

Minutes for Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission

August 2, 2022

Hybrid In-Person & Virtually

Call to Order – 8:30 AM MT

Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission was held on Tuesday, August 2, 2022, in the Main Conference Room of the Central Support Office of the Idaho Division of Veterans Services (located at 351 Collins Road Boise, ID) and virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Attendees

Commission Members in attendance: Chairman **Josh Callihan**, **Rockey Davis**, **Jinny Cash**, **Art Gimpel**

IDVS Staff Members in attendance included: IDVS Chief Administrator **Mark Tschampl**, IDVS Deputy Chief Administrator **Tracy Schaner**, IDVS Business Support Services Bureau Chief **Paul Spannkebel**, ISVH-Boise Administrator **Rick Holloway**, ISVH-Lewiston Administrator **Mark High**, ISVH-Pocatello Administrator **Josiah Dahlstrom**, ISVH-Post Falls Administrator **Colleen Moon**, OVA Bureau Chief **Bill Heyob**, Blackfoot Cemetery Business Operations Specialist **Mark Weaver** (virtually), Financial Officer **Debbie Spence**, and Management Assistant **Kevin Wallior**.

Number of Citizens in attendance: 0

Announcements

Still awaiting appointment of a 5th IVAC Commissioner. [The day after IVAC, the Governor's Office announced Eugene Brown was appointed to the vacancy.]

Deputy Chief Administrator **Tracy Schaner** reintroduced **Colleen Moon**, former Quality Improvement Director and Deputy Administrator of the Idaho State Veterans Home in Boise, as the new Idaho State Veterans Home Post Falls Administrator. She originally left IDVS for a position with Syringa but has returned to lead our newest State Veterans Home.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on May 5, 2022, was made by Commissioner **Jinny Cash**. Commissioner **Rockey Davis** seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

Community Outreach

With Community Resource Coordinator Mitzi Cheldelin absent (attending a national conference in Washington DC related to the Governor's and Mayor's Challenges to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families), Chief Administrator Mark Tschampl provided an update on Mitzi's Outreach efforts since the last meeting. He highlighted Mitzi's efforts to connect with Veterans Service Organizations around the state and her collaboration with Mission43. Mitzi has been using the #WheresMitziNow on social media to help spread the word about events and organizations around the state she's connecting with to better serve Idaho's Veterans community.

Mitzi is working with the Idaho Veterans Network to compile a comprehensive list of all the organizations and services available to Veterans and their families in Idaho and create a free to use online Veterans Resource Directory. This directory is not yet live but will be searchable and filterable by content and geographic location.

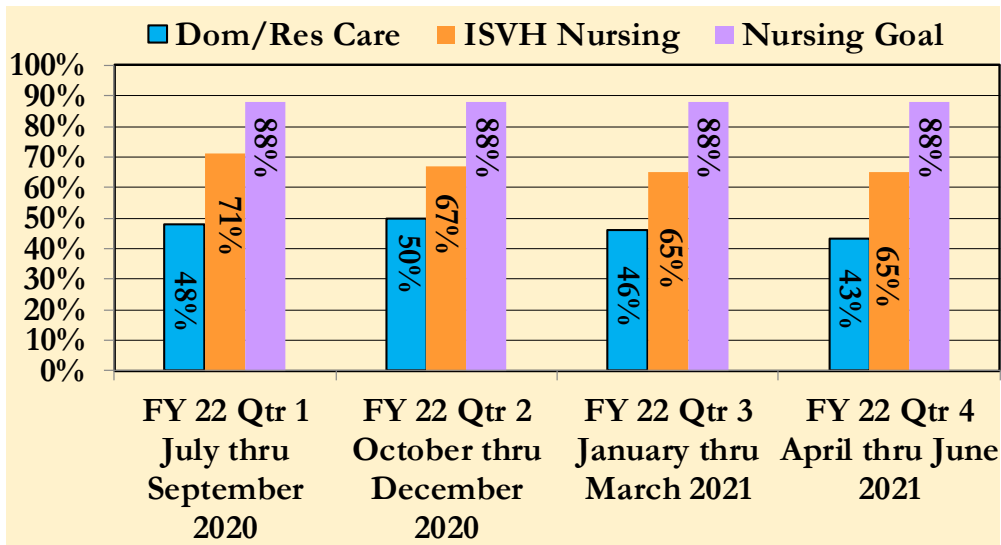
Mitzi has been invited to an invite only conference hosted by Syracuse University to connect with counterparts from around the country and share Best Practices in Veterans Services.

