

Minutes for Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission July 17, 2019 – Boise, Idaho

Call to Order

The quarterly meeting of the Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission was held on Wednesday, July 17, 2019, at the Idaho Division of Veterans Services Central Support Office in Boise. It began at 8:30 a.m. and 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 a military 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**, State Veterans Cemetery Bureau Chief **James Earp**, Veterans Education Program Specialist **Tonya Erhardt**, Office of Veterans Advocacy Bureau Chief **Bill Heyob**, IDVS Executive Assistant **Kevin Wallior** and IDVS Administrative Assistant **Mitzi Cheldelin**.

ISVH-Lewiston Administrator **Mark High** joined the meeting via telephone.

Number of Citizens in attendance: 0

Announcements

The next IVAC meeting will be Wednesday, October 23, 2019 in Lewiston at the Idaho State Veterans Home.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on April 24, 2019 was made by **Leo Dub** and seconded by **Art Gimpel**. Minutes were unanimously accepted.

Special Legislative Update

2020 Legislation Proposals presented by **Kevin Wallior**

1. Vaping Tax (444-01)
 - a. Taxing vaping products would encourage all ages to stop smoking or vaping
 - b. Proceeds would be used for
 - i. Prevention programs
 - ii. State's 35% portion of future Veteran's Home construction
 - iii. Veteran's Home services
 - c. Funding source will be needed for future Veteran's Homes as our Veteran population increases
 - d. Preventing smoking and vaping in the Veteran population will reduce future healthcare costs incurred by IDVS
 - e. Combines needed deterrent with a needed revenue source
2. Endorsement to Replace/Remodel Veterans Home in Southwest Idaho (444-02)

- a. Establish the State's commitment to request a federal grant to construct and fund a Veterans Home in Southwest Idaho by remodeling and/or placing the Boise Veterans Home and provide services under VA programs.
 - b. Commitment is needed to proceed with VA grant application which would provide 65% of the allowable construction cost.
 - c. Grant application due April 15, 2020.
 - d. Current Boise Veterans Home is 55 years old and is incurring costly building maintenance to maintain strict nursing home standards.
 - e. New Veterans Home models encourage a more "homelike" environment.
 - f. Existing Boise Home building could be repurposed for services under other VA programs.
3. Amendment to the Veterans Recognition Fund (444-03)
 - a. Allow transfer of fund from Idaho Veterans Recognition Fund to Idaho Veterans Recognition Income Fund for the purpose of providing matching funds to federal grants for Home and Cemetery construction projects
 - b. Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 65-703(2), Idaho Code, or any other provision of law to the contrary
 - c. Amendment to Veterans Recognition Fund statute will allow more flexibility.
 4. Rename Title 65 from Soldiers & Sailors to Veterans (444-04)
 - a. Change would better represent Idaho's Veteran population by acknowledging that not all Veterans are soldiers or sailors.
 - b. Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guard Veterans aren't currently represented in the title of the Statute that governs their benefits and rights under Idaho law.
 5. Repeal 65-502(17) - (444-05)
 - a. Repeal the definition of Veteran listed in Title 65-502(17) that conflicts with the definition of Veterans defined in Title 65-203.
 - b. Reduce confusion related to the definition of Veteran in the State of Idaho as it applies to benefits.
 6. Provide for the issuing, sale and redemption of bonds (444-06)
 - a. Allow for the issuing of state bonds by IDVS for improving, replacing, or building Idaho State Veterans Homes and facilities.
 - b. Provide the ability to obtain VA grant matching funds, without needing to request general funds.
 - c. This would only be necessary if Title 73-119(11) is not still in effect, not having been repealed by other legislation.
 7. Veterans Home Nurse Retention/Recruitment Loan Compensation (444-07)
 - a. Amend Section 67-5339, Idaho Code, to provide a student loan compensation program for recruitment and retention of registered nurses employed at the Idaho State Veterans Homes.
 - b. The healthcare and skilled labor market is very competitive
 - c. Unemployment in healthcare remains well below the national average
 - d. Turnover is expensive and negatively impacts the quality of veteran care and services provided
 - e. Minimum staffing levels must be maintained to meet state and federal compliance and licensing for nursing home participation in Medicare and Medicaid
 - f. Being able to offer certain nursing staff with student loan repayment compensation will help IDVS compete with the private sector to staff our Homes and provide the care our Veterans deserve.

