

Board of Veterans Services
Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2015

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) was held on Monday, January 12, 2015 at the Virginia War Memorial, 621 S. Belvidere Street, Richmond.

Members Present

- Richard Anderson
- William Haneke
- Susan Hippen
- James Icenhour
- Thad Jones
- Donald Kaiserman
- Sandra Love
- William Nicholas
- Belinda Pinckney
- Bryce Reeves
- Christopher Stolle
- Rich Schollmann, Chairman, Veterans Services Foundation
- Chip Moran, Chairman, Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
- John Newby, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services

Members Absent

- Mamyé BaCote
- Max Beyer
- Johnny Johnson
- Don Lecky
- Toddy Puller

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

- Jaime Areizaga-Soto, Deputy Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Leslie Frazier, Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Steven Combs, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
- Kendra Ellison, DVS
- Jack Hilgers, DVS
- Mel Sanchez, DVS
- Andy Schwartz, DVS
- Cathy Wilson, DVS
- Carrie Ann Alford, Legislative Assistant to Senator Puller
- Bridget WhanTong, Office of Senator Puller

Materials Distributed as part of the Agenda Packet

- Agenda
- Reports (Agenda Item III)
 - Benefits Committee
 - Care Centers Committee
 - Cemeteries Committee
 - Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
 - Veterans Services Foundation
 - Department of Veterans Services
- 2015 General Assembly Session (Agenda Item IV)
 - Excerpts from the Executive Budget Document
 - Proposed changes to BVS 2015 Position Papers and Summary
- New Business (Agenda Item V)
 - Proposed changes to BVS ByLaws

Call to Order

Chairman Don Kaiserman welcomed the BVS members and called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The roll was called and with 14 of 19 members present a quorum was determined.

Mr. Steven Combs introduced the state officials and guests present. Their names and organizations are recorded above.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. William Haneke made a **motion, seconded** by Ms. Susan Hippen, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried **unanimously**. The approved agenda is included as *Attachment 1*.

Approval of October 7, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Mr. James Icenhour made a **motion, seconded** by Delegate Rich Anderson, to approve the October 7, 2014 Meeting Minutes as presented. The motion carried **unanimously**.

Reports

Benefits Committee

Committee Chairman Belinda Pinckney delivered the report of the Benefits Committee (see *Attachment 2*).

Chairman Kaiserman commended DVS Benefits Director Tom Herthel for his leadership and the work of the DVS Benefits Services section. Mr. Icenhour also commended Mr. Herthel and the Benefits team.

Care Centers Committee

Committee Vice Chairman William Haneke delivered the report of the Care Centers Committee (see *Attachment 3*).

The Board members had an extensive discussion on the planned veterans care centers in Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia, including options to expedite construction of the two new centers.

Cemeteries Committee

Committee Vice Chairman Thad Jones delivered the report of the Cemeteries Committee (see Attachment 4).

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) Chairman Chip Moran delivered the JLC report (see Attachment 5).

Veteran Services Foundation

Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Chairman Rich Schollmann delivered the VSF report (see Attachment 6).

Department of Veterans Services

Commissioner John Newby delivered the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) report (see Attachment 7).

2015 General Assembly session

Chairman Kaiserman led the Board's discussion of the 2015 General Assembly Session.

Mr. Combs reviewed session dates and times.

On behalf of the Benefits Committee, Ms. Pinckney presented a revised version of the Board's position paper for BVS 2015-01, as well as a revised summary of the Board's 2015 initiatives. Ms. Hippen made a **motion, seconded** by Senator Bryce Reeves, to approve the revised position paper and summary as presented. The motion carried **unanimously**.

Mr. Combs reviewed the DVS, veteran and military-related budget items included in the Governor's introduced budget, as well as veteran- and military-related legislation submitted to date.

Delegate Anderson and Senator Reeves, co-chairs of the General Assembly's Military and Veterans Caucus, gave a brief overview of the Caucus' role and meeting schedule.

New Business

Mr. Jones made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Icenhour, to approve the revised ByLaws as presented. The motion carried **unanimously**.

Delegate Chris Stolle made a **motion, seconded** by Senator Reeves, to approve the Compact with Virginia's Veterans as presented.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Wrap Up and Prepare for Next Meeting

Chairman Kaiserman stated that the next BVS meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2015.

