

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
The Regular Quarterly Meeting of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Wednesday, April 1, 2015 - 10:00 a.m.
Iowa Veterans Home
1301 Summit Street
Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

Present: Larry Spencer
Monica Blakely -1st Vice Chair
Mickey Williams
Elizabeth Ledvina
Jon Wille
Kate Meyers
Dan Gannon

Absent: Richard Goebel-Chair

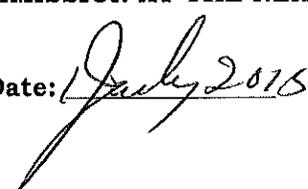
Staff: Robert King, Executive Director, IDVA Jodi S. Tymeson, Commandant, IVH
Michael Hines, IVH - Recording Secretary

**Guests/
Presenters:**

Gary Wattnem, USAR Ambassador	Ronald Langel, VVA
David Thornburg, DAV/IA Vets Council	Mari Mielke, IDAV
Steven Hyde, MOPH	Sue Rich, Washington Co VA
John Derner, American Legion	Kristi Catrenrich, VACIHCS
Bart Quick, VACIHCS	Judith Johnson-Mekota, Director Iowa City VA
Jevon Robinson, VSO Blackhawk Co.	Ryan Dixon, VARO

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

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

Date:  July 2015

Call to Order:

Chairman Goebel was absent for meeting. Meeting was called to order by meeting 1st Vice Chair Col. Monica Blakely at 10:02 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence:

Pledge of allegiance was led by meeting chair Col. Monica Blakely followed by a moment of silence.

Roll Call:

Meeting chair Col. Monica Blakely took roll call.

Welcome/Introductions of Guests:

Meeting chair Col. Monica Blakely welcomed everyone in attendance and asked guests to introduce themselves.

VA Regional Office Update:

Ryan Dickson provided the VA Regional Office update. Ryan briefed that the employees are still working overtime. The average day pending is 142 days with 97.3% accuracy. Ryan mentioned that we were right on target with the VA Secretary's goals of 125 days and 98% accuracy.

As of March 4, 2015 we have gone with the standardized forms. Ryan briefed the standardized form to the committee as it will help veterans on what they want to claim and easier for the claims processor to process. The other new form is the intent to file form. It will take place of the formal claim process. The form will hold an effective date. The veteran will have 1 yr to obtain his/her documentation/evidence (along with 526 ez-forms) for the claim. Ryan mentioned that training has been provided.

VA Medical Center - Iowa City Update:

Director Judith Johnson-Mekota gave an update on the VA Medical Center in Iowa City.

The director briefed the changes to the Veterans Choice Card.

Parking garage which will house about 400 spots is estimated to be completed on July 4, 2015. A new Operating Room (OR) has an estimated completion of January 2016.

Director Johnson-Mekota mentioned that she has received veteran feedback in reference to education benefits and pain maintenance.

VA Medical Center - Des Moines Update:

Kristi Catrenrich briefed the VA Medical Center - Des Moines update. Catrenrich gave an update to the committee on the job search for a new director for the VA Medical Center.

A mammography expansion open house will be April 2, 2015 from 2-4:00 p.m. Official ribbon cutting ceremony and remarks at 3:00.

Kristen briefed the committee on the change of the outpatient scripts. Basically we are following the national mandate on how we get prescriptions out. It is to improve access. Starting the 30th of April, all first filled medication scripts are going to be automatically mailed out to the veteran. Kristen informed the committee that there were still going to be that opportunity for education and communication of the scripts. Letters are going to be sent out to all veterans detailing their medication list.

Knoxville CBOC pre-award process is expected this summer 2015 with completion of facility in summer/fall of 2017. However no letter has been addressed by congressional staff. We will continue to update as we get that information.

Approval of Commission Minutes:

Commissioner Gannon made a motion to approve Commission minutes of January 7, 2015 quarterly meeting. Second by Commissioner Willie. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Trust Fund Applications:

Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve minutes of Trust Fund Meeting of January 6, 2015. Second by Commissioner Spencer. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Spencer made a motion to approve minutes of Trust Fund conference call of February 5, 2015. Second by Commissioner Ledvina. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commission Williams made a motion to approve minutes of Trust Fund conference call of March 5, 2015. Second by Commissioner Willie. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

New Business:

Dan Gannon spoke about the Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day on May 7, 2015 in Des Moines, Iowa. This year we are going to honor a Fairfield Iowa Serviceman whose name has just been added to the wall. We will be adding our 867th name to the Vietnam wall. Information will be sent out by Jill Joseph. Dan further spoke about reproducing a book (750ea) with information and names for the event, a microphone/speaker/technician and tent for the Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day for approximately \$4,000.00.

Commissioner Gannon made a motion to approve cost of material/equipment for Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day for approximately \$4,000.00. Second by Commissioner Williams. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Gannon briefed that yesterday Governor Branstad signed the bill to fund the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund (lottery money) of \$2.5m a year.

Commissioner Ledvina briefed the committee that the "Iowa Home Base" was advertised in the Army Times. Also Commissioner Ledvina briefed the committee about a couple of guest speakers (April 15) will be speaking in the Veterans Memorial in Cedar Rapids.

