

**Board of Veterans Services
Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2007**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) was held on Monday, March 19, 2007 at the American Legion Department of Virginia in Richmond.

Members Present

John Anderson; Mason Botts; Vince Burgess; Mark Cole; Kirk Cox; Paris Davis; John Edwards; Lydia Dudley; Paul Galanti; Pat Green; Thad Jones; Bill Leighty; Samuel Metters; Al Sample; Bettye Simmons; Judson Stanley; and Vivian Watts.

Members Absent

Jay O'Brien; and Max Taylor.

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

John Anderson, Benefits Services Eastern District Manager, Department of Veterans Services; Anne Atkins, Communications Director, Department of Veterans Services; Colbert Boyd, Chief Operating Officer, Department of Veterans Services; Steve Combs, Director of Policy and Planning, Department of Veterans Services; Rhonda Earman, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services; Andrew Edwards, Webmaster, Department of Veterans Services; Fred Fralin, Benefits Services Manager, Department of Veterans Services; Don Ferguson, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General; David Harker, Outreach Director, Department of Veterans Services; Dan Kemano, Cemeteries Director, Department of Veterans Services; Martha Mead, EO 19 Project Director, Department of Veterans Services; Annie Mosby, Director, State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training, Department of Veterans Services; Donna Shumate, Human Resource Consultant, Department of Veterans Services; David Simmons, Information Technology Manager, Department of Veterans Services; and Bill Van Thiel, Administrator, Virginia Veterans Care Center, Department of Veterans Services.

Others Present

Tom Briggs and Roger Sullivan of the Virginia Veterans Coalition; Dennis Stone, TecAccess; Larry Matera; Brenda Thomas, Virginia Public Radio; Ned Hunter and Lisa Meunier, Stratizon Corporation; and two Special Assistants from the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety.

Materials Distributed

Meeting agenda; draft minutes of the January 8, 2007 meeting; Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations 2007 Legislative Agenda as of March 12, 2007; copy of JLC Chairman Mason Botts' March 14, 2007 letter to Governor Kaine regarding SB 1145 relating to the Service Disabled Veteran Business Program; DVS FY07-08 Budget Amendments, as agreed to by the House and Senate Conference Committee; DVS Monthly Summary of Operations; Summary of DVS Town Hall meetings; information on the new Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center Administrator; Care Centers Subcommittee Report; and Virginia Veterans Care Center 2006 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Call to Order

With of 12 of 19 members present, Chairman Galanti called the meeting to order at approximately 11:35 a.m. Delegate Cole, Paris Davis, Senator Edwards, Al Sample and Delegate Watts arrived shortly after the meeting began. The membership and guests recited the pledge of allegiance to the American flag.

Approval of Minutes

A **motion** was made by Pat Green and seconded by Thad Jones and passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2007 meeting, as drafted.

Department of Veterans Services Initiatives

Commissioner Burgess called attention to the handout on the recent town hall meetings DVS held across the state. Commissioner Burgess stated that the meetings were facilitated by Greg Brittingham of Virginia Commonwealth University, who prepared summaries of each meeting to be included in an overall summary, which will be used in the EO 19 (Serving Virginia Veterans) report to Governor Kaine and posted on the DVS web site. Commissioner Burgess said the meetings were designed to raise awareness with Virginia veterans about DVS services, and to receive input from veterans and their families about issues and concerns they may have. Mr. Burgess said that many of the veterans in attendance were unaware of the services DVS provides, including benefits services, cemetery services and care center services; they also expressed frustration about being able to access United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits.

Commissioner Burgess also reported on the successful veterans forum conducted by state Senator Stosch on March 13 at the American Legion Department of Virginia. Commissioner Burgess said that Senator Stosch sent flyers to constituents in his district announcing the event, asking them to attend and learn more about DVS and the services and programs available to Virginia veterans. DVS staff assisted Senator Stosch with the event, and attended the meeting. Commissioner Burgess noted that DVS is available to assist any state legislator who wishes to conduct a similar forum.

Commissioner Burgess said that the EO 19 report is due to Governor Kaine on April 30, and that DVS is making good progress on it.