Adjourn

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

ATTACHMENT 1
Board of Veterans Services

Virginia War Memorial, Freedom Hall
621 S. Belvidere St, Richmond
January 12, 2015
10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

AGENDA

- I. Opening, Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call and Quorum Determination, Approval of Agenda, and introduction of BVS members, DVS Staff, and Guests – *Don Kaiserman, BVS Chairman* (10:00 – 10:10)
- II. Approval of October 7, 2014 Meeting Minutes – *Don Kaiserman, BVS Chairman* (10:10 – 10:15)
- III. Reports (10:15 – 11:00)
 - a. Benefits Committee – *Belinda Pinckney, Chair*
 - b. Care Centers Committee – *Don Lecky, Chairman*
 - c. Cemeteries Committee – *Max Beyer, Chairman*
 - d. Joint Leadership Council – *Chip Moran, JLC Chairman*
 - e. Veterans Services Foundation – *Rich Schollmann, VSF Chairman*
 - f. Department of Veterans Services – *John Newby, Commissioner*
- IV. 2015 General Assembly session (11:00 – 12:00)
 - a. Overview (dates, meetings, etc.)
 - b. BVS and JLC 2015 initiatives
 - c. Governor’s introduced budget and legislative package
 - d. Other veterans legislation
 - e. General Assembly Military and Veterans Caucus
- V. New Business – *Don Kaiserman, BVS Chairman* (12:00 – 12:20)
 - a. Review and approve proposed changes to BVS ByLaws
 - b. Review and endorse the Compact with Virginia’s Veterans
- VI. Public comment (12:20 – 12:25)
- VII. Wrap Up and Prepare for Next Meeting – *Don Kaiserman, Chairman* (12:25 – 12:30)
- VIII. Adjourn (12:30)

Lunch to follow the meeting

ATTACHMENT 2

BENEFITS COMMITTEE REPORT

January 12, 2015

Chairman Kaiserman and members of the Board:

The Benefits Committee met on December 22, 2014. At the meeting, the committee conducted an in-depth review of the DVS Benefits Services section. Topics covered included: section history; population served; staffing and organization; services provided; budget and economic impact; budget, staffing, training, process, and facility challenges; remediation – steps taken and planned to address challenges; FY16 funding (Governor McAuliffe’s introduced budget) and FY17-18 funding.

The committee fully supports the \$1,750,201 (GF) in new funding proposed in Governor McAuliffe’s introduced budget, which will enable DVS to:

- Add five positions at understaffed locations:
 - Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) at three Benefits Offices (McGuire VAMC, Salem VAMC, Tidewater Area);
 - Veterans Service Administrators (VSAs) at the Fairfax Benefits Office and the Roanoke Center of Excellence (COE);
- Add six new positions:
 - VSRs at two new Benefits Offices (locations to be determined);
 - VSAs at the Henrico and Hampton VAMC Benefits Offices and the two new offices;
- Convert 13 VSAs to VSR Positions;
- Make appropriate salary adjustments;
- Provide annual training;
- Fund office furnishings/signage/relocations;
- Purchase needed IT equipment.

The Committee recommends and requests the full support of the Board of Veterans Services in ensuring the full \$1,750,201 is appropriated to the DVS Benefits Services section in FY16. Draft talking points for use by Board members in advocating for this critical funding are attached to this report.

The Committee notes that additional funding will be required in FY17 (estimate +\$300K) and FY18 (estimated +\$250,000) to fully complete all required initiatives.

The Committee will hold quarterly meetings and/or seek quarterly status updates from DVS on the Benefits Services section, with the Committee Chair in more frequent contact with DVS staff.

Respectfully submitted,

Belinda Pinckney
Chair, Benefits Committee

ATTACHMENT 3

CARE CENTERS COMMITTEE REPORT

January 12, 2015

Chairman Kaiserman and members of the Board:

The Care Centers Committee of the Board of Veterans Services has not met since the last Board meeting, but Committee Chairman Don Lecky is in regular contact with Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC) Administrator Bill Van Thiel and Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) Administrator Sandra Ranicki.

