

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
The Regular Quarterly Meeting of the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs Meeting
Wednesday, October 2, 2019 - 10:00 a.m.
Malloy Leisure Resource Center
Iowa Veterans Home
Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

- Present:** Elizabeth Ledvina, Chairperson
Chuck Connors, Member, Commission of Veterans Affairs
Daniel J. Gannon, Member, Commission of Veterans Affairs
Orene Cressler, Member, Commission of Veterans Affairs
Steve Hyde, Member, Commission of Veterans Affairs
Kenneth Lloyd, Member, Commission of Veterans Affairs
Darlene McMartin, Member, Commission of Veterans Affairs
Gregory Paulline, Member, Commission of Veterans Affairs
Gary Wattnem, Member, Commission of Veterans Affairs
- Absent:** Mary Van Horn, Member, Commission of Veterans Affairs
Carol Whitmore, Member, Commission of Veterans Affairs
- Staff:** Timon M. Oujiri, Commandant, Iowa Veterans Home
Aimee Deimerly, Volunteer Coordinator, Iowa Veterans Home
Steven Lukan, Executive Director, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs
Karl Lettow, Communications, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs
Nancy Morford, Administrative Assistant, Iowa Veterans Home – Meeting Secretary
- Guests/
Presenters:** Randal Beyer, VBA, Des Moines VA Regional Office
Rod Derringer, Des Moines VA Regional Office
Kristi Catrenich, VBA, Des Moines Regional Office
Julie Dueker, Julie Dueker Ministries
John Derner, The American Legion
Bruce Beeston, Vietnam Veterans of America
Brett McLain, Director, Story County VSO
Erin Roberts, Story County Veterans Affairs
Tim Fisher, Fore the Veterans
Gail Graham, Director, VA Central Iowa Healthcare System, Des Moines
Jerry Self, Public Service Officer, VA Central Iowa Healthcare System, Des Moines
Kelsey Thien, House Democrats
David Thornburg, Disabled American Veterans
Brenda Safranski, Senator Ernst Office, Des Moines
Dave Allen, Senator Grassley's Office, Des Moines
Pat Sweeney, Director, Polk County VSO
Mike Mortensen, President, IACCVSO
Bob Bird, Iowa Senate Republican Caucus Staff
Judy Johnson, Director, VA Medical Center, Iowa City
Kent Ohms, Legislative Services Agency

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

APPROVED: Elizabeth Ledvina Date: 1-8-2020
Elizabeth Ledvina, Chair, Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

Call to Order:

Meeting Chairperson Ledvina called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence:

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

Introduction:

Commandant Timon Oujiri introduced Dr. Joseph Hoagbin as IVH's new Medical Director from Council Bluffs. He has been with IVH for two months. He is ushering in our new contract with Unity Point and also ushering in our new smoking policy. He is a great asset. Dr. Hoagbin left the meeting.

Roll Call:

Chairperson Ledvina took roll call. Commissioners Van Horn and Whitmore were excused. Executive Director Lukan was not present during roll call but entered the meeting at 11 a.m. Commissioners introduced themselves.

Presentation:

Because of You Old Glory Flies:

Chairperson Ledvina introduced Julie Dueker, author of a book entitled, "Because of You Old Glory Flies." She explained how this book came about. She is also the founder and director for the Young Patriots Club, consisting of schoolchildren from the Des Moines area. Bubba Sorenson (who paints the freedom rocks) was the illustrator for her book. Her website is www.juliedueker.com. For everyone who orders her book through her website, \$1 will go to TAPS (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors) in October. In November, she is offering \$1 for every book sold to go to the Iowa Veterans Cemetery. Her book can also be used as a fundraiser. She also has a teaching program and videos. She will send a link to all Commissioners who will get it out to all 99 counties. One of the legislative initiatives of the American Legion is education and patriotism.

Fore the Veterans Update:

Chairperson Ledvina introduced Tim Fisher, Executive Director of Fore the Veterans. The organization addresses physical and mental health issues facing today's military members and veterans through the game of golf. In 2018 they used two golf courses to provide 456 rounds of golf at no cost to the active and veteran military members. They raised \$28,000. So far in 2019, utilizing more golf courses, they provided 662 rounds of golf in Polk County and raised over \$50,000. They plan to expand their outreach program to neighboring counties and eventually state wide. They would like to open an indoor facility with golf simulators, maybe using a vacant space in a mall. Mr. Fisher asked the Commission for \$25,000 to help open an indoor facility and purchase golf simulators (\$10,000 apiece) so they could help veterans throughout the winter months.

