

**Board of Veterans Services  
Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2009**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) was held on Monday, January 12, 2009 at the Virginia War Memorial, 621 S. Belvidere Street, Richmond.

**Members Present**

- Dan Boyer
- Vince Burgess
- Mark Cole
- Paris Davis
- John Edwards
- Paul Galanti
- Pat Green
- Thad Jones
- Peyton Robertson
- Al Sample
- Vivian Watts

**Members Absent**

- John Anderson
- Kirk Cox
- Samuel Metters
- Toddy Puller
- Bettye Simmons
- Judson Stanley
- Max Taylor
- Frank Wickersham

**Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present**

- Stephen Parker, Special Assistant, Office of the Secretary of Public Safety
- Don Ferguson, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General
- Jon Hatfield, Executive Director, Virginia War Memorial
- Anne Atkins, Director of Communications, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
- Bert Boyd, Chief Operating Officer, DVS
- Steven Combs, Director of Policy and Planning, DVS
- Jack Hilgers, Development Director, DVS
- Judith Reid, IT Program Assistant, DVS
- Mike Rogers, Director of Finance and Administration, DVS
- Cathy Wilson, Executive Director, Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, DVS
- Doris Thomas, S2CG

Board of Veterans Services Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2009

**Materials Distributed**

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of the October 8, 2008 meeting
- Department of Veterans Services Report
- Benefits Committee Report
- Care Centers Committee Report
- Cemeteries Committee Report
- Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations Report
- Veterans Services Foundation Report
- Quality Indicator Survey

**Call to Order**

The members and guests recited the pledge of allegiance to the American flag.

**Roll Call and Quorum Determination**

With 10 of 19 members (9 of 17 voting members) present, a quorum was determined and Chairman Galanti called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. Delegate Watts arrived later.

**Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Green made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Boyer, to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of Draft Minutes from October 8, 2008 meeting**

Senator Edwards made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Green, to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2008 meeting as written. The motion carried unanimously.

**Department of Veterans Services Report**

Commissioner Burgess delivered the Department of Veterans Services report, which is included as Attachment 1.

Commissioner Burgess introduced Mike Rogers, the new DVS Director of Finance and Administration, who gave some background on his experience in state and local government.

Cathy Wilson, Executive Director of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP), gave a brief update on recent VWWP activities, including the hiring of the three regional directors.

Chief Operating Officer Bert Boyd reviewed the results of the Quality Indicator Survey of the Virginia Veterans Care Center.

Steven Combs, Director of Policy and Planning, reviewed the sections of Governor Kaine's introduced budget that were applicable to DVS. He then covered the Department's two bills before the 2009 General Assembly.

Commissioner Burgess presented Mr. Boyd with a plaque in recognition of 25 years of state service.

Board of Veterans Services Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2009

The Board paused from 11:45 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for lunch.

### **Standing Committee Reports**

#### Benefits Committee

Mr. Sample delivered the report of the Benefits Committee, which is included as Attachment 2.

#### Care Centers Committee

Mr. Jones delivered the report of the Care Centers Committee, which is included as Attachment 3.

#### Cemeteries Committee

Mr. Green delivered the report of the Cemetery Committee, which is included as Attachment 4.

#### Budget and Strategic Planning Committee

No report.

### **Legislative Report**

Senator Edwards, Delegate Cole, and Delegate Watts all spoke of the budget challenges facing the Commonwealth this fiscal year and next. Delegate Cole discussed his bill (HB1727) on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children, while Delegate Watts reviewed her bill regarding the Virginia War Memorial (HB2192).

### **Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations Report**

Mr. Boyer delivered the report of the JLC, which is included as Attachment 5.

### **Veterans Services Foundation Report**

In Mr. Wickersham's absence, Mr. Hilgers delivered the report of the Veterans Services Foundation, which is included as Attachment 6.

### **Public Comment and Roundtable Discussion**

There was no public comment.

### **Adopt 2009 Meeting Schedule and Adjournment**

Chairman Galanti proposed the following meeting schedule for the remainder of 2009 and the first part of 2010:

- Wednesday, April 22
- Wednesday, July 15
- Wednesday, October 28
- Monday, January 11, 2010

Mr. Jones made a **motion, seconded** by Delegate Cole, to adopt the proposed meeting schedule. The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:06 p.m.

