

Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 30, 2008

A meeting of the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee (VCCAC) was held on Tuesday, September 30, 2008 at the Virginia Veterans Care Center, 4550 Shenandoah Avenue NW Roanoke.

Members Present:

Vince Burgess
Julia Dillon
Thad Jones
Worth Kenyon
Karen Olichwier
Sandra Ranicki
Bill Van Thiel

Members Absent:

Jim Dudley
John Jackson
Scott Brown

Others Present:

Bert Boyd, DVS Chief Operating Officer
Steven Combs, DVS Director of Policy and Planning
Judy Reid, DVS IT Program Assistant
Mellissa Wolfe, VVCC Administrative Assistant

Materials Distributed

- Agenda
- Draft Minutes of May 28, 2008 meeting
- Virginia Veterans Care Center Report
- Virginia Veterans Care Center Brochure
- Proposed Tazewell Veterans Care Center Site Check List

Call to Order and Welcome

Commissioner Burgess welcomed everyone, and called the meeting of the VCCAC to order at 11:02 a.m.

Roll Call and Quorum Determination

Five out of ten members were present. Ms. Julia Dillon and Ms. Karen Olichwier arrived late bringing the voting members to seven and a quorum was determined to exist.

Review and Approval of VCCAC May 28, 2008 Minutes

The Commissioner asked the members to review the minutes of the May 28, 2008 meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Thad Jones, and seconded by Ms. Sandra Ranicki, to approve the minutes with three changes. The decision was unanimous to approve the minutes as amended.

The changes are as follows:

- Page 3, 4th paragraph, end of line, change “Medicare” to “Medicaid”
- Page 3, 7th paragraph, 3rd line, replace “the Department of Social Services” with “the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs”
- Page 5, 4th paragraph, end of first sentence, add “at 70% or greater”

DVS Agency Overview

Led By Commissioner Burgess:

Commissioner Burgess said the agency had the privilege on Monday, September 22, 2008 to host a ceremony, where the deed for 79.6788 acres was transferred from the Department of Defense to the Commonwealth of Virginia to construct the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin. The deed has not yet been signed; however, it should be signed within the next two weeks. The ceremony had a great attendance of 250-300 people. Governor Kaine and Congressman Boucher were also in attendance.

Commissioner Burgess reported the agency has been very active, meeting with local officials throughout Virginia, for other potential locations for veterans care centers. After the William & Mary Care Center study became public, four to five localities have shown interest in having a veterans care center in their area.

Commissioner Burgess informed the committee that the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program has begun. Catherine A. Wilson, Nurse Corps, USN (retired), former Commanding Officer at the Naval Hospital in Bremerton, Washington, was hired August 25, 2008 as the Executive Director for this program. Ms. Wilson works out of Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC). Ms. Wilson is preparing interviews for three regional manager positions, one each in Southwest Virginia, Northern Virginia and the Tidewater area.

Commissioner Burgess reported that a budget reduction plan has been submitted to the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB). This plan has reductions of five, ten, and fifteen percent of the Department’s General Fund budget. The plan now has to be reviewed by DPB. The agency has already completed two and five percent budget cuts. This plan would be an additional budget cut to the agency. The committee will be updated on the outcome at the next meeting.

Virginia Veterans Care Center Update

Lead by Bill Van Thiel:

Residents:

Mr. Van Thiel reported the facility is experiencing more vacancies than ever before. The highest vacancy rate the care center has had in the past was twenty-six, now there are vacancies in the mid-thirties. Half of the vacancies have been on the Alzheimers unit with fifteen vacancies and the other half has been on the Assisted Living unit with up to seventeen vacancies. As of today, the high numbers have come down with the following vacancies: Alzheimers unit has nine, Assisted Living unit has fifteen and the Nursing Home has a few vacancies due to transfers and a few residents have passed away. Other nursing homes in the Roanoke Valley are experiencing the same high vacancy levels.