Division Bureau Reports

Business Support Services Report presented by Paul Spannkebel

1. Introduction of Business Support Services Staff
 - a. **Michael "Mike" Gwinn** – new IDVS Purchasing Agent as of May 2019

- b. **Chris Weston** – was IDVS IT Support but is now Program Specialist dealing with IT issues and being a liaison with ITS
 - c. **Roberta "Bert" Hartz** – HR Program Specialist
2. Delegated purchasing authority has been increased to \$500,000 from \$100,000
 3. IT transition to ITS has had a few hiccups but mostly smooth
 4. CEC raises are completed for IDVS staff
 5. Our motto continues to be "Train & Retain"
 6. Care Ware scheduling software is up and running in all three Homes. It has been a long and challenging process, but everyone has worked together and a special thank you goes to **Kevin Wallior** for his help bringing it all together.

Financial Report presented by **Debbie Spence**

1. FY19 Year-End Fiscal Status (Preliminary)
 - a. Total Appropriation: \$42,669,684
 - b. Expenditures: \$33,170,978
 - c. Remaining Appropriation: \$9,498,706
 - i. Less 2nd Cemetery: -\$7,496,100
 - ii. Less Encumbrance Requests: -\$82,723
 - d. Total Remaining Appropriation: \$1,919,883
2. FY19 Year-to-Date Nursing Occupancy Rate
 - a. Boise Home – 89.9%
 - b. Pocatello Home – 82.9%
 - c. Lewiston Home – 90.4%
 - d. IDVS Average – 88.2%
 - e. Other Idaho Facilities – 63.0%
3. FY19 Average Cost Per Resident Per Day
 - a. Nursing - \$344.61
 - b. Dom/Residential - \$114.25
4. FY20 Appropriation - \$78,592,100
 - a. 57% Federal Funds/VA: \$45,079,007
 - b. 18% Veterans Recognition Income Fund: \$14,358,200
 - c. 11% Medicaid Receipts: \$8,525,420
 - d. 9% Private Pay Receipts: \$6,802,080
 - e. 2% Medicare Federal Funds: \$1,583,493
 - f. 2% General Funds: \$1,224,200
 - g. 1% Endowment: \$1,019,700
5. FY20 Appropriation Includes the Following:
 - a. \$76,000 - Change in Benefit Costs
 - b. \$98,800 - Statewide Cost Allocation
 - c. \$556,600 - Change in Employee Compensation
 - d. \$871,100 - Market Equity Salary Increases
 - e. \$551,900 - Additional Staffing (2 Education/1 OVA)
 - f. \$103,300 - New Capital Outlay Items
 - g. \$200,000 - Intergovernmental Transfer – Medicaid
 - h. \$100,000 Veterans Recognition Income Fund
 - i. \$42,223,400 Fourth Veterans Home
 - j. \$307,200 Governor Tech Initiatives
 - k. \$80,000 Idaho Suicide Hotline (on-going)
 - l. \$7,496,100 Reappropriation Authority – Second Veterans Cemetery

- m. DPW projects are being funded by the Permanent Building Fund (previously self-funded FY13-FY18)
- 6. FY21 Budget Preparation
 - a. Budget request process is underway for FY21
 - b. All Bureaus have submitted their budget requests to Division
 - c. Division is reviewing the Bureau requests with the Bureau Executives and will compile the Division budget request
 - d. Division Budget will include:
 - i. The Veterans Recognition Fund 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

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

1. Average daily census for the 4th quarter of FY19 was 110 nursing care residents – 91% occupancy; and 23 residential care residents – 64% occupancy
2. Nursing hours are holding steady – we watch this closely to maintain adequate staffing
3. We had many DPW or Major Maintenance projects in FY19, but we monitored the expenses closely and had a net over expenses of \$2,000,000.
4. We have introduced the monthly Cheers with the Chief. Pretzels and non-alcoholic beer are served. Chief Administrator **Marv Hagedorn** attends and visits with the residents on the back patio.
5. Changes to Medicare are being introduced on October 1st. Training is taking place with staff.
6. **Rick Holloway, Tracy Schaner, and Debbie Spence** traveled to Long Island, NY, Pell City, AL and Reno, NV to tour State Veterans Homes and find out about new designs, programs and interview administrators about pros and cons.
7. The Jacklin Family, who have donated the land for the future Post Falls Home, came and toured the Boise Home.
8. Still searching for an RN Manager. Several interviews but have not found the right person. We are hiring smart instead and hiring fast.

