

**Board of Veterans Services
Cemeteries Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 30, 2008**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Cemeteries Committee was held on Wednesday, July 30, 2008 at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond.

Members Present

- Mark Cole
- Paul Galanti
- Pat Green

Members Absent

- Paris Davis
- John Edwards

Department of Veterans Services Officials Present

- Steven Combs, Director of Policy and Planning
- Dan Kemano, Cemeteries Director

Others Present

None

Materials Distributed

- Agenda
- Draft minutes from 4-17-08 Cemeteries Committee Meeting
- Quarterly Update on Virginia's veterans cemeteries
- Project Status Report July 28, 2008 – Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin
- Information and newspaper article on the Missing in America Project
- Budget amendment request by Delegate Algie Howell – Item 426 #1h – related to funding for the installation of vault liners at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia and the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery
- FY09/10 Budget – Item C-153 – language authorizing the Governor to request federal funds to purchase and install vault lines at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia and the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery
- Department of Veterans Services Point Paper on Lawn Crypts
- Information brochure on cemetery bell towers
- Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia equipment inventory spreadsheet (partial)

Call to Order and Quorum Determination

Chairman Pat Green called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Two of five members were recorded as present. Delegate Mark Cole arrived later and a quorum was determined.

Monthly Progress Report – Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin

- DVS Cemeteries Director Dan Kemano summarized the progress to date on the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin.

Legislative/budget issues for 2009 and beyond

- Missing in America Project (MIAP)
 - The committee members reviewed the materials provided and then discussed the MIAP. Chairman Pat Green stated that he would brief the full Board of Veterans Services when he presented his report
 - Chairman Green suggested that DVS work with MIAP to collect cremains (cremated remains) from the Roanoke Valley and Southwest Virginia, and that a special ceremony be held in conjunction with the opening of the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin, to inter the cremains collected by MIAP and DVS
 - Chairman Green emphasized the importance of working with the Virginia Cemetery and Funeral Home boards to assure their “buy in” and support for MIAP efforts in Virginia
 - Chairman Green asked Cemetery Director Dan Kemano and Policy Director Steven Combs to work with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) on these issues:
 - How does the Code of Virginia treat the storage and disposition of cremains?
 - Can the Code of Virginia be changed to require funeral homes to work with DVS to determine if a set of unclaimed cremains belongs to a veteran?
 - Can the Code of Virginia be changed to provide legal protection for funeral homes when the transfer a set of unclaimed cremains to DVS?
 - Can the Code of Virginia be changed to require funeral homes to transfer unclaimed cremains to DVS, after a specific period, so that the cremains can be given a dignified final resting place?
- Pre-installed vault liners
 - Mr. Kemano and Mr. Combs briefed the committee on the issue of vault liners at Virginia’s state veterans cemeteries. It was noted that:
 - The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) provides vault liners at no cost to the veteran or his/her family
 - DVS regulations require the veteran or his/her family to purchase a vault liner for interment at Virginia’s state veterans cemeteries in Amelia and Suffolk. The cost is \$800 to \$1,200 per vault
 - Construction plans for the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin call for the installation of 1,250 “pre-installed” vault liners at that cemetery. The cost of the vault liners is included in the USDVA construction grant, meaning that the liners can be offered at no cost to the veteran or his/her family
 - The topography of the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin is such that only 1,250 pre-installed vault liners can be installed in Phase 1 of the Dublin cemetery (plans for Phases 2 – 4 provide for installation of some

pre-installed vault liners when those phases are built). After the pre-installed vault liners run out, the veteran or his/her family will be required to purchase vault liners, as is now the case at the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries

- Chairman Green expressed concern that veterans will see a disparity/inequity between the services provided by the Dublin cemetery (i.e. free vault liners) and those provided by the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries (i.e. vault liners for which the veteran must pay between \$800 and \$1,200)
- Chairman Green noted that he would brief the BVS on this issue during his report
- State Cemetery Grants Program funding opportunities
 - Chairman Green had requested an update on grant funding opportunities available through the USDVA's State Cemetery Grants Program (SCGP)
 - Mr. Combs and Mr. Kemano told the committee that the 2008 General Assembly has authorized the Governor to apply for grant funding through the SCGP to purchase and pre-install vault liners at the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries
 - Mr. Combs and Mr. Kemano stated that SCGP leaders have cautioned DVS that SCGP may not have sufficient funding in FY09 to support these requests. SCGP has told DVS that some funds are available to support installation of pre-installed vault liners at new state veterans cemeteries (such as Dublin), but that such funds are not likely to be available for existing state veterans cemeteries (such as Amelia and Suffolk)
 - Mr. Combs and Mr. Kemano briefed the committee on a Point Paper that DVS has submitted to the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), urging that group to support SCGP efforts to obtain additional construction grant funds from the U.S. Congress. With the additional grant funds, SCGP would be able to support grant requests, such as that which will be submitted by DVS, to pre-install vault liners at existing state veterans cemeteries
- Bell Towers for the cemeteries
 - Mr. Kemano told the committee that the master plan for the Dublin cemetery includes the construction of a Bell Tower, but that USDVA construction grant funds cannot be used to purchase the tower. He said that USDVA expects state and/or private funds to be used. USDVA construction grant funds can be used, however, to pay for the construction of the concrete base on which the tower will rest
 - Mr. Kemano told the committee that the master plans for the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries also call for the construction of bell towers at those facilities, but that the towers have not yet been purchased. Mr. Kemano noted that the Suffolk cemetery has a concrete base already, but that the Amelia cemetery did not
 - Chairman Green asked if funds had ever been requested from the Commonwealth to purchase bell towers for the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries. Mr. Combs responded that to his knowledge, state funding had never been requested
 - Chairman Green stated that he believed that the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) and the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) should work together to raise fund to support the construction of bell

towers at all three cemeteries. He said he would make this motion during his report to the BVS, to which the committee agreed

- Equipment Replacement Plan
 - Mr. Kemano delivered a report on equipment replacement needs for the Amelia cemetery. Mr. Kemano noted that the cemetery was now 11 years old and that much of the original equipment (such as the backhoe, mowers, etc.) was at or had passed the end of its useful service life. Mr. Kemano stated that he had developed an equipment replacement plan for the Amelia cemetery. He shared portions of the plan with the committee
 - Chairman Green asked how DVS would pay for the replacement equipment. Mr. Kemano responded that the current budget was devoted almost exclusively to current operations and that funds were not available for equipment replacement. Mr. Kemano stated that he would request funds for equipment replacement as part of the budget process
 - Chairman Green asked Mr. Kemano to provide the committee with the complete equipment replacement plan for the Amelia cemetery, with a detailed accounting by fiscal year of the equipment that needs to be replaced and the associated cost. Chairman Green asked that the detailed accounting be provided as soon as possible

Review and approval of minutes from the April 17, 2008 committee meeting

By consent, the committee approved the minutes from the April 17, 2008 meeting as written

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.