

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
The Regular Quarterly Meeting of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs Meeting
Wednesday, January 6, 2010, beginning at 10:00 a.m.
Camp Dodge, Bldg. A6A
7105 - NW 70th Avenue
Johnston, IA 50313-1824

Present: Steve Mulcahy, Chairperson, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Don Delamore, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Francis McAllister, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Laurel Phipps, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Rosetta Waychus, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Present by Conference Call: Todd Jacobus, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Darlene McMartin, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs
Mickey Williams, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Absent: Jean Schroeder, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Staff: Patrick Palmersheim, IDVA Executive Director
Mari Mielke, IDVA - Recording Secretary
Missy Miller, IDVA, Trust Fund Administrator
Kent Hartwig, IDVA Legislative Liaison

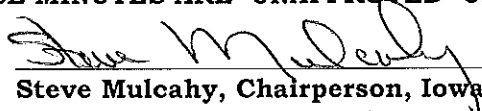
John Mathes, IVH Acting Commandant
Lisa Purvis, IVH Legislative Liaison
Greg Wright, IVH Business Mgr
Diana Steiner, IVH Budget Analyst

Guests: Brett McLain, Story County Director
Dave Thornburg, DAV
Dave Bolton, DAV
Hugh Ceaser, DOM
Bo Berntsen, IGOV
Jason Chapman, Legislature
Dave Huffman, Des Moines, VAMC

Richard Bullock, American Legion
John Derner, American Legion
Elizabeth Ledvina, Tama County Director
Greg Reed, VARO
Kathy Peters, VARO
Valerie Buckingham, Iowa City VAMC

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

APPROVED:


Steve Mulcahy, Chairperson, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Date:

4-7-10

Call to Order:

Chairperson Mulcahy called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. after connecting Commissioners Jacobus, McMartin, and Williams. Sue Lerdal from the LFB was also present by telephone.

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence:

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance and then a moment of silence.

Roll Call:

The recording secretary took roll call and all Commissioners were present/connected by telephone except Commissioner Schroeder who was excused.

Welcome/Introductions of Guests:

Chairperson Mulcahy welcomed everyone in attendance and asked for introductions of guests.

Approval of Commission Minutes:

A motion to approve the regular Commission minutes from the September 23, 2009 meeting and the subcommittee Conference Call minutes from October 15, November 17, and December 15, 2009 was made by Commissioner Delamore and seconded by Commissioner Phipps. Motion carried unanimously.

VA Regional Office Update – Greg Reed

As part of the President's stimulus package, we brought on 38 temporary employees at the Des Moines VARO for a one year appointment at a GS7. We are hopeful that once August rolls around we hope to be able to retain these employees permanently. This has been very, very helpful at the RO and has helped us meet some of our production goals.

Last October, our Secretary established new service-connection for Vietnam veterans with three specific illnesses related to the exposure to Agent Orange. The illnesses affected by the recent decision are Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease, and B cell leukemia's such as hairy cell leukemia. The VA is projecting that nationally we are going to get hit about 980,000 claims. Not just from presumptive but combined with all the other claims. In the past, the Des Moines VARO has been receiving about 1% of the nationally filed claims.

The RO recently promoted four rating specialists and after their training later this month, we are very confident that they will start being productive as soon as possible. So far this FY through January 5, 2010 we have completed 1,620 compensation claims with an average time to complete at 160 days. Our appeals timeliness continues to improve. Currently, our Form 9 processing is down to 393 days.

Our Central Office has removed "average days pending" as a measure of success. While this is still being tracked, we are now paying more attention to average days to complete. We believe that concentrating on reducing the backlog will have a positive effect on all timeliness with regard to claims processing.

VA Medical Center – Des Moines Update – Dave Huffman

The biggest news is the movement of our patients from the Knoxville Community Living Center (CLC) moved to the new Des Moines CLC. All the patients were transferred safely and in their new rooms. A Community Based Outpatient Clinic remains at Knoxville offering Primary Care and Mental Health outpatient services. All patients' services are located in Bldg. #1. All dental services remain at the Des Moines VAMC.