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

1. Census for the last quarter of FY19 was 84% of the 66 available beds and remains stable.
2. We currently have 11 people on the waiting list to get into the Home but staffing and construction preclude us from filling all the beds.
3. Busy with admissions and discharges, but we have had very few veterans pass away. It has been enjoyable to get to know the veterans as they make the Home their long-term residence.
4. Medicaid receipts are down, due to change over to Medicaid plus Molina and Blue Cross.
5. Expenses are stable.
6. Satisfaction Survey at 95%+ positive feedback.
7. Window replacement project will be put back out to bid this month.
8. Flooring and cabinet replacement to start in July.
9. Programs in place to help residents with Dementia maintenance.
10. Nursing, CNA and Therapy students from ISU have been assisting in the Home. They have been a great help with projects, and we hope this will be a good recruitment tool, but we have not seen any results yet.
11. Blessing Bike delivered in June. Residents and staff really enjoy it.
12. Took residents fishing two times in June at a private pond stocked by the American Legion with 10lb+ fish. Everyone enjoys it and we have a fish fry afterwards.

13. VA Survey at the end of June – excellent results – no findings.
14. Nursing Director **Troy Henderson** has been training "Non-Violent Crisis Intervention" out of state the last couple of weeks. He was recently recognized with Meritorious Instructor status – one of only 480 in the United States. This program will roll out to all three Homes.
15. Slide show was shown highlighting special resident activities over the last few months.

Lewiston Veterans Home Report presented by **Mark High** (via telephone)

1. Census last quarter averaged 86% of the 64 available beds.
2. In the process of hiring RNs, census can increase once we are fully staffed
3. Veterans on waiting list to get into the home
4. Janitorial services will be increasing 9% for FY20 – have not seen an increase in 2 years
5. Chapel and OVA office construction is underway – estimated to be finished December 28, 2019
6. **Travis Pollock** and his group donated \$5000.00 to the Lewiston IVAL.
7. Volunteer hours are increasing. We have both regular volunteers plus groups and organizations volunteering for special events
8. The Blessing Bike was donated to the Home in May and has been enjoyed by the residents.
9. We are recruiting on the radio and attending job fairs
10. State survey occurred in April, with the VA survey the following week. Nine tags were received from the State and one tag from the VA. Plan of correction has been to both.
11. Training on our new computerized staffing system, Care Ware. It is VERY helpful managing the scheduling process and the employees like it.

Veterans Cemetery Report presented by **James Earp**

1. There were 220 internments for the fourth quarter of FY19 and 245 pre-registration applications.
2. Total internments for FY19 was 750 – down from 3.7% from 779 in FY18.
3. Steady four-year upward trend of dependent internments.
4. Two-day National Cemetery Administration Inspection took place in May. Staff and Cemetery received overall compliance rating of 88%, with National Shrine status eligibility. It was noted we have one of the best volunteer programs and our Staff is very knowledgeable and proficient in Internment Operations and Grounds Maintenance & Presentation.
5. It should be noted our Staff's knowledge and proficiency is due in large part due to their attendance of the National Cemetery Administration training courses in St. Louis.
6. Internment revenues for the 4th quarter of FY19 were \$544,238.00 – down due to the VA's timeliness of payment processing under their new system.
7. Senior Financial Specialist **Pamela Jayo** is working with VA representatives to improve the process.
8. Our volunteers put in a total of 984 volunteer hours in the 4th quarter with a total of 3007 volunteer hours during FY19.
9. Attendance of the 2019 Memorial Day Ceremony was over 1,500.
10. The DPW 17-602 improvement to drainage along the upper road will be completed by the end of the month.
11. **Tom Wells**, Cemetery Caretaker attended the 50th Anniversary of the National League of POW/MIA Families in Washington, D.C., proudly representing the State of Idaho and its Veterans.
12. Over 200 members of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA) conducted an Honor Ride and wreath presentation as part of their National Event in Boise
13. In May, Administrative Assistant **Tori Powers** attended and completed the National Cemetery Administration training in St. Louis.
14. The Office Specialist II position has been filled by **Des Watson** who started this week.
15. FY21 Budget proposals for the Boise and Blackfoot Cemeteries have been submitted to CSO.
16. The fixes to the known issues with the Cemetery Management database are on hold with the transition of IT services to ITS. This database is critical to reporting information to the VA and future

management of the Blackfoot Cemetery. The data is piling up until it can be entered into the database.