- Construction of the 40 bed SBVCC addition is behind schedule. The contractor now hopes to complete construction in April. Ms. Ranicki and project manager Ron White hold formal meetings with the contractor and the A&E firm every other week, or more frequently if needed. In order to coordinate the required pre-opening inspections with both the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Virginia Department of Health, the contractor has been directed to report by February 1 whether construction will be completed in April.
- At VVCC, the new generator project/installation has been problematic but is progressing, and VVCC is in the process of replacing the fire alarm system. Operation Holiday Spirit received \$24,000 in donations.
- The VA State Home Construction Grants Priority List for FFY2015 has been released (see attached):
 - The Hampton Roads project ranks #51.
 - The Northern Virginia project ranks #52.
 - The Department of Veterans Services does not expect either project to receive federal funding in FFY2015 – available funding may only support the first 20 projects on the priority list.
- The Governor's Introduced Budget includes higher state commitments (35% of project costs) for the Hampton Roads (\$32,620,481) and Northern Virginia (\$33,912,198) to reflect higher construction costs and the new VA design standards (small house concept).
- After approval of the budget by the Governor and General Assembly, DVS will update the federal grant applications so that the higher federal grant amounts will be reflected in the FFY16 Priority List.

Respectfully submitted,

William Haneke
Vice Chairman, Care Centers Committee

ATTACHMENT 4

CEMETERIES COMMITTEE REPORT January 12, 2015

Chairman Kaiserman and members of the Board:

The Cemeteries Committee has not met since the last meeting of the Board, but Chairman Max Beyer and I have stayed engaged with DVS Cemeteries Director Dan Kemano regarding our three state veterans cemeteries. Significant items to report include:

- The Governor's Introduced Budget includes authority for DVS to apply for federal grant funding to construct additional cremated burial sites (columbariums) and associated landscaping and infrastructure work at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk). At current usage rates, the existing columbariums will reach capacity in approximately three years, so it is essential that construction of new columbariums begin soon. A \$500,000 treasury loan is authorized for the design phase of the project and a \$3.5 million for the construction. DVS will repay the loan from the federal grant.
- The first granite monument will be placed along the Memorial Wood Walkway at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia) within the next two months. The donated monument, in black granite, will honor Iwo Jima veterans.
- The cemeteries are in good shape financially. Two additional employees will be hired in the next two months based on the increased workload at the Suffolk cemetery.
- The Christmas Holiday period went just great at all three cemeteries, with excellent support from the veterans community, civic organizations, and the public. Approximately 900 wreaths were placed at the Amelia cemetery, 5,800 at the Suffolk cemetery, and 450 at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Dublin).
- The master plans for the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries are nearing completion and will be reviewed by the Committee at its next meeting.
- The Cemeteries Committee will meet in March or April to review the master plans, status of construction projects, cemetery operations and maintenance, and financial and staffing levels. All Board members are invited to attend. The Committee will report to the full Board at the May meeting on its findings.

Respectfully submitted,

Thad Jones
Vice Chairman, Cemeteries Committee

ATTACHMENT 5

JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS Report to the Board of Veterans Services January 12, 2015

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) has met twice since the last report to the Board of Veterans Services (BVS).

The focus of the October 15 meeting was on education programs and student veterans, including an in-depth presentation by the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Veterans Education, Training, and Employment (VETE) programs section.

At the December 18 meeting, the JLC:

- Adopted revisions to the six JLC 2015 Initiatives
 - The revised summary paper is attached to this report.
 - Electronic copies of the six JLC position papers will be sent by e-mail to the BVS following the meeting.
- Approved the 2015 meeting schedule (attached to this report).
- Approved the 2015 action plan (will be sent by e-mail following the meeting).
- Approved and endorsed the 2014 Annual Update to the Compact with Virginia Veterans.
- Reviewed the schedule and coordinating instructions for the JLC 2015 Conference at the General Assembly on Thursday, January 15.
 - All BVS members are invited to attend.
 - Invitations were sent by e-mail on December 23, 2014.
- Voted unanimously to support and endorse three employment bills, the problem-solving courts bill, and the military child/student identifier bill presented at the meeting.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with the BVS in support of Virginia's veterans in 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas "Chip" Moran
Chairman

ATTACHMENT 6

VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION Report to the Board of Veterans Services January 12, 2015

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees has held one meeting since the last BVS meeting. A meeting was held on November 5, 2014 with a quorum present and the Development and Finance Committees met before the Board meeting. The following events occurred and actions taken at the meeting, in addition to the usual reports and updates on VWWP and V3.