The Knoxville Campus continues to have a lot of options for the entire campus as it currently is, and working closely with our Central Office staff, who has contracted with a company Jones, Lange & LaSalle to look at future uses for the campus. Also working closely with the City of Knoxville for the future uses of the campus buildings, as well as the newly created Knoxville Task Force that is looking into uses for the property and what would be in the best interest of the community.

On some statistical notes, last year we treated 305,000 veterans on an outpatient basis. Construction continues with the Primary Care/Dental facility, and scheduled to be completed this coming spring. The new entryway in Bldg. #2 where the kitchen and canteen area will be is progressing and on schedule. 3A, Acute Psychiatry is fully operational with 10 beds. Building #5 has been remodeled and what was called the Domiciliary is now the Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (PRRTP) and all patients are now at Des Moines. The MRI building has been completed. The contractor is troubleshooting some technical issues but in the meantime has provided a mobile MRI trailer for staff to use.

The Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Mason City is expanding and scheduled to be completed the end of February. Nothing new to report for Fort Dodge, but in Carroll we're projecting that we will be able to provide services to 2,900 veterans. Currently in the negotiation phase prior to award of a construction contract. Hope to award that later this month or early February. After the award takes place the contractor will have 120 days to complete the construction, and hopefully be in the Carroll office by the 1st of June. At the Marshalltown CBOC we're anticipating servicing more than 3,000 veterans and the construction is under way with completion expected by the end of February and operational by mid-March.

We continue to see a large number of OIF/OEF veterans coming through our doors; through December 2009 we've treated 4,592 veterans.

A guest in attendance asked Mr. Huffman if it was true that by January 15, 2010 the VAMC would be losing its transport shuttle services. Mr. Huffman indicated that the facility will be replacing all the shuttle services with their own staff and own vehicles. We won't be diminishing the service, but change how it's delivered.

VA Medical Center – Iowa City Update – Valerie Buckingham

She is the new Public Affairs Officer and started two months ago. We will be renovating the seventh floor inpatient units and will replace all the three and four bed units with private rooms with private bath facilities. The project is scheduled to start in March with an estimated completion date of January 2011.

In November we broke ground on a new research building that is scheduled to be completed in the summer 2011. We had a 400-space parking ramp on the approved project list, but we are still awaiting a final budget. Also on the approved project list

is a new operating room. It will be located adjacent to the Intensive Care Unit. Right now when they come out of the operating room they have to go out into the hallway and go around to get to the intensive care unit. This way it will be sterile environment to sterile environment.

We will also be relocating our locked psychiatric ward from 9E to 9W. We recently renovated the main entrance to the hospital last year and now we'll be renovating the halls and the walls on the first and third floors.

We broke ground in November on a new community based outpatient clinic (CBOC) in Ottumwa and will also have a new CBOC in Decorah and one in the Sterling Rock Falls, Illinois area.

Iowa City does have a backlog that should be eliminated by the end of February. Backlog was created by personnel turnover and an increase in demand of nearly 20%. Backlog is defined for example: If our normal 30 day capacity is 300 applications a month and we receive 350, then a backlog of 50 applications is created. It takes a minimum of 4 months to hire providers in Compensation and Pension. We have hired four additional contract providers to help eliminate the backlog and are in the process of hiring additional permanent staff to meet the new increased demand.

Veterans Home Update – John Mathes

One of the new developments since the last Commission meeting is that IVH identified a number of residents who are located in the Malloy Bldg. who would more appropriately be classed as Residential Level of Care rather than Nursing Level of Care. When we identified that possibility, we notified the VA in Des Moines and continue to be in contact with them about those residents and in fact, some of them are more appropriately placed in Residential Care.