Commissioner Burgess then briefed the Board on recent staffing changes at DVS:

- Martha Mead, who is retiring from the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services will be working part-time with DVS as the EO 19 Project Director. Ms. Mead will assist with EO 19 strategies and activities associated with the implementation of it.
- David Harker, who recently retired from the Department of Corrections, will be working part-time with DVS on outreach activities, especially to homeless and incarcerated veterans.
- Benefits Services field operations now will be divided into three regions: Eastern, managed by John Anderson; Western, managed by Jim Granger; and Northern, managed by Walt Phillips. One of the VSRs at the McGuire VA Medical Center will be moving to the new DVS Hampton VA Medical Center field office.
- Sandra Ranicki has been hired as the new Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center Administrator. Commissioner Burgess called attention to the handout relating to Ms. Ranicki.
- Roz Trent, who supports the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF), the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) and the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee (VCCAC) will be leaving DVS on March 26 to work at the new policy unit that is being formed at the Department of Criminal Justice Services, but will be coming back periodically to assist with

transitioning.

Commissioner Burgess reported that the opening of the SBVCC is approximately 30 days behind schedule, making it make late August or early September. Commissioner Burgess said he would keep the Board updated on the date of the opening.

Pre-Registered Public Comment

Chairman Galanti recognized Roger Sullivan as the first speaker. Mr. Sullivan asked why the Virginia War Memorial got a \$3.5 million interest-free loan [towards the construction of the Education Wing] instead of a [General Fund] appropriation. Mason Botts explained that it is not truly a loan, that instead it is a temporary funding mechanism designed to show that the state has committed to funding its part [\$4 million] of the [\$6 million] construction project. With the commitment of state funding, the War Memorial [Education Foundation] would have the ability to solicit private donations, knowing it will receive matching state funding to cover the remaining construction costs.

Mr. Sullivan asked whether receipt of the loan was contingent on raising approximately \$2 million in private donations and how much had been raised thus far. Mr. Stanley responded that the last count he had was that \$100,000 had been raised to date. Mr. Stanley expressed his concerns that if it takes years to raise the necessary private funds, then the cost of construction would have increased to the point that the initial funding would not be sufficient, and that the War Memorial Education Foundation would have to raise additional funds. Mr. Stanley said that, in his opinion, the \$3.5 million should have been in the form of an appropriation instead of a treasury loan, because the \$3.5 million in state funding cannot be touched, until \$2 million in private funding is raised.

Delegate Cox added that Governor Kaine had proposed \$1.5 million [General Fund] in his [introduced] budget for the project, in addition to the \$500,000 that was appropriated last year. He noted that the General Assembly wouldn't appropriate the full state share [\$4 million] without private matching funds. Delegate Cox said that the General Assembly approved the treasury loan [\$3.5 million] to send a clear signal that the Commonwealth was committed to funding its share [\$4 million] of the project. The War Memorial Education Foundation then would be able to use this information as part of the effort to raise \$2 million in private funds. Delegate Cox said it was his understanding from Virginia War Memorial Foundation officials that there would be no problem in raising the private donations. Delegate Cox and Pat Green emphasized the importance of veterans service organizations becoming involved in raising the private funds.

Mr. Sullivan then asked what was going on with the Veterans Services Foundation since the meeting at the General Assembly during the session. Ms. Dudley said she would provide a full report during her portion of the meeting agenda.

Board member John Anderson said he was very concerned about the veterans health care issues and asked Commissioner Burgess if he had any recurring meetings with the directors of the VA Medical Centers in Virginia. Commissioner Burgess responded that the VA's Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network (VISN-6) serves the health care needs of veterans residing in North Carolina, Virginia and parts of West Virginia, and that the Veterans Advisory Committee for that group met in Roanoke on March 7, a meeting that he and Chief Operating Officer Bert Boyd attended. Commissioner Burgess explained that at that meeting, he and Mr. Boyd approached the VISN-6 leadership about ways DVS can help the VA medical system within VISN-6 to provide services to veterans. Commissioner Burgess said that one

DVS proposal is to develop a memorandum of understanding with VISN-6 and the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services, wherein the 40 community services boards in Virginia could provide direct mental health and family services to veterans referred by the VA medical system. Dr. Anderson urged Commissioner Burgess to work closely with the directors of the VA medical centers in Virginia.