## **ATTACHMENT 1**

### **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES REPORT TO BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES January 12, 2009**

- State Budget Reductions
  - All state agencies were required to submit 5, 10, and 15 percent reduction plans
  - DVS goal was to minimize cuts in direct services to veterans
  - The DVS General Fund budget was reduced by \$586,689 in FY09 and \$596,380 in FY10 (7% of DVS General Fund Budget)
  - Some of the impact to DVS services include:
    - Four (4) vacant benefit services positions will remain unfilled
    - Layoff one (1) administrative position
    - Eliminate two (2) wage positions devoted to community outreach and workforce development
    - Reduced support services for contracts, procurement, and capital projects
    - Reduced funding for TurboVet (\$50,000 vs. \$100,000)
    - Reduction of \$27,922 in the amount of community grant funds available under the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program
  - These cuts are on top of reductions of \$288,236 in FY08 and \$38,642 in FY09
- Virginia Wounded Warrior Program
  - Executive Director, Executive Assistant, and three Regional Directors now on board
  - Virginia Wounded Warrior Program Summit – “Painting a Moving Train” held November 6 and 7 at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center and remote sites
  - Community funds distribution process begins: January – March 2009
- Automated system for the electronic preparation of veterans’ disability claims (aka TurboVet)
  - \$100,000 appropriated by 2008 General Assembly to continue development
  - \$50,000 reduction as part of budget shortfall
- Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC)
  - SBVCC is now set up to receive the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reimbursement
  - SBVCC Addition of up to 80 beds is ranked #71 on the VA’s Priority List of Pending State Home Construction Grants for FFY09
- Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC)
  - VVCC is in the early stages of two capital improvement projects:
    - Expansion and resurfacing of the VVCC parking lot to accommodate the increased number of visitors to the facility

Board of Veterans Services Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2009

- Improvements to the facility's delivery area to provide greater turnaround space for trucks. This will speed deliveries of supplies, food, and other material
- Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center
  - New care center of up to 240 beds is ranked #72 on the VA's Priority List of Pending State Home Construction Grants for FFY09
- Benefits
  - In FY08, the VA Roanoke Regional office adjudicated 12,318 claims submitted by DVS on behalf of Virginia veterans. Over 63% of the claims were approved, and over \$28 million in retroactive payments were awarded
- Cemeteries
  - Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery: 591 burials in FY08
  - Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia: 213 burials in FY08
  - Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin:
    - Deed transfer ceremony was held on September 22. Governor Kaine, Congressman Boucher, Senator Edwards, other state and local officials, and many members of the veterans' community were in attendance.
    - Architect selected in October
    - Expected VA construction grant is \$7.8 million
- State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training
  - As of June 30, 2008, there were 846 Virginia facilities approved to provide education and training to eligible veterans and their dependents. This is an increase of 71 facilities from last year
  - In FY07, over 21,000 veterans used their G.I. Bill benefits at a post-secondary education facility in Virginia
  - These benefits totaled almost \$136 million

**ATTACHMENT 2**

Board of Veteran Services  
Benefits Committee Report  
12 Jan 2009

DATE: 12 Jan 2009

I. Members

Al Sample – Chairman  
Kirk Cox – Delegate  
Max Taylor – Member  
Vacant – Needs to be filled

II. Meetings – None this period

III. Committee Activities – Though no meetings have been held, members have been independently tracking and assisting DVS in the following areas:

- Turbo Vet Portal Development – Continuing to stay abreast on its development and interfaces with other Portal Tools.
- Veteran Workforce Development Taskforce – IAW EO 19 and E0 61 the Governor established the Task Force to find improved ways of assisting veterans in finding employment and employment related training and credentialing. The Task Force is comprised of representatives from various state agencies, the VMAC Chair, the Adjutant General, DVS Commissioner, Delegate Watt, Senator Wagner and prior military Corporate owners and senior executives. The report was submitted to Governor Kaine on 25 Aug 2008. The Governor’s Office received and reviewed the report. The next step is to meet with Sec. Marshall and key staff members to initiate an implementation development plan.

IV. DVS Benefits Services Operational Briefing – John Anderson

V. SAA Education Report – Annie Walker

**BENEFIT SERVICES**  
**OPERATIONAL BRIEF AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2008**

**Field Office Staffing**

Current staffing level is adequate, but filling of additional open positions would enhance operations. We are currently augmenting offices with staff from other locations. Currently we have openings in:

Alexandria	Agent Position
Fairfax	Agent Position - Interviews in January
Tidewater	Office Manger - Acting appointed
Eastern District	Manager Position - Acting appointed
Northern District	Manager Position - Acting appointed

**Operations**

We have not lost any employees this quarter. One (1) resignation is effective on January 20<sup>th</sup> at VAMC McGuire.

The Northern Virginia area continues to give us some challenges that we continuing to work through.

**Outreach Efforts**

We have had during October -December contact with 42 Veteran Service Organizations, 52 Legislative Contacts and identified 188 potential MSDEP eligible recipients.

**Claims Activity**

There have been 7,622 claims adjudicated by the VA since July 2008 for a 60.7 percent grant rate. Our cumulative total of retroactive benefits from July through December is \$16,461,909.

