

**Board of Veterans Services
Cemeteries Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 8, 2014**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Cemeteries Committee was held on Tuesday, July 8, 2014 at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, 5310 Milners Road, Suffolk.

Board Members Present

- Sandra Love, Cemeteries Committee Chairman
- L. Max Beyer, Cemeteries Committee Vice Chairman
- Donald Kaiserman, Cemeteries Committee
- Thad Jones, BVS Chairman
- Susan Hippen, BVS
- James Icenhour, Jr., BVS
- Belinda Pinckney, BVS
- Thomas “Chip” Moran, Vice Chairman, Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC)

Commonwealth of Virginia Employees Present

- Steven Combs, Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Director of Policy & Planning
- Tammy Davidson, DVS Finance Director
- Dan Kemano, DVS Cemeteries Director
- Mickie Jones, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (A/E Manager for DVS)

Materials Distributed

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the August 2, 2013 committee meeting
- State Veterans Cemeteries, End of FY14 interment numbers
- State Veterans Cemeteries Organizational Chart
- Flyers for the Horton Wreath Society
- State Veterans Cemeteries building and property maintenance, equipment phase replacement, and planning & improvement plans: Fiscal Year (FY) 14 (projected vs. actual)
- Budget and Resources: FY14 (projected vs. actual)
- Schematic drawings from the draft Suffolk and Amelia cemetery master plans
- State Veterans Cemeteries building and property maintenance, equipment phase replacement, and planning & improvement plans: FY15-26 (projected)
- FY15-20 Cemeteries Workload, Resources, and Expenditures Estimate (assumptions and projections)
- Budget and Resources: FY15-20 (projected)

Note: the materials distributed at the meeting are not included in these minutes, but are available electronically upon request.

Call to Order, Quorum Determination, and Agenda Approval

Chairman Sandra Love called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. Chairman Love had moved the meeting start time to 10:30 a.m. in order to allow the members to tour the cemetery prior to the meeting (the tour was originally scheduled to take place after the meeting).

Ms. Belinda Pinckney led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Eight Board members were recorded as present and a quorum was determined.

Mr. Donald Kaiserman made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Thomas Moran, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval draft minutes of the August 2, 2013 committee meeting

Mr. Max Beyer made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Thad Jones, to approve the minutes of the August 2, 2013 committee meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

State Veterans Cemeteries – Update on Current Operations and Projects

DVS Cemeteries Director Dan Kemano reviewed the FY14 interment numbers at the state veterans cemeteries:

- Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk): 1,018 interments;
- Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia): 307 interments;
- Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Dublin): 140 interments.

Mr. Kemano reviewed the state veterans cemeteries organization chart. He discussed the role of each position and compared the workload and staffing requirements at the three cemeteries. He noted that 23 of 26 authorized positions were currently filled, and that DVS plans to fill positions 24, 25, and 26 in FY15. He noted that positions 25 and 26 were newly authorized for FY15, and resulted from the recommendation of the Cemeteries Committee and the Board to the Governor and General Assembly. The three new positions are an Assistant Cemeteries Director (to be located at the Amelia cemetery), and a burial team employee and administrative coordinator (to be located at the Suffolk cemetery).

Mr. Kemano distributed copies of three flyers for the Horton Wreath Society. He explained the role of the Society in purchasing wreaths, which are placed on gravesites at the Suffolk cemetery each December.

State Veterans Cemeteries – FY14 year-end budget summary

Mr. Kemano presented a summary of the cemeteries Building & Property Maintenance, Equipment Purchase & Replacement, and Planning & Improvement plans for FY14, comparing planned (August 2013) with actual purchases and expenditures. Mr. Kemano discussed each item in detail and provided additional information based on questions from the Board members.