Subcommittee Reports

Benefits Subcommittee

Al Sample said no meetings of the Subcommittee had been held since the last board meeting, due to activities associated with the General Assembly session and obligations of the members of the Subcommittee. Mr. Sample said that he had discussed benefits services issues and service delivery mechanisms with DVS staff on several occasions. Mr. Sample noted that he had been involved in developing a training program for current and newly hired VSRs and had worked with the VA's Benefits Services Administration to improve DVS training mechanisms and service delivery. Mr. Sample said he also had worked with DVS staff to ensure that the provisions of EO 19 are implemented. Mr. Sample noted that he has been working with DVS staff on implementing the provisions of EO 25, that addresses workforce development issues in the Commonwealth; as well as EO 33, which is designed to enhance opportunities for small, women- and minority-owned businesses.

Care Centers Subcommittee

Thad Jones called attention to the subcommittee report included in the agenda packets. Mr. Jones said that one of the most important recent activities was the medical job fair held in Richmond on March 13 sponsored by the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Mr. Jones said that the positions available at the soon-to-be opened SBVCC were highlighted at the job fair.

Mr. Jones said that the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee will meet on March 30.

Mr. Jones reported that in January, DVS conducted a walk-and-talk tour of the SBVCC, and that Colonel Van Barfoot and Ruth Sitter, widow of Colonel Carl Sitter, and members of their families were in attendance. Colonels Barfoot and Sitter are Congressional Medal of Honor recipients living in Virginia, for whom the SBVCC was named. Mr. Jones noted that a grand-opening ceremony is being planned for the SBVCC, and asked for the Board's help in establishing an ad hoc committee to help facilitate the ceremony's activities.

Mr. Jones called attention to the Virginia Veterans Care Center Consumer (VVCC) Satisfaction Survey.

Mr. Stanley said that John Jackson, Paralyzed Veterans of America's representative on the JLC, and social workers at the McGuire VA Medical Center (VAMC), would like to meet with Mr. Jones and VVCC Administrator Bill Van Thiel in order to gain an understanding of the SBVCC residency requirements and any other information they need to properly counsel the veterans they serve. Mr. Stanley suggested that the VAMC patient advocates also be included in this meeting, and that the meeting take place as soon as possible. Commissioner Burgess promised to discuss this proposal with Mr. Stanley after the meeting.

Mr. Van Thiel reported that the VVCC renovations are nearing completion, with the storage building and laundry facilities being fully operational and only a few minor punch list items remaining.

Board of Veterans Services Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2007

Mr. Van Thiel said the SBVCC's anticipated completion date is a floating timeline that changes with varying construction dynamics, and currently is about a month behind. Mr. Van Thiel said that the schedule does not include items such as inner court yards, so postponing the opening is a prudent decision.

Commissioner Burgess added that DVS has contracted with the College of William & Mary on a statewide care center study, which should be completed late summer or early fall. Commissioner Burgess said this would serve as a master plan on the need for additional care center beds throughout the Commonwealth. Mr. Galanti noted that the William & Mary cost proposal was about half that of the other proposals submitted.

Cemeteries Subcommittee

Pat Green reported that he had met with Commissioner Burgess, Cemeteries Director Dan Kemano and representatives of Virginia Logos, the Department of Transportation's vendor responsible for road signage. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss improvements to road signage for Virginia veterans cemeteries. Virginia Logos has agreed to enlarge the existing signs for the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia, and add more signs to ensure that visitors may easily locate the cemetery. Mr. Green reported that the Suffolk Town Council will not allow the existing signs for the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans to be enlarged, but will allow additional signs to be placed. Mr. Green said it is anticipated that this project will be complete within the next six months.

Mr. Green reported that a replacement for the recently vacated grounds supervisor position at the Amelia cemetery soon will be hired, and that a few benches had been added at the Horton cemetery.

Mr. Green said a minor problem has arisen with the construction of the 2-vehicle storage building at the Horton cemetery, involving what type of engines the vehicles stored there will have. Mr. Green said that Mr. Kemano is working to resolve this issue.

Mr. Green reported that thanks to Governor Kaine's budget proposal, state funding has been appropriated to support the construction of the Southwest Virginia cemetery. Mr. Green urged Board members to communicate with Congressman Rick Boucher, Governor Kaine and the Board's legislative members to thank them for their roles in moving this project forward. Mr. Green said that the land conveyance from the Department of Army should occur within the next six months. Mr. Green noted that there will be publicity and ceremonies associated with the opening of the cemetery and thanked the members of the JLC, who have promised to assist with the publicity.