Division Bureau Reports

Financial Report presented by Sonya LaCasse

1. Quarterly Costs Per Resident Day
 - a. Quarter 1 – July to September 2021
 - i. Boise Home - \$445.67
 - ii. Pocatello Home - \$483.84
 - iii. Lewiston Home - \$381.03
 - b. Quarter 2 – October to December 2021
 - i. Boise Home - \$498.44
 - ii. Pocatello Home - \$732.51
 - iii. Lewiston Home - \$483.00
 - c. Quarter 3 – January to March 2022
 - i. Boise Home - \$533.93
 - ii. Pocatello Home - \$561.77
 - iii. Lewiston Home - \$487.11
 - d. Quarter 4 – April to June 2022
 - i. Boise Home - \$956.80
 - ii. Pocatello Home - \$943.33
 - iii. Lewiston Home - \$830.30

4th quarter costs are so high compared to previous quarters due to COVID.
2. FY22 Quarterly Occupancy Rates



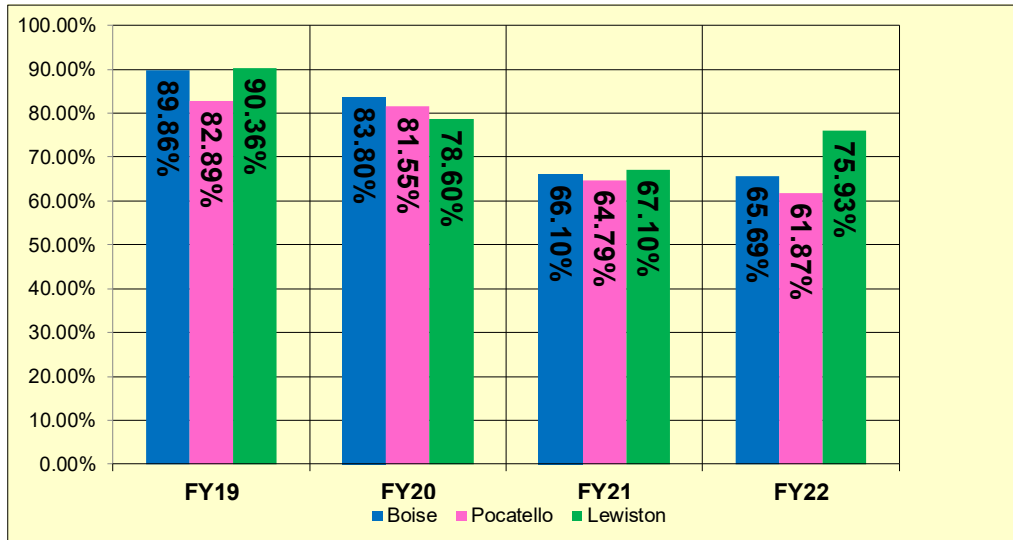
Allowing the Dom/Res occupancy rate to decline, as the program will be discontinued when the replacement home in Boise is constructed.

With COVID outbreaks decreasing, the declining census has begun to reverse and return to pre-pandemic norms.

3. FY2022 Year-to-Date Nursing Occupancy Rate
 - a. Boise – 66.1%
 - b. Pocatello – 64.8%
 - c. Lewiston – 67.1%
 - d. IDVS Average – 66.0%
 - e. Idaho Average – 61.0%