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Ms. Tammy Davidson, DVS Finance Director, compared the projected (August 2013) and actual cemetery expenditures in FY14, noting that total expenditures were lower than projected. She explained the different cemetery revenue sources, including the state General Fund, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) burial reimbursement (plot allowance), and the spouse burial charge. Ms. Davidson noted the DVS receives a small amount when the Department trades in a piece of old equipment for new, and that this amount it put towards the purchase of new equipment.

Ms. Davidson stated that the federal burial reimbursement is currently \$734 per veteran burial, and that DVS divides the funding between current operations and building & property maintenance, equipment purchase & replacement, and planning & improvement. She noted that DVS will need to shift most of this funding to current operations over the next several fiscal years. She reviewed the \$300 spouse burial charge and its use for current operations. Mr. Kemano added that several states charge spouses the same amount as the federal veteran burial reimbursement, but that Virginia was holding the spouse charge at \$300. Ms. Susan Hippen asked if this charge was used for and is important to current operations; Mr. Kemano confirmed it was.

Ms. Davidson also noted that, with the opening of the new cemetery garden sections with preplaced outer burial containers at the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries, DVS has suspended the sale of individual outer burial containers (for the older garden sections).

Mr. Kemano added that because the new gardens (with the preplaced outer burial containers) were constructed with federal grant funds, there were no charges for first or second interments in the new garden sections. He said that DVS had suspended the sale of outer burial containers for second interments in the older gardens (i.e. those without preplaced outer burial containers) and that DVS would provide the outer burial containers at no cost to the veteran or spouse.

Ms. Pinckney asked for a short review of controls on state veterans cemetery spending. Ms. Davidson reviewed the DVS internal controls (monitoring by her staff, coordination with Mr. Kemano, spending approval by herself, Mr. Kemano, and the Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner), and the state spending controls (state Department of Accounts, the Auditor of Public Accounts, the Department of Planning & Budget, and the Appropriations Act). Mr. Steven Combs noted the critical oversight and policy role played by the Board of Veterans Services and its committees, which work with DVS to set priorities on department spending and services provided and monitors the delivery of those programs/services.

Cemetery master plans

Ms. Mickie Jones, DVS A/E Manager, stated that the Amelia and Suffolk cemetery master plans were complete in draft form, and that DVS was reviewing the plans and providing feedback to the firms of Wiley | Wilson and the LA Group, which completed the plans under contract with DVS. Mr. Kemano added that the staff of the VA's State Cemetery Grants Program was also reviewing the draft plans and would provide feedback. He said that electronic copies of the master plans will be distributed to the Board upon completion.

Ms. Jones distributed schematic drawings from the Amelia cemetery draft master plan. She

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directed the Board members' attention to the area colored in blue and red on the first handout, noting that these areas represented land that was not suitable for cemetery expansion because it is in a flood plain/wetlands (blue) or has a slope greater than 10% (red). She stated that this considerably reduced the amount of land available for future cemetery expansion.

Ms. Jones then presented schematic drawings of how the Amelia cemetery might appear when fully built-out, and how the cemetery might be expanded in seven phases. She noted that when the cemetery was originally constructed it was estimated that almost all of the 122-acre site would be available for development, but that the draft master plan shows that considerably fewer acres will be available for future development. She noted that this would reduce the number of in-ground casketed burial sites available in future garden sections, but that this could be partially offset by the construction of additional columbariums and in-ground sites for the interment of cremated remains.

Mr. Beyer and Mr. Kaiserman reminded the Committee that, at the last Committee meeting, the Committee had asked DVS to monitor the availability and acquisition of land adjacent to the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries in case the master plans showed that a significant portion of the current cemetery acreage should prove unsuitable for future development. They asked Ms. Jones and Mr. Kemano for an update on land availability in Amelia.

Ms. Jones stated that DVS had requested assistance from the Division of Real Estate Services (DRES), which is part of the state's Department of General Services (DGS). She noted that DRES handles all land/property acquisition for the state and that it was important to have a DRES representative involved in the process from the beginning. Ms. Jones said that the owner of a property adjacent to the Amelia cemetery was considering putting the property on the market, and that she, Mr. Kemano, and a DRES representative had toured the property with the owner to learn more about what is available.