Open Positions:

Mr. Van Thiel said the VVCC Infection Control Nurse position was vacant and requires a RN to fill this position. Also, the Director of Quality Improvement has recently resigned; she is currently working out her notice. This position also requires a RN.

Inspections:

Mr. Van Thiel reported the Salem VAMC completed the annual survey of VVCC in July. The final report has not yet been received, but the verbal exit interview had many positive comments.

Mr. Boyd asked if VVCC receives a written report from the VAMC after the inspection.

Mr. Van Thiel said yes, the care center does receive a final written report. The VAMC is in the processing of changing to a computerized survey system and this is slowing the processes down. If the survey team had found a major problem, they would have notified the care center immediately.

Energy Conservation Program:

Mr. Van Thiel reported the VVCC is currently working on an energy conservation program. Trane Corporation has been granted the bid. This program is part of the Governor's Executive Order 48, Energy Efficiency in State Buildings.

Mr. Boyd asked if Trane was only auditing or auditing and giving recommendations.

Mr. Van Thiel said Trane would look at items such as lighting, heating, water used for the yard, heating units, air circulators, boilers and chillers to see where energy could be saved and then would offer their recommendations.

Mr. Boyd stated VVCC will have expenses and then will have savings.

Mr. Van Thiel said the goal is to fund the program with the savings. Trane will write a guarantee of the projected savings, the care center will then pay Trane back over time. The same program has been conducted in other state buildings and has been successful.

Commissioner Burgess asked would it be for facilities of a certain age.

Mr. Van Thiel stated SBVCC is already energy efficient.

Mr. Jones asked if VVCC would be cutting corners, since it is a healthcare facility.

Mr. Van Thiel said no, not at all. Trane is understanding, that VVCC is a healthcare facility and will not cut corners. The program allows Trane to look for more efficient ways to do the same VVCC has done in the past. Since VVCC is self-funded, it allows money saved from this program to be used somewhere else.

Mr. Combs stated that future facilities could be built with more advanced features like this.

Modification and Enlargement of the Pharmacy:

Mr. Van Thiel reported VVCC has a new medication dispensing system called OPUS. This system is more labor intensive for the pharmacy department but will help with drug control and cut down on medication errors. This system requires more working room in the pharmacy, which is not available.

Mr. Combs asked what VVCC will be giving up to provide the extra space for the pharmacy.

Mr. Van Thiel said an old smoking room will be cut into half. One half of the room will be the additional pharmacy space and the other half will be the first floor conference room. The first floor conference room area was taken when the HR department moved back to VVCC.

Mr. Boyd asked if OPUS linked to QS1 system.

Mr. Van Thiel said this is strictly a dispensing system. VVCC is working toward implementing a bar code system for the residents and medications, which will be linked to the clinical system that will be installed.

Mr. Boyd said it would be great if VVCC pharmacist shared with SBVCC pharmacist on changes and updates happening in the pharmacy.

Mr. Van Thiel said SBVCC has a new system and new carts, where as VVCC has carts that are fifteen years old.

Mr. Jones asked if the goal is have a seamless operation between VVCC and SBVCC and all other care centers when they come online.

Mr. Van Thiel stated care centers will have different policies and procedures. Some policies and procedures that VVCC has will not work at SBVCC and vice versa. A surveyor may ask for a policy or procedure to be changed in one care center but not in the other.

Commissioner Burgess stated both VVCC and SBVCC have worked together on developing policies and procedures. The operation of all the care centers will be seamless.

Parking Lot Addition:

Mr. Van Thiel stated the lack of parking spaces in the parking lot is becoming an issue. Parking has always been an issue, but due to more staff, volunteers and resident family members there is not enough parking. The maintenance department is putting gravel out in the yard to provide a temporary parking lot.

Certified Nursing Assistance Training Program:

Commissioner Burgess asked how the Certified Nursing Assistance (CNA) training program is working out.

Mr. Van Thiel said VVCC has had four classes of ten students in each class. The number of students in the class usually goes down after the class begins. Fifteen out of forty students that have graduated from the program are still working at VVCC. A few employees entered the program from other departments and some of those people have returned to their original department.