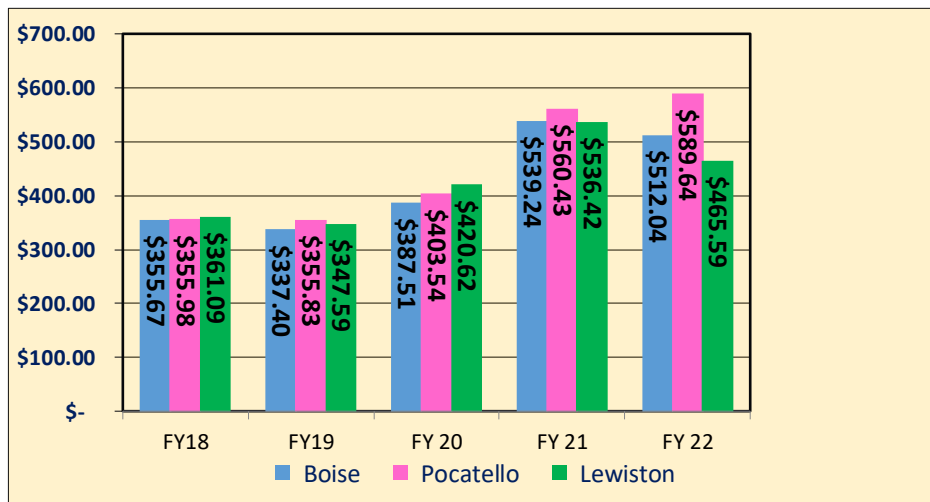
Our Nursing Occupancy Rates continue to be higher than Idaho's average for skilled nursing facilities.

4. Average Census YTD Comparisons by Fiscal Year



5. FY 2022 Average Cost per Resident Day

- a. Nursing \$516.96
- b. Dom/Residential \$210.27
- c. Nursing yearly costs comparison per resident day by Fiscal Year



6. FY2022 Year End Fiscal Status (Preliminary Report included COVID-19):

a. Total Appropriation –	\$100,268,299
Expenditures –	\$69,514,472
Remaining Appropriation –	\$30,753,827
Less construction Grant Project yet to be completed –	\$30,622,862
Less encumbrance Requests –	\$106,711
Appropriation Revision –	\$24,254

7. The FY2021 Single Audit resulted in no findings.

8. FY2023 Budget Appropriation – \$52,819,000

- a. Federal Funds (VA) – 48% - \$25,186,964
- b. Receipts (Medicaid) – 25% - \$13,242,811
- c. Receipts (Private Pay) – 18% - \$9,340,889

d. General Funds – 3% - \$1,531,800

i. General Fund as a Percentage of Appropriation by Fiscal Year



e. Federal Funds (Medicare) – 3% - \$1,445,236

f. Veterans Recognition Income Fund – 2% - \$1,195,000

g. Endowment Income – 1% - \$876,300

h. FY2023 Budget Appropriation Details:

- i. \$240,500 Change in Benefit Costs
- ii. \$738,600 Inflationary Adjustments
- iii. \$296,400 Replacement Items
- iv. \$129,700 Statewide Cost Allocation
- v. \$1,811,200 Change in Employee Compensation
- vi. \$90,000 Loan Forgiveness/Tuition Assistance
- vii. \$60,000 Additional Staff for Boise Cemetery
- viii. \$43,000 New Capital Outlay
- ix. \$7,154,900 Post Falls Home Prorated Operations
- x. \$195,000 Veterans Recognition Fund – Allocation Plan \$0
- xi. \$1,000,000 Veterans Recognition Fund – Post Falls Construction Project
- xii. \$80,000 Idaho Suicide Hotline (on-going)
- xiii. \$40,356,600 Reappropriation Authority for Construction Grant Projects Not Complete

9. FY2024 Budget Preparation

- a. Starting the FY 24 budget request process.
- b. All bureaus have submitted their budget request to Central Support.
- c. Central Support is reviewing the bureau requests with the Bureau Chiefs and will compile the Division budget request.
- d. Chief Administrator met with DFM to discuss necessity of request items.
- e. Division Budget will include:
 - i. The Veterans Recognition Fund Allocation Plan
 - ii. Our plan for operating if there is a reduction of 10% or more in federal funds that we receive per Governor’s Executive Order #2014-03
 - iii. New Capital Outlay Items
 - iv. FY23 Supplemental Requests for ARPA Funds & Medicaid Reimbursement Methodology
 - v. Post Falls Annualization

- vi. Reappropriation for All Construction Grants (not completed)
- vii. IT Replacement Equipment (emergent needs)
- viii. Boise Home Replacement

Questions and comments from the Commissioners:

No questions or comments.

