

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The Regular Quarterly Meeting of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs Meeting
Wednesday, January 8, 2014 beginning at 10:00 a.m.
Iowa Gold Star Military Museum
7105 - NW 70th Avenue
Johnston, IA 50313-1824

Present: Kate Myers, Chair
Dan Gannon
Becky Dirks Haugsted
Todd Jacobus
Darlene McMartin
Larry Spencer
Bill Wallace
Jon Wille
Mickey Williams

Absent: Todd Jacobus
Larry Spencer

Staff: Robert King, Executive Director, IDVA
Mari Mielke, IDVA - Recording Secretary
Jodi Tymeson, Commandant, IVH

Guests/ Bart Quick, VA Central Iowa Health Care System
Presenters: John Derner, American Legion
Ryan Dickson, VARO
Susan Martens, Ashford University
Cord Overton, Governor's Office
Amy Beller, Sen. Harkin's Office
Aaron McKay, Sen. Grassley's Office
Jim Demarest, American Legion
Elizabeth Ledvina, IACCVSO Pres.
Mitch Holmes, Cass County Dir.
Mary Neubauer, Iowa Lottery
David Thornburg, DAV
Michele Mustain, Cong. Latham's Office
Jennifer Acton, LSA

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

APPROVED: *Kate Myers* Date: 4/2/14
Kate Myers, Chair, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Myers at 10:00 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence:

Following the Pledge of Allegiance there was a moment of silence.

Roll Call:

Recording secretary took roll call and Commissioners Jacobus, Spencer and Dirks Haugstad were absent. Commission Dirks Haugstad arrived a few minutes after the meeting started.

Welcome/Introductions of Guests:

Chairperson Myers had the Commission members introduce themselves and then asked the guests in attendance to do the same.

Approval of Commission Minutes:

Commissioner Gannon made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 18, 2013 Commission meeting and Commissioner Wille seconded the motion. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner McMartin made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 2, 2013 conference call to approve Trust Fund applications and Commissioner Wallace seconded the motion. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Wille made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 9, 2013 conference call to adopt the IVH's Chapter 10 administrative rules changes and Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Gannon made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 6, 2013 conference call to approve Trust Fund applications and Commissioner Dirks Haugstad seconded the motion. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2013 conference call to approve Trust Fund applications and Commissioner McMartin seconded the motion. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

VA Regional Office Update

Ryan Dickson filled in for Director Terri Beer who could not attend. He is the Change Management Agent for the Des Moines Regional Office. The last quarter their average days pending at the service center, which is the average age of their inventory, is about 159 days. They continue to exceed their monthly production goals through the holiday season. Management lifted the mandatory overtime for the holidays but employees still volunteered to work the overtime to keep the monthly production goals in check.

The Des Moines RO is almost completely paperless; approximately 90%. They are one of the first to rollout the new transformation model, just about over a year ago. This last October they had a site visit from the Deputy Director and his team from the Office of Field Operations from the Central Office and their focus was to take a look at the transformation, current status, and the transformation of going paperless.

This does not mean that they will not accept paper claims, it just means that receiving the paper claims do get converted into the computer system and become paperless eventually.

Although they had a pretty good year covering a little bit of ground with the backlog, they know they are not where they need to be yet. They have a ways to go but they are definitely looking forward to continuing to make progress on the backlog.

Commissioner McMartin made mention that with the RO going paperless, the E-Benefits uploading documents through the claims process from the county offices still is difficult. Mr. Dickson said that this glitch will hopefully be fixed in the next two weeks.

VA Central Iowa Health Care System – Des Moines Update

Bart Quick, Chief of Voluntary Service and Community Outreach Coordinator and still the Public Affairs Officer at the VA Central Iowa Health Care System was hoping to bring the new Director, Judith Johnson-Mekota, but she was unable to attend because of a unexpected health issue. Ms. Johnson-Mekota starting as Director approximately 3-weeks ago and right now she is going through an assessment phase of the hospital; she's looking at the fiscal structure of the facility; she is looking at the services provided; she's interested in the COBCs, and right now doing a full assessment.