Mr. Boyd asked if we assure the transferring employee a position in their original department, if the employee does not work out in the CNA program.

Mr. Van Thiel said no, however; we like to keep good employees if we are able.

Ms. Dillon asked is there a written contract charging the student for fees if the contract is broken.

Mr. Van Thiel said yes, there is a written contract, but collecting money owed is often hard.

George Mason University (GMU) Project

Mr. Van Thiel stated that Shirley Travis, Dean of the GMU College of Health and Human Services, will be touring VVCC tomorrow, October 1, 2008. She has already toured SBVCC.

Commissioner Burgess stated GMU has approximately eighty acres where the envision a care center might be built. GMU would like to use this as a training facility for their healthcare academic programs while providing care to veterans. This is an ongoing project.

Inspections:

Mr. Van Thiel reported that VVCC is waiting on the annual State Licensure and Medicare/Medicaid survey.

Commissioner Burgess asked if the inspection would take place before the end of the year.

Mr. Van Thiel said yes, this is an annual inspection. The exact time of the inspection is unknown, but has to be done by the end of the year.

Referrals:

Mr. Worth Kenyon asked if VVCC has seen many transfers to SBVCC.

Mr. Van Thiel stated yes, we send referrals to SBVCC.

Ms. Ranicki said SBVCC gives VVCC referrals as well. If their admissions department finds the referrals' relatives are closer to the Roanoke area, they will recommend or inform the family of the closest veterans care center to their home. Referrals are also given to VVCC when assisted living is needed. Admissions Directors at both care centers are working together on referrals.

Brochures:

Commissioner Burgess distributed the new brochures for VVCC.

Service Connected:

Commissioner Burgess asked Mr. Van Thiel or Mr. Boyd if they have heard any more on the VA's final ruling of the seventy percent service connection plan.

Mr. Boyd stated the last update he had heard, the plan is to be implemented by the end of 2008. However, this plan is not retroactive and if a resident passes away, the facility will not be able to collect on their time spent in the facility.

Mr. Van Thiel said he had called DC and had asked about the seventy percent service connection plan and they were still unsure of any reimbursements.

Mr. Boyd said the benefits staff is working with the care centers to identify veterans who will be receiving these benefits.

Mr. Jones asked if someone had a disability rating of ten percent was the goal to increase the disability rating to seventy percent.

Mr. Van Thiel said the care centers would take care of the resident with or without the seventy percent service connection as they have done in the past.

Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center Update

Lead by Sandra Ranicki:

Residents:

Ms. Ranicki reported that the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) has opened all three units. The main focus now is to increase the census to ninety-five to ninety-eight percent on a daily basis. As of today, the census is ninety-nine, but has had 148 admissions. Many of the residents have had short term therapy to discharge home and some residents have passed away.

Ms. Ranicki stated marketing and developing relationships with discharge planners is ongoing. Recently SBVCC purchased an ad in the Seniors Guide and featured two articles on two residents at the care center. The Seniors Guide is interested in publishing articles on more residents in future editions.

Ms. Ranicki reported projected target census to ninety-five to ninety-eight percent on a daily basis will occur in February 2009, with 158 residents. Of the ninety-nine residents, fifty-nine are Army, six are Marines, eleven are Air Force and twenty-three are Navy. Seven of the residents are women.

Ms. Ranicki said seven physicians come to the facility as attending physicians.

Mr. Boyd asked what the percentage of private pay residents is.

Ms. Ranicki stated twenty-one residents are private pay; twenty-seven are Medicare; forty-seven Medicaid and four are managed cases.

Ms. Ranicki said revenue collection for September was projected at \$740,000 and actual collection was \$746,000. Year to date revenue collection is at \$1.1 million. SBVCC has projected that February 2009 the facility will be at full capacity.

