

**Board of Veterans Services
Meeting Minutes
June 29, 2021**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) was held electronically on Tuesday, June 29, 2021.

Members Present

- Victor Angry
- Carl Bedell
- John Bell
- Carl Bess
- Michael Dick
- Mario Flores
- Buddy Fowler
- Dan Helmer
- James Icenhour
- Thurraya Kent
- Tammi Lambert
- John Lesinski
- Maime Locke
- Kathleen Murphy
- Kathy Owens
- Bryce Reeves
- Marcus Simon
- Julie Waters
- William Ashton, Chairman, Joint Leadership Council
- Robin Beres, Veterans Service Foundation
- Pam Seay, representing the Virginia War Memorial Foundation
- John Maxwell, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services

Members Absent

- Paige Cherry
- Jenny Dye
- Lyla Kohistany
- Frank Reyes
- Jack Lanier, 2nd Vice Chair, Veterans Services Foundation

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

- Jon Ward, Assistant Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Tom Crabbs, Military Liaison Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Jim Flaherty, AGO
- Steven Combs, Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS)

- Claudia Flores, VDVS
- Thomas Herthel, VDVS
- Tina Parlett-Calhoun, VDVS
- Annie Walker, VDVS
- Beverly VanTull, VDVS
- Ravi Padma, VDVS
- Quintrel Lenore, VDVS
- Martina Murray, VDVS

Materials Distributed as part of the Agenda Packet (sent via e-mail and posted on BVS webpage)

- Draft Agenda
- Draft Minutes of the April 16, 2021 meeting
- VDVS Operations Update
- VDVS Strategic Priorities Brief
- Veterans in the Arts Working Group Report
- JLC Report to BVS
- Veterans Services Foundation Report
- Virginia War Memorial Report

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Michael Dick called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

Chairman Dick led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call and Quorum Determination

The roll call determined a quorum with 22 of 26 members present.

Approval of Agenda *(See Attachment 1)*

Chairman Dick asked for a motion to approve the agenda by. Senator Bell made the **motion, seconded** by Senator Reeves. The motion carried by unanimous consent. *(See attachment 1)*

Approval of Minutes of the April 16, 2020, Meeting

Chairman Dick asked for a motion to waive the reading of the minutes since they minutes from the April 16, 2021 meeting were available to all members in advance. Delegate Kathleen Murphy made the **motion, seconded** by John Lesinski to waive the reading of the minutes. The Chairman asked for any opposition to approval of minutes or comments. Ms. Thurraya Kent asked to correct spelling of Ms. Tammi Lambert's name in the minutes. The Chairman confirmed the spelling will be corrected. In the absence of opposition, the Chairman ruled that the minutes are approved.

Introduction of VDVS staff and guests

VDVS Commissioner Maxwell introduced the VDVS team members. The names are recorded

above.

Chairman Dick introduced Assistant Secretary Ward, and Military Liaison Tom Crabbs from the Secretary's office.

Update on VDVS *(See Attachment 2)*

Chairman Dick asked VDVS Commissioner Maxwell to provide an update on the VDVS Operational Status. He noted that VDVS fully transitioned from a COVID posture to in-person services by appointment only. He commented that outreach is conducted at an agency level.

Commissioner Maxwell commented that the majority of VVFS requests for services relate to housing. There remains a focus on suicide prevention and mental health. Commissioner Maxwell commented on the cemetery effort to reach National Shrine status.

VDVS is coordinating with SCHEV on VMSDEP forecasting. He noted the SCC involvement in a pilot program. Commissioner Maxwell highlighted Memorial Day services at the Virginia War Memorial with approximately 60,000 viewers. He also highlighted the Women Veterans Summit with 900 registrants.

Commissioner Maxwell noted VDVS submitted the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan under the One Virginia Plan. Chairman Dick thanked the Commissioner and noted that Thurraya Kent and Kathy Owens visited the Care Centers and welcomed other members to visit as well. Commissioner Maxwell also thanked the Board Members and highlighted the commitment to the veterans.

Senator Bell asked about the tracking of veteran suicide. Commissioner Maxwell noted that VDVS relies on the Department of Veterans Affairs data. Senator Bell thanked the Commissioner and asked for information from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Kathy Owens asked about the 41% of resources spent on housing and rent and asked for more details. Commissioner Maxwell commented the range of housing assistance but VDVS is able to provide more fidelity. DC Herthel commented that much of the funding is transition money for housing.