Commissioner Burgess added that DVS is embarking on a statewide study on the need for additional veterans cemeteries that will be provided to the General Assembly. Commissioner Burgess said DVS has been working with the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Policy at the University of Virginia to explore the possibility of the Center conducting the study.

Board member John Anderson urged DVS to make the organizations conducting the care center and cemeteries studies aware of the fact that there are no facilities in Northern Virginia, a region with the second largest population in Virginia.

Mr. Green added that he and Mr. Davis have been working with a company that provides free Christmas

for gravesites, with the objective of getting the wreaths placed at Virginia veterans cemeteries.

Budget and Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Dr. Metters urged Board members to become involved in activities relating to EO 19, EO 25 and EO 33. Dr. Metters said he served on National Small Business Advisory Committee for Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses, and that he is happy to see that there has been some movement in this area at the state level with these executive orders. Dr. Metters noted that Public Law 106-50 mandates that there shall be a disabled veteran owned business program; and Public Law 108-83 mandates there will be a set-aside program for disabled veteran owned businesses.

Dr. Metters said he had asked the chairmen of the three standing subcommittees to look at the existing DVS Strategic Plan (the Plan) and provide suggestions for revisions or additions. Dr. Metters asked the chairmen to provide their reports to him by the end of April, and they agreed. Dr. Metters said he then hopes to hold a meeting of the Budget and Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Subcommittee some time in May to provide further input into the strategic planning process. Dr. Metters said he also would like input from the JLC, the VSF and the VCCAC prior to the May meeting. Dr. Metters emphasized that coalescence between all of the groups will provide comprehensive and broad-based support for the Plan, and this process will provide good guidance for the future of DVS programs and services. Dr. Metters also welcomed input from all Board members.

Steve Combs distributed the FY07-FY08 Budget Amendment, as agreed to by the House/Senate Conference Committee, and Commissioner Burgess called attention to the Monthly Summary of Operations handout, which provides agency budget updates. Commissioner Burgess asked board members to contact Armistead Ransone or himself if they have any questions or suggestions on the report.

Steve Combs said the budget handout was an update from the last board meeting on where DVS is in terms of operating budget, and that the last page has capital budget and other information. Mr. Combs said that the General Assembly approved all of Governor Kaine's budget requests, including the supplemental request for the Southwest Virginia veterans cemetery. Mr. Combs pointed out that there is an additional \$734,000 and additional positions for FY08; and that Benefits Services shows a loss of some funding that can be attributed to the transfer of resources to administration and support services to the Financial Management System (FMS). Mr. Combs added that these funds were allocated by the 2006 General Assembly specifically for the FMS, and that the transfer from Benefits Services is merely a technical administrative procedure. Mr. Combs said that the VVCC also will be allocated funds to modernize patient records system.

Mr. Combs said that no additional positions will be allocated for cemetery operations, but that \$80,000 will be provided to bring salary conditions for cemetery staff in line with local market standards.

Mr. Combs noted that there has been no funding increase for the State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training, but he emphasized that under the Montgomery GI Bill, there are special programs for business training.

Mr. Combs also noted additional funding proposed by Governor Kaine to support the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program. One million dollars will be allocated to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to support the Virginia Military Survivors and

Dependents Education Fund (VMSDEF). SCHEV which will disburse up to \$1,500 per student as a stipend for room, board, books and supplies. Delegate Cox added that the General Assembly explored various ideas for providing for the room, board, books and supplies and settled on the stipend mechanism, so that students living off campus would be included in the benefit. Chairman Galanti added that VMSDEF stipend augments a federal stipend amounting to approximately \$700 or \$800.

Al Sample added to Dr. Metters' comments, saying that SB 1145, patroned by Senator Wagner, was passed during the 2007 General Assembly session that supports the intent of EO 33.

In response to Thad Jones' comments about the amount of information new board members must process, Dr. Metters stated that he hoped the updated Strategic Plan will serve as mechanism to measure DVS accomplishments and what the future goals and objectives are. Mr. Leighty noted that the new state budget structure dictates that funding will be tied to performance measures, providing for programmatic accountability.