Ms. Ranicki reported the VA inspected the facility in March and finalized in July for VA subsidy eligibility. SBVCC has filed for the VA subsidy for March 2008– July 31, 2008 time period in the amount of \$473, 000, and August 2008 in the amount of \$66,000 and is waiting for the reimbursements.

Staff:

Ms. Ranicki reported that the facility now has 184 classified and thirty-six wage staff members. Currently, SBVCC is not filling vacant positions. They are only filling those positions that have been filled and have become vacant. Recently, the procurement position came vacant and has been filled with an eVA specialist.

Ms. Ranicki said the Kronos time keeping system has been implemented. In the past, time was tracked by supervisors keeping a written record of all employees time worked. After two payroll periods, Kronos is now online. Special help was given by Julie Lewis, payroll for VVCC to get the system up and running.

Ms. Ranicki said the accounting department and the business office at SBVCC and VVCC have been working together to develop a cost ledger, to be used for the cost report. The cost report is due on November 30, 2008 and SBVCC will be filing January 2008 – June 2008 time period. Goodman and Company has been awarded the contract to complete cost reports for both SBVCC and VVCC.

Ms. Ranicki stated that several of the physicians at SBVCC have come from The Medical College of Virginia (MCV) and several medical students have also come to do special projects.

Mr. Boyd reported that SBVCC are in the final stages of the construction project. In the next two weeks, the residential engineer will be conducting the final inspection. After completion of the final inspection, the final payment will be released.

Mr. Jones asked if the Director of Admissions at SBVCC had received any negative comments regarding the admissions packets on the website.

Ms. Ranicki stated she had not heard of any negative comments. If people do not have internet service, they are welcome to contact SBVCC and a packet will be mailed, or they can come by and the admissions department will go over the forms with them.

Bed Hold Policy:

Commissioner Burgess asked if both SBVCC and VVCC would discuss their bed hold policy.

Mr. Van Thiel stated that VVCC tries to be flexible with the bed hold policy. After three days being away, the resident's belongings are packed away in boxes. If we know the resident will be returning, we do not try to fill their bed. We like being able to give them a home to come back to. Many of our residents have been here for years.

Mr. Boyd stated the bed hold policy for the assisted living unit is different from the nursing home side. Most of the nursing home residents leave due to sickness whereas; the assisted living residents may leave to go on a vacation.

Ms. Ranicki said in the case of an assisted living resident leaving on vacation, this case should be handled differently. Most leave of absence cases SBVCC has had, residents have went home for the weekend. The bed hold policy does need work.

Mr. Boyd asked if a resident leaves for a weekend to go home, are the care centers still able to collect the VA per diem.

Mr. Van Thiel said yes, as long as they are gone less than ninety-six hours.

Commissioner Burgess stated work needed to be completed on the bed hold policy and will be addressed at the next meeting.

Mr. Jones asked if a resident passed away and has no family are we (the care center) responsible for their burial and if so, is the resident buried at one of the veterans cemeteries.

Mr. Van Thiel said at the time of admission, the resident decides his funeral home and arrangements.

Ms. Ranicki stated at the time of admission the resident is informed of the veterans cemeteries.

Mr. Boyd stated that DVS Cemetery Director Dan Kemano has planned to meet with both care center admissions directors to provide more information of the veterans cemeteries.

Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center Update

Lead by Bill Van Thiel:

Mr. Van Thiel stated it had been some time since he was at the Hampton site and was unsure if demolition of old buildings had began. The Hampton project is number ninety-one on the VA's list and SBVCC addition is number ninety-two.

Mr. Kenyon asked if Hampton had transferred the property to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Mr. Van Thiel said no, the site had to be cleared first.

Potential Care Center in Southwest Virginia

Lead by Steven Combs:

Mr. Combs stated that Tazewell County local government officials and the public are very interested in having a care center in their area. Mr. Boyd, Ms. M. Jones, Mr. Van Thiel and he visited two sites in Tazewell County. One site was in Richlands and the other site was adjacent to the Tazewell Community Hospital.