Chairman Dick asked if there were any further questions. No additional questions heard. Chairman Dick turned the floor over to Commissioner Maxwell.

VDVS Strategic Priorities

Commissioner Maxwell noted this brief is to present actions / activities as near-term objectives to take the agency forward in serving veterans and their families. He commented that VDVS is positioning as a port of entry for services.

Commissioner Maxwell noted VDVS wants to be a thought leader and create opportunities for collaboration. He commented VDVS plans to resume the Virginia Transition Alliance and the Interagency Executive Strategy Committee.

JLC Chairman Bill Ashton asked if VDVS is involved in the DoD Skillbridge program.

Commissioner Maxwell responded that VDVS is involved with this program. Chairman Ashton commented this program is available to businesses across the Commonwealth and assists transitioning service members to obtain civilian experiences and skills for their resume.

Commissioner Maxwell commented that the virtual programming the War Memorial provided during COVID remains popular, therefore the goal is to optimize both in-person and virtual services. He further commented on the objective for improving outcomes for veterans and their families to include readily available assistance for new clients. He highlighted claims adjudication and the appeals success rate as indicators for improved outcomes. Commissioner Maxwell noted the desire for VDVS to have a staff member solely dedicated to Suicide Prevention.

Chairman Dick asked about the appeals success rate and noted the Puller Clinic at William & Mary. He asked about external support. DC Herthel commented on the partnerships with the Puller Clinic, William & Mary, and NVLSP. He noted that VDVS makes referrals to external partnerships for assistance with discharge upgrades and general legal assistance. He commented that if appeals cases are unsuccessful at the BVA, NVLSP takes some of those cases to federal court at no cost to the veteran. He further noted NVLSP connects veterans with pro bono legal services as well in some circumstances. Chairman Dick noted the demand for services remains high.

Kathy Owens asked the Commissioner if the improvements or enhancements to the War Memorial programs involve additional financing. Commissioner Maxwell responded that additional resources are required. Commissioner Maxwell commented this might include an additional staff member or two.

JLC Chairman Ashton asked if VDVS has a youth program coordinator. Commissioner Maxwell highlighted youth education at the War Memorial. CDC Combs commented that VDVS does not have a dedicated youth program coordinator but echoed the Commissioner's comments on the education programs at the War Memorial and further noted those programs are targeted to youth. CDC Combs also noted that the teacher outreach programs are targeted to youth programs. The War Memorial is a popular destination for school groups and scouting programs.

AS Ward highlighted the Challenge program in the Virginia National Guard dedicated to helping underserved and disadvantaged youth graduate with GEDs.

Commissioner Maxwell continued his brief and commented on the desire for an agency-wide Case Management System for holistic connection to services. He noted the need to also support growth in social media and outreach.

Commissioner Maxwell discussed challenges in recruiting / retention of staff at the Care Centers and noted VDVS efforts to improve competitiveness in this market. He also discussed the commitment to quality of life enhancements for veterans in the Commonwealth. Commissioner Maxwell noted the need for a secure virtual platform to support services. Commissioner Maxwell commented on partnerships and trade organizations to facilitate

transition from active duty to civilian employment. He also noted services to justice involved veterans and the need to grow this capacity as well.

Commissioner Maxwell commented on the desire for VDVS to formalize outreach program to reach the 721,000 veterans across the Commonwealth. Chairman Dick asked about the goal of serving as a Port of Entry, specifically if VDVS desires to be the primary port or one of the primary ports of entry. Commissioner Maxwell responded that VDVS desires to be a port of entry, not the only port of entry, but to serve as a leader in the space.

Commissioner Maxwell noted the entrepreneur initiatives in VDVS. He also commented on the need to grow IT capacity within the agency. He further noted the need to address shortfalls for supportive services, such as HR, IT, Finance and Communications. He also noted the commitment to flexible work plans to the extent possible. He noted the analysis on salary and role classification to ensure the current classification is correct.

Commissioner Maxwell commented on the need to identify metrics and measures to achieve objectives in support of the Compact and strategic priorities.

Chairman Dick thanked the Commissioner and asked for comments and questions. None heard. Chairman Dick turned the floor over to Julie Waters for the Veterans in the Arts working group.