Mr. Leighty announced that two former U. S. Marines who served during Operation Iraqi Freedom have been hired as part of the Department of Transportation's (VDOT) Wounded Veteran Internship Program. The program is open primarily to veterans wounded in U. S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, who do not wish to return to jobs they may have had before their combat service. The internships can last up to two years. Veterans in the program can compete for permanent VDOT positions, jobs in the private sector or other government agencies. Mr. Leighty added that there are six more applicants waiting to be placed in the program.

The meeting adjourned for a lunch break at 12:45, and reconvened at 1:05.

Chairman Galanti asked the guests and staff present at the meeting to introduce themselves.

General Assembly Report

Delegate Watts praised the measures that provide for additional funds to support VMSDEP.

Delegate Watts advised that one of her constituents living in the Northern Virginia area about to retire from military service, who has very good credentials and a desire to serve as a VSR, could not accept a VSR position that was offered to him because the salary was too low. Delegate Watts urged DVS to address salary differentials for positions in areas like Northern Virginia with higher costs of living, noting that other state agencies like Virginia State Police have a salary structure that provides for the differential. Commissioner Burgess responded that DVS is addressing the differential issue, and also is looking at increasing VSR salaries across the board, because they currently are too low when compared to market standards. The DVS salary increase plan currently is being reviewed by the Department of Human Resource Management and will be implemented thereafter.

Senator Edwards said that DVS has been successful in getting its message about the need to improve services and programs to Virginia veterans to the General Assembly, resulting in a favorable environment for pushing forward veterans legislation and budget items. Senator Edward urged DVS to keep up the good work by getting the word out to veterans on services available to them. Senator Edwards echoed Delegate Watts' comments about VMSDEP funding.

Delegate Cole said he was glad to see that DVS finally is recovering from the state budget cuts of

approximately 5-6 years ago and that most of the services cut at that time have been restored. Delegate Cole emphasized that there now is an emphasis on military and veterans issues, which helps to increase the DVS visibility within the General Assembly.

Commissioner Burgess added that he and Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) Director Sara Wilson has been working with Delegate Hall (SB 2840) and Senator O'Brien (SB 1033) to ensure that the statutory language providing for veterans preference was strengthened during the General Assembly session. The word "consider" was removed; the word "preference" was inserted; and DHRM is directed to provide guidance on veterans hiring preference to state and local agencies. Ms. Wilson made a veterans hiring preference presentation at one of the JLC meetings, and she plans to engage the JLC when preparing the guidance information. Commissioner Burgess said that DVS is considering a proposal that one of the new positions allocated by the General Assembly be dedicated strictly to veterans hiring preference compliance.

Delegate Cox said he has sent a summary of veterans legislation to all the Veterans Service Organizations in his district, which included donation opportunities for the War Memorial Education Wing project. Delegate Cox said he had received good input from the VSOs and urged other legislative members to provide a similar summary to veterans in their districts. Delegate Cox praised the JLC for helping Virginia veterans to speak with one voice before the General Assembly, helping to facilitate the passage of important legislation and budget items.

Comments from the Chairman of the JLC

Mason Botts said that the JLC had great success this year because of a tremendous effort in pulling together a prioritized legislative agenda, a process which began ten months ago. Mr. Botts said that most of the JLC member organizations' legislative agendas were, for the most part, consistent with the JLC agenda. Mr. Botts thanked the legislative board members for their hard work in getting important veterans legislation and budget items passed.

Mr. Botts went over each of the items listed in the JLC agenda, noting key bills such as SB 1145 (Wagner), certification of businesses owned by special disabled veterans, which defines "service disabled veteran" and "service disabled veteran business." Mr. Botts said that although SB 1145 is a good start, many veterans believe that the provisions requiring that a veteran must have a 50% service-connected disability, or be 10% combat disabled before they receive the benefit is too restrictive. Accordingly, on March 14, Mr. Botts wrote a letter to Governor Kaine asking that all Virginia veterans with a service-connected disability be allowed to participate in the Service Disabled Veteran Business Program established by SB 1145. Mr. Botts said that the payday lending issue is a very complicated one, with competing interests by those who support payday lending and those who oppose it. Hence, none of these bills were passed, but the issue may be revisited in the 2008 session.

