

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The Regular Quarterly Meeting of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs Meeting
Held at Camp Dodge, JMTC Building 3586 (B-62) Via Zoom meeting
Wednesday, January 6, 2021
7105 – NW 70th Avenue
Johnston, IA 50313-1824

Present: Elizabeth Ledvina, Chair
Chuck Connors
Carol Whitmore
Gary Wattnem
Orene Cressler
Kenny Lloyd

Via Zoom: Mary Van Horn
Greg Paulline

Absent: Steve Hyde
Darlene McMartin

Staff: Karl Lettow, Public Information Office - IDVA
Mari Mielke, IDVA – Recording Secretary
Timon Oujiri, Commandant IVH

Guests Present: John Derner – American Legion

Presenters: Korey Brooks – SOS
Gary Boseneiler, Director – Johnson County VA

Via Zoom: Missy Miller – IDVA
Wayne Marek – Vet Center
Dan Gannon – DAV
Patty Hamann – Cedar Co. VA
Roger Pittsenbarger – Henry Co. VA
James Kessler
Judith Johnson-Mekota – Iowa City VAMC
Jennifer Watkins – Muscatine Co. VA
Mike Briel, Green Co. VA
John Michelson – Employee Support Prog.
Dave Allen, Senator Grassley’s Office

Lawrence Paul – VVA
Dave Thornburg – DAV
Ed Staszewski – Clinton Co. VA
Kim Gould – PVA
Bruce Voight – VARO
Jeff Self – Iowa City VAMC
Gail Graham – Des Moines VAMC
Yolando Loveless, Black Hawk Co. VA
Melissa Bierman, Chickasaw Co. VA
Brenda Safranski, Senator Ernst’ Office

NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE WHEN DATED AND SIGNED BY THE MEETING CHAIR

APPROVED: Elizabeth Ledvina **Date:** 4-7-2021
Elizabeth Ledvina, Chair, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Call to Order:

Chairperson Ledvina called the meeting to order at 1000 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence:

Chairperson Ledvina led the Pledge of Allegiance and followed with a moment of silence for our departed veterans, POWs and those missing in action and those on active duty at this time.

Roll Call:

Recording secretary took roll call.

Welcome/Introductions of Guests:

Guests on the Zoom meeting and those in person introduced themselves.

Approval of Commission Minutes:

Commissioner Wattnem made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 1, Trust Fund conference call and was seconded by Commissioner Cressler. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Lloyd made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 7, quarterly meeting minutes and was seconded by Commissioner Whitmore. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Wattnem made a motion to approve the November 5, Trust Fund conference call minutes and was seconded by Commissioner Lloyd. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Connors made a motion to approve the December 3rd Trust Fund conference call minutes and was seconded by Commissioner Cressler. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Whitmore made a motion to approve the Commission's Legislative meeting minutes on November 5th. Commissioner Lloyd seconded the motion; motion carried; approved unanimously.

VA Regional Office Update

Director Bruce Voight gave an update for the VA Regional Office.

VA Medical Center – Iowa City – Update

Director Judith Johnson-Mekota gave an update for the Iowa City Medical Center.

VA Medical Center – Des Moines Update

Director Gail Graham gave an update for the Des Moines Medical Center.

Veterans Home Update

Commandant Timon Oujiri gave the Commission an update for the Iowa Veterans Home including a big "thank you" for the funds to purchase t-shirts and badge lanyards for each of our staff members, they were a big hit.

IDVA Update

Executive Director Steve Lukan gave an update for the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. There were questions regarding Veterans Day at the Hill, scheduled for January 20th, as to whether it would be in-person or a virtual event. After further discussion, Commissioner Cressler

made a motion to hold the event virtually and was seconded by Commissioner Wattnem. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

New Business

Korey Brooks, Director of the Warrior and Family Services branch with the Iowa National Guard made a presentation on behalf of the Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) requesting \$26,200 from the Veterans Project Assistance program (License Plate Fund) for the remaining SOS 2021 expenses. A written request was distributed. After discussion of the request, Commissioner Wattnem made a motion to approve and was seconded by Commissioner Van Horn. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Gary Boseneiler, Johnson County VA Director made a presentation before the Commission requesting \$5,000 from the License Plate Fund to support the Johnson County Armory & Veterans Memorial expansion Phase 4, which is a great form of advertising and outreach for the county.

After further discussion of the request, it was determined that the Commission could not approve the \$5,000 request based on the License Plate funds criteria, but would be open to the idea of a "plaque" representing the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs placed at the Memorial. Commissioner Van Horn made a motion to approve \$500 for the ICVA plaque for placement at the Memorial. Commissioner Lloyd seconded the motion; motion carried; approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Dave Thornburg representing the DAV updated the Commission regarding an April 20, 2020 discussion at the meeting of the Department's executive committee members, which is one member of each chapter, voted unanimously to be removed from DAV's representation on the Commission.

Dan Gannon spoke about the unfortunate circumstances that several attempts to discuss this matter with the Governor or a Governor's representative didn't get scheduled.

Chuck Connors informed the Commission that this was his last meeting because he was being deployed later in the month. He also "thanked" the Commission members for the honor to be able to serve on the Commission and serving the veterans in this great State.

Next Commission meeting

Next quarterly meeting for the Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, April 7th beginning at 10:00 a.m. More information about where and when will follow.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at Noon.