Boise Veterans Home Report presented by **Rick Holloway**

1. Census
 - a. Average daily census for the 4th quarter of FY22 was 71 nursing care residents – 58% occupancy.
 - b. Average daily census for the 4th quarter of FY22 was 15 red/dom residents – 42% occupancy.
 - The occupancy will not go above 15 because this program is being phased out and will no longer be supported when the replacement Home is built.
 - c. Biggest challenge is lack of capacity due to staffing challenges.
 - CEC and the base wage increases have improved staffing recruitment.
2. Provider Tax Program has netted \$8.1 million in the past few years that our Homes have benefited.
3. Pharmacy costs were higher this quarter due to a few residents having very expensive prescriptions.
 - One patient's meds are \$7000/week.
 - Another patient has a \$4000/week prescription.
 - Only a portion of the cost is reimbursable.
4. ISVH-Boise has acquired a 5-star rating from CMS.
5. The home switched from Sparklight to Dish for television provider for the residents.
 - Not been an easy transition. Some channels that were available previously, we're still trying to regain under the new provider.

Questions and comments from the Commissioners:

Chairman **Callihan** – What will happen to the Veterans in the Dom/Res program when that program goes away?

Administrator Holloway – For those Veterans not ready to transition into skilled nursing, they will be placed in other facilities in the area.

Pocatello Veterans Home Report presented **Josiah Dahlstrom**

1. Similar staffing concerns as the Boise Veterans Home.
 - a. Had recent success hiring.
 - b. Good relationship with local schools, clinical student program has helped relieve some of the pressure related to staffing challenges.
2. Census for the 4th quarter of FY22
 - a. Averaging 44, currently at 44 residents, will be 46 by the end of the week.
3. DPW/Maintenance
 - a. New paint and color scheme in several areas throughout the home [Commissioner **Gimpel** commented on how great the new paint scheme looks in the facility.]
 - The maintenance team did a phenomenal job. Having our maintenance team be able to provide that service is an invaluable cost saving mechanism.
4. Josiah played a video presentation created by his Activities Staff.

Questions and comments from the Commissioners:

No additional questions or comments.

Lewiston Veterans Home Report presented by **Mark High**

1. Census for the 4th quarter of FY22 steadily increased
 - a. Targeting 58 residents by the end of the year.
 - b. Keeping 8 rooms in reserve for potential outbreaks and new admission quarantines.
 - c. CEC has been very positive in recruiting allowing us to keep our census up.
2. Volunteers
 - a. 4th quarter was the first quarter Volunteers were able to return.
 - b. Core group of 8 have been volunteering since April.
3. DPW Projects
 - a. New flooring project was completed.
 - b. New lighting project is nearly complete.
 - c. IVAC donated a pallet of new artwork to display throughout the facility.
 - d. Business Office remodel is in progress.
4. Played a video presentation showcasing Activities, human interest stories, and morale in the Lewiston Home.

Questions and comments from the Commissioners:

Chairman **Callihan** – Are state surveys unannounced? How many surveyors show up?

Administrator **High** – Yes they are unannounced. Usually between 3 and 5 surveyors will be in the facility for the whole week. Anticipating a life safety survey soon.

BREAK – 9:40 – 9:50

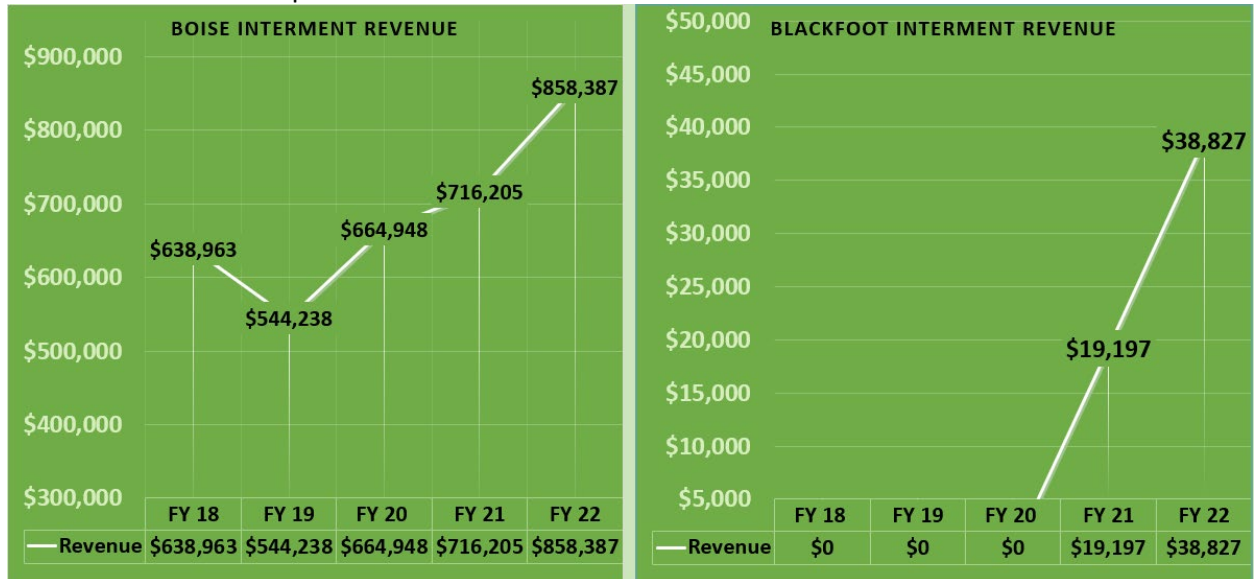
Veterans Cemetery Report presented by **Mark Tschamp**