Bill Leighty suggested that the Board endorse the JLC's March 14 letter to Governor Kaine. A **motion** was made, seconded and passed, with Bill Leighty abstaining.

Comments from the Chairwoman of the Veterans Services Foundation

Lydia Dudley reported on the needs assessment that was discussed at the Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees' December meeting. Ms. Dudley said the needs assessment process is ongoing.

Ms. Dudley said that DVS had developed a financial management system for the Veterans Services

Board of Veterans Services Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2007

Fund (the Fund) that will be discussed at the next Foundation meeting. Ms. Dudley said the plan should be finalized at that meeting.

Ms. Dudley discussed HJ 3139 (Reid), which would have abolished the Foundation. The thrust of the resolution was the Foundation's lack of progress in raising funds. When the resolution came before the General Laws Subcommittee, Foundation member Leroy Gross and Board of Veterans Services member John Anderson testified. Ms. Dudley said that the message that came out of this legislation is that it is time for the Foundation to fulfill its fundraising role or decide if that is not possible. The Foundation sent a letter to Delegate Reid outlining how the Foundation saw its initial assignment when the Foundation was established. The letter stated that the Foundation's Trustees would develop a report by November, 2007 that would address the Foundation's mission and objectives and what the future of the Foundation is. Ms. Dudley said that Delegate Reid has been invited to attend the April Foundation meeting.

Judson Stanley asked if the Foundation would be willing to donate approximately \$200,000 to the Virginia War Memorial Educational Foundation towards its \$2 million funding goal. Ms. Dudley responded that it was her understanding that Foundation's funds were to be used exclusively for DVS projects. Don Ferguson advised this was not legally possible, because the enabling statute for the Foundation references the Fund, which includes monies previously held at the Virginia Veterans Care Center, and restricted by statute to programs and projects undertaken by DVS. Mr. Ferguson said that the only way Fund monies could be used for other projects would be to amend the statute to make allow for other projects, or to make the Foundation a DVS entity.

Thad Jones recommended doing a needs assessment to determine if approximately \$10,000 of Fund monies should be allocated for Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center projects.

Bill Leighty said that fund raising capability is something Governor Kaine will consider in future appointments to the Foundation's Board of Trustees.

Board member John Anderson said that one of the things that came out of the testimony before the General Laws Subcommittee is the possibility of acquiring professional fundraising staff for the Foundation, noting the difficulties in getting volunteers to perform this task. Pat Green said that he thinks the Foundation should become a IRS 501(c)(3) organization, so that donors will have the assurance that their donations are not going to the Commonwealth.

Ms. Dudley said it was her understanding that fundraising is not a function of the Trustees themselves. Paris Davis suggested that donations be solicited through the Combined Federal Campaign. Bill Leighty responded that it may be possible for the Foundation to become a designated charity for the Combined Virginia Campaign (CVC). Steve Combs added that to be eligible for the CVC, charities must be registered, non-profit organizations. Senator Edwards suggested that legislation be introduced in the 2008 General Assembly session for a Foundation check-off on state income tax returns. Commissioner Burgess added that only so many organizations may eligible for check-off status at a time.

July 16 Board Retreat

Paul Galanti asked Don Ferguson to comment on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requirements for the retreat format planned for the July 16 Board meeting. Mr. Ferguson advised that a recent Virginia Supreme Court ruling states that all public body meetings, including retreats, must be covered by the

Board of Veterans Services Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2007

provisions of FOIA, i.e., minutes and votes on motions must be recorded. Mr. Ferguson asked that he be allowed to review the agenda before the retreat takes place. Mr. Ferguson said that, as long as the retreat is conducted like any other public meeting, there should be no problem. A **motion** was made, seconded and passed unanimously to hold the retreat on July 16. It was noted that the retreat should run from approximately 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, and tentatively is scheduled to be held at the Virginia National Guard armory.

Paul Galanti proposed sending a commendation to the American Legion Department of Virginia's (American Legion) Adjutant expressing the Board's gratitude for the use of its facilities for DVS meetings. A **motion** was made, seconded and passed unanimously that DVS prepare the commendation and submit it to the American Legion.

Open Public Comment and Roundtable Discussion

Mason Botts thanked the JLC Vice Chairman and other JLC members for their efforts in drafting the JLC's legislative agenda and for getting key veterans legislation passed during the General Assembly.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.