

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
The Regular Quarterly Meeting of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Wednesday, October 1, 2014 - 10:00 a.m.
Iowa Veterans Home
1301 Summit Street
Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

Present: Larry Spencer
Richard Goebel – Chair
Monica Blakely
Bill Wallace
Elizabeth Ledvina

Absent: Kate Myers
Jon Wille
Mickey Williams
Dan Gannon

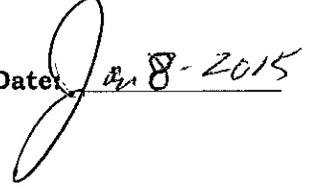
Staff: Robert King, Executive Director, IDVA Jodi S. Tymeson, Commandant, IVH
Michael Hines, IVH – Recording Secretary

**Guests/
Presenters:**

Terri Beer, VA	John Derner, American Legion
David Rehbein, American Legion	Valerie Buckingham, Iowa City VAHCS
Judy Johnson-Mekota, VAHCS	Amy Beller, Senator Tom Harkins
Kristi Kielhorn, House GOP	Ron Morris, Van Buren Co. VA
Mike Kuhn, Marion Co. VA	Robert Ratigan, IVH Resident
Brett Mclain, Story Co. VA	Kent Ohms, Legislative Services Agency
Ron Struble, Dept Cmdr AL	David Paulus, Floyd Co. Veteran Driver
Dennis Hull, Floyd Co.	

NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE 'UNAPPROVED' UNTIL ACCEPTED BY THE COMMISSION AT THE NEXT MEETING.

APPROVED: 
Richard Goebel, Chair, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Date:  Jan 8 - 2015

Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order by Chair Richard Goebel at 10:17 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence:

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chair Goebel followed by a moment of silence.

Roll Call:

Recording secretary took roll call.

Welcome/Introductions of Guests:

Chair Goebel welcomed everyone in attendance and asked guests to introduce themselves.

VA Regional Office Update:

Terri Beer Director of the VA Regional Office presented the Commission with an update on the VA Regional Office.

Director Beer informed the committee that the VA Regional Office was up to 113 employees. She explained that they are actually down 5 employees and that there ceiling is actually 118; they have recently just hired 5 more employees and will be available October 20, 2014; bringing them up to 118.

The VA regional Office touched on the hosting of a national training day in October for Veterans Service Organizations. The regional office is waiting on some travel approvals to come to Des Moines.

The month of August 2014 monthly compensation payments for beneficiaries were \$33.6M. We increased our production in August 2014 by 56% over August 2012. The regional office is setting at 95% claim base accuracy. We were able to help the nation with claims because of our high accuracy. We also reduced our inventory of 1yr old claims by 93%. Director Beer briefed that the VA Regional Office was working directly with the VSO partners and fully developed claims. We are at a little over 115 days.

Director Beer briefed the regional office's Town Hall meeting that was conducted in the month of September. There were approximately 55 people in attendance, 14 were veterans and the rest consisted of congressional staffers, VSOs, CVOs, and an attorney advocate. Director Beer mentioned that there would be more Town Hall meetings in the future.

The national back-log (claim over 120 days) has been reduced. There was a 60% reduction in 18 months nationally. Director Beer explained that 99% of the claims coming through the office are electronic. Director Beer explained that they don't broker any claims and that they can handle any claim in Iowa with the priority is still being the oldest claim.

VA Medical Center - Iowa City Update:

Valerie Buckingham, Public Affairs Officer, presented the VA Medical Center Iowa City Update.

The Director position at the VA Medical Center in Iowa City has been announced and closed. On August 25th, the VA hired Mr. Heath Streck as the Associate Director of Operations. He came from Central Iowa Health Care in Des Moines. Dr. Peter Kaboli was also hired for the Chief of Medicine position. A new physician has been hired for the Bettendorf CBOC and should be starting in a few weeks.

The parking ramp construction is moving along. The estimated completion for the ramp is April 2015.