1. A new Cemetery Director is being recruited as James Earp accepted a position with the VA's National Cemetery Administration. [During the meeting, Jeremy Gilbert notified IDVS that he accepted the position. Jeremy was a Captain in the US Army, and his final duty station was as a liaison between the US Army and Arlington National Cemetery.]
2. ISVC Interments 4th Quarter FY2022 vs prior FY

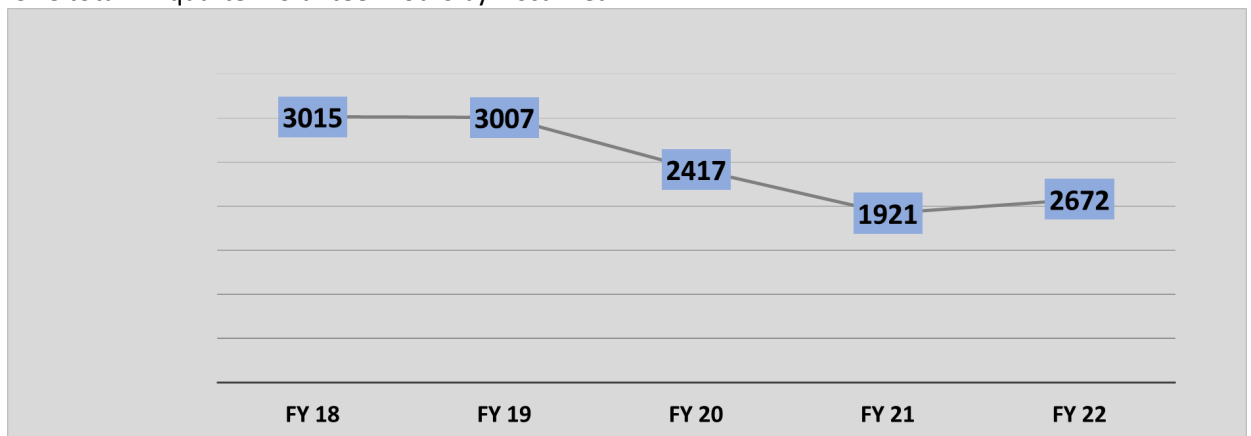


Expect Blackfoot to continue to increase services. Mark Weaver is doing a lot of outreach work in the community, speaking with funeral directors and veterans service organizations, to increase awareness of the State Veterans Cemetery in the region.

3. Interment Revenue 4th quarter FY18 – FY22



4. Volunteer hours have increase as COVID has eased in the region. ISVC total 4th quarter volunteer hours by Fiscal Year



5. Memorial Day services were held at both State Veterans Cemeteries. There was a high turnout at both despite the inclement weather conditions.

6. Donations:

- a. IVAL donations allowed for the creation of a memorial coin to be provided to families of deceased Veterans interred at one of the State Veterans Cemeteries.
- b. Blackfoot received a \$15,000 donation for the purchase of a golf cart to help shuttle visitors around the grounds safely.

