

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMFORT SUITES, BISMARCK ND

November 2, 2007
9:30am

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

Roll Call:

Present:

Carl Bloomquist	Dave Hilleren	Wayne Paulson
Wally Buckingham	Rudy Jenson	Lyle Schuchard
Lee Finstad	Orletta Kilen	Gary Skarphol
Mike Fisher	Jerry Meske	Dave Vandergon
Jerry Goll	Dean Overby	

Absent:

John Hanson

Guests:

Jason Wahl, State Auditor's Office

Motion by Dean Overby to approve August 3 & 4, 2007 meeting minutes, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed.

Motion by Dean Overby to approve September 21, 2007 meeting minutes, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed.

November 2, 2007 - 9:40am: Announcement by Chairman Jenson for committee to move into Executive Session. Discussion will be limited to the draft follow-up report on the Performance Audit of the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. This action is in accordance with N.D.C.C. 54-10-26 regarding the State Auditor's Office working papers being confidential.

Roll Call:

Present:

Carl Bloomquist	Dave Hilleren	Wayne Paulson
Wally Buckingham	Rudy Jenson	Lyle Schuchard
Lee Finstad	Orletta Kilen	Gary Skarphol

Mike Fisher
Jerry Goll

Jerry Meske
Dean Overby

Dave Vandergon

Absent: John Hanson

Tom Summers, ND Dept of Veterans Affairs
Cathy Halgunseth, ND Dept of Veterans Affairs

Jason Wahl presented draft follow-up report on the Performance Audit of the ND Department of Veterans Affairs. One copy will remain at the Department for reference. It is stressed that this is a confidential document and not available to the public. The Auditor's Office would like to receive the responses no later than November 16, 2007.

Break from 11:10am to 11:30am.

Responses will be drafted for the committee to review.

Motion by Gary Skarphol to move out of executive session, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed.

Executive session ended at 11:45a.m., November 2, 2007.

Discussion on the Iterim Study committee meetings. Minutes of the Fargo meeting had been sent to committee members for their information. Many were upset at statements made by Brad Maasjo regarding the Administrative Committee.

Meeting recessed for lunch.

Meeting reconvened at 1: 05

John Hanson is now in attendance.

MG David Sprynczynatyk, Adjutant General, ND National Guard

- ▶ Attended take off of Honor Flight at Fargo Hector International Airport.
- ▶ Habitat for Humanity – Guard members are involved with building a home in the Fargo community for the wife and family of an Iraqi national who worked with 104th. He provided information that put his life at risk.
- ▶ Pandemic Virus exercise conducted by the Guard.
- ▶ Recruiting: over \$1 million mark reached in recruitment bonuses; \$7 million in re-enlistment bonuses; the ND National Guard leads the nation in percentage of re-enlistment.

Phil Miller, Director, North Dakota Veterans Cemetery [INFORMATION PACKET]

- ▶ Change in eligibility rules regarding burial of spouse of veteran
- ▶ Burial fee and headstone provided by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- ▶ Only state veterans cemetery that allows reservists meeting certain criteria to be buried in cemetery.

Presentation by Chairman Jenson on behalf of the Committee to General Michael Haugen thanking him for his service to the veterans of North Dakota and his assistance to the Administrative Committee.

Jim Woods, State Approving Agency [INFORMATION PACKET]

- ▶ Assists veterans and their dependents on education benefits
- ▶ Works with the colleges and universities throughout the State to ensure the programs met VA standards.

Rob McDivitt, FACHE Medical Center Director, VA

- ▶ Still on a continuing resolution for funding
- ▶ 26,000 veterans received care from Fargo VA and satellite clinics this fiscal year
- ▶ Over 2,000 OIF/OEF veterans enrolled for care

Wayne Bostrom, Area Manager, Job Service North Dakota, Bismarck

- ▶ Veterans Job Fair, Nov 15, 2007, Bismarck 5:30-7:30

Mac McDavitt, DVOP, Job Service North Dakota, Fargo

- ▶ Presentation of a \$500 check to the American Legion in appreciation for their programs serving veterans. Gary Skarphol accepted the check on behalf of the American Legion.
- ▶ Joined with US Bank to provide debit cards to clients for their unemployment benefits.

Workforce Development Council Update – Lyle Schuchard & Jerry Meske

- ▶ Still an ex-officio position with no voting rights. Currently Lyle has a position on the planning committee.