Veterans in the Arts Report *(See attachment 4)*

Ms. Waters noted this is the final report and recommends sun-setting this working group. She noted there are countless groups that offer programs and courses in the arts, but there is no central place to find all the programs. She recommended an effort to coordinate information on all the resources. The working group recommended when time and budget allows, VDVS have veterans in the arts coordinator.

Chairman Dick turned the floor over to Carl Bedell for the Benefits Report.

Benefits Working Group Report

Mr. Bedell reported that Director Donna Williams oversaw a Veteran's Will Clinic. More than 46 veterans received wills from the intake sessions. Mr. Bedell commented that the Benefits staff will receive training in suicide screening to participate in the VISR program. He further noted the opening of the VDVS offices. Mr. Bedell commented on the staffing shortage concerns and further highlighted the time required to become fully accredited once a staff member is hired. He commented on the salary classification review for staff and attorneys and offered support from the working group on this effort.

Chairman Dick asked the future of the working group. Mr. Bedell responded that the working group should continue and commented the next steps will follow once the VDVS offices fully open.

Chairman Dick asked for additional questions. None heard.

Education Working Group Report

Chairman Dick provided the report on the Education Working Group efforts. Chairman Dick noted the Virginia law that mandated the 7 Community Colleges with the highest number of student veterans were required to establish an office dedicated to student veteran support. The four-year schools were not mandated to do so, therefore the working group focused on the how the four-year schools were providing support services to veterans. The working group's efforts on surveying student veterans is still a focus of effort and Chairman Dick commented he identified two PhD. Candidates at William and Mary Law School who will assist with revising the survey. Chairman Dick noted the working group is resetting and moving forward. He asked for questions.

Bill Ashton asked if the working group contacted the nonprofit organization student Veterans of America to ask if there is a chapter at each school. Chairman Dick confirmed that the working group did contact the nonprofit organization.

Chairman Dick asked if there was any opposition to sunsetting the Veterans in the Arts working group as recommended by Ms. Julie Waters. No opposition heard. Chairman Dick thanked Ms. Waters for her work.

Future Working Groups

Chairman Dick opened up the floor to discuss a working group to assist VDVS measure its progress to meeting objectives.

Kathy Owens recommended VDVS prioritize higher-ticket items / programs so members of the Board can contribute at-will.

Chairman Dick thanked Ms. Owens. Chairman Dick noted Dan Helmer's request to be part of the working group. Chairman Dick asked Vice-Chairman Lambert to head the working group. Ms. Lambert agreed to set up the working group with a focus of developing metrics to assess progress in accomplishing objectives.

Kathy Owens commented that if metrics can be identified prior to the upcoming legislative session, so those metrics are available for members to advocate for VDVS budget items with legislatures.

Ms. Lambert asked for a POC within VDVS. Commissioner Maxwell thanked the Board for establishing the working group and referred Ms. Lambert to the VDVS Director of Policy and Planning.

Chairman Dick proposed that a working group focused on VDVS measures and metrics be established and asked for comments or objections. None heard. Chairman Dick recognized Delegate Helmer's willingness to participate on the working group and asked other members to contact Ms. Lambert .

Chairman Dick asked for any additional proposals for a working group. Delegate Murphy commented on her intention to continue with holding Women Veterans Roundtables across the Commonwealth.

Delegate Helmer asked about a working group focused on the needs of economically disadvantaged veterans.

Chairman Dick asked Mr. Lesinski from the VSF for comments. Mr. Lesinski commented the VSF works with VDVS on employment transition support.

Chairman Dick commented it is an unspecified task of each working group and further commented if the working groups believe a more targeted working group needs to be established, they should bring that forward to the BVS.

Delegate Helmer agreed and noted a focused effort on veterans in need leading up to the legislative session, targeting those veterans disadvantaged by their service.

DC Annie Walker commented on an initiative with the Hampton Roads Veterans Employment Center titled ALICE – Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed population. The center is Hampton Roads focuses on transitioning service members who desire training to become employable and veterans who are employed but living below the poverty line.

Bill Ashton commented on the SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. He noted his work with the state of Arizona to determine if that state's VSO's are able to ask questions to determine if the veteran is food insecure, and then assist the veteran begin the SNAP application.

Chairman Dick thanked Mr. Ashton.

JLC Report *(See Attachment 5)*

Chairman Ashton commented on the May 14 JLC meeting and noted the VDVS strategic priorities. He commented on a tax exemption initiative the Fleet Reserve will likely propose for the JLC 2022 initiative to expand the benefit to surviving spouses of those who died on active duty. Chairman Ashton noted his term as Chairman of the JLC concluded on June 30th 2021.