The Town Hall meeting was held September 17, 2014 at the VA Medical Center Iowa City. There were a total of 10 veterans, 19 veteran service officers, members from elected official offices, and 37 employees. Meeting was productive. The chief complaint was that there was not enough publicity on the meeting. Valerie stated that they were going to holding these Town Hall meetings on a quarterly basis, along with monthly conference calls. The first Town Hall conference call will be October 16th at 10:00 a.m. Valerie continued to brief that the VA Medical Center Iowa City will hold a conference call every third Thursday of the month, except when we have a face-to-face Town Hall meetings. The number to call for the conference is 1-800-767-1750, access code 89692 and press pound key.

Valerie briefed about the KIOKs that have been place throughout the Medical Center and Primary Care. The KIOKs are for the veterans to check in for an appointment. They will also be implemented into the clinics the next couple of months.

Valerie informed the commission that they also had a visit from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in July as well as congressional officials, elected officials.

On August 22, Iowa City VA conducted the 2nd annual mental health summit. The purpose was to engage in dialogue with our community partners in providing mental health care needs for veterans. It was very successful as we had 85 participants that signed up. Iowa City VA hopes to do this again.

Valerie presented the concern about bacteria (Legionella) found in the Iowa City VA Medical Center water system. There was never a threat to the patients. The VA requires the facilities to do water testing each quarter. Iowa City VA does water testing every month. The reason being if we see any small amounts we can go ahead and correct the problem. The main water system contained no bacteria. It was detected in a sink and a patient's room and an ice machine that has never been put back into service as there were very small amounts of Legionella bacteria. Small meaning safe levels as no patients have come down with Legionella. Valerie explained that where there were low amounts found; we did take appropriate actions. To megiate this further we installed pall filters on patient showers. That is the only thing that is guaranteed to kill the Legionella. We also installed a carbon dioxide generator to eliminate the bacteria area. Valerie further explained that the "old" water system was is in the process of being reconfigured.

VA Medical Center – Des Moines Update:

Director Judy Johnson-Mekota presented the Des Moines VA Central Iowa Health Care System update.

Director Johnson-Mekota mentioned that the FY14 budget went very well and that the FY15 budget was preliminarily at this point because we have some changes associated with the budget; relating to the Veterans Choice Act. The new legislation is supporting some new FTs in the areas of primary care and mental health specialty care.

A new provider has started in the Marshalltown CBOC.

The director briefed that 93% of the primary care appointments are less than 30 days, 27 days to get a new patient into primary care, and if you are established it is less than 5 days. For specialty care access for patients the average is around 39 days. Director Johnson-Mekota explained that there problems are focused around optometry and orthopedics. We are currently recruiting for an ENT specialist as well as an endocrinologist.

Director Johnson-Mekota spoke on the Federal Information Security Management group visit. The group was looking at their Information Security Programs. The results were very positive with overall positive findings. There was a visit from Booz-Allen Hamilton in regards to the new model of care. Also, we had a Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) visit in September. They looked at our rehab treatment facility as well as the outpatient clinic. We are waiting a final report.

The Director mentioned that an employee satisfaction survey was just conducted. She briefed that that there was almost a 60% response rate; which was the national expectation rate.

The VA Central Iowa Health Care System briefed the Town Hall meeting that they conducted in September, 2014. There were a total of 16 in attendances (congressional staff, veterans, service organizations) and 30 staff from the VA Central Iowa Health Care.

Construction project for this year will be a starting a mental health outpatient clinic, CLC cottages. Under the Veterans Choice Act we have been given additional funding to expand and remodel our laboratory, expand and remodel our Pharmacy and upgrade our elevators. Our supply processing & distribution project was over bid so it will have to go back out. The 3B Ward, med surge unit, (26 individual rooms) will hopefully open up next Tuesday. The boiler & chiller plan project was also mentioned.

The new image and ammography unit will open up on October 29.

The HUD point will be provided at the next commission meeting.

The Legionella was brought up. Director Johnson-Mekota explained that the Legionella levels at VA Central Iowa Health Care were below the safe level. Samples are drawn on a monthly basis and fall below the acceptable Legionella levels.

