

# Minutes for Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission

## January 19, 2023

### Hybrid In-Person & Virtually

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Call to Order – 8:30 AM MT

Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission was held on Thursday, January 19, 2023, in the Idaho Division of Veterans Services Central Support Office (located at 351 N. Collins Road Boise, ID 83702) and virtually via Microsoft Teams.

#### Attendees

Commission Members in attendance: Chairman **Josh Callihan**, **Rockey Davis** (Virtual), **Jinny Cash**, **Art Gimpel**, **Eugene Brown**

IDVS Staff Members in attendance included: IDVS Chief Administrator **Mark Tschamp** (Virtual), IDVS Deputy Chief Administrator **Tracy Schaner**, IDVS Business Support Services Bureau Chief **Paul Spannkebel**, ISVH-Boise Administrator **Rick Holloway** (Virtual), ISVH-Boise Deputy Home Administrator **Amber Goodchild**, ISVH-Lewiston Administrator **Mark High**, ISVH-Pocatello Administrator **Josiah Dahlstrom**, ISVH-Post Falls Administrator **Colleen Moon**, OVA VSO **Jim Philpott**, Idaho State Veterans Cemeteries Bureau Chief **Jacob Faulkner**, Community Resource Coordinator **Mitzi Cheldelin**, Community Resource Admin Assistant **Marisa McCarter**, and Management Assistant **Kevin Wallior**.

Number of Citizens in attendance: 0

#### Announcements

Jacob Faulkner introduced as the new Bureau Chief for the Idaho State Veterans Cemeteries. Jake is a Navy Veteran. Prior to joining team IDVS, he spent the past 4 years with the Boise VA Medical Center as the Voluntary Services Specialist. In his role, Jake was heavily engaged with the Veteran community, VSOs, and local leadership. He's worked closely with many facets of the VA to include their Homeless Team, Behavior Health, Social Work, and Patient Advocacy.

#### Approval of Minutes

**Chairman Callihan** asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on November 11, 2022. **Commissioner Gimpel** motioned for approval. **Commissioner Cash** seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### Community Outreach – presented by **Mitzi Cheldelin**

Spoke about her outreach efforts around the state working with Veterans Service Organizations and community members to serve Idaho Veterans. In 2022, Mitzi spoke in front of 4,048 Veterans specific meetings, 1,266 community groups, and 11,238 mixed Veteran/Community groups. The goal for 2023 is to make it to a VSO meeting in every county in Idaho.

Recent highlight: a Korean War Veteran on hospice reached out for assistance in finding a period specific uniform from the era she served in so she could be interred in it. While Mitzi couldn't source a uniform, she was able to find a seamstress willing to recreate the proper uniform.

Marisa McCarter joined the Community Outreach team as our newest Administrative Assistant II to assist Mitzi with her outreach efforts. Prior to joining team IDVS, Marisa was on the committee that worked on the Digital Resource Guide that was recently launched [IdahoVeteransGuide.Org](https://IdahoVeteransGuide.Org)

## **Division Bureau Reports**

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

Focused on increasing staffing which will allow Boise to increase admissions. Currently only 75-76 skilled nursing residents and 16 domiciliary residents. A major area of focus is stabilizing the nutrition staffing.

There was some recent turnover in the Business Office. CSO and other Homes loaned financial specialists and business staff to help navigate this shortfall.

The Boise Home has a Bronze Quality Award from the AHCA and is applying for the Silver Award.

There was a 13 resident COVID outbreak in the past quarter. Fortunately, no residents passed.

There has been recent luck hiring cook and dietary staff. Post Falls has lent licensed nurses to Boise. This has been doubly beneficial. It has helped Boise with their staffing issues while allowing the Post Falls nursing staff to learn how IDVS operates our skilled nursing homes in preparation for Post Falls to begin admitting residents.

### **Pocatello Veterans Home Report** presented by **Josiah Dahlstrom**

The Pocatello Home has been fortunate with staffing comparatively. The census has improved by 12% since October and is currently at 80%.

Customer Satisfaction remains high (4.5/5 rating). Josiah attributes this to the high quality of his staff.

Pocatello had a recent COVID outbreak. 10 residents contracted the virus. There were no hospitalizations or deaths. This success was attributed to the internal procedures in place and widespread vaccination of residents.