**Training**

District meetings are being conducted quarterly that are serving as an arena for continued training. Because of the limited staffing in Northern VA, training is done on an office by office schedule due to the varying needs of each individual office.

**Future Needs**

As is previous quarters, additional staffing would permit for additional services especially in the Northern VA area. Expect to see some additional moves to improve our services.

Board of Veterans Services Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2009

Board of Veterans Services/Benefits Committee  
State Approving Agency  
January 7, 2009

As of January 7, 2009, The State Approving Agency (SAA) has 900 facilities approved to provide education and training to eligible veterans and their dependents. In FFY 07, there were 21,000 veterans enrolled in those active facilities, receiving \$135,695,743.00 in benefits. Virginia continues to be ranked in the top 6 states for total student population in the nation.

The major focus for Veterans Education is the new Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33); its implementation, the impact of the new bill on the financial aid and registrar's offices of colleges and universities and the role that the State Approving Agency will play in ensuring the success of the bill.

Ms. Walker (Director) and an education specialist will be attending a briefing on January 9, 2009, sponsored by the American Council on Education and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to address these concerns.

### **ATTACHMENT 3**

## **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES CARE CENTERS COMMITTEE REPORT January 12, 2009**

---

### **Virginia Veterans Care Center Highlights Mr. Bill VanThiel**

Approximately 30-vacancies are occurring daily. Half of the vacancies are coming from the Domiciliary (DOM) (Assisted Living Unit).

VVCC has admitted 39 patients, discharged 40-patients and sadly, 8-patients died in the last 5-weeks. At the end of December 2008, fourteen residents were admitted to the hospital due to various medical causes.

VVCC DOM unit was granted a two year license because of the favorable annual licensure survey.

VVVC raised \$33,102.00 for Operation: Holiday Spirit. This is a yearly project to raise money to insure that all of VVVC residents receive a Christmas gift(s).

As reported in the last committee's report, the Energy Conservation (Ex.-Or.48) project with TRANE is in full progress. Additionally, the pharmacy modifications project for a new medication delivery system is going well.

VVVC is listed as (54) on the VA Construction Grant priority list.

### **Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center Highlights Mrs. Sandra Ranicki**

SBVCC has admitted 217 patients since the opening. There are (130) in-house residents due to multiple reasons, such as short term rehab and returning home, and deaths. SBVCC has processed the following: Army Veterans @ 116, Navy Veterans @ 42, Air Force Veterans @ 21, and Marines Veterans @ 13.

SBVCC primary pay sources are: Medicaid @ 57%, Medicare @ 18%, private payment @ 22% and Tricare @ 3%.

Currently, the Federal VA per diem subsidy is received two (2) months in arrears. SBVCC received \$259,000 on January 5, 2009. This payment was for November. Staff is working proactively to ensure that payment is timely received.

SBVCC staff consists of the following employees: classified employees @ 187, wage employees @ 51 and veterans employees @ 14.

Volunteerism from groups and individual are active at SBVCC. There are 18-groups and 8-individual providing services and activities.

In an effort to connect with the community, informational packages were mailed to American Legion posts (68) and VFW posts (50). Some of the groups are requesting tours of the facility.

Board of Veterans Services Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2009

**Commissioner's 2008 Annual Report Veterans Care Centers Highlights**  
**Mr. Vince Burgess**

The **Virginia Veterans Care Center and Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center** Annual Report highlights can be found on **pages 33-38** of the Commissioner's 2008 Annual Report. The report is an excellence snapshot of the current state of our veterans care centers.

*Respectfully submitted-Thad A. Jones*

## **ATTACHMENT 4**

### **Board of Veteran Services Cemeteries Committee Report January 12, 2009**

The following is a quarterly update on issues, events, and progress being made at the Virginia Veterans Cemeteries, submitted by Cemeteries Director Dan Kemano

#### **VIRGINIA VETERANS CEMETERY, AMELIA**

- A. Total burials conducted this FY to date: 118 services conducted.
- B. Total full time employees: two administrators, three grounds employees plus a shared mechanic.
- C. One cemetery administrator assists the Claims Agent located at the cemetery office with all administrative duties at the office, until the claims office part-time employee position is filled.
- D. With the availability of funding and due to some excellent work on the part of our financial management team, we were able to look at our phase replacements list and replace the top item on that list, we have ordered a new full-size backhoe for the cemetery, delivery date is end of January, noting this is the only phase replacement piece of equipment purchased at this twelve year old cemetery, more does need to be done and as we discussed at meetings previously we do need phase replacement funding in the budget established for each of our cemeteries.
- E. Due to some exceptional work on the part of our new Grounds Supervisor, a tremendous amount of work has been completed through out the cemetery with a tremendous boost to the cemeteries curb side appeal, all winter work projects are moving forward as planned.