Motion by Dave Hilleren for the Chairman and Secretary to initiate talks with the Governor's Chief of Staff to secure voting rights for the position on the Workforce Development Council, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed unanimously.

[MOTION #1]

- ▶ TAP: Working with other entities to provide funding for individuals who are not able to attend the three day event due to financial constraints.

▶ Education/Training Benefits: Not all service people are eligible for education benefits. The Council is trying to find funding to assist those who don't qualify.

Memorial Bridge Update – Lyle Schuchard

▶ There are twenty flags on the bridge, four on each overlook that will fly on special occasions. AMVETS project is to raise \$7,000 for a four-wheeler to help move the flags from their storage place under the bridge to the overlooks.

Report by Jerry Meske

U.S. Department of Labor Job Fair Blitz [HANDOUT]

▶ Presented Financial Report for Bismarck StandDown 2007

Chairman's Report – Rudy Jenson

▶ Protection & Advocacy open board position open – will check to find out if they were able to get a veteran to serve

▶ ND Coordinating Council – wanted a more uniform residency requirement, no action taken by Council; and plaque and certificate to Comfort Inn and Comfort Suites not presented yet. Gary Skaphol will contact the Secretary of the Coordinating Council for updates.

Department of Veterans Affairs – Tom Sumers, Veterans Benefits Specialist

▶ Three outreaches: one with the NDARNG and two Native American (Belcourt and Devils Lake)

▶ Betty Helmer accepted the position of Women's Veteran Coordinator and will start December 1, 2007

▶ Trained new service officers from Walsh, Nelson, and Emmons County. Sheridan County VSO will work with Gene at the end of November.

▶ Fall CVSOS Conference held in September. Well attended with positive comments on the training.

▶ Some confusion on how to apply and/or receive the Property Tax Exemption. The Department will work on a fact sheet.

▶ Grant and Loan applications are being processed in a timely manner.

▶ Almost 1000 Welcome Home letters have been sent to returning veterans.

November 2, 2007 - 3:58pm: Announcement by Chairman Jenson for committee to move into Executive Session. Discussion will be limited to the draft follow-up report on the Performance Audit of the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. This action is in accordance with N.D.C.C. 54-10-26 regarding the State Auditor's Office working papers being confidential.

Roll call taken.

Present:

Carl Bloomquist	Dave Hilleren	Wayne Paulson
Wally Buckingham	Rudy Jenson	Lyle Schuchard
Lee Finstad	Orletta Kilen	Gary Skarphol
Mike Fisher	Jerry Meske	Dave Vandergon
Jerry Goll	Dean Overby	

Absent: John Hanson

Tom Sumers, ND Dept of Veterans Affairs
Cathy Halgunseth, ND Dept of Veterans Affairs

Draft responses were discussed. Revisions need to be made. Another executive session will be necessary for the committee to give final approval.

Motion by Lee Finstad to move out of executive session, second by Carl Bloomquist. Motion passed.

Executive session ended at 4:30p.m., November 2, 2007.

Meeting recessed for Subcommittee meetings.

November 3, 2007

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

Roll Call:

Present:

Carl Bloomquist	John Hanson	Dean Overby
Wally Buckingham	Dave Hilleren	Wayne Paulson
Lee Finstad	Rudy Jenson	Lyle Schuchard
Mike Fisher	Orletta Kilen	Gary Skarphol
Jerry Goll	Jerry Meske	Dave Vandergon

Absent:

none

Strategic Plan needs to be updated. The most recent copy will be sent to committee members.

Subcommittee Reports:

Budget Committee – John Hanson, Chairman
Budget is on track, no unforeseen problems.

Appeals Committee – Dave Vandergon, Chairman
Three appeals heard in October, decisions upheld in all cases. Letters have been sent indicating committee's decision. Appeal heard yesterday, decision upheld.

Legislative Committee – Lee Finstad, Chairman
Recommend ACOVA thoroughly research possibilities to unify county veterans service officers under the Department of Veterans Affairs.

PWTF Committee – Wally Buckingham, Chairman

- 1.) Request from Minot DAV for transportation, committee recommends disapproval
- 2.) Request from Veterans Home for updating two AED units, committee recommends approval
- 3.) Request from Veterans Home for circuit training equipment, committee recommends approval

Motion by Gary Skarphol to obligate funds of \$6,500 for circuit training equipment for the Veterans Home, second by John Hanson. Motion passed.

