

Minutes for Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission January 9, 2020 – Boise, Idaho

Call to Order

The quarterly meeting of the Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission was held on Thursday, January 9, 2020, at the Idaho Division of Veterans Services Central Support Office in Boise. It began at 9:25 a.m. after IDVS staff and commissioners returned from the IDVS JFAC presentation at the State Capitol. The meeting was presided over by Chairman **Melvin Napier**.

Attendees

Commission Members in attendance included: **Melvin Napier, Jinny Cash, Leo Dub, and Art Gimpel**.

Patrick Grace was unable to attend due to his military service obligation.

IDVS Staff Members in attendance included: IDVS Chief Administrator **Marv Hagedorn**, IDVS Deputy Chief Administrator **Tracy Schaner**, IDVS Business Support Services Bureau Chief **Paul Spannkebel**, IDVS Financial Officer **Debbie Spence**, ISVH-Boise Administrator **Rick Holloway**, ISVH-Pocatello Administrator **Josiah Dahlstrom**, ISVH-Lewiston Administrator **Mark High**, State Veterans Cemetery Bureau Chief **James Earp**, Veterans Education Bureau Chief **Doug Jacobson**, Office of Veterans Advocacy Bureau Chief **Bill Heyob**, OVA Veteran Service Office **Matt Ranstrom**, and Administrative Assistant **Mitzi Cheldelin**.

Number of Citizens in attendance: 0

Announcements

The next IVAC meeting will be Wednesday, April 15, 2020 in Lewiston at the Idaho State Veterans Home.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on October 10, 2019 was made by **Leo Dub** and seconded by **Art Gimpel**. Minutes were unanimously accepted.

Division Bureau Reports

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

1. Average daily census for the 2nd quarter of FY20 was 102 nursing care residents – 83% occupancy; and 20 residential care residents – 55% occupancy
2. Staffing has remained stable, but we do have openings for 12 CNA positions, 1 RN and 1 LPN
3. The receipt amounts have varied from month to month – sometimes a receipt payment is received before month's end and we will show "two" payments that month then "zero" for the following month
4. Our 55-year old building has a lot of maintenance issues. Recent repairs or replacements include:
 - a. Replacement of hot water pumps
 - b. Dishwasher vacuum breaker replacement
 - c. Wall pack lights installed on front of building
 - d. Globe lamp bulbs replaced
 - e. Additional light installation on the back of building
 - f. Elevator #2 power supply replaced

- g. Activity room split drainpipe repaired
- h. Two boiler display panels replaced
- i. Fan coil unit replacement (substantial) completed 11/15/2019
- j. Two attic sprinkler lines replaced
5. We had a lot of special events our residents participated in last quarter
 - a. Boise Veterans Parade
 - b. Veterans Day ceremony
 - c. American Legion Christmas gift shop
6. US News & World Report named ISVH Boise one of the skilled nursing facilities in the United States – one of only 14 in Idaho
7. In December, we were one of only 5 skilled nursing facilities in Idaho to receive Tier 4 recognition for quality of care from the American Health Care Association

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

1. Census for the second quarter of FY20 was 83% of the 66 available beds
2. As with the Boise Home, our receipt amounts have varied from month to month
3. The holidays bring in a lot of volunteers – we had 8,521 volunteer hours for the first quarter of FY20 – our volunteers bring the community to the Home and enhances the lives of our residents
4. The American Legion Food Convoy in November brought in over \$26,000 of food and money, enhancing the quality of meals our residents receive during the holidays
5. Thanks to the donations from the Idaho Veterans Assistance League, our Veterans are able to take part in many outings each quarter
6. The American Legion Auxiliary donated over 200 gifts for residents to send to family members
7. Each resident was sponsored for the holidays and received numerous gifts on Christmas morning. It has become a family tradition for the Dahlstrom family and many other families to spend Christmas morning at the Home opening gifts
8. The Blackfoot Elks Lodge is working with the ISU architectural students to design and build some outdoor recreation opportunities for the residents on the campus funded by the Elks
9. The AHCA/NCAL gave the Pocatello Home Tier 3 recognition from their Quality Initiative Recognition Program
10. Slideshow of the last quarter events in the Home was shown