Commissioner Ledvina addressed a couple of questions with the commission from Association Veterans County Service Officers; vehicle reimbursement car insurance requires only one estimate and we require 2 estimates and could (commission) go back to one estimate. Col. King informed the committee of a pending request and recommended that we stay with 2 estimates. The other topic/question that the county officers were asking was if we are going to make the rules (trust

fund) that the veterans have to have dental insurance. Commissioner Ledvina mentioned that it was talked about in the past. A discussion ensued about the Delta Dental and Metlife insurance. Commissioner Gannon made mention that we need to review our rules. Col. Blakely further mentioned that there is a Trust Fund meeting tomorrow as she recommended that further discussion take place about the rules. Elizabeth brought up the idea of putting the Trust Fund application into a PDF fillable file that would be very beneficial for everyone involved. It would be clearer for everyone that is using the trust form.

Jon Wille made the announcement that after the tomorrow's trust fund meeting that he was stepping down.

Old Business:

Col. King made mention that during the Commission meeting in January meeting; he proposed an application for a monument erection at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery for the Marines Corps League. The funds have been raised and the monument is ready to be installed. The dedication for the Marine Corps League monument will be Saturday, June 18, 2015.

Commissioner Gannon made a motion to approve the application for the erection of a monument at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery by the Marine Corps League. Second by Commissioner Blakely. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Iowa Veterans Home Update:

1. Current Census: 566 Residents (Nursing = 468 / Residential = 98)
 - Working to place residents for the upcoming move and then continue to admit to open beds
2. Legislative Session:
 - At this time, no legislative budgets have been released.
 - IVH requested \$10.8 million for capital improvements.
 - IVH requested status quo state appropriation.
3. Construction Update:
 - a. Malloy South Tower – Renovation in progress is on target for May 2015 completion.
 - b. Renovation of Dack will begin when Malloy South completed – scheduled completion for May 2016.
 - c. Sheeler and Loftus will be crowded for residents for the year while Dack is being renovated.
 - d. Temporary locations will be needed throughout the facility for staff during the Dack renovation. We are also looking to maximize the use of space.
4. Major Maintenance: 2 funded projects
 - a. Historical Guard House tuck pointing
 - b. Energy Plant tunnel beam repair
5. Greenhouse needs repair/replace.
6. Several VA Projects will be submitted for funding consideration by April 15.
7. WW II Monument on the IVH grounds – Grinnell Mutual Insurance reported that more than enough funds have been raised - \$24,000+. We have received donations from several Elks

Clubs and veterans organizations throughout the state. We're in the process of meeting with residents for the design, and we will be requesting estimates for the work.

8. Open Records Request
9. New brochure completed
10. We have requested the VA Recognition Survey for June.

IDVA Update:

Col. Robert King presented the IDVA update to the commission.

The signing and passage of HF166 which added the individual unemployable was accomplished. The Governor signed it the 5th of March 2015; retroactive for those that it impacted 1 January 2014.

The IDVA appropriation budget was increased by \$105,000 by the Governor to add an additional administrative assistant cemetery representative at the cemetery and a maintenance worker for outside. They are also providing additional money to pay for the audit for the department since we have to pay the Auditor's Office.

Home ownership assistance program remains at \$2.5M. There has been some change in the wording for the county allocation from \$1M to \$990,000 for 99 counties.

Col. King mentioned the average amount of money for the Trust Fund. The Governor signed the Trust Fund bill yesterday. The Trust Fund will receive the 2.5M.

HF68 (establishment of veterans treatment courts in each judicial district) was deferred to next year. There is only 1 program like this in the state and that is in Woodbury County. Col. King mentioned that he saw another similar bill (HF558) with funding attached to it. It dealt with disruptive and disorderly conduct by creating a civil action.

HF377 pertains to unclaimed veterans cremated remains. Was in subcommittee the 26th of February, 2015.

HF577 waves certain hunter safety education requirements for certain veterans.

SF288 dealing with veterans preferences – employment. Col. King briefed that he was asked to provide an amendment to the original bill. Amendment was provided.

HSB164 deals with a study bill relating to motor vehicle registration fees for disabled veterans.

HF382 relates to establishing a database for businesses owned by veterans. The Representative who proposed that has withdrawn that HF.

HF366 establishing a reversion account within the county 1 commissions of veteran affairs fund for the provision of 2 grants to county commissions of veteran affairs (turn back for county allocations). County may be able to ask for additional funds. The Representative who proposed that has been withdrawn.

HF539 providing for the recognition of reserve forces and 1 national guard service status on driver's licenses and 2 nonoperator's identification cards. Col. King explained that if you qualify you get "veteran" on your license. That was no money attached to the original bill.

Col. King reported that we had no reported deficiencies.

The cemetery has interred 2,366 as of yesterday. The cemetery has ordered 2 replacement 6 ft riding mowers in addition to a 5 ft riding mower. A telephone switch system (\$1,000) was ordered as well.

Col. King briefed the committee that the IDVA was meeting their performance standards (at the cemetery) IAW the VA report that comes out month. The director of the national cemetery grant program and the architect will be visiting the cemetery sometime around April and May. Prior to the final money being given.

The Trust Fund has \$207,000 spendable. The Total Trust Fund balance is \$21M. The balance for Injured Veterans Grant fund is \$346,000.00. Honor Guard reimbursements is the same balance as the trust fund. 123 applications have been submitted for the Homeowner Grant.

Col. King talked about volunteers and donators at the cemetery.

Col. King presented certificate of appreciations to Larry Spencer and Dan Gannon for their service while serving on the Iowa Commission Veterans Affairs board.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no public comments.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 11:37 a.m., File# WS700217.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Hines
Recording Secretary