Pocatello showed a slideshow set to music highlighting resident activities and experiences in the past quarter.

Local VSOs continue to support the Pocatello Home and during the annual food convoy in November (which Commissioner Gimpel participates in), donated over \$23,000 worth of goods and \$2,500 in cash to be used to the benefit of our Pocatello Home residents. Local farmers have been donating potatoes to the Pocatello Home for 30 years to the point that Pocatello has never had to purchase potatoes.

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

Lewiston has returned to in person stand-up meetings in the Home, the first time since COVID restrictions were implemented.

The Lewiston census is currently at 58 and was even 59 for a short time (90% capacity). There was a minor COVID outbreak in the past quarter. 4 residents contracted it, but it was contained and resolved quickly due to the internal procedures in place.

Lewiston has 18 regular volunteers and volunteering has slowly gotten back to the pre-COVID norms.

Lewiston has 4.89/5 customer satisfaction rate. The past 3 months they received perfect 5 for each month.

There was a hot water pipe break in their COVID quarantine reserved rooms. Currently working with DPW and Risk Management to get this repaired.

Creative Aging Art Gallery. This was the culmination of multi-week art workshops as a part of a partnership with the Idaho Commission of the Arts. Residents were able to showcase their art work that culminated from this multi-week

workshop.

Mark High recently celebrate 30 years of Idaho state service! Congratulations to Mark!

Lewiston have been training Post Falls staff over the past quarter in IDVS/ISVH procedures and policies to help prepare them for when the Post Falls Home begins admitting residents.

**BREAK 9:26 – 9:36**

**Post Falls Veterans Home Report presented by Colleen Moon**

Post Falls dedication in November was very successful. Thank you all for attending.

Unfortunately, we've had some mechanical issues that need to be resolved before we can open for residents. A pipe froze in our fire suppression system which has required us to shift from a liquid fire suppression system to a dry system. Currently projecting the end of February for our first residents.

Post Falls has hired 40 staff and are ready to go whenever we get the clearance for our first admit.

Questions and comments from the Commissioners:

**Chairman Callihan** – asked Was this a design flaw?

**Response:** Yes. The designer made incorrect assumptions about relative temperatures in the mechanical area. The cost of repair will not be borne by IDVS or the State. We are pushing hard for the contractor to resolve and make IDVS whole.

**Chairman Callihan** and the other **Commissioners** reiterated how impressive and beautiful the Post Falls Home is. It makes us proud to work in Veterans Services in the Idaho.

**Veterans Cemetery Report presented by Mark Tschampl**

Since it is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> day since joining team IDVS, Mark Tschampl is presenting the Cemetery Report in place of Jake Faulkner.

Boise Veterans Cemetery had 411 interments and Blackfoot Cemetery had 27 interments during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of FY2023.

There were 1,281 Volunteer Hours in the quarter.

DPW 20-606 / Boise Veterans Cemetery Expansion (As of: 01/03/2023):

Completed project will add surveyed plots for urn burials, a new Memorial Wall courtyard and the addition of the Space Force Seal.

Additional columbarium walls removed due to cost and space still available.

Presented to PBFAC Jan 2020 and has appropriation from JFAC.

We received the letter of intent to award VA Construction Grant. Estimated project completion and opening – Spring 2024

Total project budget \$1,005,000

DPW 21-605 Cemetery Projects, Blackfoot (As of: 01/06/2023):

The team of Headwaters Construction Company of Rexburg and NBW Architects was awarded the design/build contract in July of 2022.

The completed project will add a 34x80 ft storage building with an attached employee breakroom, a redesigned scatter garden, new gravel frontage, and a redesigned memorial wall.

The pre-engineered metal storage building has been ordered and should arrive onsite at the beginning of February 2023.

Estimated project completion – June 2023

Total authorized funding: \$955,500

DPW 17-603 / ID-13-05; Southeast Idaho Veterans Cemetery (As of: 01/06/2023):

Remaining work to complete Memorial Wall for scatter garden and In Memory Of markers moved to project DPW 21-605.

Final payment submitted and VA grant closeout procedures begun in December of 2022.