17. Significant Actions for the Southeast Idaho Veterans Cemetery in Blackfoot (DPW 17-603/ID-13-05)
 - a. Construction bids have concluded.
 - b. Amount to be awarded for construction is \$5,741,171.
 - c. Estimated total budget for the project is \$7,371,817.
 - d. Add Alternate request not funded by the VA Grant will be submitted in FY21 for DPW Construction Projects.
 - e. IDVS will request a supplemental funding to the FY20 budget for the remaining Add Alternates estimated to cost \$625,000.
 - f. Estimated date for the Official Groundbreaking is sometime in October 2019.
 - g. Estimated project completion and opening – November 2020.
18. Everyone is invited to attend the Spirit of '45 Celebration at the Cemetery on August 11th to honor our WWII Veterans.

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

1. OVA had the following stats for the 4th Quarter and 2019 YTD
 - a. Office Interviews – 4th Quarter 1,816 / FY19 7,030
 - b. POA's Filed – 4th Quarter 1,348 / FY19 5,215
 - c. Claims Submitted – 4th Quarter 2,213 / FY19 8,843
 - d. Correspondence – 4th Quarter 3,619 / FY19 11,616
 - e. Appeals – 4th Quarter 122 / FY19 382
 - f. Home Visits – 4th Quarter 49 / FY19 228
 - g. Veterans Seen by OVA in Veterans Courts – 4th Quarter 284 / FY19 766
 - h. State Emergency Grants Approved – 4th Quarter 0 / FY19 4
2. Boise VA Regional Office continues to be ranked one of the top 5 offices in the country out of 54 nationwide, based upon performance standard for both VR&E and Compensation Claim adjudication.
3. The Board of Veterans Appeals Travel Board is ongoing at the Boise VARO this week. This will probably be the last BVA Travel Board at the VA in Boise due to appeals modernization.
4. The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 was signed into law and will go into effect on January 1, 2020.
 - a. Law grants herbicide presumption veterans aboard vessels operating not more than 12 nautical miles seaward of the water of Vietnam and Cambodia.
 - b. Law also grants additional presumption for herbicide agents to Veterans who served on or near the DMZ in Korea between September 1, 1967 and August 31, 1971.
 - c. Also includes addition of benefits for children of certain Thailand service Veterans born with spina bifida.
 - d. Law requires the VA to report on research being conducted on a broad range of conditions possibly related to service in Southeast Asia.
5. VA Mission Act went into effect June 6, 2019 and ends the Choice Program
6. OVA VSO **Michele Perry** was recognized at the VFW's Accredited Service Office of the Year for the State of Idaho
7. **Scott Thorsness** (previously County Veteran Service Officer for Kootenai County) was hired as the second full-time State Service Officer in Post Falls. Scott is an Air Force retiree and his first day was July 8, 2019.
8. **Michael Salazar** has replaced **Rick Poisel** at the Pocatello OVA office. Michael served on active duty in the Coast Guard for 7 years and his first day with OVA was Jun 24, 2019.

9. The Annual County and Post Service Officer Training will be conducted at the Riverside Hotel in Boise on August 21-23 and will include the Chairman of the BVA, the Social Security Administration, the Pension Management Center at St. Paul and the VA Debt Management Center.
10. **Bill Heyob, Frank Fabbi, and Debbie Harmon** will be attending the VFW National Convention in Orlando next week.
11. The VFW Advanced and Phase 1, Part 1 Training Session will take place in Annapolis, MD on September 15-20.

Veterans Education Bureau Report presented by **Tonya Erhardt** (Bureau Chief **Doug Jacobson** doing a compliance survey in Rexburg)

1. The Veterans Education Bureau (VEB) operates on the Federal fiscal calendar so report information reflects that.
2. Currently there are 362 VA approved facilities in Idaho – an increase of 9 over last quarter. Categories include 6 Apprenticeship and 3 OJT (on the job training).
3. Any significant changes to the approved programs need to be resubmitted to the VA for approval so benefits can be paid. During the third quarter FY19 VEB processed 502 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 before. There were 92 of these inquiries for the third quarter of FY19.
5. We have not received the 3rd quarter VA Payout results yet for OJT/APP Programs. It usually takes 30 days after the end of the quarter. The 2nd quarter total was \$578,624.57.