With the State of Iowa being in a cost saving mode, and rightfully so, and with IVH being a part of that, we invited all of the staff to submit ideas on what can IVH do to save costs. One of the things that came back from a surprising number of staff is, in light of your census and in light of the budget, IVH should consider reducing the number of units. As of today, IVH has 707 residents and 38 beds that are vacant in nursing and staff is saying we think you need to relook at how IVH is housing people. In addition to that, IVH as a part of the State's Executive Branch, are in the process of furloughing staff. It is the opinion at IVH that it would be easier to furlough direct care staff if we had fewer units to deal with, that you would have more people per unit. As a result of that, we asked our relocation committee to look at the possibility of whether it might be possible to consolidate some units. They came up with a recommendation that IVH take the residents on Sheller 2W, which is a temporary housing unit that was set up to provide some special programming for people that were having some behavioral and emotional kinds of issues, and to consolidate them into Malloy and Loftus 2. We've looked at that and have talked to all the stakeholders and we have agreed to do that by February 1. What that does is it increases the staffing level on the units that needed increasing and allows IVH to address the issue of furloughs. We have been in lots of conversations with our Collective Bargaining partners and they have been very supportive of what we are doing and why we are doing it.

Bo Berntsen from the Governor's Office shared with the Commission about the process of filling the Commandant's position at IVH. There are 12 total applicants for the position and appears that six of them meet the minimum requirements for the position. The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) will be reaching out to the committee to start scheduling interviews. Chairperson Mulcahy asked Mr. Berntsen if the committee members have already been selected and if not, how

the selection process will work. Mr. Berntsen indicated that DAS will start reaching out to those people, although they have not yet been contacted. The decision on the committee membership has been decided, but haven't all been contacted yet.

Lisa Purvis – Discussed with the Commission and distributed the IVH Annual Report, which has been sent to the Governor's Office, the Legislature, Department of Management, Legislative Services, etc. which is very similar to last year's report, although the content and costs were cut in half. It contains the services IVH provides such as nursing care, the medical care, recreation and activities, and food services. It has an update on performance measures that IVH keeps track of every year; as well as financial information for FY'09. The annual report will also be available on IVH's website, and will not be mailing them out to all the county commissions of veteran affairs.

Veterans Day on the Hill will be January 21 with a legislative breakfast being served from 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. which is specifically for leadership of the veterans' service organizations and we are asking each VSO to select two people to represent their organization at the legislative breakfast. Then from 9:00 – Noon there will be a program, some vendor tables around the Rotunda area of the Capitol. The vendor table participants will be charged a \$100 to set up to show their products and services, which will help cover the cost of legislative breakfast which is new this year. We have also asked Casey's, Hy-Vee, and the Central Iowa Honor Flight to set up a vendor table in light of their tremendous support of the Honor Flight Program.

Diana Steiner – Discussed with the Commission information on the FY'10 budget which has been very challenging. At the beginning of the fiscal year we started out with \$11.3 million appropriation and carried into FY'10 from FY'09 about \$5.6 million. In October we were notified of the 10% across the board cut; no layoffs were included in those cuts. Department Directors were asked by the Governor to take a 10% pay reduction, which the Acting Commandant has done. As positions became vacant, if they were non-direct care positions, we've been leaving them vacant. Have made a commitment to reduce overtime by 10%; continue to defer equipment purchases that are needed. Have reduced some of the contractual services; we've eliminated all out-of-state travel and have reduced our in-state travel and training budget. Have reduced office supply purchases, printing, advertising, and plan on reducing all of our inventories of supplies by June 30, 2010; and have also reduced our carry forward by 10%. All of these reductions combined equal about \$1.7 million dollars. Discussion continued regarding how the furlough process will work.

Greg Wright – Updated the Commission on all the construction process. Have submitted documentation to Washington for the Dack Day Room extension project and waiting for the grant letter. Hope to have it within the next 30-60 days. IVH is in the programming design phase for Phases 2 & 3.

IVH Chapter 10 Administrative Rule Change

In discussion of the "Notice of Intended Action" on involuntary discharges and the process of involuntary discharges IVH is asking the Commission to approve the amended sub rule 10.47 as follows: "If a member is not satisfied with the decision of the department of inspections and appeals, the member may seek judicial review in accordance with Iowa Code chapter 17A. A member's discharge under rule 801 –10.43(35D) shall **not** be stayed while judicial review is pending." Commissioner Phipps made a motion to approve said change and Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Camp Dodge Office Update – Patrick Palmersheim

The cemetery director's position was eliminated in December and I have been spending my time between Camp Dodge and the Cemetery which has been about 3 days at Camp Dodge and 2 days at the Cemetery. Cold weather, ice storms, and frost levels have made burials at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery very challenging.

