

DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
JULY 28, 2009

Members Present: Lardizzone, Thompson, Carroll, Corsa, Evans, Harden, Kitson, Lank, Newstadt, Sarg, Wasson and Weir

Member Excused: Timberman

Staff Present: Davila and Reid

Guests: James Collins (SOS), Charles Dorman (VAMC Director), Nate Robinson (SBA), Dawn Premock (AMVETS), Bob Babel and Nick Ferri (VVA), and George Goss (KWVA)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nation's Flag.

Chairman Lardizzone opened the meeting by reporting that Columbus Day and Presidents' Day will no longer be State holidays; the office will now be open on those days. The Commission received a "thank you" card from Anita Rich (Southern Cemetery) for a retirement plaque that was presented to her. Introduction of guests.

Robinson – Provided information on a variety of SBA programs offered to veterans. The PATRIOT EXPRESS Program is designed strictly for veterans, their spouses and family members. He offered to provide briefings to the veterans service organizations.

Dorman – They are having some challenges with the Georgetown Clinic. They are working on trying to improve both communication and access for both clinics in Georgetown and Dover. The VA operating budget for next year will be increased by 2.5%; which will basically cover the cost-of-living adjustments. The VA OEF/OIF Homecoming Event is scheduled for this Saturday, August 1, 2009, from 1-4 pm.

Premock – Provided a briefing on "Partners Across Delaware" which is a program to help veterans, active duty military, and dependents. The goal is to bring all the different organizations together so when someone needs assistance, there is one resource to go to.

Corsa – Recommended that the "Partners Across Delaware" program have an outreach group in each county.

Collins – The Friends of the Veterans Home approved the pre-construction planning costs for the Veterans Home pavilion. He would like to plan a small groundbreaking ceremony for possibly the end of September. During the final stages of the budget in June, there were some changes to the Veterans Home budget, which left them with a personnel deficit. He is working on the situation and will keep the Commission informed.

Davila – Recommended that the pavilion be dedicated on Veterans Day in the afternoon, after the bridge ceremony. Everyone agreed.

Lank – Asked if anyone was working on the patient transportation issue at the Veterans Home.

Reid – Explained that there was nothing in the 2010 budget to provide patient transportation for personal doctor appointments, etc. They have the DART system in place to transport handicapped individuals for various appointments. The Home does not have a vehicle or personnel slated to provide that service. The residents and family members have expressed a need for the service. Mr. Reid also provided the Veterans Home monthly update. The Veterans Home fund is currently at \$121,499.35.

Davila – Suggested that the Veterans Home look at purchasing/renting a van or bus from Fleet Services so the money would stay in-house. Mr. Reid agreed to review the costs involved with Mr. Davila.

Lardizzone – Suggested that the Veterans Home reevaluate the newspaper subscriptions and request a cost savings for the Delaware State News. Commissioner Carroll suggested that they also look at subscribing to the free local newspapers.

MOTION BY HARDEN TO REDUCE THE DELAWARE STATE NEWS SUBSCRIPTION FROM 10 COPIES TO 5 COPIES, SECONDED BY WASSON, MOTION DEFEATED.

Mr. Reid reviewed the Veterans Home annual survey which was completed in June 2009. The number of deficiencies was 13 for 2009 versus 24 deficiencies in 2008. Additional details and questions will be discussed at the Veterans Home Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for August 5, 2009. Mr. Reid also provided information from the National State Veterans Home Association concerning per diem rate increases.

MOTION BY THOMPSON TO ACCEPT JUNE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES, SECONDED BY CORSA, MOTION CARRIED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Davila – There is a pre-construction meeting scheduled for Monday concerning the Southern Cemetery; to include 1,148 double vaults, 400 single vaults, a 1,280 niche columbarium, and 200 crypts for remains. The project is estimated at \$1.8M and has been approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs. We also received the \$360,000 from the Bond Bill Committee to add another 704 niche columbarium, two retention ponds, and an irrigation system for the Northern Cemetery. That project will be approximately \$4M. We have advertised for bid in the paper and will be interviewing architects shortly. We hope to get approval for funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs in their 2010 budget. We have also requested through the Secretary of State's Office to fill the two positions vacant at the Southern Cemetery (Cemetery Administrator & Admin. Specialist III).

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Commission members were provided with a copy of the letter drafted by the Legislative Committee to the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee in response to the Commission's oversight of the Veterans Home. The meeting with the legislature on June 17, 2009, was not well attended and the Commission has received no response to date.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Weir (AMVETS) – Department held a meeting and picnic at Dover AFB on Saturday, July 18, 2009. The AMVETS National Convention is scheduled for August 8-15, 2009, in New Orleans, LA. Commissioner Weir asked for assistance in obtaining information on ordering a bronze plaque for AMVETS for placement in the Veterans Home. Commissioner Lank offered his assistance.

Thompson (MCL) – The MCL will be hosting the Veterans Day Ceremony at the Delaware Memorial Bridge on November 11, 2009.

Wasson (DELVETS) – On July 4, 2009, Post 1 had a family picnic.

Kitson (VFW) – The VFW National Convention is scheduled for August 15-21, 2009, in Phoenix, AZ. The National Cooties Convention will also be in Phoenix, AZ, from August 22-24, 2009.

Newstadt (JWV) – On August 1, 2009, he will be attending the Veterans Homecoming at the VA Hospital. The JWV also sponsors Bingo at the VA Hospital on the first Thursday of every month. The annual JWV Family Picnic will be held at Talley Day Park on August 16, 2009.

Corsa (VVA) – The VVA National Convention is being held now in Louisville, KY.

Evans (American Legion) – Their State Convention was held recently with election of officers. The officers will be installed on August 9, 2009, at Post 2 in Dover. The American Legion National Convention begins on August 21, 2009, in Louisville, KY.

Lardizzone (DAV) – The DAV National Convention is scheduled for August 21-26, 2009, in Denver, CO.

Davila – Reminded the veterans organizations to submit a new listing of elected officers to the Commission office.

NEW BUSINESS

Kitson – The Commission received a request for a residency waiver for a veteran who previously resided in Milton, DE, and due to the death of his spouse, moved to Princess Anne, MD. Currently, he has returned to Delaware and resides with his other daughter in Bridgeville, DE, for the past 30 days. He has requested admission to the Veterans Home.

MOTION BY KITSON TO APPROVE THE RESIDENCY WAIVER REQUEST, SECONDED BY LANK, MOTION CARRIED.

ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE

Carroll – Suggested that more Commission members attend the Veterans Home Advisory Committee meetings.

Davila – By law, under Title 29, the Commission is the advisory group. The Commission has oversight in the administration of the Veterans Home and shall have the authority to promulgate such rules, regulations and policy.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: **AUGUST 25, 2009 (10:00 AM)**

LOCATION: **Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE**

ADJOURNED