Approval of Commission Minutes:

Commissioner Wallace made a motion to approve Commission minutes of July 9, 2014 quarterly meeting. Second by Commissioner Spencer. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Trust Fund Applications:

Commissioner Wallace made a motion to approve minutes of Trust Fund Meeting of July 7, 2014. Second by Commissioner Ledvina. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Spencer made a motion to approve minutes of Trust Fund conference call of August 7, 2014. Second by Commissioner Wallace. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commission made a motion to approve minutes of Trust Fund conference call of September 4, 2014. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

New Business / Determine next Commission Meeting:

The next quarterly Commission of Veterans Affairs Meetings were established. The following dates were selected and voted on.

January 7, 2015 beginning at 10:00 at Camp Dodge – Iowa Gold Star Military Museum

April 1, 2015 beginning at 10:00 at the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown

July 1, 2015 beginning at 10:00 at Camp Dodge – Iowa Gold Star Military Museum

October 7, 2015 beginning at 10:00 at the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown

Commissioner Wallace made a motion to approve FY15 commission meeting dates. Second by Commissioner Spencer. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Old Business:

Chair Goebel brought up the VA dental plan. Commissioner Spencer, speaking on behalf of Col. King, explained that the IDVA passed along documents to service organizations about the Delta Dental Plan to help a Veterans Service Officer. Commissioner Spencer explained the information on the dental hand-out. Spencer mentioned that the key is the awareness of the program. It is a 3 year test program through the VA medical center, administered by Delta Dental and Metlife. The basic coverage ranges from less than \$10 a month.

IDVA Update:

Commissioner Larry Spencer updated the Commission on the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs.

Commissioner Spencer mentioned that the Home Base Act (SF 303) seems to be following into place. The Veterans Coalition has meant for legislative initiatives for 2015. More information about that as we go forward which involved the support of disable veterans, proposed increase in property tax exemption for those that are not 100% disabled.

The Veterans Cemetery is up to 2,157 in interments as of yesterday. The pace of activity continues to increase and with no additional manpower. Commissioner Spencer reiterated that the Iowa Veterans Cemetery works with the same set of regulations that the National Cemeteries do. Spencer praised the volunteers at the cemetery.

Commissioner Spencer mentioned that Col. King was working with the Veterans Administration Vocational Rehabilitation Department. Spencer commented that they (VOC REHAB) have a

representative in the IDVA at Camp Dodge. That rep is available 20-25 hrs per week to answer questions, process claims as that representative has a wide range of experience.

The Benefits Trust Fund continues to have lots of activity. The trust fund received a donation from the Gabus Auto Group in August worth \$25,000.

In the fiscal year 2014, 19 counties returned some of their \$10,000 legislative appropriations monies that are appropriated to each county in Iowa by the General Assembly each year. The total that the 19 counties returned was \$34,529.00, which is \$13,500 less than last year. 9 of 19 counties returns added up to \$1,340.00.

Commissioner Spencer briefed that the IDVA benefit specialist's have been able to submit claims for and bring in \$2,268,786 a month. The annual sales tax revenue from that of 6% is \$1.6M.

Commissioner Spencer spoke about IDVA outreach. Story County has an Honor Flight coming up. The Fall School for County Commissioners, Veterans Service Officers is October 22-24, 2014.

Col. King will be speaking to Principal Financial Veterans Group on November 6th, Sac City on November 8th, Iowa Veterans Cemetery on November 11th and at the Veterans Hall in Des Moines.

Wreath Across America will once again take place on the Iowa Veterans Cemetery on Saturday, December 13, 2014 at 1100 hrs.

Commissioner Spencer explained that Col. King has been working with Information Technology people to design a fact book for online. They have determined through the first few looks is to update the IDVA website and incorporate the fact book into the website. No department funds have been expended for this project.

The commission last time approved \$500 for the reproduction of some new Iowa Veterans Cemetery brochures. The purchase order has been signed and submitted for 1,000 brochures for \$278.00.