The biggest thing expected in her administration vs. the previous administration is that she wants to be very, very public, very active within the community, and working with our partners within the community, VSOs, as well as anybody and everybody. She is going to be much more visible.

Construction continues to be moving quite well with the emergency room. It is now completely enclosed and doing the interior, electrical system, and everything else that goes with an emergency room. Not sure yet when it will be up and running.

They are pushing forward and got permission from fiscal to go ahead and proceed with community living center cottages that is expanding. It is similar to the community concept as you see at the Iowa Veterans Home.

The mental health area is also expanding, as is staffing. Structure wise they are looking at putting up and restoring a building on the eastside of the facility. Staff wise we are looking at increasing positions for social workers and psychologists to help address more PTSD issues. It is a very competitive market for these positions and they are not the only facility looking to fill these positions.

They are also looking at expanding the parking and making more patients spots. The new director is also pushing the idea of staff parking at the offsite parking that is located down by the old Target building. They can park there and catch the shuttle back up to the hospital. The shuttle runs three buses that are continuously picking up staff and visitors that are parking on the lot.

New Business

Mary Neubauer from the Iowa Lottery attended the meeting to show the Commission the marketing pictures and explain the new game of "Ride to Riches" scratch game that all proceeds will benefit the Veterans Trust Fund. The Iowa Lottery teamed up with a well-known Iowa artist to produce a one-of-a-kind motorcycle that will be up for grabs in a promotion to support the Veterans Trust Fund. It will be the first time that Ray "Bubba" Sorensen II, has painted a motorcycle.

The one-of-a-kind motorcycle from Victory Motorcycles in Spirit Lake will be given away in the lottery's "Veterans Victory" promotion that players can enter using non-winning tickets in the \$1 "Ride to Riches" instant-scratch game. If you don't win an instant prize on your ticket you can enter the code from the ticket on line at the Lottery website for a chance to be entered in the drawing to win the motorcycle. The drawing will be held in late March. The value of the motorcycle is about \$31,000 not including the art work.

The Iowa Lottery has released a total of 11 scratch and pull-tab games dedicated to the Veterans Trust Fund since the program began in 2008. The Iowa Lottery has raised nearly \$15M for the Veterans Trust Fund since the games began in 2008. Pull-tab games have declined in recent years; they are the oldest play style tickets that the Lottery has on the market. We are looking at what to do with that entire product base; because it just isn't selling as well. This year our proceeds for the Veterans Trust Fund are a little lower than they have been in the past and we think in large part it is because of the pull-tab games.

Commissioner Dirks Haugstad mentioned that the artist Bubba Sorensen has a program going on now that he is trying to get a Freedom Rock in every county. And if your county does not have one, you can go to his website. It is relatively inexpensive to get it to your county.

Old Business

Veterans Day at the Capitol is Wednesday, January 22. Vendor tables need to be set up by 9:00 a.m. The program begins at 10:00 a.m. Visit the tables and your legislators up until Noon.

IDVA Update

Col. King briefed the Commission on the various presentations, speaking engagements and events that he has participated in since the last quarterly meeting in September. The Korea Reborn books that are a limited edition commemorative book was published and produced by Remember My Service Productions, a division of StoryRock, Inc., in cooperation with Seoul Selection. There were 5,000 books delivered to the National Guard at Camp Dodge that were distributed from our office to all the county offices that requested them and to individual callers. These books were very well received and as of today, all but a few of the books have been given out. We have inquired about receiving more, but there are no more available and they will not be producing any more. These books were distributed nationwide. The following is from his written report:

State programs:

- Veterans Trust Fund – have received/approved 117 applications in 2013 for a total of \$203,633.81; available spendable balance is \$189,785.93.
- Injured Veteran Grant – Applications approved during 2013 is 13 at \$87,500 expended
- Honor Guard Reimbursements – Requests approved during 2013 is 135 at \$170,095 expended
- Military Home Ownership Program – Total of 320 applications at \$5,000 per grant during 2013. The Iowa Finance Authority will be receiving an additional \$650,000 for this program
- County Allocations – 100% spent from 81 counties. 18 counties returned a total of \$48,071.43 of allocated funding