Chairman Dick thanked Chairman Ashton for his insight and input during his time with the BVS.

VSF Report *(See Attachment 6)*

Ms. Robin Beres noted the VSF meeting on June 10th and commented on the VDVS Strategic Priorities. She noted the Dominion Energy Charity Classic's support of the VSF. She further noted the development committees work advocating for new donors and partnerships. Ms. Beres commented on fundraising campaigns. The Next VSF meeting is scheduled for September 9, 2021.

Virginia War Memorial Foundation

Ms. Seay commented on the importance of youth education programs and noted online programming with a focus on local history and the relevance to educators across the Commonwealth. She commented on the exhibit opening in the fall entitled *Who they were, Lives worth knowing*. Ms. Seay also commented on in-person events returning in the fall. Ms. Seay noted the need for volunteers and communication to non-veterans as well as veterans.

Good of the Order Report

Chairman Dick highlighted that the June 29 meeting is the final meeting for three members who completed their terms: Julie Waters, Frank Reyes, and Lyla Kohistany. On behalf of the Board, Chairman Dick extended gratitude and thanks for their support of the veteran community and support.

Chairman Dick asked for further comments.

Kathy Owens asked for information on application for BVS vacancies. Chairman Dick referred Ms. Owens to the Commonwealth's website.

Bill Ashton mentioned the next JLC meeting July 14 at the War Memorial.

Commissioner Maxwell highlighted and thanked Ms. Julie Waters for her work with the Virginia Women Veterans Summit.

Ms. Owens commented the F-22 FRS Training Squadron will be permanently moved from Florida to Langley, creating several hundred new jobs. She further commented on the Navy establishment of the Aerial Vehicle Operator Warrant Officer Community.

Chairman Dick thanked Ms. Owens and asked for any further reports. None heard.

New Business

Chairman Dick commented on a letter received proposing modifications of state cemeteries administrative procedures to include an online status board for information about the current number of grave sites, date for full capacity and burial fees. Chairman Dick commented the proposal in the letter to eliminate the spousal burial fee. Chairman Dick asked a Board member to work with the JLC to consider this proposal.

Public Comment

No comment heard.

Wrap Up & Adjournment

Ms. Lambert thanked Ms. Waters and VDVS for the Women's Summit and asked that the Summit be live-streamed next year.

Chairman Dick asked for a motion to adjourn. Kathy Owens made the **motion, seconded** by Delegate Fowler. In the absence of any objections, the motion carried.

ATTACHMENT 1
BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES

AGENDA
ELECTRONIC MEETING

- I. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:00 – 10:02)
- II. Roll Call and Quorum Determination – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:02 – 10:10)
- III. Approval of Agenda – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:10 – 10:15)
- IV. Approval of Minutes of the April 16, 2021 meeting – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:15 – 10:20)
- V. Introduction of VDVS staff and guests – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (10:20 – 10:30)
- VI. Update on current VDVS operational status – *John Maxwell, VDVS Commissioner* (10:30 – 10:35)
- VII. Operationalizing VDVS Strategic Priorities – *John Maxwell, VDVS Commissioner* (10:35 – 10:50)
- VIII. Working Group Reports
 - a. Veterans in the Arts – *Julie Waters* (10:50 – 11:00)
 - b. Benefits – *Carl Bedell* (11:00 – 11:10)
 - c. Education – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (11:10 – 11:20)
 - d. Possible Future Working Groups – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (11:20 – 11:30)
- IX. Reports (11:30 – 11:45)
 - a. Joint Leadership Council – *William Ashton, JLC Chairman*
 - b. Veterans Services Foundation – *Jack Lanier, VSF 2nd Vice Chairman*
 - c. Virginia War Memorial Foundation – *Linda Schreiner, VWMF Chairman*
- X. New Business: (11:45 – 11:50)
 - a. “Good of the Order” Reports – *all members*
 - b. Other new business – *as requested by members*
- XI. Public comment (11:50 – 11:55) – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman*
- XII. Wrap Up & Adjourn – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman* (11:55 – 12:00)
* Next Meeting 11 August

ATTACHMENT 2

VDVS Operational Update



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services

John Maxwell
Commissioner

Telephone: (804) 786-0220
Fax: (804) 786-0302

Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) Operations Update for the Board of Veterans Services June 29, 2021

Over the past two months, VDVS completed the vast majority of its transition from pandemic to normal operations. Our staff in Benefits and VVFS returned to the offices full-time in May. Services are provided by appointment only; we are reviewing ways to safely return to walk-in services. Virtual/phone appointments remain an option if preferred. Overall, the number of clients served is trending upward.