Ms. Jones said that, as part of the master plan development, Wiley | Wilson and the LA Group had completed a brief analysis of the adjacent property, and had determined that only a portion of the property is suitable for development as a cemetery. Ms. Jones said that if the state were to move forward with land acquisition, it should only be for the part of the property that is suitable for cemetery expansion, with perhaps a few acres additional acres for buffer. Ms. Jones stated that, subsequent to this evaluation, DRES told the owner of the adjacent property that DVS would be primarily interested in the 26 developable acres.

Much discussion followed about the potential for future residential and commercial growth in Amelia County and how quickly the state should act to acquire additional land. Other options were discussed, with Mr. James Icenhour noting that James City County had used the *purchase of development rights* process very successfully to manage growth.

Ms. Jones said that DRES had begun looking at the availability of other property near the cemetery, and that this could offer DVS options.

Mr. Beyer made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Kaiserman, that DVS continue to actively pursue the process of acquiring property (or the development rights thereto) adjacent to the Amelia

cemetery for future expansion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Jones next turned to the Suffolk cemetery master plan. She said that, in contrast to Amelia, the Suffolk site did not present significant topographic challenges, and that the majority of the site could be developed as originally envisioned. She distributed schematic drawings of the current site, how the cemetery could appear as fully developed, and a proposed phase development plan. There was a short discussion about the rate of consumption of gravesites at the Suffolk cemetery; Ms. Jones indicated that the Master Plan showed a maximum availability of 38,170 gravesites. She noted that DVS and the Board may want to consider looking at land adjacent to the Suffolk cemetery for future purchase.

State Veterans Cemeteries Building & Property Maintenance Equipment Purchase & Replacement, and Planning & Improvement Plans, FY15-26

Mr. Kemano reviewed the cemeteries Building & Property Maintenance, Equipment Purchase & Replacement, and Planning & Improvement plans for FY15-26, covering the FY15 plans in detail. The members asked for additional or clarifying information about some of the plans, which Mr. Kemano provided. Mr. Combs noted that proposed funding for the purchase of bell towers had been reduced from previous budget projections.

FY15-20 Anticipated Workload and Funding

Mr. Combs called the members' attention to the sheet listing the assumptions built into the DVS FY15-20 budget and workload projections. He noted that cemetery spending priority goes to 1) current operations (including vaults); 2) building and property (infrastructure) maintenance; 3) equipment purchase/replacement; and 4) to planning & improvement projects. The Committee members were in agreement with this priority.

Ms. Davidson explained that funds from the state's General Fund maintenance reserve can only be used for certain purposes, and thus could not be used for all requirements. She also noted that DVS cannot automatically carry over General Fund maintenance reserve funds from one fiscal year to the next, but that sometimes prior-year funds are made available for particularly large-scale projects which require the funds from multiple years. For this reason, General Fund maintenance reserve funds are not reflected in the carry-forward amounts to the next fiscal year.

Mr. Combs, Ms. Davidson, and Mr. Kemano reviewed the spreadsheets showing budget and workload projections for FY15-20. Ms. Davidson pointed out that each year DVS will have to shift more of the VA burial reimbursement from building/equipment/planning costs to current operations. Mr. Combs added that, if projections hold, DVS should have sufficient resources through FY19 without having to seek an increase in General Fund support, but if cemetery workload increased significantly and additional positions had to be added, DVS would have to seek a General Fund increase sooner.

Mr. Beyer made a **motion, seconded** by Ms. Pinckney, that the Committee support the Building & Property Maintenance, Equipment Purchase & Replacement, and Planning & Improvement plans for FY15-26 as presented, and that the Committee support the FY15-20 budget and resource plans as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

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Adjournment

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:11 p.m.