- (1) Reviewed Foundation income, expenses, and fundraising events conducted during FY15;
- (2) Approved the 1st Quarter FY15 VSF Financial Reports;
- (3) Approved VSF FY15 Goals and Objectives;
- (4) Approved changes to VSF-DVS Joint Policies #6, 6A, 7, 8, 9, and 10;
- (5) Approved appointing new member Kathleen Levingston to the Development Committee;

As of 31 December, the Foundation has received donations during FY15 of about \$370,000, of which over \$230,000 is for VWWP and \$113,000 for V3. By contrast total revenue at this time last year was about \$233,000 with about \$185,000 for VWWP. As always, the Foundation extends its sincere congratulations to the outstanding outreach of all DVS activities to realize this significant fundraising level. It could not have been accomplished without the dedication of all DVS personnel.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2015 at the Virginia War Memorial. Items for the next meeting may include: (1) approval of the Second Quarter FY15 Financial Statement and budget adjustments, if any; (2) approval of the review and update of VSF-DVS Joint Policy #9; (3) refine a new draft policy on charitable bequests/planned giving; (4) review and update of the VSF Bylaws and Joint DVS-VSF Memorandum of Understanding; (5) review VSF FY15 fundraising program and projections; (6) elect a nomination committee for FY16 officers; and (7) confirm meeting date and locations of 2015 Board meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Schollmann
VSF Chairman

ATTACHMENT 7

Memorandum for: Chairman Don Kaiserman
Members, Board of Veterans Services

From: John L. Newby II, Commissioner

Date: January 12, 2015

Subject: Department of Veterans Services report

On December 1, 2014, I submitted my first Commissioner's Annual Report to the Governor and General Assembly. I was proud to report to them, and am proud to report to you, on just some of the results achieved by your Department of Veterans Services (DVS) in FY2014:

- Filed 23,241 disability compensation claims on behalf of Virginia veterans and families, directly enabling the recoupment of **\$2.3 billion** in federal compensation and disability payments to our veterans in FFY13.
- Delivered 5,606 discrete supportive services to veterans and their families through the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program.
- Approved 1,122 educational program offerings for the G.I. Bill program, thus expanding educational opportunities for veterans using their G.I. Bill benefits. Virginia veterans received more than **\$872 million** in G.I. Bill benefits in FFY13.
- Facilitated the employment of 3,225 Virginia veterans through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program.
- Provided 130,670 patient days of care at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond and the Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke.
- Performed 1,464 burials at Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries.
- Honored Virginia's fallen by hosting 65,692 visitors at the Virginia War Memorial, a new single-year record.

Even with all we have accomplished, DVS will not rest on its laurels in Fiscal Year 2015. For instance, design work is underway for the expansion of the Virginia War Memorial. Our Sitter and Barfoot Veterans Care Center is scheduled to complete construction of a 40-bed addition this year, and we look forward to providing skilled care to more Virginia veterans.

DVS continues to enjoy the strong support of the Governor, the members of the Virginia General Assembly, and the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs. We are honored that they have made our veterans a top priority, and we look forward to continuing our work in 2015 as we continue to make Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.

With the additional funding included in Governor McAuliffe's introduced budget, your Department of Veterans Services is poised to do great things in FY2016:

- Benefit Services: Add five positions at understaffed offices; convert 13 administrative positions to veterans service representatives; implement a career development plan for all staff to strengthen recruitment, hiring, training, and retention; and open two new benefit offices;
- Add three new housing resource specialist positions in Virginia Wounded Warrior Program regions to help us achieve and sustain the goal of ending veterans homelessness by the end of 2015;
- Put veterans to work in the new Virginia economy through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program;
- Help our veterans make the transition from military service to civilian life, and connect with employment, training, and educational opportunities through the Virginia Transition Assistance Program; and
- Continue to ensure that our veterans and their families have access to education and training opportunities through the G.I. Bill and the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program.

We will need your strong advocacy during the 2015 General Assembly session to accomplish all that we have set out to do. Advocate on behalf of our 800,000 veterans and their family members, for the resources DVS needs to achieve our goals in FY2016 and beyond. Then, throughout the year, keep up with what is happening. Ask tough questions, set high expectations, and demand results. Hold us accountable. And if we need additional resources to get the job done, help us get them.

We could not ask for better partners than the BVS. Thank you all that you do.