Working through the COVID-19 environment, Benefits developed an outreach initiative to keep our community partners and military installations aware of our internal processes that provided services within the CDC, state and federal guidelines. This includes outreach efforts to insure our community partners were aware of our staged return to office plan for one on one meetings with veterans. We also reached out to clients we have previously assisted, and informed them of our operating schedule. This effort allowed us to keep veterans and families updated on changes in VA benefits and law, reminders of intent-to-file (ITF) expiration dates and continued efforts to assist in the management of pending VA disability compensation claims.

For VVFS, 41% of new clients require housing assistance, followed by behavioral health and benefits assistance. VVFS is filling multiple vacancies in order to get back up to full operational capacity. The number of total clients (which captures services to existing/repeat clients) served by VVFS was significantly higher in May 2021 (254 total clients) than May 2020 (120 total clients).

In addition to client services, and care and community resource coordination and peer and family support, VVFS continues to coordinate expansion of Virginia's Identify Military Service Members, Veterans and families (SMVF), Screen for Suicide Risk, and Refer for Services (VISR) pilot as part of the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide. VISR 2.0 will kick off in September and run for one year. VISR 2.0 recruitment is open now for new community partners including VSOs that want to expand their suicide prevention training and suicide risk screening activities.

The VVFS East team continues to help the City of Suffolk and Western Tidewater Community Services Board (CSB) on their implementation of crisis services strategic planning (Crisis Intercept

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101 North 14th Street, 17th Floor, Richmond, Virginia 23219
www.dvs.virginia.gov

Mapping) for SMVF to enhance peer support, care coordination, and care transitions in regional behavioral health services. VVFS is working with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Department of Medical Assistance Services to expand military cultural competency and cross referrals with VDVS. This is part of a broader public behavioral health system transformation to enhance community-based clinical and housing supports for SMVF as a gap fill to Federal care.

The Cemeteries division had another record month in May with 208 interments, exceeding the FY20 interment total of 1,812 by mid-May. Cemeteries expects an approximate 23% increase in FY21 interments over FY20, with an expected 2,260 burials. The crypt expansion project at Amelia started May 3rd and is already six weeks ahead of schedule, with completion expected in early CY22. All three veterans cemeteries returned to normal operations on 1 May. Renovation projects for the chapel, maintenance building and public restrooms at Amelia are scheduled to begin in July, followed by needed repairs/additions at the Dublin cemetery. Cemetery staff are greatly benefiting from professional training from the National Cemetery Administration, which is resulting in much improved appearances and National Shrine Commitment reporting statistics. We are digitizing management of documents at all three cemeteries and unifying the analog phone systems. Solutions for intelligent call routing are in development and testing.

VMSDEP is continuing to grow and trend upwards, as we recently approved the 3000th application for the year. However, program cost/usage forecasting is a challenge; VDVS is coordinating with the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) to find ways to better forecast and manage program costs.

The State Approving Agency (SAA) is wrapping up its participation in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) risk-based survey pilot. The National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA), Education Council, and the USDVA developed the pilot to test effective data collection processes and a risk-based survey process that complies with both the Colmery Act and the newly enacted Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-315). Provisions in the new law updated the requirements for risk-based surveys, strengthened the existing ban on misleading advertising, and clarified the obligations of institutions. For the first time, SAAs will systematically conduct reviews that examine specific areas of risk relating to finances, enrollment, student outcomes, and other measures not currently included in the compliance review process. Virginia is one of six states in the nation participating in the pilot. The resulting process creates incentives for schools to maintain and improve access, affordability, high levels of completion, and increased earnings for student veterans. Schools must also demonstrate financial integrity in the handling of taxpayer resources. National implementation of risk-based surveys must occur by October 1, 2022.