Commissioner Spencer spoke about a card type for the IDVA and Veterans Coalition that represents a listing of the members of the Veterans Coalition/Organizations that they belong to one of these organizations. A National Guard currently has an existing card. The NG card was used only as an example. Spencer mentioned that Col. King would be asking for funding for that purpose. No cost estimate was presented. Chair Goebel commented that the funding would come from either the License Plate fund or the Veterans Trust Fund.

Veterans Home Update:

Jodi Tymeson, Commandant of the Iowa Veterans Home, gave the update on the Iowa Veterans Home.

Current Census: 579 (Nursing Care = 481 / Residential Care= 98)

Census holding steady around 580

Waiting List: no issues – beds available: 5 open nursing, 2 semi-secure, 8 RCF.

FY 15 budget built on census of 580 (475/105)

FY 16 budget built on census of 575 (470/105)

In June, we completed the Recognition Survey (VA) in conjunction with moving residents into the renovated Malloy North Tower. This was also the opportunity to ensure the correct number of

certified beds – 509. We just received the final paperwork from the VA Secretary stating we had met all the VA standards. This will reset our annual survey date.

DIA conducted our annual survey in August, and the State Fire Marshal was here in September. We did very well on both surveys and have submitted our plans of correction. “No resident care issues” were cited in the DIA survey.

Upcoming Legislative Session: We began the budget process several months ago with all IVH budget managers. We will be submitting budget requests for FY 16 and FY 17 by the October deadline. (Action Item) **Motion made by Elizabeth Ledvina to approve the IVH Budget. Second by Bill Wallace.**

Construction Update:

- a. Malloy North Tower – Completed; moved residents in May
- b. Malloy South Tower – Renovation in progress (May 2015)
- c. Renovation of Dack will begin when Malloy South completed
- d. New Community Living Center – withdrew from federal project (plans were 3yrs old and we didn't feel that the budget was adequate for that and withdrew the project)
- e. Renovation of Canteen by IVH staff in progress
- f. Senior team discussing need for new construction or renovation
(see capital request and equipment needs list)

Jodi spoke on the following - Marketing and Outreach Update / Ice Bucket Challenge on YouTube / Veterans Benefit Fair on Sept. 20 / WW II Monument on the IVH grounds

Insights

Jodi explained to the commission on what other State Veterans Home in the surrounding states are doing in terms of care for their veterans. We are one of 14 states that have a Veterans Home.

We are looking at the Iowa Veterans Home becoming a Home Base Iowa Business. We want to become part of the Home Base Iowa Business so that we can actively recruit veterans to come here to work. Jodi commented that we are not a business and that we are a state agency and the state would have to make a few exceptions that.

Five-Year Strategic Plan Goals (FY2015 - FY2019)

1. Provide the highest quality of care, services, and activities to our residents to maximize their quality of life
2. Ensure availability and maximize usage of human, physical, and financial resources to ensure current and future operations
3. Create a culture of safety awareness, quality assurance, and performance improvement
4. Implement a dynamic leadership and staff development program focused on skill development and building effective teams
5. Ensure a communication system that is both efficient and effective

PUBLIC COMMENT:

David Rehbein from the American Legion read a statement from the American Legion on the American Legion's interaction with other Veterans Service Organizations. This statement was a personnel statement and not an official position of the American Legion. The statement was read by Mr. Rehbein to the commission and those in the audience. Mr. Rehbein also asked for the recording secretary (Mike Hines) to ensure that the reading be made part of the meeting minutes. A discussion ensued after the statement was read. After a lengthy discussion the meeting was moved for adjournment.

Amy Beller from Sen. Harkins Office:

Amy Beller made an announcement on behalf of Sen. Harkin and thanked the Commission and Veterans that helped him serve. Amy informed the audience that Sen. Harkin was presenting a Vietnam Veteran with a Purple Heart this Sunday in Ames at 2:00 p.m. The recipient will be going on the honor flight as well.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 12:17 p.m., File# WS700194.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Hines
Recording Secretary