

**ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
FAIRFIELD INN, JAMESTOWN ND**

May 16 & 17, 2024
9:00 AM

Meeting called to order at 9:00am by Chairman Murray Strom. Pledge of Allegiance and a Moment of Silence observed for POW/MIAs and Glenn Wahus who recently passed.

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Brian Bartlett	Dave Hilleren	Dave Rice (TEAMS)
Joe Best	Kruckenberg	Murray Strom
“Dutch” Bialke (TEAMS)	Vernon Laning	Jim Verwey
	Gary Maddock	Hal Weninger (TEAMS)

Absent:

Steve Anderson - Excused	Trish Hodny - Excused
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Guests:

Legislative Council member
Bill Tuff and Scott Kaufman from VFW
Dani Hopkins, Governor's Office

Chairman Strom asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Motion to approve Agenda by Vernon Laning, 2nd by Jim Verwey. Motion carried.

ND DVA Report – Commissioner Lonnie Wangen [POWER POINT PRESENTATION]
Ed Ennis resigned his position on ACOVA.

Commissioner presented the information provided to Governor Burgum at the OMB Strategy Review meeting on March 15, 2024.

Met with staff from Legislative Council assigned to our agency. Talked about agency's status in the 2023-2025 biennium and needs and goals in the 2025-2027 biennium.

Rodney Gellner, Fargo VAHCS Associate Director

- Pact Act, trying to get veterans to be aware of their benefits
- Planning summer events to reach out to veterans; an event will be held June 12th at Minot and Summer Veterans Fest on August 8th in Fargo.
- Fargo VA facility received a 95% on a patient trust survey
- Grand Forks CBOC will be moving to a new space in 2025, it is 4 times the size they have now; Fergus Falls CBOC will be moving out of the veterans' home into a facility with twice the space they have now; and Bismarck CBOC will be looking for bigger space to accommodate more services.
- Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) has been working on getting vans for the past year. Those should be arriving soon.
- Fisher House update: still trying to find land. VA is broadening their search to other areas in Fargo since it doesn't seem land is available near the VA. The VA was hoping to build close enough to the VA so families could walk to it. Transportation for families will need to be considered with the Fisher House built farther away from the VA.

ND National Guard, LTC Sheldon, Adjutant General's Office [POWER POINT PRESENTATION]

- Camp Grafton Dorm opened Fall 2023
- 119th Wing Operations Center will be fully operational Spring 2024
- Dickinson Armory will have a Ribbon Cutting sometime in 2025
- Camp Grafton Fitness Facility will start groundbreaking Spring 2024
- Military Gallery has potential groundbreaking in 2025. Working on getting donations through a fund-raising campaign.
- #1 in Medical Readiness for 3 years (90.4%); #1 in School seat utilization vs allocation (120%). when other States don't fill seats, ND Guard members take those seats; #2 in Noncommissioned Officer Education System (95%); National Guard Excellence in Diversity Award: Fiscal Year 2022 Recipient; #5 in Re-enlistment rate (81%).

Chairman Strom asked if the National Guard has anyone to serve on the ND Veterans Home Governing Board. LTC Sheldon said now is not a good time but perhaps in the Fall they may have someone.

Job Service ND – Jerome Billups, Director DVOP & LVRS

- People from out of state are coming to North Dakota looking for employment
- There are barriers that veterans have in finding employment and Job Service is addressing those issues. Since January 2024, there have been 84 newly registered veterans and Job Service will provide one-on-one service for these veterans.
- Served 150 veterans: 68% get employment and 64% are still employed after one year

- Job Service is now able to help veterans who have been separated from service within three years, with or without a disability.

ND Assoc. of County & Tribal Veterans Service Officers; Chris Deery, President, Cass County VSO

- Three CVSOs at the NACVSO National Training in Denver, CO.
- Two weeks ago, there was State Training by the ND DVA in Fargo.
- Attended meetings regarding the Fargo National Cemetery. No actions have taken yet.
- Working with the VA on the upcoming Air Show
- Hometown Hero forms being circulated for an event at the Red River Valley Fair
- Information on veteran's car giveaway program by Progressive. Last year, Cass County had someone receive the car. Cass County is looking for nominees for this year's giveaway.

ND Veterans Home Governing Board: Vernon Laning, Chair

- Mark Johnson retired May 10th. Selection Committee reviewed nine applicants and Dane Grebel was hired as Administrator.

Mr. Grebel started May 6th at the Veterans Home. He had a busy first week by meeting residents and department managers at the Residents Forum Session and attending the Long-Term Care Conference. The Home needs to fill 6 nursing positions along with 4-6 dietary positions. He is currently living in Valley City but will be moving to Lisbon.

Jim Verwey spoke about the ND Veterans Home Foundation Golf Tournament. It is June 7, 2024 at the Mapleton Golf Course.

Governor's Office: Dani Hopkins

- A Military Ball was held at the Air Museum in Fargo. There were about 200 guests in attendance.

ND Veterans Affairs was given the Bridge Builder Award.

- Governor's Office is hosting meetings to improve services and opportunities for veterans and their families.
- Talked about the open positions and upcoming appointments on ACOVA.

Chairman Strom is looking for nominees for the ND Governing Board.

Subcommittee meetings held.

May 17, 2024

Committee reconvened at: 9:00am

Meeting called to order at 9:00am by Chairman Murray Strom. Pledge of Allegiance and a Moment of Silence observed for POW/MIAs, and those serving overseas.

