

**Board of Veterans Services
Cemeteries Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 2, 2013**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Cemeteries Committee was held on Friday, August 2, 2013 at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, 10300 Pridesville Rd, Amelia.

Members Present

- Sandra Love, Committee Chairman
- L. Max Beyer, Committee Vice Chairman
- Donald Kaiserman
- Thad Jones, BVS Chairman
- George Corbett, representing the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

Department of Veterans Services Officials Present

- Steven Combs, Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Director of Policy and Planning
- Tammy Davidson, DVS Finance Director
- Dan Kemano, DVS Cemeteries Director

Materials Distributed

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the May 23, 2013 committee meeting
- State Veterans Cemeteries Organizational Chart
- State Veterans Cemeteries Service Area Plan
- State Veterans Cemeteries building and property maintenance, equipment purchase and replacement, and planning & improvement plans (spreadsheets)
- FY14 Operating Budget
- Documents related to the proposed cemetery master plans

Call to Order, Quorum Determination, and Agenda Approval

Vice Chairman Max Beyer called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. Four of five members were recorded as present and a quorum was determined. Chairman Sandra Love arrived at 10:05, bringing the number of members present to five.

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

Approval of minutes of the May 23, 2013 committee meeting

Mr. Kaiserman made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Thad Jones, to approve the minutes of the May 23, 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 status of the projects to pre-install outer burial containers at the Suffolk and Amelia cemeteries. He noted that despite some weather delays, the projects were largely on track and that DVS expects to begin using the new garden sections in November.

Mr. Kemano reviewed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 burial numbers at the state veterans cemeteries:

- Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk): 859 burials;
- Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia): 311 burials;
- Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Dublin): 175 burials.

Mr. Kemano noted that burial levels had increased at all three cemeteries compared to the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Kemano next reviewed the staffing at the state veterans cemeteries, noting that 22 of 24 authorized positions were currently filled, that DVS was in the process of filling the 23rd position, and that DVS planned to fill the 24th position later in FY 2014.

Mr. Kemano covered the staffing requirement levels identified in the Cemetery Service Area Plan (SAP), which is part of the DVS Strategic Plan. He noted that staffing level requirements are based on the number of burial services performed each year and on need to maintain the cemetery grounds.

He called the members attention to the May, 2013 study completed by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service of the University of Virginia titled “*Commemorating Military Service and Sacrifice in Virginia: An Analysis of Veteran Memorial Needs.*” Referring to Table 4.3, he noted the increasing burial rate at state veterans cemeteries. He noted that with each year the number of gravesites increases, leading to a requirement to increase staffing to maintain the cemetery grounds. Mr. Kemano stated that DVS would almost certainly need to add two positions (#25 and #26) in FY 2015 to handle the increased requirements.

Mr. Beyer noted that the Cemeteries Committee had recommended to the Board of Veterans Services that two additional positions be authorized for Fiscal Years 2015/2016, and that the Board has subsequently adopted this recommendation as one of its initiatives for 2014. He thanked Mr. Kemano for his briefing and asked that the Cemeteries Committee be kept up to date on cemetery staffing. Mr. Kemano agreed to do this.

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

Mr. Dan Kemano reviewed the cemeteries Building & Property Maintenance, Equipment

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Purchase & Replacement, and Planning & Improvement plans for the three veterans cemeteries. He covered projects planned for Fiscal Years 2014 through 2025.

Mr. Kemano covered in-depth the plans for FY 2014, noting that the plans were prioritized first by major category (maintenance, equipment, planning/improvement) and then by specific requirement. One of the major projects planned for FY 2014 includes replacement of the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems at the Amelia cemetery chapel, cemetery office, and maintenance building.

Mr. Kemano then called the Committee members' attention to the documents related to master plans for the Suffolk and Amelia cemeteries. He noted that there is a master plan for the Dublin cemetery, but that the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries do not have master plans. He said that master plans for the two cemeteries will be a critical component in guiding any future cemetery development. As an example, he noted that the columbariums at the Suffolk cemetery will reach capacity in four to five years. A master plan would guide the placement of additional columbariums. Having a master plan in place and a specified location for new columbariums would facilitate the DVS application for grant funding to construct additional columbariums through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, State Cemetery Grants Program.

Mr. Kemano stated that while the master plans represent a significant one-time expenditure by DVS, effective master plans will guide cemetery planning and operations for decades.

DVS Finance Director Tammy Davidson and DVS Policy Director Steven Combs next reviewed the FY 2014 operating budget for the state veterans cemeteries. They gave an overview of the projected workload and expected financial resources for the cemeteries, concluding that the cemeteries will have the financial resources in FY 2014 to support the development of master plans for the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries.

Mr. Kemano noted that a master plan would be especially critical for the Amelia cemetery, as preliminary surveys have shown the low-lying parts of the cemetery near a creek may be unsuitable for future development, while other areas may be unsuitable due to underground rock formations. As part of the master plan process, bore samples will be taken to show which areas are suitable for future development.

The committee members asked what impact the presence of undevelopable areas would have on the operational life of the Amelia cemetery. Mr. Kemano noted that if fewer acres were available for future development, the operational life of the cemetery would be shortened, though he could not estimate by how much until the cemetery master plan was completed.

The Committee members recognized the vital requirement to complete master plans for the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries. Mr. Beyer made **motion, seconded** by Mr. Kaiserman, that the Committee should support the planned expenditure of funds in FY 2014 on master plans for the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries, and that DVS should monitor the availability and acquisition of land adjacent to the two cemeteries in case current cemetery acreage should prove unsuitable for future development. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Love asked that the Committee be kept informed on the master plan process, which Mr. Kemano agreed to do.

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Ms. Davidson, Mr. Kemano, and Mr. Combs provided a brief overview of forecasted workload and expenditures through FY 2018, noting that DVS expects to have sufficient financial resources to fund all projects identified in the Building & Property Maintenance Equipment Purchase & Replacement, and Planning & Improvement plans, provided that there is no reduction in state funding for the cemeteries, and provided that an increasing share of the federal burial reimbursement is shifted from maintenance and equipment replacement to current operations.

Chairman Love stated that the Committee will need to closely monitor workload and expenditures to ensure that the cemeteries have the resources necessary to achieve and maintain national shrine status and to operate in a safe and efficient manner. The Committee members agreed with this by unanimous consent, and also agreed to support the projects identified in the State Veterans Cemeteries Building & Property Maintenance Equipment Purchase & Replacement, and Planning & Improvement plans for FY 2014 - 2018. Chairman Love asked that the Committee be kept up to date on cemetery workload and expenditures, which Mr. Combs, Ms. Davidson, and Mr. Kemano agreed to do.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.