Total project budget \$7,371,817

Total construction budget \$5,741,171

Questions and comments from the Commissioners:

**Chairman Callihan** – asked if there is any update about purchasing land from Dry Creek for an eventual Boise Cemetery expansion.

**Response** – Dry Creek Board is still in discussion regarding this. It first had to resolve a land dispute with a residential neighborhood. That dispute has been resolved in favor of Dry Creek. There still needs to be an evaluation/assessment of the land before any decisions can be made.

**Office of Veterans Advocacy Report** presented by **Jim Philpott**

Drinking from the firehose but making things happen. OVA continues to bring money into the state.

Re-adjudicating the past with new PACT Act presumptive conditions.

- OVA statistics comparing 2d Qtr FY-2023 totals to FY-2022:

	<u>2023 YTD</u>	<u>2022 YTD</u>	<u>Increase/Decrease</u>
Interviews YTD	4,007	3,376	+ 631
Phone Interviews	24,334	23,024	+ 1,310
POAs Filed YTD	2,760	2,621	+ 139
Claims Filed YTD	5,651	4,322	+ 1,329
Correspondence	4,580	2,623	+ 1,957
Appeals YTD	188	235	- 47
Home Visits	93	85	+ 8
Veterans Seen by OVA in Vet Courts	232	266	- 34
State Emergency Grants Approved	4	3	+ 1

Comparing the monthly totals from December 2022 and December 2021 resulted in (42) additional office interviews, (276) additional claims filed and (157) additional pieces of claims correspondence filed to the VA.

#### Noteworthy Issues currently happening with the VA

Boise VA Regional Office is continuing to hire new employees as part of the VBA Expansion due to workload increase due to the PACT Act.

The VA began working PACT Act presumptive claims mid-December for anyone with a terminal condition. For all others, VA began rating PACT Act claims on January 1st, 2023. When they began working the claims, there were approximately 250k claims pending.

VA has changed their processes in working herbicide presumptive claims. Instead of forcing all herbicide presumptive claims to one of 12 "Blue Water Sites", supplemental claims (meaning the VA has already confirmed exposure to herbicides) can be worked at any of the 57 VA Regional Offices.

VA and DFAS has ended the SBP/DIC Offset as of January 1, 2023. Any Surviving Spouse who is eligible for both Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) through the VA and Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) from Defense Finance and Accounting Service may now receive both benefits with no offset/reduction.

Beginning January 17, 2023, VA will authorize veterans in a suicidal crisis to be treated at a VA or non-VA health care facility at no cost to them. Some of the highlights are that this is 1- Specifically for emergency health care due to an immediate suicidal crisis, 2- No cost to the veteran and may include 30 days inpatient care and 90 days outpatient care, 3- VA will provide, pay or reimburse the veteran for the emergency treatment and 4- the Veteran does not need to be enrolled in VA health care. In order to qualify, the Veteran must meet any of the follow eligibility criteria (Dishonorable discharge is a disqualifier): 1- Served more than 24 months active service, 2- Served more than 100 days under combat exclusion, or in support of a contingency operation, or 3) Veteran was a victim of MST as outlined in the press release. We still do not know how the VA will reimburse Non-VA Healthcare or how long it will take.

#### Significant Events within the OVA

With the new year, Veterans who are rated 100% service connected by the VA or rated Individual Unemployable need to contact their County Assessor's Office before April 15, 2023, with a new VA Benefit Letter for the 100% Property Tax Reduction (Up to \$1,500 off the December 2023 Property Tax Bill). This must be renewed each year which is creating a huge volume of requests from Veterans for the VA Benefit Letters.

Kelly McCartney (Caldwell VSO with Collateral Duty of Idaho Women Veteran's Conference Coordinator) has begun planning for the State's 2023 Women Veterans Conference. Dates/location are still TBD.

IDVS did not ask for additional VSO FTE. Currently tracking data to potentially ask for 1 or maybe 2 more FTE for FY2025 during the 2024 legislative session.

### **Business Support Services Report** presented by **Paul Spannkebel**

#### **Education**

Shannon Lambert & Abby Edgar, our Veterans Education Program Specialists, 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. Wendy Van Zeeland, our new Technical Records Specialist assists them with the admin burden. The education team telecommutes primarily but meet in person every 2 weeks.