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

1. Census for the second quarter of FY20 averaged 79% of the 64 available beds. The number can be misleading because we are taking in a lot of patients for rehab – they get better and are discharged to go home
2. Large Medicaid reimbursement in October due to **Rick Holloway's** help with the IGT
3. Laundry and Janitorial costs have increased. Both companies do a great job, it's just been a cost of doing business
4. Staffing is holding steady: we need 4 CNAs and 1 part-time RN. CNA positions are hard to fill because Washington is paying \$13.50 to start
5. Staffing turnover has only been 4%, which is an incredibly low number; once we hire staff, they usually stay
6. The Chapel/OVA expansion construction project is expected to be done by the end of January with open houses scheduled for February. The residents are enjoying watching the construction
7. Lots of special events for our residents this last quarter – including one of our residents being the Grand Marshal of the Veterans Day Parade
8. IVAL purchased some Blackjack tables which are getting a lot of use. Our residents seem to beat the Marine Corps League every time

9. A Blue Star Memorial Marker was placed in the Rose Garden and a dedication ceremony was held
10. We had our annual Christmas Party extravaganza and Jinny Cash played piano and Santa was in attendance with gifts for everyone
11. Chief Administrator **Marv Hagedorn** dropped by and visited with resident the day after Christmas and it was the buzz of the Home for the next week. Thank you Marv!
12. We continue to market with Nelly Broadcasting for resident and staff recruitment which has been successful
13. In December, we were one of only 5 skilled nursing facilities in Idaho (along with the Boise Home) to receive Tier 4 recognition for quality of care from the American Health Care Association; thank you to **Colleen Moon** for all of her hard work getting the data entered and pushing us over the top
14. We hired a Staff Development Coordinator, a new position to the Lewiston Home. **Lorri Tretter** comes to us from the Department of Health and Welfare and brings a lot of experience
15. Chaplain **Chuck Powell** was our Employee of the Quarter. He was recognized for his never-ending dedication to our residents, families and staff
16. Administrative Assistant II **Shannon Anderson** was recognized for 25 years of State service
17. Slideshow of the last quarter's events in the Home was shown

Veterans Cemetery Report presented by **James Earp**

1. There were 177 internments for the second quarter – bringing to a total of 391 for FY20 - up 4% over last year; along with 180 pre-registration applications
2. Second quarter revenue was \$166,234 for a total of \$413,590 for FY20 – up 39% from this time last year. This amount is a result of quicker processing of the claim and multiple smaller payment received weekly
3. We have seen improvements with the VA implementing information that allows us to now match the check to the decedent for single checks and checks processed for multiple decedents
4. One major change that we encountered is the VA will no longer pay the burial plot allowances for Active Duty death cases; these cases need to be processed through the appropriate branch of service within the DOD for payment
5. Volunteers completed 819 volunteer hours during the 2nd quarter for a total of 1522 volunteer hours for FY20 – an increase of 9.5% over last year at this time
6. Two of our volunteers received Senator Crapo's Spirit of Freedom Award: **Tammy Burst** and **Connie Seymour**
7. Employee retention continues to be an attribute of our Bureau's success
8. This quarter **Darin Sorenson** was presented with his 15-year service certificate and **Pamela Jayo** with her 5-year certificate
9. We had another successful Wreaths Across America National Remembrance Ceremony in December – hundreds of attendees placed over 5100 donated wreaths at the Cemetery in a moving display of respect of those laid to rest
10. Southeast Idaho Veterans Cemetery at Blackfoot (DPW 17-603)
 - a. Thank you to everyone who attended the official groundbreaking in October
 - b. Mild conditions in October and November allowed the completion of foundations for the main structures at the site
 - c. Issues continue with establishing utilities to the site (electricity, water, sewer, gas), but those are being worked through with DPW, the contractor and the City of Blackfoot
 - d. IDVS is monitoring the submittal of multiple additions to the project that will be part of the State's construction process. These additions were originally submitted for the VA's consideration but were declined for federal funding
 - i. Public restrooms accessible to visitors on the cemetery grounds
 - ii. Conference room space to be used for the privacy of families scheduling burial services

- iii. Additional maintenance bay to accommodate the backhoe and equipment
- iv. Irrigation water infrastructure from the canal to the Veterans Cemetery
- v. 30' x 60' maintenance building for secure storage of special use items and materials
- e. Director of State Hospital South has offered temporary workspace at their facility to accommodate future staff during the final stages of construction
- f. Estimated project completion and opening – November 2020
- g. Total project budget \$7,371,817
- h. Total construction budget \$5,741,171