Welcome/Introduction of Guests:

Chairperson Ledvina welcomed everyone in attendance. A round table of introductions of guests was held.

VA Regional Office Update:

Randal Beyer attended on behalf of Bruce Voigt, Director of the VA Regional Office. Mr. Beyer gave an overview of his program, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program, including eligibility requirements and types of services offered. They are currently serving approximately 840 veterans across the state.

VA Medical Center – Iowa City Update:

Chairperson Ledvina introduced Judy Johnson, Director, VA Medical Center, Iowa City. Judy gave an update on a few outreach events. The Iowa City VA partnered with the DAV for the 26th Annual TEE Tournament golf tournament which was held September 8 – 13, 2019. There were 242 veterans who participated. This event is for any veteran that has been treated by the Iowa City VA.

There were over 600 veterans attend Veterans Experience Action Center held on July 20 and 21, 2019, at St. Ambrose University in Davenport. It was a great collaboration with the Des Moines VA. Over 30 VA representatives from VHA attend where approximately 45 veterans were enrolled.

On Friday, November 8, 2019, an event will be held at the Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Cedar Rapids. There will be 25 VHA services there, enrollment and eligibility, women's health, suicide prevention, to name a few.

Director Johnson provided an update of the clinics in Davenport and Cedar Rapids.

Director Johnson briefed attendees that veterans were sent a letter from the VA that they will begin sharing veteran health information electronically to participating community care providers through an encrypted portal. If anyone DOES NOT want their information shared, they must sign a 10-10164. If a veteran decides not to share their information, they will still be able to receive VA health care.

VA Central Iowa Health Care – Des Moines Update:

Chairperson Ledvina introduced Gail Graham, Director of Des Moines Central Iowa Healthcare System. Gail introduced Jerry Self, the new Public Affairs Officer for Des Moines CIHCS. He most recently worked in Senator Ernst's Office.

Director Graham gave an update on construction. As of Tuesday, October 1, both Des Moines and Iowa City VA campuses are smoke free for everyone.

They completed their review by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organization and are fully accredited.

Des Moines, Iowa City and Omaha VA will be transitioning from Optim to United Healthcare next week. Urgent care will still be provided by Tri-Care until March, when they will transition.

Last week Des Moines VA held a telephone town hall and had 2,600 veterans on the line, answered approximately 20 questions with 150 items to follow up on.

Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs Update:

Executive Director Steve Lukan briefed the Commission on IDVA.

Ray Tree Service and many volunteers spruced up the Veterans Cemetery recently.

Veterans Cemetery has been busy with over 500 services over the past three fiscal years.

Fall School of Instruction will be held October 15-17 in Des Moines.

From the money received from the License Plate Fund, two computers, a new copier, printer and scanner has been purchased. Department of Public Defense IT was able to locate between 10 – 12 computers from Homeland Security to help stretch their budget.

Our fairly new Public Affairs Officer, Karl Lettow, will be keeping the Commission informed of veteran legislation when the legislative session begins in January, keeping track of bills and learning the process.

Iowa Veterans Home Update:

Commandant Oujiri presented the Iowa Veterans Home Update:

Current census: 504 residents at IVH which is 98 percent capacity. Currently have 46 on our waiting list, which is 4-6 months. Average age is 77 years old, youngest is 48, oldest is 103. We have 35 WWII veterans, 59 Korean, 239 Vietnam Veterans, 7 Gulf and 88 peacetime and Desert Shield/Storm era.

As of August 1, we began contracting our physicians through Unity Point Healthcare. We have two physician assistants from Unity Point Healthcare at IVH taking care of our residents. Our new Medical Director, Dr. Hoagbin, introduced at the beginning of the meeting, oversees the contract.

Veterans Day keynote speaker will be Simon Conway, WHO, a great veteran advocate.

Commandant Oujiri briefed attendees on repairs from the tornado that went through Marshalltown July 2018, included the tree restoration project of the Marshalltown High School Class of 1969, and on our recruitment endeavors.

Commandant Oujiri also announced IVH will be smoke free, date not yet determined. We did receive an Immediate Jeopardy during our VA survey this summer due to resident smoking.

Meeting break was taken from 11:34 – 11:53 a.m.

Trust Fund Applications:

Commissioner Gannon made a motion to approve minutes of Trust Fund conference call of July 2, 2019. Second by Commissioner Connors. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Wattnem made a motion to approve minutes of Trust Fund conference call of August 1, 2019. Second by Commissioner McMartin. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Commissioner Lloyd made a motion to approve minutes of Trust Fund conference call of September 5, 2019. Second by Commissioner Hyde. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Approval of Commission Minutes:

Commissioner Cressler made a motion to approve Commission minutes of July 10, 2019, quarterly meeting. Second by Commissioner Hyde. Motion carried; approved unanimously.