ACOVA Roll Call:

Present:

Brian Bartlett	Lamar Kruckenberg	Murray Strom
Joe Best	Vernon Laning	Jim Verwey
Dave Hilleren	Dave Rice (TEAMS)	Hal Weninger (TEAMS)

Absent:

Steve Anderson -Excused	Trish Hodny - Excused
“Dutch” Bialke - Excused	Gary Maddock - Excused

Guests:

Dane Grebel, ND Veterans Home Administrator

Committee watched a video provided by LTC Sheldon, ND National Guard.
ND National Guard “Domestic Emergencies”

Motion by Vern Laning to accept February 2024 minutes, second by Lamar Kruckenberg. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion on next meeting:

Motion by Dave Hilleren for the next ACOVA meeting to be held September 19 & 20, 2024 in Steele, ND, second by Lamar Kruckenberg. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Strom spoke on appointments for the North Dakota Veterans Home Governing Board. Kenny Wiederholt's name was submitted by Dean Overby for consideration.

Veterans Affairs Subcommittee – report by Joe Best
Dutch Bialke, Chairman.

Reviewed Fund 410 – No discrepancies
Hearing Aids – tabled policy so CVSOs could provide input on policy change.
ND DVA budget – No discrepancies

Commissioner's compensation augmented by HRTG funding for workload increase.

Motion by Joe Best to accept minutes as presented, second by Brian Bartlett. Motion passed unanimously.

Policy 434 – Hearing Aid. CVSO's have not gotten back to Dan on policy change.

Legislative Subcommittee – report by Vernon Laning
Brian Bartlett, Chairman.

No recent Legislative Council meeting or minutes. Reviewed legislation items. Property tax exemption discussed due to Minnesota raising their exemption amount.

Motion by Vernon Laning to accept minutes as presented, second by Jim Verwey. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Strom spoke on the positivity of having a Veterans Caucus at the state legislature for the upcoming session.

PWTF & Appeals Subcommittee
PWTF Subcommittee – report by Dave Hilleren
Jim Verwey, Chairman

Fund 410 reviewed.
Discussed avenues for fundraising.

Appeals Subcommittee – report by Dave Hilleren
Chairman Jim Verwey.

No appeals.

Motion by Dave Hilleren to accept PWTF and Appeals minutes as presented, second by Vern Laning. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Report

Chairman Strom has been attending meetings throughout the State. He talked about a stand-alone machine that will cash in gaming tickets rather than having a cashier handle the pay-outs.

Motion to name Kenny Wiederholt and Steve Frojen to Veterans Home Governing Board by Lamar Kruckenberg and second by Dave Hilleren. Motion carries unanimously.

Steve Frojen will be contacted to find out if he would like another term on the Board.

Roundtable Discussion:

Chairman Strom asked what happened with Ed Ennis. Dave Hilleren stated Ed resigned due to a conflict with the DAV. Since Ed resigned from the DAV, he can no longer serve on the committee as a representative from the DAV organization.

Chairman Strom said it was nice being in Jamestown for the Bridge naming ceremony. DOT had the sign up on the bridge already. If there are other events happening around the State, we could possibly have a meeting to be able to attend the event.

Jim Verwey: The speaker's updates were good. There will be a new Adjutant General, possibly be named by this fall or sooner.

Vernon Laning: Location is good. Dedication ceremony didn't really touch on the bridge as much as he expected. Would have been nice to have a sign displayed so people could see what it looks like.

Dave Hilleren: Congratulations to Dane. Vietnam Veterans convention and picnic will be at Van Hook, outside of New Town. It starts on Thursday, July 19th with an open day for people to arrive. The meeting begins on Saturday, called to order by Dan Stenvold. A Casino boat will be having a three-hour cruise for attendees. Dave invited everyone to attend the convention.

Brian Bartlett: Appreciated the Vietnam Veteran convention information. 988 is an important number to know. Dedication Ceremony was a good event to be at, important to get the word out.

Lamar Kruckenberg: Great meeting. Thanks to Lonnie for the legislative package; hopeful to get many items passed. Attending meeting in Detroit Lakes and possibly going to Washington, DC.

Dane Grebel: Thanked members for their service to this country. Great to be in this meeting and going to the Dedication ceremony. Plans to be in Steele for the next meeting.

Joe Best: Still learning and is planning on attending the next meeting in Steele.

Dan Thorstad: Glad he can be at the meeting providing IT support. Going through Facebook one day, he came across a friend he had served with in the military. After having a discussion with his friend, he provided his friend with information about the crisis line. Within days, the friend had an appointment with a mental health provider and was doing much better.

Cathy Halgunseth: The highlight of the meeting was attending the Bridge Dedication Ceremony. It was a very good idea for the ACOVA to meet so everyone could go to the event. It was very moving with the family sharing their thoughts and what they've gone through.

National Guard, DOT and ACOVA will be working to put together a committee to work on getting the applications for naming bridges with legislative authority. That way, it wouldn't need legislative action every time a bridge is to be named. Commissioner Wangen has a project for the Department to put together a list of all the bridges in North Dakota and possible names for those bridges.

Dave Rice: Tomorrow on KFGO Veterans Hour (schedule on Facebook page) the manager of Fargo National Cemetery will be on. Gave update on upcoming Honor Flight: leave on Sunday and return on Tuesday. Sept 22 – 24 will have two planes for the Honor Flight.

Motion to adjourn by Jim Verwey, second by Lamar Kruckenberg. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted:

Jim Verwey
Secretary

NOTE:

Steve Frojen was contacted by a committee member. Steve is not interested in serving another term on the ND Veterans Home Governing Board.