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

1. OVA had the following stats for FY20 at the end the 2nd Quarter FY20 as compared to FY19
 - a. Office Interviews – FY20 3978 / FY19 3440 (Increase of 538)
 - b. Phone Interview – FY20 26,289 / FY19 24,774 (Increase of 1,515)
 - c. POA's Filed – FY20 2712 / FY19 2611 (Increase of 101)
 - d. Claims Filed – FY20 4403 / FY19 4350 (Increase of 53)
 - e. Correspondence – FY20 4306 / FY19 4826 (Decrease of 520)
 - f. Appeals – FY20 59 / FY19 37 (Increase of 22)
 - g. Home Visits – FY20 144 / FY19 114 (Increase of 30)
 - h. Veterans Seen by OVA in Veterans Courts – FY20 366 / FY19 342 (Increase of 24)
 - i. State Emergency Grants Approved – FY20 0 / FY19 2 (Decrease 2)
2. The VA began processing Blue Water Vietnam Veterans and Survivor DIC Claims on January 1, 2020
 - a. Claim will be processed in one of eight centralized locations – Cleveland, Phoenix, Roanoke, St. Louis, St. Paul, St. Petersburg, Sal Lake City and Waco
 - b. If the Veteran filed a previous claim that was denied solely based on not being "boots on ground" service in Vietnam, VA is assigning the original date of claim as the effective date
3. National Defense Authorization Act for FY20 eliminated the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Offset. DFAS will phase in the concurrent payment beginning in January 2021 by DFAS paying 1/3 of owed SBP along with full DIC (from VA). Beginning January 1, 2022, DFAS will pay 2/3 of owed SBP along with full DIC and beginning January 1, 2023: Full SBP and DIC will be paid
4. There was a 1.6% cost of living allowance that will be factored into all Federal Benefit payment beginning January 1, 2020
5. Beginning January 1, 2020, DOD will allow Purple Heart Recipients, Former Prisoners of War and service-connected Veterans enrolled in VA Health Care to access bases and installations to use the commissary, exchange and MWR activities
6. **Darryl Heisey** (Post Falls Office) left OVA in December - **Matt Ranstrom** (23-year Air Force Retiree) will replace him
7. OVA had (9) Service Officers attend the VFW Intermediate Skill Level Training in Annapolis, MD in November. The class average on the final exam was 88% and all of our VSOs scored above the class average. **Scott Thorsness** (Post Falls) achieved 100%, **Lance Santiago** (Boise) 99%, **Michele Padgett** (Boise) 98%, **Joe Riener** (Lewiston) 98%, and **Wes McAuslan** (Caldwell) 97%
8. At the end of October, VFW NVS announced the VFW accredited Service Officers helped Veterans with over \$9 Billion in VA Benefits; Idaho was one of the top 10 Departments, tying with Colorado for 5th place with a growth of 35.89% over the previous year
9. 100% Service-Connected Veterans receive a Property Tax Reduction up to \$1320 off the December bill but must apply yearly by April 15th; there is proposed legislation that will also include individual unemployability as meeting the requirement

Veterans Education Bureau Report presented by **Doug Jacobson**

1. The Veterans Education Bureau (VEB) operates on the Federal fiscal calendar so report information reflects that
2. Currently there are 377 VA approved facilities in Idaho – an increase of 7 over last quarter – most in Apprenticeships/OJT
3. Any significant changes to the approved programs need to be resubmitted to the VA for approval so benefits can be paid. During the 1st quarter FY20 VEB processed 589 changes
4. VEB is now tracking office walk in inquires and phone inquiries – listed as Technical Assist/Inquiry on reports. This is a large percentage of our workload but has not been tracked in previous years. There were 190 of these inquiries for the 1st quarter of FY20
5. We have not received the 1st quarter VA Payout results yet for OJT/APP Programs, it usually takes 30 days after the end of the quarter; the 4th quarter total was \$606,705.00
6. We did 16 on-site visits for the 1st quarter of FY20
7. We had a couple big outreach events planned in Southern Idaho with several other agencies, but employers did not sign up and they were canceled
8. **Bob Snyder** is the new USDOL Director and should be a great asset for us