7. DPW/Construction

- a. A new maintenance shed is to be constructed at the Blackfoot cemetery.
- b. Boise is at the top of the priority list for a construction grant to expand the columbaria and scatter garden.
- c. IDVS has begun discussions with Dry Creek Cemetery to purchase land adjacent to the Boise cemetery for future expansion. The current space will be depleted within 10 years, additional land is needed to provide space for the cemetery to grow.

Questions and comments from the Commissioners:

No Questions or comments.

Office of Veterans Advocacy Report presented by **Bill Heyob**

1. OVA Statistics comparing 4th Quarter FY2022 Totals to 4th Quarter FY2021 Totals

	<u>2022 YTD</u>	<u>2021 YTD</u>	<u>Increase/Decrease</u>
Interviews YTD	7,324	5,173	+ 2,151
Phone Interviews	48,291	42,003	+ 6,288
POAs Filed YTD	5,107	4,504	+ 603
Claims Filed YTD	9,071	7,087	+ 1,984
Correspondence	6,334	4,735	+ 1,599
Appeals YTD	461	383	+ 78
Home Visits	182	154	+ 28
Veterans Seen by			
OVA in Vet Courts	523	577	- 54
State Emergency			
Grants Approved	6	5	+ 1

- FY-2022 resulted in the most claims filed in one year so far!

FY-2022: 9,071, FY-2021: 7,087, FY-2000: 8,038, FY-2019: 8,843, FY-2018: 8,205, FY-2017: 7,874

2. Noteworthy Issues currently happening with the VA

- a. VA Regional Office has returned to work (rotates one day per week for most employees)
- b. Masks are no longer required within the VARO dependent upon the current Covid transmission rate within the community.
- c. The VA is preparing for the approval of the "Honoring Our PACT Act" which has been passed by the House of Representatives and returned to the U.S. Senate. If passed and signed into law, this is supposed to create many new presumptive conditions.
- d. Claims for herbicide presumptive conditions are still moving extremely slow due to the 12 centralized processing location (who are also doing Nehmer Reviews). These have resulted in several Huge Retroactive payments:
 - i. Navy Veteran in Eastern, OR \$630k
 - ii. Surviving Spouse in Twin Falls- \$582k
 - iii. Navy Veteran in Spokane Valley, WA- \$575k
- e. VA is deploying a new 3-digit phone number to supplement the current VA Crisis Hotline. The new number is 988 and then press 1.
- f. The National Personnel Records Center has resumed normal operations as of March 7, 2022.
- g. VA Medical Family Caregiver Program is preparing to expand to all generations of Veterans beginning October 1, 2022.
- h. The Boise VAMC roll out of the Cerner VA Medical Records has been placed on hold.
- i. VA Insurance Program is sunseting the Service-Disability Life Insurance Program on 31 December 2022 and replacing it with a new program called VA Life. Those insured under S-DVI can keep their current coverage or switch to VALife. Veterans who are insured under S-DVI and elect to transfer their coverage to VALife can be insured under both programs during the initial two-year period after enrollment in VALife, if they apply between January 1, 2023

and December 31, 2023. Veterans who convert from S-DVI to VALife after December 31, 2025, cannot keep S-DVI during the VALife waiting period. VALife is available to all Veterans who have a service-connected disability rating (0-100%) and are age 80 and under are eligible; though some Veterans who are 81 or older may qualify. VALife eliminates deadlines to apply (prior program had a strict-two-year window), offers coverage up to \$40,000 in \$10,000 increments and offers a Cash Value component after 2 years. There is a two-year waiting period for coverage to begin but once approved, rates never increase.

3. Significant Event with OVA

- a. We will be conducting the 2022 County and Post Service Officer Training at the Riverside Hotel in Boise from August 3-5. Guest Presenters are from the VA Inspector General Office, VA Debt Management Center, St Paul Pension Management Center, and multiple presenters from the Boise VARO/VAMC.
- b. OVA is participating in the Nez Perce Tribal Veteran Claims Clinic at the Clearwater Casino on August 10th.
- c. The next VFW training session is September 18-23 in Annapolis, MD. VFW is combining the Advanced and Intermediate classes together. Most of our Team will attend remotely with the reduced in-person seats.
- d. Outreaches being conducted in all counties across the State and many different outreach events to include Assisted Living Center presentations and the Legacy Corps Graduation.

Questions and comments from the Commissioners:

No questions or comments.