SAs are rated on a 3-tier system: Unsatisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, and Satisfactory. IDVS received a Satisfactory rating! Way to go team for receiving top marks.

Keeping Tabs on the Cooperative Contract Agreement

FY23 Allocation: Submitted COLA supplement request for FY23 increasing FY23 Allocation to \$187,486: pending VA final approval.

FY22 Supplemental: Submitted FY22 Supplemental Request on 12/15/2022 in the amount of \$79, 189.31: pending VA approval.

FY21 Supplemental: Awaiting FY21 Supplemental in the amount of \$84,993.12 which was approved by VA in September of 2022.

The Veterans Education program Contributes to Idaho's economy significantly:

IDAHO GI BILL® BENEFITS SNAPSHOT FOR FY2022		
FACILITY TYPE & TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT USED BY BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF CLAIMS	FUNDING PAID
<b>IHL (INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING)</b>	<b>6255</b>	<b>\$ 14,475,813.95</b>
MONTGOMERY GI BILL - ACTIVE DUTY (CHP30)	368	\$ 594,796.41
POST 9/11 GI BILL (CHP33)	5887	\$ 13,881,017.54
<b>NCD (NON-DEGREE - VOCATIONAL)</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>\$ 2,914,660.79</b>
MONTGOMERY GI BILL - ACTIVE DUTY (CHP30)	10	\$ 31,435.99
POST 9/11 GI BILL (CHP33)	383	\$ 2,883,224.80
<b>OJT/APP (ON-THE-JOB OR APPRENTICESHIP)</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>\$ 65,543.43</b>
POST 9/11 GI BILL (CHP33)	105	\$ 65,543.43
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6753</b>	<b>\$ 17,456,018.17</b>

Program Activities in FY2023 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

Facility Type	Total Number of Idaho Facilities	Programs Approved	Programs Disapproved
IHL	19	430	38
NCD plus Flight	41	16	3
Apprenticeships (APP)	175	5	13
On-The-Job (OJT)**	137	0	0
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>54</b>

The education team is working on:

The New Education Database. Continuing to work with ITS's DBAs to construct a smart database.

Training the new TRS1

Focusing on existing program reapprovals for IHLs and NCDs

Approved 5 new OJT-APP programs.

Focus on approving Idaho High Schools for GI Bill® with 1 new high school approved and 5 in the pipeline.

The VA has:

Assigned 8 RBS (Risk-Based Surveys)

4 IHLs and 4 NCDs

50% of RBS must be completed by end of VA's FY23-Q2 (3-31-2023)

By the end of January, will have visited 6 RBS assigned facilities.

2 large IHLs are scheduled: One for April and One for May.

The FY-23 Risk factors identified for 8 Idaho facilities:

3 Facilities with 85/15 program violations

4 Facilities with 30% increase in Tuition and Fees from AY21 to AY22

1 Persistence Rate more than 55%

### **HR and IT Report**

Dwayne Davis was promoted from HR Specialist Senior to our newly approved HR Officer position.

IDVS hired 2 new HR staff members in CSO, an HR Specialist Senior and an HR Specialist. This will be the first time in over a year that IDVS is fully staffed in our HR department.

HR is centralizing similar to the IT centralization, except the HR staff members will remain on site in their current agency locations.

IDVS also hired a new technical records specialist to assist with purchasing and fiscal.

### **Fiscal**

FY2022 End Results

\$9,155,600 reverted appropriation

9.17% of total appropriation

Majority due to staffing shortages, construction not completed, and items ordered but not received/paid.

\$55,800 was General Funds

3.8% of total General Funds appropriation

Majority due to trustee & benefits not distributed.