Division Report presented by **Marv Hagedorn**

1. Budget History
 - a. During the last Recession, JFAC reduced General Funds of Departments which had other revenue sources or dedicated funds.
 - b. IDVS was one of these Departments - General Funds were reduced to just 3%.
 - c. IDVS has Land Endowments but they don't produce very much money.
 - d. Revenue from the Homes previously went into a "savings fund", but because of the General Funds reduction this revenue has gone towards staffing OVA, Education and CSO.
 - e. Veterans Recognition Fund was created to safeguard funds in "savings" so funds would not be returned to State General Funds by the legislature.
 - f. The VRF has been used for the required matching funds for VA loan applications.
2. Replenishing the Veterans Recognition Fund
 - a. The fund has dwindled to less than \$5 million after matching funds for the Blackfoot Cemetery and the Post Falls Home.
 - b. Approximately \$35-\$40 million will be needed for matching funds if the Boise Home is replaced.
 - c. Need to shift the operation of OVA, Education and CSO back to General Funds to build VRF.
3. Legislative Proposals
 - a. Ideas for revenue streams
 - i. Vaping Tax (444-01)
 - ii. Issue, sell and redeem Bonds (444-06)
 - b. Amendment to Veterans Recognition Fund (444-03)
 - i. Allow transfer of funds from Idaho Veterans Recognition Fund to Idaho Veterans Recognition Income Fund
 - ii. This will provide matching funds to federal grants for Home and Cemetery construction projects

- iii. The VA also has health/safety/repair grants for building improvement loans, but we must show matching funds
 - 1. As an example, these grants could have been used last year for the sewer repair at the Boise Home instead of everything out of pocket
 - 2. Future improvements of the Boise Home building for use as a facility for other VA sponsored day service programs
- iv. Allow use of funds for VA grant matching when loans are available rather than waiting annually for legislative approval
- c. In conjunction with Health & Welfare, establish a Nurse Retention/Recruitment Loan Compensation (444-07)
 - i. Provide a student loan compensation program for recruitment and retention of registered nurses employed at the Idaho State Veterans Homes.
 - ii. The healthcare and skilled labor market is very competitive
 - iii. Unemployment in healthcare remains well below the national average
 - iv. Turnover is expensive and negatively impacts the quality of veteran care and services provided
 - v. Minimum staffing levels must be maintained to meet state and federal compliance and licensing for nursing home participation in Medicare and Medicaid
 - vi. Being able to offer certain nursing staff with student loan repayment compensation will help IDVS compete with the private sector to staff our Homes and provide the care our Veterans deserve.
- 4. The Governor's Red Tape Reduction Act instructed agencies to reduce agency rules by at least 5%. IDVS was able to reduce our rules and regulations by 70% by changing many into policies. This gives us flexibility during the fiscal year.
- 5. Cheers with the Chief
 - a. Marv meets once a month with residents at the Boise Home and serves non-alcoholic beer and pretzels, along with visiting and reminiscing.
 - b. Home residents can have an alcoholic beverage with a prescription.
 - c. The design of the Post Falls has a Sports Bar because Cheers with the Chief has been so successful.

Post Falls Home Update presented by **Tracy Schaner**

1. Tracy introduced design development architect **Julia Sanders** and interior design architect **Daisy Wright** from Orcutt/Winslow of Arizona.
2. The new home is designed as with a home-like environment with a resort feeling, rather than the traditional institute design.
3. The Jacklin Family donated 7.3 acres in Post Falls, and it has been accepted by the State of Idaho Land Board.
4. The new Home is approximately 85,000 square feet
5. The rooms will be larger than the current homes and each will be single occupancy with a private bath.
6. There will be one residential neighborhood and a separate community center.
7. The neighborhood is subdivided into four households each supporting 16 private resident rooms, dedicated dining, kitchen, den, sitting lounges, living and outdoor patio areas.
8. The design intent is to create a home-like feeling that is both comfortable and inviting and encourages well-being.
9. The philosophy of the interior design emphasizes strong connections to nature and a simplicity of form to create tranquil settings for meaningful life.
10. The style is characterized as elegantly understated with clean lines and simple ornamentation.

11. The color palette and finish materials will reflect the natural environment through earthier tones and rich accents.
12. The project was designed to maximize the potential of the relatively compact site in Post Falls.
13. Building placement optimizes mountain views, minimizes impact to the adjacent residential properties and optimizes site circulation and allows for expansion.
14. We are #461 on the VA priority list for Veteran Home projects.
15. IDVS is moving forward with plans and deliverables so we are prepared to accept a grant opportunity should another state not be ready or prepared and decided to defer their grant opportunity for Feder FY2019.
16. If the grant opportunity comes through this year, we are on track to break ground in June 2020 with an opening date of January 2022.
17. Once we break ground, we can start taking applications.

Adjournment

Commissioner **Art Gimpel** moved the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Commissioner **Jinny Cash** and was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Mitzi Cheldelin

Administrative Assistant
Idaho Division of Veteran Services

8/23/2019

Date Completed