Motion by Orletta Kilen to obligate funds of \$1,270 to update two AED units at the Veterans Home, second by Mike Fisher. Motion passed.

Motion by Carl Bloomquist to uphold committee's recommendation to deny the funding request for a van in Minot, second by Jerry Goll. Motion passed.

DVA Subcommittee – Dean Overby, Chairman

Collection Accounts – approximately 90 accounts turned over, already getting results.
Special/Travel Grants –there have been times when the special grant was given for travel purposes in addition to a travel grant. These situations were due to medical need, i.e. cancer treatments, surgery at Minneapolis VA
Office Lease – Unable to get new office space. Consensus of committee is to have the Department look into present lease for a release clause and to look into other available offices.

Negotiated Loan Amount – times that lesser loan amounts were offered to applicants but not to all; modification made to internal form so a negotiated amount may be offered to all applicants during the decision process.

Women’s Coordinator Position – Betty Helmer will start December 1, 2007.

Denture Grant – Policy 430

Motion by Dean Overby to accept change “Replacement pieces are allowed after a five year interval from date of approval.”, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed.

Assets – Policy 412

Motion by Dean Overby to accept change “Documentation required that shows the CD has been locked I for one year from date of application”, second by Dave Hilleren. Motion passed.

Scholarship

Already available from other resource.

Conservatorships/Guardianships – Policy 103

Motion by Dean Overby to accept change “Exceptions to this policy fall under N.D.C.C. 30.1-27, Guardians of Minors and/or in family situations.”, second by Jerry Goll. Motion passed.

Property Tax Exemption referred to Legislative Committee.

Motion by Gary Skarphol to accept subcommittee reports, second by Jerry Meske. Motion passed.

Veteran Home Update – Mark Johnson, Administrator

- ▶ In the process of remodeling, majority of life safety issues completed.
- ▶ VA survey – problems with ceiling tiles, stained carpets, and some paper compliance issues.
- ▶ New building – looking at designs, working with VA for possibility of CBOC unit. Received clearance from Historical Society to take buildings down with the exception of the Commandant’s Home.
- ▶ Waiting for letter stating federal funding available, until that letter is received the state won’t release allocated monies to pay for the studies being done. Construction is planned to start the summer of 2008.
- ▶ Administrative Rules – five years ago the Committee accepted rule changes but a hearing has not been held on them. Once a hearing is held, the changes can go to the Administrative Rules committee for action.

CVSO Training Proposal – Warren Tobin, Chair, CVSO Training Committee

Request for CVSO Training Grant to bring in the National CVSO Association to conduct a week long training session. Discussion on proposal. Concerns of committee included the Department not doing the two yearly conferences, what training will be provided, and how many county veterans service officers will actually participate.

Motion by Jerry Meske to table proposal, second by Dean Overby. Motion passed.

Motion by Lee Finstad to invite the Chairman of the County Commissioners Association and the President of the CVSO Association to the next meeting to discuss the CVSO training proposal, second by Dean Overby. Motion passed. Warren Tobin invited to attend also.

Introduction of Betty Helmer, Department's newly hired Women Veteran's Coordinator.

Status on search for Commissioner of Veterans Affairs. On website for state announcements and job service and will be in the four major newspapers in the state. Closing date is November 16 2007. Top candidates will be interviewed by an independent search committee. Top three will be invited to committee meeting for further questions. Three committee members will be on the negotiating team.

Motion by Gary Skarphol that Dean Overby, Lee Finstad, and Lyle Schuchard comprise the negotiating team, second by Orletta Kilen. Motion passed.

November 3, 2007 – 10:40a.m.: Announcement by Chairman Jenson to move committee into Executive Session. Discussion will be limited to the draft follow-up report on the Performance Audit of the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. This action is in accordance with N.D.C.C. 54-10-26 regarding the State Auditor's Office working papers being confidential.

Responses accepted by Committee. Cathy Halgunseth directed to forward responses to Jason Wahl at the State Auditor's Office

Motion by Lee Finstad to move out of executive session, second by Carl Bloomquist. Motion passed.

Executive session ended at 10:48a.m., November 3, 2007.

Motion by Dean Overby to thank Cathy Halgunseth for her assistance in preparing the responses, second by Gary Skarphol. Motion passed.

Next meeting:

ACOVA Meeting
Nov 2 & 3, 2007
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March 2008 – Bismarck

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Lyle Schuchard
Secretary