Mr. Combs said that a lot of things have to be worked out. A few items to be reviewed are, if the project would be feasible, look at demographics to see what size the care center should be, could the care center be self sufficient, and would staffing be available.

Mr. Boyd said cross-state demographics needed to be looked at. Where Tazewell County is so close to West Virginia, how would that impact Medicare and Medicaid, and how would it affect ownership of the property.

Mr. Combs stated the Tazewell site is approximately ten miles from West Virginia.

Mr. Van Thiel said the fifty mile radius would include West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia.

Mr. Combs said the positive side of this project was the enthusiasm of the citizens and the support of the local government and medical centers. Tazewell officials are approaching this project not only as an economic issue, but as a service for deserving veterans. There are a lot of items to address and figure out.

Ms. Dillon asked of the two sites purposed by Tazewell County, which of the sites was preferred.

Mr. Combs said no decisions have been made. The formal analysis is still incomplete, and there are too many items to take into account, for a decision to be made at this time.

Mr. Van Thiel said the private nursing home in Tazewell, Heritage Hall has 180 beds and currently has forty-four vacancies.

Mr. Combs said one of the concerns about this project are; no one wants to take away business or compete for resources from the private sector nursing homes. He said that Tazewell officials and citizens are convinced there is a need for this care center, and that it would not take away business from the private sector.

Mr. Van Thiel stated the feasibility study shows that this district is one of the four lowest planning districts for the veteran's population in the state.

Mr. Combs said Mr. Van Thiel had developed the first site selection matrix. The feasibility study and Scott Brown's planning group have offered their services in site evaluations. Mr. Van Thiel has put together data of surrounding healthcare centers in Tazewell County.

Ms. Olichwier asked if the lack of nursing staff is the reason for low hospital and nursing home occupancies.

Mr. Van Thiel said that Tazewell officials stated they are not having shortages of professional nursing staff.

Mr. Boyd stated that Tazewell is interested in expediting the waiting period and bypassing the VA's state home grant process. They have spoken about using private and public monies to fund the sixty-five percent of which the VA usually provides on new construction projects, and have the VA reimburse the funds later. History has been shared that reimbursements in the past have taken in some cases six to ten years. There are a lot of issues to discuss and to consider on this project.

Mr. Combs stated that the Tazewell asked if they could raise the money for the sixty-five percent and have the VA reimburse them later. He said that Commissioner Burgess has found out that this would be possible, but the building would have to be built to federal specifications. The problem would be length of the wait for reimbursements. There is no guarantee that a project will ever become number one of the VA's project list. Using the public/private money may be too risky.

He said that the next step will be to develop a more detailed outline.

Mr. Jones asked if in the future a liaison will be appointed to hospitals on behalf of the veterans to fill empty beds.

Commissioner Burgess said he had not thought of this. Creative thinking may be needed to fill beds in a rural area. This may be a matter that the committee may need to discuss more.

Mr. Kenyon said the process of a new construction project could take six to seven years to be approved by the VA. The committee needs to look at the new way that nursing homes are being built. Some nursing homes are now being called community living centers. Need to look at the standard concepts of living centers, what will they be in the future.

Mr. Van Thiel stated the VA has issued new construction guidelines.

Mr. Boyd said the committee needed to be aware of the impact of using allocated beds in a rural area, and having vacancies, whereas we could have more nursing home beds in a denser populated area. The committee needs to also look at maybe having a private company run a newly built care center and have the state pick up three years later. This could eliminate the high cost of start up.

NASVH

Lead by Bert Boyd:

Mr. Boyd reported that VAMC would be outsourcing their inspection surveys to QTC Management Incorporated.

Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

Schedule Next Meeting Date and Location

Commissioner Burgess said that he would like to schedule the next meeting Tuesday, March 17, 2009 in Hampton. The meeting place has not yet been established. Mr. Combs will inform the committee when a place has been confirmed.

Adjourn

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Bill Van Thiel and seconded by Ms. Sandra Ranicki to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.