As of December 31, 2009 we've have 426 burials. We've anticipated that there will be 2 – 2.5 burials a day. The Cemetery has received two benches, one from the County Association and one from Vietnam Veterans of America in Ottumwa. We plan to have an event once the winter weather is over. The irrigation system issue is ongoing. A new design is in progress to move the electrical panels across the road in conjunction with the irrigation. The water treatment plant folks at Camp Dodge have agreed to help us with the water treatment process.

The National Cemetery Administration will be doing inspections every three years and the Iowa Veterans Cemetery's inspection will be in 2011. The Cemetery grant expires on June 30, 2010, and then will have a federal audit. We have recently been notified that the National Cemetery Administration is offering grants for state cemeteries; the IDVA will be applying for these funds. The grants will become available after July 2011.

The fire alarm system at the Cemetery dials into the Cemetery telephone lines rather than the Fire Department/Dallas County Sheriff's Office. We will be getting this fixed soon.

IDVA's Legislative Liaison, Kent Hartwig has resigned effective January 8th, so I will also be at the Capitol some days during the legislative session and Missy Miller will be taking over the Trust Fund administration for the Commission. We won't look at filling this position until possibly next fiscal year. IDVA staff will take five furlough days each the remainder of this fiscal year. Bob Steben will take seven furlough days during the remainder of this fiscal year because he is a non-contract employee. These furlough days need to be used before June 24, 2010. The increment weather has allowed staff to start using some of their furlough days.

The Yellow Ribbon Program which is a mandatory program for all veterans to help them reintegrate after being deployed, has been going on for about two years now, Shawn Hippen is the State point of contact and his office is now located at the IDVA. His job is to help coordinate and facilitate Yellow Ribbon events for the State of Iowa. Please give him a call if you have any questions.

Commissioner McMartin asked if the location and dates have been set yet for the Spring School of Instruction. Mr. Palmersheim said that nothing has been arranged yet but we are in discussions with three different hotels to host the school. The problem has been the costs that IDVA would incur. Since Easter is the first week in April, we are looking into the last week of April. Discussion continued. The county association asked if at all possible to have the dates and place determined by January 20th, Veterans Day on the Hill, so they can get it into their budgets, which are due the end of January.

Kent Hartwig – Trust Fund – Intends to send out the Commission's Trust Fund Report to the Legislature, Governor's Office, and legislative staff on Friday, January 8th. There is no longer a waiting list of applicants, which means that we're able to pay

now on the applications received, but still not a lot of interest being incurred month to month. The average interest amount received on a monthly basis in calendar year 2009 was around \$10,000. Calendar year 2008 was approximately \$16,000. All claims are being paid as they come in. One area that creates a hold up has been for the applicants needing dental work; they need to have the dental work done before receiving the funds.

New Business

The Commission addressed the Resolutions submitted by the Iowa Veterans Council, the American Legion and the County Association. John Derner of the American Legion briefed the Commission on a few resolutions: 1) regarding the Governor's Office appointing a full-time permanent Commandant for the Iowa Veterans Home as soon as possible, and 2) requests the State of Iowa establish bonus program for Iowa veterans who served during the periods defined by Iowa Code 35.1 for Lebanon Grenada conflict, Panama conflict, and the Persian Gulf conflict, and 3) requesting an American Legion license plate be established with proceeds going to the Commission's License Plate Fund. Chairperson Mulcahy suggested to the Commission to not vote for the American Legion license plate resolution.

The County Association also asked by resolutions brought before the Commission asking that the State put the Commission back in charge of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs as it was prior to 2007. The Association also is requesting that the \$10,000 grant allocation that goes to each county continue as stated in the Iowa Veterans Council's resolution.