Financial Report presented by **Debbie Spence**

1. 2nd Quarter FY20 Average Cost Per Resident Per Day (as of 12-31-2019)
 - a. Boise Home - \$400.19
 - b. Pocatello Home - \$410.78
 - c. Lewiston Home - \$441.72
2. 2nd Quarter FY20 Average Daily Census
 - a. Boise Home – 100.71 residents
 - b. Pocatello Home – 54.77 residents
 - c. Lewiston Home – 50.26 residents
 - d. IDVS Average – 81%
3. FY20 Appropriation - \$78,579,900
 - a. General Funds – 1.5% (includes Governor's reset reduction of \$12,200)
 - b. Continue to monitor our revenue for cash flow purposes
4. FY21 Budget Recommendation \$46,213,700
 - a. <\$178,800> - Change in Health & Variable Benefit Costs
 - b. \$360,500 - Inflationary Adjustments
 - c. \$389,300 - Replacement Items
 - d. \$8,000 - Statewide Cost Allocation
 - e. \$396,900 – 2% change in Employee Compensation (Classified Employees)
 - f. 3% Compensation Schedule Change
 - g. \$333,600 Cemetery Blackfoot Operations
 - i. \$242,200 Personnel Cost for 5 new positions
 1. (1) Business Operations Specialist
 2. (1) Cemetery Caretaker Foreman
 3. (1) Technical Records Specialist
 4. (1) Cemetery Caretaker Senior
 5. (1) Cemetery Caretaker
 - ii. \$67,400 – Operating Costs
 - iii. \$24,00 Capital Outlay for Office Equipment
 - h. \$1,245,200 – Additional Staff (18.20 FTP)
 - i. (4) RN Senior (Lewiston & Pocatello)

- ii. (9) CNA (Boise, Lewiston & Pocatello)
- iii. (2) Service Officers (OVA)
- iv. (1) Officer Specialist 2 (Cemetery)
- v. (1) Maintenance Craftsman (Lewiston)
- vi. (2) 0.5 Religious Coordinators (Lewiston & Pocatello)
- vii. (1) 0.2 Social Worker (Pocatello)
- viii. (1) Temporary Landscaping Technician (Cemetery)
- i. \$239,300 – Reclassification of 12 LPN positions to RN positions through vacancies (Boise, Lewiston & Pocatello)
- j. \$154,700 – Market Alignment for RN Sr. and CAN positions (Boise, Lewiston & Pocatello)
- k. \$5,000 – New and Replacement Capital Outlay Items for bariatric beds
- l. \$415,100 – 24/7 Security Coverage (Boise, Lewiston & Pocatello)
- m. \$50,000 – Loan Repayment Program for RN Staff
- n. \$4,500 – OITS (Office of Information Technology Services) Operating Costs
- o. \$38,800 – OITS Servers and Licensing
- p. \$200 – OITS Agency Billings
- q. Cash Transfer of \$3,951,900 from Veterans Recognition Fund to Veterans Recognition Income Fund for 4th Veterans Home Construction and Allocation Plan
- r. <\$24,300> - 2% General Fund Reduction and Exemptions
- s. \$7,496,100 – Carryover for Blackfoot Cemetery
- t. \$43,023,400 – Carryover for State Veterans Home in Post Falls
- u. General Funds are 2.6% of total budget recommendation; does not include carryover requests above

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

1. Understanding Nursing Staff Hiring & Retention
 - a. Each job classification has an assigned paygrade and each paygrade has 3 levels:
 - i. 100% of paygrade (policy)
 - ii. 125% of paygrade (max policy)
 - iii. 75% of paygrade
 - b. Decision units have been put in place for our nursing staff
 - i. CNAs will be started at 85% of policy
 - ii. RNs and LPNs will start at 90% of policy
 - iii. All of our registered nursing staff are RN Seniors
 - iv. LPN positions will transition to RN Seniors as LPN positions are vacated
 - c. Budget request impact on current staff
 - i. 45% of our CNAs will get a pay increase with the 85% policy guideline
 - ii. 57% of our RNs and LPNs will get a pay increase with the 90% policy guideline
 - iii. Competitive salaries to compete with the private sector
 - iv. Historically largest IDVS turnover has been in direct care staff which make up 2/3 of employees
 - v. Higher salaries = lower turnover
2. An RN Senior Loan Repayment has been proposed to the legislature to assist with recruitment
3. We are working with a temp agency to have a person search for small grant opportunities to help with needs at our Homes and Cemeteries
4. Active Shooter training and Respectful Workplace training have taken place in the Homes and offered to other staff members
5. Supervisor training is completed, and we will be offering regular "brown bag lunch" updates
6. There are issues with the billing process for ITS services; we are being billed for things we felt should be covered in day to day operations