FY23 Quarterly Costs per Resident Day

FY2023 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

Boise – \$523.00

Pocatello – \$513.06

Lewiston – \$449.01

FY23 Quarterly Occupancy Rates

FY2023 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

Dom/Res Care – 42%

ISVH Nursing – 69%

Nursing Goal – 88%

FY23 YTD Nursing Occupancy Rate as of December 31, 2022

Boise – 58.6%

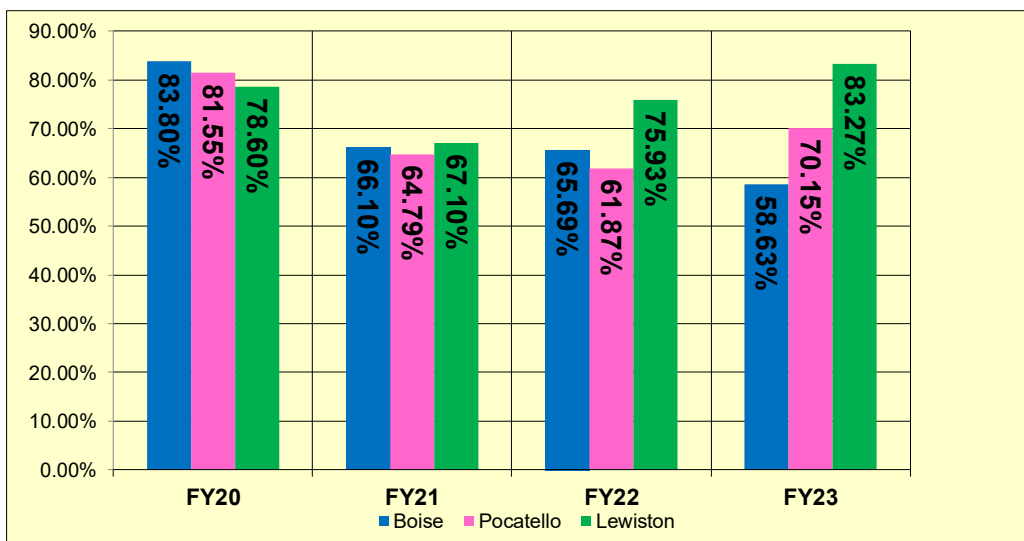
Pocatello – 70.2%

Lewiston – 83.3%

IDVS Average – 68%

Statewide Average – 61%

Average Census YTD Comparisons

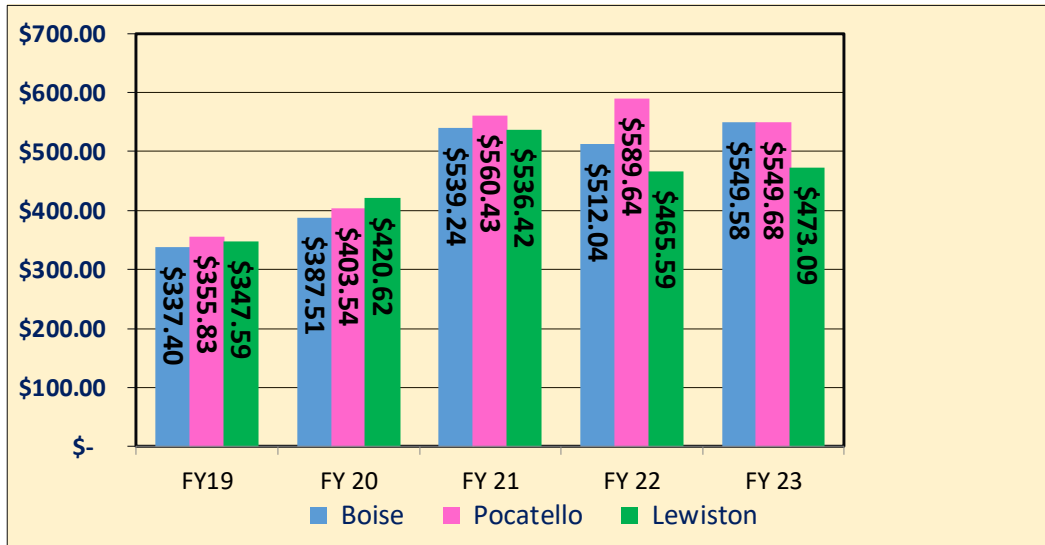


FY2023 Nursing YTD Average Cost per Resident Day as of December 31, 2022

Nursing – \$525.28; Dom/Residential – \$253.28



Nursing Yearly Costs Comparison Per Resident Day



FY2023 General Funds

General Funds are appropriated in Personnel, Operating, and Trustee & Benefits

Appropriation is \$52,819,00 of which \$1,531,800 (2.9%) is General Funds.