Commissioner Phipps made a motion to approve all the aforementioned resolutions excluding the American Legion license plate request. Commissioner McMartin seconded the motion. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Action Items:

- Commissioner Phipps asked that IVH send a hard copy of the Annual Report to the Commissioners that were not present.
- Chairperson Mulcahy asked that IDVA look into doing some more Public Service Announcements (PSA) and what the costs would be.
- Chairperson Mulcahy also asked that IDVA provide a report regarding the License Plate Fund with a breakdown of the uses and amounts used.

Public Comment

Elizabeth Ledvina, President of the Iowa Association for Commissioners of Veterans Affairs, reported that many counties are concerned about the state requirement that counties have a veterans affairs office, and that a veterans affairs employee be at the office 20 hours each week. Will the state waive these mandates for smaller counties? There are huge concerns of these smaller county offices that without the \$10,000 grant money will either have to close the office or reduce the hours that the office is open. Bo Berntsen from the Governor's Office said that he would take this concern back to the Governor.

Adjutant John Derner with the American Legion informed the Commission of the upcoming Mid-Winter Conference scheduled for February 12-14. There will be a presentation about the Community Covenant Program by guest speaker Major General Retired Craig Weldon. There will be a session on what the American Legion is calling: Operation Outreach. Also there

will be a session that will address concerns for female veterans. Please get in touch with him with any questions you may have about the conference.

Trust Fund Applications

After discussion of application #00176 requesting \$3,000 for unemployment, Commissioner Phipps made a motion to deny and Commissioner Delamore seconded the motion. Commissioner Mulcahy abstained from voting. Motion carried; denied unanimously by voting Commissioners.

After discussion of application #00136 requesting again for housing funds and durable equipment, Commissioner Phipps made a motion to deny and seconded by Commissioner Waychus. Motion carried; denied unanimously.

After discussion of application #00318 requesting \$364 for additional dental work, Commissioner Waychus made a motion to approve and seconded by Commissioner McAllister. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

After discussion of application #00337 requesting \$607 for vision expenses, Commissioner McMartin made a motion to deny and seconded by Commissioner Phipps. Motion carried; denied unanimously.

After discussion of application #00338 requesting \$750 for dental work, Commissioner Jacobus made a motion to defer pending more information on income. Commissioner Waychus seconded the motion; motion carried; deferred unanimously.

Adjournment

With no further discussion before the Commission, the meeting ended at Noon, CST. The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for April 7, 2010 at the Iowa Veterans Home, Ford Conference Room, and beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mari Mielke
Recording Secretary

Cc: Joni Klaassen, Governor's Office
Bo Berntsen, IDVA Policy Advisor, Governor's Office
Barbara Galloway, Assistant Attorney, Attorney General's Office
Hugh Ceaser, Department of Management
Sue Lerdal, Legislative Fiscal Bureau
Jenny Schneider, Auditor's Office
Jessica Holmes, Department of Administrative Services
Steven Ainger, Department of Administrative Services
John Mathes, Acting Commandant, IVH
Nancy Morford, Administrative Assistant, IVH
Lisa Purvis, Legislative Liaison, IVH
Senator Daryl Beall, Senate VA Committee, Chair
Senator James Seymour, Senate VA Committee, RM
Representative Matt Windschilt, House VA Committee, RM
Representative Ray Zirkelbach, House VA Committee, Chair

John Derner, Adjutant, American Legion
Larry Jatho, Adjutant, DAV
Ron Healy, Iowa UAW Veterans Committee
Jerry Meek, Commander, MOPH
Jon Schneider, President, PVA
Reginald Richardson, Pres., Reserve Officers Assn.
David Hunter, Commander, Marine Corp. League
Elizabeth Ledvina, President, IACCVA
Barry Sharp, Director, VAMC, Iowa City
Don Cooper, VAMC, Des Moines
David Davis, Director, VA Regional Office
Tom Ashworth, Senate Republican Caucus Staff
Zeke Furlong, House Democratic Research Staff
Jason Chapman, House Republican Caucus Staff
Julie Simon, Senate Democratic Caucus Staff