Business Support Services Report presented by Paul Spannkebel

Education

Shannon Lambert and Abby Edgar, our Veterans Education Program Specialist, continue to do great work approving programs for education benefits including Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL), Non-College Degree Programs (NCD), On the Job Training Programs (OJT), and apprenticeships.

Hiring a new Technical Records Specialist to assist them with the administrative burden.

HR Report

1. Change in Employee Compensation (CEC) distributed
 - a. \$1.8 million allocated for performance-based increases, allocation was based on the employee matrix.
 - b. New Market rates implemented.
 - i. Aggressive base rate increases – some positions saw a cumulative increase between CEC and market rate adjustments of \$4-5/hr.
 - ii. Hoping this will mitigate the need for contract staffing.
2. Loan Repayment Program has not been implemented, yet.
 - a. Updated the tuition assistance policy to allow for non-permanent staff to utilize to help create staff that can then move into permanent positions that are currently vacant.
3. A full quarter of the available positions in our Agency are currently vacant.
 - a. Everything is on the table to try and recruit. Individual bonuses, market equity, etc.
 - b. Recruiting is a Sisyphean hurdle.
 - c. Legislature has considered legislation related to staffing agency price gouging.

Procurement

Costs of goods and services are increasing placing a lot of stress on the budget. Concerns moving forward, and something the agency is monitoring closely.

Questions from the Commissioners:

No questions or comments

Central Support Office Updates

Post Falls Home presented by **Tracy Schaner**

The Post Falls Home is nearly complete. The Dedication Ceremony is scheduled for November 11, 2022.

- Furniture is expected by the end of September beginning of October. The community center is nearly complete.
- The Community Center is nearing completion. The tiling is complete (still needs to be done in the neighborhoods). Lighting/wall coverings going up.
- Colleen Moon will relocate up there the 1st week of September.
- Tracy will transition up there full-time in September and will remain up there until the Dedication Ceremony.
- The Post Falls Home received a donation for a Music Memory program.
- IVAC will be scheduled for the same week as the Dedication Ceremony and held in the conference room of the new facility.

Construction Grants presented by **Tracy Schaner**

Boise Replacement and the Pocatello & Lewiston Renovations will all be on the priority list.

- a. The Boise Home replacement project is well into the schematic design phase.
- b. The Boise Home was already on the Priority list as a Priority 2 (no matching fund approved) with the matching funds secured in the 2022 legislative session it will move up to a Priority 1.
- c. The Lewiston Renovation project will begin planning in September with Pocatello slated to follow soon after.
- d. The State Historical Preservation Society has identified some barriers due to historical buildings located on the adjacent Boise VA Campus. This creates additional steps and approvals.

Chairman **Callihan**: I've had experience with the Idaho Historical Preservation Society through construction projects on the VA Campus. They have a reputation for being belligerent and inflexible, and not easy to work with, especially compared to other states' historical preservation organizations.

Chief Administrator Remarks presented by **Mark Tschampl**

Chief Administrator Tschampl mentioned one of his goals upon joining IDVS was increasing outreach and visibility for the agency amongst the public. Highlighted two successes related to that goal:

- Creating an Outreach Coordinator position, which is now filled by Mitzi Cheldelin.
- Contracted with TransUnion to identify the Veterans population in the state and is working with Lumen/Qualtrics to push information out to the Veterans community via email and SMS. Will be presenting this project at the NASDVA Summer Conference later this month.

Guard & Reserve Burial Equity Act was signed into law. If a state wants to, they can allow non-veteran

Guard and Reservists to be buried in State Veterans Cemeteries without risking eligibility for VA Construction Grants. For Idaho to implement this we will need to change our existing Administrative Rules. Non-veteran Guard and Reservist burials would not be covered by VA plot allowance and would require private pay.

New Business

Commissioners voted to suspend the Veterans Recognition Fund for another year due to depleted funds. Commissioner Gimpel motioned at 11:12 am to accept an allocation plan of \$0 for the Veterans Recognition Fund. Commissioner Cash seconded. The vote was unanimous consent.

The next IVAC meeting will be either November 10 or November 11, depending on coordinating schedules.

Commissioner Gimpel Motioned to adjourn at 11:15 AM. Commissioner Davis seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:15 PM MT

Kevin R. Wallior
Management Assistant
Idaho Division of Veteran Services