Federal benefits:

- Total monthly benefits - \$2,167,171 for the month of December to 2,428 recipients
- Total monthly revenue - \$130,030.26
- Total annual benefits - \$26,006,052
- Total annual revenue - \$1,560,363.12
- Total recipients – 2,428

Cemetery:

- Need to open the Maintenance Worker II position again
- Interments as of January 7, 2013 – 1,805. 124 since last commission meeting
- Equipment replacement forecasting/funding needed
- \$1.2M (\$919,612 United States Veterans Administration Cemetery grant/\$250,000 FY'13 Iowa State Legislature appropriation) construction program
- 960 capacity columbaria plaza, pump house, water filter system, vehicle storage garage addition has begun; projected completion has been delayed

Upcoming Events:

- Condition of the State Address on January 14
- Veterans Day on the Hill on January 22
- Iowa Association of County Commissioners and Veterans Service Officers (IACCVSO) Spring School April 15-17

Commissioner McMartin asked Col. King if there is a way to add a search by county or state or both on the Kiosk at the Veterans Cemetery. You can only look up by veteran name and not by county or by state. Col. King will look into getting this added to the Kiosk.

Someone from the audience asked the Commission about the process that is used to approve Trust Fund applications that have to do with old bills that were not approved because the services were suspended for lack of funds in the Trust Fund and now that the uses have been unsuspended, can these applications be revisited for payment. Commissioner McMartin answered the inquiry with lengthy discussion.

Veterans Home Update

Commandant Jodi Tymeson handed out her written report, annual report, newsletter and Mission Statement. From her written report:

- The Commandant's focus is to provide highest quality of care, respectful and positive living environment for residents, and respectful and positive working environment for staff.
- Current Census: 593 (Nursing Care = 487 – residential care = 106), no waiting list. Although sometimes there are veterans waiting for dementia care units.
- New Chief Operating Officer Mike Jarrell began his duties on January 3. He is a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator and will function as such. He has over 16 years of experience.
- The FY'13 Annual Report has been submitted to DOM (see copy).
- The FY'15 Budget requests a status quo state appropriation of approximately \$7.5 million. This is only about 10% of the overall budget. Jodi briefed the Governor/Lt. Governor on December 10th. Discussion continued regarding the briefing slides (see copy).
- IVH does not have a department bill this year.
- The recent Administrative Rules changes are now in effect.
- Personnel: DAS directed a "nurse compaction" for nursing supervisors – all across state government. NS1 and NS2 all become Nurse Supervisors (NS). They are using this opportunity to look at making some other changes in our Table of Organization. They are also reviewing our Committee Structure and how our policies are structured.
- No update from the Ombudsman's Office on their investigation.
- The Chapel can now transmit Chapel services to resident rooms via TV channel.
- IVH recently brought in a trainer for 2 days to train 30 staff on the survey (inspection) process.

- We are increasing our positive visibility in the press by inviting Times Republican to IVH events. They have been providing excellent coverage. We are also on the two local radio stations from time to time.
- Construction: We are working with Federal VA regarding application for new 72 bed building to replace beds lost in renovation to single rooms.

There is a requirement for the Commission to pass a resolution naming depositories because of the amount of the budget. Jodi has distributed the eight financial institutions list with the depository amounts of each. After further discussion Commissioner McMartin made a motion to approve the requirements of Iowa Code chapter 12C.2 for the eight financial institutions listed. Commissioner Gannon seconded the motion; motion carried; approved unanimously.

There was discussion among the Commissioners that when they are asked to do a presentation or they are representing the Commission at events that maybe there should be a fact sheet or information about the Commission be put together so that all the Commissioners are on the same page.

Public Comment

There were questions from the audience throughout the meeting.

Determine next Commission meeting

Next Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 2 at the Iowa Veterans Home beginning at 10:00. Location at IVH to be determined.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.