We continue to monitor our revenue for cash flow purposes.

Governor's FY2024 Budget Recommendation – \$129,309,500

For FY23 (current fiscal year)

\$21,832,200 Legislative Reappropriation

\$1,500,000 Medicaid Reimbursement Methodology Adjustment

\$0 American Rescue Plan Act State Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Transfer

\$106,800 Executive Carry Forward

\$428,500 Change in Health & Variable Benefit Costs

\$1,937,900 Inflationary Adjustments

\$418,500 Replacement Items

\$251,500 Statewide Cost Allocation

\$3,990,000 Annualization for Post Falls (partial year requested in FY22)

\$1,069,800 4% Change in Employee Compensation (Classified Employees)

\$68,404,200 State Veterans Home Boise Replacement/Renovation

\$15,000 Group/Temporary Staff Health Benefit Increase

\$83,600 New Capital Outlay

<\$519,100> Human Resource Modernization (8 FTPs)

Budget Law Exemptions/Other Adjustments (formerly reappropriation/carryover)

\$16,181,900 Post Falls Construction \$1,005,500 Cemetery Boise Expansion

General funds are 1.3% of total budget recommendation; does not include Budget Law Exemptions/Other Adjustments above

The fiscal team are doing an incredible amount of work. Made more impressive considering the fiscal staff shortages in our Homes.

Luma goes live in July. Financial, Purchasing, and HR functions will all be under the Luma system.

CEC Recommendation – 4% merit based in FY2024; 4.5% FY2025 correction for healthcare workers.

Cemeteries generate enough revenue to operate.

### **Central Support Office Updates**

#### **Construction Grants Update** presented by Tracy Schaner

Boise Home Replacement and the Lewiston Home and Pocatello Home Renovations Projects

We can expect the priority list to be released by the VA between January and April. The budget is expected to be \$158 million.

We anticipate Boise will be near the top as a replacement home, but life & safety grants have the highest priorities. Lewiston and Pocatello will be much further down the priority list and likely won't be funded for a few more years.

The Boise Home replacement is expected to cost \$40 million and will be a 4-story 122 bed facility. BABA driven cost estimates. All three projects should be granted waivers. This only saves a portion of the construction projection increases. This prompted the redesign from 5-story to 4-story and a reduction from 152 beds to 122 beds.

Our ISVH leadership staff will be meeting with the Idaho Congressional Delegation when they attend the NASVH mid-winter conference in Washington DC.

CSO Talking points when meeting with VSOs and state legislators:

Supporting IDVS budget.

support for new Boise Veterans Home.

military retirement pay tax exemption.

Workforce development

State hurting for skilled labor

Meant to recruit newly retired military retirees to relocate to Idaho.

Any loss in military retiree pay tax revenue is more than made up for by the increase in taxable income

from second careers, spouse and dependent incomes, and new business/entrepreneurial endeavors.

**Chief Administrator's Remarks** presented by **Mark Tschampf**

Extremely pleased with the progress all our programs have made this year.

Pushed this past year to make us more competitive in recruitment through:

Promoting competitive wage increases.

Endorsing flexible scheduling for skilled nursing staff

DHR is working on legislation for this legislative session to allow overtime to be based on an 80-hour window instead of a 40-hour window to allow for more schedule flexibility for our skilled nursing staff.

Promoting a childcare benefit or housing supplement for low wage positions in high cost of living areas

The Governor is aware of the struggles and is receptive to creative solutions. Going to require a much heavier lift to achieve and will take time to build support from legislators.

Our budget presentation to JFAC is scheduled for January 30, 2023, at 9:00 AM. No surprises are expected.

**New Business**

Discussed coordination for the next IVAC meeting in April. Commissioners look forward to returning to the pre-COVID rotation of IVAC amongst the Veterans Homes. This will not occur until the CMS emergency declaration is lifted in May. The next IVAC meeting will be in April, date to be announced.

**Chairman Callihan** is open to a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Cash** motioned to adjourn at 11:26 AM MT. **Commissioner Brown** seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:26 AM MT

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Kevin R. Wallior  
Management Assistant  
Idaho Division of Veteran Services