The Virginia War Memorial hosted the 65th Annual Commonwealth's Memorial Day Ceremony on May 31, 2021. Acting Secretary Kathleen Jabs was the keynote speaker. The relaxation of limits on in-person gatherings enabled the 2021 ceremony to be both in-person (almost 1,000 in attendance) and virtual (with over 45,000 watching the television broadcast and over 12,000 watching the livestream). This combination of in-person/broadcast/livestream will be our new SOP for the annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies at the Virginia War Memorial. The recording of the 2021 Memorial Day Ceremony is available here: <https://vawarmemorial.org/events/memorialday2021/>.

On June 25, volunteers placed 12,000 American flags were placed on the hillside along the Shrine of Memory to honor the nearly 12,000 Virginians killed in service to our Nation from World War II to the present day. The annual Hill of Heroes will remain in place until July 9, 2021. The Memorial is also

hosting a number of virtual educational programs and is planning to resume some in-person programming.

Both the Virginia Veterans Care Center and the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center are COVID-free (both residents and staff) and have been for several weeks. VVCC and SBVCC are now set up to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to residents and staff, with approximately two dozen doses administered to date. Both have expanded visitation options for families and are accepting new admissions. Census is growing slowly, as projected, and barring any bumps, census at both care centers should be back to pre-COVID levels in FY23.

The Puller VCC (Fauquier County) and Jones & Cabacoy VCC (Virginia Beach) projects continue on schedule and on budget, with projected first admissions in March and August of 2022, respectively. We have been happy to host construction site visits by BVS members Kathy Owens (J&C VCC) and Thurraya Kent (Puller VCC) and extend an invitation to other Board members to visit.

The Virginia Women Veterans Program (VWVP) hosted the eighth annual women veterans summit and the second virtual summit. With over 900 registered, the theme of the 2021 Summit was "*Empowered: Bold with a Purpose, Finding Clarity Beyond Crisis*" This year's agenda included two days packed with a variety of presentations and panel discussions on topics of interest focusing on women veterans, including services for women veterans in Virginia, career planning, entrepreneurship, mentorship, financial stewardship, employment opportunities, personal health, wellness, and various community resources designed for women and/or veteran needs.

VDVS is aligning our goals, objectives, and intent with the ONE Virginia plan to instill a framework of inclusive excellence that creates sustainable change, innovation, and productivity across our agency. We know that pursuing inclusive excellence also makes our Commonwealth a more attractive place to live, learn, work, play, and thrive. We submitted our plan to the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; we also expect it to evolve as we improve our agency.

The agency is focused on reaching as many veterans and families as possible. We garner more earned media than any other state agency; our social media engagement is well above government agency industry standards; and we are moving forward with a short-term advertising campaign. Therefore, we expect demand for our services to increase. We will continue to seek ways to improve in the near-term while seeking longer-term initiatives and resources that permit VDVS to better serve Virginia's veterans and their families.

We continue to be grateful for the Board of Veterans Services' support.