#### **ALBERT G. HORTON JR. MEMORIAL VETERANS CEMETERY**

- A. Total burial conducted this FY to date: 285 services conducted.
- B. Total full time employees; two administrators, five grounds employees plus a shared mechanic.
- C. Suffolk has two unfilled employee positions: one grounds and one administrator due to funding restraints. The numbers of burials has increased significantly each year for the past two years and will increase again this year with no increase in actual employees positioned due to funding.
- D. The two-stall garage storage facility is nearly completed, the garage doors are being installed this week, hopefully the simple electrical wiring of the garage will be completed by this month and we can move equipment in.
- E. On the 13th of December we had a great Wreaths Across America ceremony, because of a wonderful committee formed by Jeanne Banks, her committee spent six months actively collecting donations [standing out in front of stores handing out donations cards] they collected \$8 thousand plus dollars to put a Wreath with a red bow on each grave/cremation site through out the cemetery. **IT WAS SPECTACULAR TO SEE.**
- F. All winter work projects are moving forward as planned.

#### **VIRGINIA VETERANS CEMETERY, DUBLIN**

- A. The Department of Veterans Services does now have a signed property Deed in hand for the

Board of Veterans Services Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2009

Dublin cemetery property.

B. We are very busy now in the design and engineering of the cemetery grounds and buildings, We are also working up a very tentative planning schedule through the construction completion which I will get out to all concerned within this month.

## **ATTACHMENT 5**

### **JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS REPORT TO BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES January 12, 2009**

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) met on December 18, 2008. The JLC:

- Prioritized its 2009 Legislative Objectives:
  1. Automated System for the Electronic Preparation of Veterans' Disability Claims
  2. Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children
  3. Burial Vaults for Virginia State Veterans Cemeteries
  4. Military Family Relief Fund
  5. Real Estate Tax Relief for 100% Disabled Veterans
  6. Homeless Veterans Study
- Adopted revisions to the JLC Constitution and By-Laws
- Received a presentation from Virginia War Memorial Executive Director Jon Hatfield on the current rules governing the placement of names on the Wall of Honor at the Virginia War Memorial
- Received a presentation from Mr. Robert Huffman, State Coordinator of the Virginia National Guard Funeral Honors Program
- Received reports from the Department of Veterans Services, the Board of Veterans Services, the Veterans Services Foundation, and the JLC Representative to the Virginia Citizen-Soldier Support Council
- Discussed the "JLC Conference at the General Assembly," to be held on January 19, 2009
- Adopted the following meeting schedule for 2009:
  - Wednesday, March 25
  - Wednesday, May 20
  - Wednesday, August 12
  - Wednesday, October 14
  - Thursday, December 17

The next JLC meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 25, 2009 at the American Legion Building in Richmond.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel D. Boyer  
JLC Chairman

## **ATTACHMENT 6**

### **VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION REPORT TO BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES January 12, 2009**

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees met on December 3, 2008. The meeting:

- (1) Held Standing Committee meetings.
- (2) Reviewed Foundation fund raising conducted during 2008.
- (3) Adopted FY09 Goals and Objectives based on the Strategic Planning Initiative.
- (4) Appointed a Foundation Manager to handle Foundation operations on a daily basis.
- (5) Recognized the Lakeview Golf Club along with David and Judy Holt for their outstanding fund raising initiatives in support of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program.

The Development Committee produced a Fundraising Plan and a Branding and Outreach (Public Relations) Plan. Both were reviewed during the Committee meeting and it was decided to initially focus on corporate donors. The Finance Committee recommended changes to the Trustees By Laws to clarify its role and reviewed the need for defining the authority of the Foundation to administer the Veterans Services Fund in conjunction with the support that the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is providing.

The Foundation Board Chairman mentioned that he had submitted the first VSF annual report to the Secretary of Public Safety setting forth Foundation accomplishments. It was as a result of the clarification of VSF and DVS being separate agencies directly under the authority of the Secretary, unlike the Board of Veterans Services and JLC that report to the DVS Commissioner.

Foundation fund raising for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) had reached \$47,904.70 at the time of the meeting. Since then to date, an additional \$10,380 has been raised toward the fund raising goal for FY09. The Foundation Board Chairman emphasized the role of Board members in contributing and conducting fund raising. The JLC Chairman reported that he had challenged the Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) represented on the JLC to step up their support for VWWP and report, at the December 18, 2008 meeting on their progress.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2009. The meeting will be held at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond. Items for the next meeting could include: (1) adoption of By Laws changes proposed by the Finance Committee and possibly others to reflect the Foundation's relationship with DVS and the role of the Foundation Manager; (2) report on progress of clarifying Fund administration, (3) review fund raising program progress, (4) refinement of fund raising and public relations programs for FY 09 and FY10, and (5) discussion of VSF Strategic Planning along with short and long-range goals.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Wickersham  
VSF Chairman