Old Business:

License Plate Fund Application Form:

Commissioner McMartin presented a draft of an application for requests for monies for projects. Chairperson Ledvina requested any suggestions to be sent to Commissioner McMartin or Chairperson Ledvina in 2-3 weeks.

Injured Veterans Grant:

Chairperson Ledvina introduced Mike Mortensen, President of Iowa Association of County Commissioners and Veteran Service Officers. Mr. Mortensen discussed the verbiage within the Administrative Rules of the Injured Veterans Grant and asked the Commission to review and see if it still applies today.

Mike passed out a request from the License Plate Fund for funds to help provide computerized communication within IACCVSO. This will also provide online training and registration for continuing education. The cost for the website is \$1,360 for one year which includes the cost to be able to make online payments. The Association is requesting \$6,800 for the first five years, which will allow the Association to create a budget line item and create a balance that will make the website self-sufficient.

During discussion, it was indicated this could be funded through the IDVA education budget.

Commissioner Wattnem made a motion to support the request for \$6,800 out of the IDVA education budget unless Executive Director Lukan finds something in the Administrative Rules that prevents this. Second by Commissioner McMartin. Vote taken; motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner McMartin made a motion that if the IDVA educational line item is not able to be used, the \$6,800 will be paid from the License Plate Fund. Second by Commissioner Wattnem. Vote taken; motion carried unanimously.

Trust Fund Administrative Rules Language:

Chairperson Ledvina has not received very many suggested changes for the Trust Fund Administrative Rules. We will review those tomorrow during the Trust Fund meeting.

License Plate Fund Administrative Rules Language:

Discussion was held. Send suggestions to Chairperson Ledvina and they will be discussed during an upcoming conference call.

Uniform Attire:

Commissioner McMartin brought up a suggestion to have t-shirts, polo shirts or some type of shirt with the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs name on that could be worn when attending events such as the State Fair, etc.

Commissioner McMartin made a motion to look for t-shirts, polo shirts, etc., that can be worn, and have the ICVA name placed on same. Second by Commissioner Cressler. Vote taken; motion carried unanimously.

New Business:

Quarterly meetings for 2020 will be Wednesday, January 8; Wednesday April 1; Wednesday, July 1 and Wednesday, October 7.

Commandant Oujiri passed out a request for License Plate funding. For recruitment and retention, IVH would like to request \$3,125 for 2 stand up tables and 1 banner, pens and pencils for giveaway, staff recognition keychains, pen/paper pad sets for new employees and IVH challenge coins for staff, visitors and volunteers when they go above and beyond the normal call of duty.

For the Christmas season, IVH would like to request a 16 – 20 foot commercial outdoor pre-lit Christmas tree for up to \$11,320 and pro grade LED Christmas lights, high grade, with a long life expectancy while using up to 90% less power for up to \$1,000, to equal \$12,320 for Christmas tree/decorations.

This comes to a total of \$15,445.

Commissioner Gannon made a motion to support \$15,500. Second by Commissioner Wattnem.

Discussion was held regarding the cost of the tree. The tree would be a quality tree that we hope would last up to 10 years. Aimee Deimerly, Volunteer Coordinator, explained how 10 – 15 years ago the IVH grounds were very festive with many, many outdoor trees lit up. Through the years, the trees were taken down and lights quit working. We have thousands of people come through IVH during the holiday season.

Chairperson Ledvina called for the vote. Vote taken; motion carried unanimously.

2020 Legislative Initiatives:

Chairperson Ledvina passed out a packet of legislative initiatives from The American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans and the Iowa National Guard. Commissioner Hyde stated the Military Order of the Purple Heart's legislative initiatives mirror the American Legion and DAV's. Commissioner Wattnem stated the ROA's legislative initiatives also mirror the American Legion and DAV's. The Counties will meet in October.

Chairperson Ledvina indicated the Legislative subcommittee will meet with Chairperson Ledvina and Commissioners Gannon and Whitmore before the January Commission meeting where a decision will be made on which initiatives the Commission will support.

License Plate Fund Request:

Discussion revolved around the request for \$25,000 from Tim Fisher from Fore the Veterans Program.

Commissioner Wattnem made a motion to deny the request from Fore the Veterans for \$25,000. Second by Commissioner Gannon. Vote taken; motion carried to deny unanimously.

Next Commission Meeting:

The next quarterly meeting will be held at the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum at Camp Dodge on Wednesday, January 8, 2020, beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.