Sincerely,

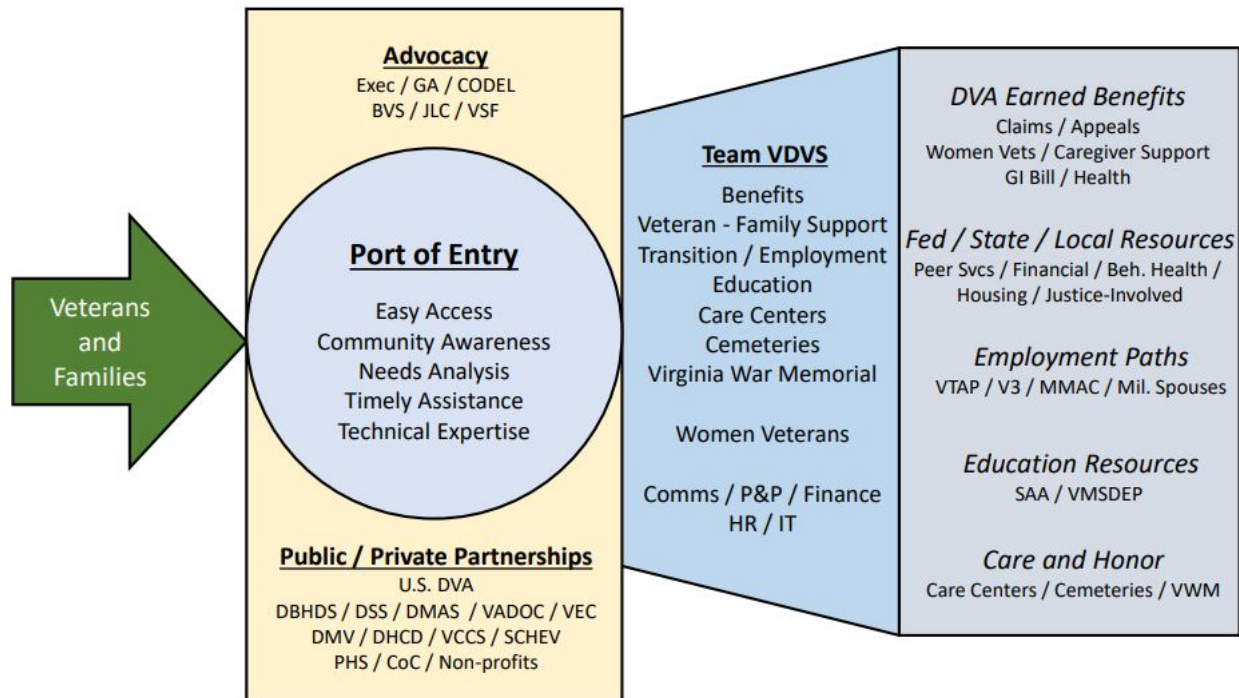
John Maxwell

ATTACHMENT 3

VDVS Strategic Priorities



Port of Entry to Services



ATTACHMENT 4

Veterans in the Arts Working Group Report to BVS

Virginia Board of Veterans Services

Veterans in the Arts Working Group - Final Report to the Board, 29 June 2021

Working group members: Ms. Julie Waters, Chair

Mr. Carl Bedell

Mr. Victor Angry

Summary of Findings:

The Veterans in the Arts Working Group was convened in September of 2018 to examine the landscape of arts resources for veterans and their families in the Commonwealth and to make recommendations to improve those resources and/or access to those resources. The Working Group broadly considered the field of the arts to be comprised of the traditional fine arts as well as the performing arts, filmmaking, fashion, creative writing, music, comedy, and the culinary arts. It also determined that arts resources for veterans include art as therapy, art for enjoyment or community, and entrepreneurial or vocational art programs.

The Working Group surveyed existent arts programming accessible to Virginia veterans and military families, and found a plentiful and diverse variety of programs available to serve the community. The programs ranged from veteran-focused organizations that also provide arts programs (i.e. the Virginia War Memorial and Veteran Care Centers), dedicated arts programs (i.e. the Hylton Center's Veterans and the Arts Initiative, RIFF and the Virginia Film Institute, and the Virginia Arts Commission), national programs (i.e. the Armed Services Arts Partnership), and countless private and public nonprofits and organizations of all sizes involved with veterans, the arts, or both.

Ultimately, the Working Group found that the missing link for arts programs for veterans and their families is the difficulty in connecting those needing or wanting services to the services themselves. Because there is no central clearinghouse or agency tracking arts programming for the military and veteran community, a potential beneficiary of an arts program or service - especially those provided by smaller organizations - needs to either be deliberately searching for a specific service or, to put it plainly, get lucky and stumble upon it. While a robust and broad spectrum of services exist in the Commonwealth (and beyond), what is needed is a way to track and compile programs and then connect the veterans and family members who want or need arts services to the right program.

Recommendations:

1. That the Veterans in the Arts Working Group be disbanded following the Board's acceptance of this report.
2. That offices and divisions within the Department of Veterans Services strive to partner with other arts organizations and/or continue to seek out ways to use the arts to serve Virginia's military community.
3. That, when the budget allows, DVS consider adding a part- or full-time arts coordinator to its staff to better track available arts programs and opportunities and connect individuals with the best programs to fit their needs. Alternatively, DVS could consider restructuring the duties of current staff to allow for oversight of arts programs.

ATTACHMENT 5

JLC Report to BVS



101 N. 14TH ST., 17TH FLOOR
RICHMOND VA 23219

Air Force Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United
States Army
Disabled American
Veterans
Fleet Reserve Association
Fifth Baptist Veterans
Ministry
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans
of America
Korean War Veterans
Association
Legion of Valor of the
U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the
Purple Heart
Military Officers Association
of America
Military Order of the
World Wars
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Navy Seabee Veterans of
America
Non-Commissioned
Officers Association
Paralyzed Veterans of
America
Reserve Officers Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
Guard Enlisted
Association
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines Association

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES June 29, 2021

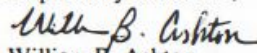
The Joint Leadership Council met virtually May 14, 2021. The briefing provided by the Veteran Services Foundation during our meeting was very well received and informative for our members. We very much enjoy our relationship with the BVS and look forward to continuing our strong partnership.

