. The Department had been placed into the wrong category.

Motion by Ron Otto to have Secretary and Chairman construct a letter to NSD (National Service Director) of NACVSO (National Association of County Veterans Service Officers) requesting ND DVA be recognized as an "affiliate" member as per the By-Laws of NACVSO and all appropriate actions regarding accreditations be taken. In addition, request that an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with NACVSO be negotiated as per By-Laws of NACVSO, second by Marlys Morgenstern.

Commissioner Wangen reported that NACVSO would like to have North Dakota be the first state to have NACVSO POA. They are already working on it. The by-laws say nothing about accreditation, the policies do. The Department doesn't want to become a voting member. It's a moot issue.

Laura Balliet, A.G. Office, said the motion could be premature due to the fact the NACVSO President said they are doing a follow-up on their by-laws. She suggests waiting for the NACVSO decision.

Ron Otto explained the Department needs to the MOU so they can handle claims for NACVSO in the State.

Commissioner Wangen stated his VSOs will have accreditation with any organization that serves veterans in North Dakota. The Committee has never come to him to tell him he needs to do that; that is micromanaging, that's day-to-day business the Commissioner decides. It doesn't need to be forced on the Department. By law, CVSOs need to be accredited with NACVSO, not the Department.

Ron Otto said the motion would bring the Department in compliance with the national organization by-laws.

Commissioner Wangen stated there is already an MOU in the works.

Motion defeated, 3 yeas and 11 nays [Belling, Hasby, Hilleren, Hodny, Langehaug, Olzweski, Quam, Schneider, Verwey, Weninger, Overby].

Marlys Morgenstern asked who she sends questions to regarding the Committee. Chairman Overby said she could talk with him. The committee needs to be mindful of having a quorum and open meeting laws.

Bob Olzweski reported that since the August Bismarck Stand-Down, they were able to help about 4 homeless veterans and he is thankful for the Stand-Down money.

Chairman Overby talked about having the next meeting in January.

Ron Otto would like to have meeting in conjunction with the Legislative Reception the Coordinating Council is planning.

Next meeting scheduled for January 13 & 14, 2015 at the Comfort Inn, Bismarck.

Motion to adjourn by Jim Haukedahl, second by Ron Otto. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted

Jim Verwey
Secretary