7. Purchasing and procurement has been busy – we have over 200 active contracts we are managing
8. We received a waiver for Therapy Services – these no longer need to go through the bidding process
9. Thank you to **Debbie Spence, Sonya LaCasse** and **Michael Gwinn** for taking an active role in the LUMA project – the Statewide enterprise system replacing the controller's office

Construction Updates presented by **Tracy Schaner**

1. Post Falls Home
 - a. 90% of the design is complete
 - b. Page turner meeting next week in Arizona so the 95% can be issued by Jan 20th to all approving agencies for review comments (e.g. DBS, Fire Marshall, IDVS Pro. Owner Assoc, etc.). This process can take 4-8 weeks
 - c. 100% set and MOA to the VA needs to be submitted by 3/27/19
 - d. This deadline must be met, or it could be years before we top of the Priority List to get another grant
 - e. Our team is working extra hard to make it happen and we are on target for a June 2020 groundbreaking
2. Boise Home Replacement
 - a. The initial grant was submitted in November 2019
 - b. Grant applications require legislative support and availability of state matching grant funding by August 1st to be on the federal FY21 Priority List
 - c. We have drafted Concurrent Resolution and Marv is working on getting a legislative sponsor to carry the CR
3. Home Grants
 - a. Working on submitting a \$2.1M VA grant application to remedy several safety and security conditions at the State Veterans Homes in Lewiston and Pocatello
 - b. Project scopes for this grant application includes:
 - i. A dining room expansion at the Lewiston Veterans Home
 - ii. Pocatello doors/hardware
 - iii. installing an electronic name badge/door security system at both Lewiston & Pocatello
 - iv. Lewiston resident room and bathroom flooring
 - v. handrail project for Pocatello
 - vi. possibly upgrading Lewiston and Pocatello's nurse call system
 - c. Total state match of \$748,348 will include an estimated remaining DPW project fund balance of \$550,848 from placing the dining room expansion DPW project on a temporary hold and \$197,500 to replace the Pocatello doors/hardware which is included in the FY2021 A&R DPW recommendations
 - d. Legislative support is also needed for these grant applications, so we also have a 2nd CR to obtain this support and commitment
4. Cemetery Expansion Boise
 - a. Working on a grant application to expand the Boise Cemetery to include construction of:
 - i. Memorial Walls in the upper portion of the cemetery
 - ii. Survey of available sections for in-ground urn burial plots
 - iii. Survey, design and construction of two additional Columbarium Walls
 - b. Cemetery grants are authorized by the VA at 100% of the development cost of an approved project if VA standards and regulations are met
 - c. To qualify for the federal grant, and begin the architectural and engineering for the project, the State is required to appropriate a 10% match

- d. Allowable matching funds from this 10% will be reimbursed 100% to the State following grant award
- e. Funding for the 10% match (\$66,500) and any non-allowable costs will be from the Veterans Recognition Fund and/or Cemetery Maintenance Fund
- f. This grant need is included in the 2nd previously mentioned CR so we can obtain the necessary legislative support to submit the grant application

Division Report presented by **Marv Hagedorn**

1. The leadership of our Home Administrators along with salary increases has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on our employee retention
2. Income from the Homes is what funds our operations at OVA, Cemetery, Education and Central Support; as salaries increase for nursing staff (expenses), revenue for other programs will decrease
3. We have requested more General Funds in the budget this year to help fund our programs
4. We have submitted several pieces of legislation and we are confident we will receive positive outcomes to those
5. Construction at Blackfoot Cemetery that is unfunded by the VA will be requested from the Permanent Building Fund
6. Proposed plans for the replacement of the Boise Home on 21-acres near the Chinden Campus include a 158-bed facility with single rooms, memory care unit, and a day health care center
7. A day health care center is needed in our community to relieve caretakers each day plus make Veterans comfortable and aware of the services offered in our State facilities
8. Would like to start a Hall of Veterans Honor to recognize Veterans who serve their communities after their military service
9. Please plan on attending the Legislative Reception tonight and educate our Legislators on the needs of our Idaho Veterans

Adjournment

Commissioner **Art Gimpel** moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Commissioner **Leo Dub** and was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Mitzi Cheldelin

Administrative Assistant
Idaho Division of Veteran Services

3/7/2020

Date Completed