During our May meeting, VDVS Commissioner John Maxwell presented his strategic priorities to the JLC supporting the Compact with Virginia's Veterans. Commissioner Maxwell presented three of his top priorities with the goal of making Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation. We understand that veteran retirement income tax remains a concern in Virginia, so the JLC will continue its advocacy on that issue as well as other initiatives that support VDVS strategic priorities.

One of the JLC initiatives for 2021 was to expand real estate property tax exemption to both the surviving spouses of service members who were "*Killed in Action*" and those who "*died while serving or from a service connected injury or illness.*" This initiative was presented as a House Joint Resolution, but was left in committee. A surviving spouse attended our May JLC meeting as a member of the public to ask about this initiative. Her husband was killed in Afghanistan in 2012 in a vehicle accident. He was on his 5th deployment. By the current Code regulations, she does not qualify for tax exemption, yet her husband paid the ultimate price. We will continue to advocate for this surviving spouse and others across the Commonwealth.

This will be my last report to the BVS as Chairman of the JLC. My term ends on 30 June. We will elect a new Chairman at our next meeting in July. It has been my privilege and honor to serve as Chairman, advocating for veterans and their families. I will remain engaged with veteran issues, and will always stand on the side of freedom. Thank you all for everything you do to support Virginia's veterans.

Respectfully submitted,


William B. Ashton
Chairman

ATTACHMENT 6

VSF Report to the BVS



VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION

Report to the Board of Veterans Services

June 29, 2021

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees held a virtual meeting on June 10, 2021.

The VSF Chairman, John Lesinski welcomed Irene Roberts of Dominion Energy and Steve Schoenfeld of the Dominion Energy Charity Classic. Irene and Steve gave a brief presentation on the Dominion Energy Charity Classic and the way this event supports the VSF.

Secretary Jabs provided remarks to include the ongoing services for veterans in Virginia and to thank Dominion Energy for their continued support that allows DVS to continue providing necessary assistance to veterans. Secretary Jabs also noted the peer support specialists from DVS are working in communities throughout the Commonwealth on suicide prevention efforts. Secretary Jabs thanked the Trustees and the Foundation for their continued fundraising efforts in support of DVS programs and looks forward to being in person with the Trustees at their next meeting in September.

Commissioner Maxwell provided a brief report on behalf of VDVS. The agency continues to focus on their role as a port of entry for services needed by veterans. Their top priorities are housing and transition services. Their belief is that housing creates better outcomes and that transition services will assist in the suicide prevention and the success of mental health services. Commissioner Maxwell noted that VVFS is now seeing new client numbers increase and while expenses were down over FY21 he believes they will increase as the eviction moratorium is lifted and more homeless veterans reach out for assistance. The 2021 Women's Veterans Summit is quickly approaching, and the Commissioner encouraged everyone to attend. Commissioner Maxwell lastly noted that the laptop program between VETE and VCCS is progressing successfully with 80 laptops distributed to veteran community college students to date.

Chairman Lesinski provided an update on the Foundation's efforts in the final quarter of FY21. The Development Committee is working hard to establish relationships with new corporate donors in hopes of creating partnerships that aid in veteran assistance efforts. The Finance Committee has worked with the VSF Treasurer to recommend the DVS' FY22 budget request and the Procedures and Policies Committee will be meeting in the near future to work on the Foundation's operational documents.

Jim Flaherty of the Attorney General's office conducted comprehensive FOIA training for the Trustees.

The Trustees elected their new slate of leaders to include John Lesinski as Chairman, Nicole Carry as First Vice Chair, and Paul Haughton as Second Vice Chair.

Overall donations are down for the Foundation in FY21, much of what can be attributed to the overall impact of the pandemic. To counter this effect several fundraising campaigns, including the Circle of Heroes recurring donation campaign, were launched to inspire donations before the end of FY21. Also, the VSF brochure is being updated and should be available for dissemination in early FY 22.

The next Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for September 9, 2021, at a time and location to be determined.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Lesinski, Chairman
Veterans Services Foundation