

Minutes for Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission January 10, 2019 – Boise, Idaho

Call to Order

The quarterly meeting of the Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission was held on Thursday, January 10, 2019, at the Idaho Division of Veteran 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 in attendance via conference phone beginning at 10:07 a.m.

IDVS Staff Members in attendance included: IDVS Administrator **Marv Hagedorn**, IDVS Deputy Administrator **Tracy Schaner**, IDVS Business Support Services Bureau Chief **Paul Spannkebel**; IDVS Human Resource Specialist **Roberta Hartz**, IDVS Financial Manager **Debbie Spence**, ISVH-Boise Administrator **Rick Holloway**, ISVH-Lewiston Administrator **Mark High**, ISVH-Pocatello Administrator **Josiah Dahlstrom**, State Veterans Cemetery Bureau Chief **James Earp**, Veterans Education/State Approving Agency Bureau Chief **Doug Jacobson**, Office of Veterans Advocacy Bureau Chief **Bill Heyob**, IDVS Executive Assistant **Kevin Wallior**, and IDVS Administrative Assistant **Mitzi Cheldelin**.

Number of Citizens in attendance: 0

Announcements

New IDVS Business Support Manager **Paul Spannkebel** was introduced to the Commission.

The next IVAC meeting will be Wednesday, April 17, 2019 in Pocatello at the Idaho State Veterans Home.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on October 18, 2018 was made by **Art Gimbel** and seconded by **Jinny Cash**. Minutes were unanimously accepted.

Division Bureau Reports

Financial Report presented by **Debbie Spence**

1. Veterans Homes are the primary revenue generator for IDVS. FY19 Appropriation is \$34,239,400.00, of which \$1,127,500.00 (3%) is General Funds
2. Costs have gone up this year because of staffing costs; along with a decrease in revenues because of the census at the Homes.
3. As of December 31, 2018, the average occupancy of the Homes is running at 87.4% for skilled nursing care. Our goal is 88% or higher
4. Governor's FY202 Budget Recommendation is \$78,375,100.00. This includes:
 - a. Revenue Adjustment for FY19 - \$1.2 million from receipt spending authority to federal fund spending authority
 - b. Architectural and Design Costs for FY19 – 4th Veterans Home – from Veterans Recognition Fund - \$800,000.00
 - c. Change in Health and Variable Benefit Costs <\$140,600.00>
 - d. Statewide Allocation Plan – services provided by other state agencies - \$98,800.00
 - e. Three percent change in Employee Compensation for Classified Employees - \$553,800.00

- f. Two percent change in Compensation Schedule - \$1400.00
- g. Market Equity and FTP Adjustment and aligns spending authority with revenue \$871,100.00
- h. Additional Staff – 3 FTP and spending authority for CAN & RN group positions - \$551,900.00
- i. New Capital Outlay and Operating (no general funds) - \$103,300.00
- j. Medicaid Provider Assessment Transfer - \$200,000.00
- k. Veterans Recognition Fund Request – Annual allocation plan - \$100,000.00
- l. Fourth State Veterans Home - \$42,223,400.00
- m. State Network Core Equipment Replacement - \$28,900.00
- n. Information Technology Modernization Initiative - \$279,300.00
- o. Reappropriation Authority for 2nd Veterans Cemetery
- p. Requested \$100,000 from the Veterans Recognition Fund to the Veterans Recognition Income Fund to cover the Veterans Recognition Fund Committee's annual allocation plan

Human Resources Report presented by **Roberta Hartz**

- 1. HR's new motto is "Train & Retain" – focus is going to be on retention of employees – particularly the nursing staff.
- 2. Training for Supervisors – new supervisors will receive critical training in their first 2 weeks. We feel supervisors are a major part of retention and we want to ensure supervisors have all the tools they need to be successful.
- 3. IDVS staff will be attending Myer-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) training, taught in-house by **Paul Spannkebel**.
- 4. Pay increase requests for CNAs and Registered Nurses have been submitted so salaries can remain competitive with the private sector.
 - a. Pocatello RNs received a \$1.50 increase in September
 - b. Boise CNAs received \$1.50 increase in October
 - c. Requested increase for Lewiston RNs should be effective this month
- 5. Hiring Fair to take place in Lewiston. Potential nursing staff can tour facility, apply online, submit resume, interview and possibly leave with a job offer.

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

- 1. Background: Navy Veteran, worked at Idaho Health & Welfare for 10 years, Deputy Administrator at Idaho Division of Human Resources for 18 months, glad to be back working with Veterans and hopes to finish career here.
- 2. Honored to be part of this outstanding staff and organization. Job duties include managing Human Resources, Fiscal, IT and Purchasing.
- 3. Staffing skilled nursing staff is the number one challenge for our agency – we need to get creative in our approach to recruiting.
- 4. Myer-Briggs certified instructor. Boise Home staff will be attending Myer-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) training at the end of the month along with some Central Support staff.

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

- 1. Average daily census for last quarter was 109 nursing care residents – 83% occupancy; and 32 residential care residents – 88% occupancy
- 2. Major projects taking place:
 - a. Fire/Life Safety – quarterly inspections have taken place and maintenance performed
 - b. Boiler Replacement – long process, but finally fired up and working except for a switch problem between the two boilers
 - c. Flooring on 1 West needs to be replaced

- d. Water leak caused damage in the kitchen pantry which resulted in asbestos abatement, mold remediation
3. Upper Payment Limit (UPL) was received in September and netted \$1.77 million for all three State Veterans Homes.
4. **Rachael Knight** has been promoted to Director of Nursing. She has been the interim director since March 2018
5. **Matt Jessen** was promoted to Unit Manager on 1 West.
6. Despite a "pervasive attitude among the staff" that we are "constantly working short", stats indicate otherwise - nursing hours per resident are in excess of 4 hours per day, staff who have left and come back realize we have more staff than comparable facilities.
7. Food Convoy took place in November. Thousand of pounds onions, potatoes, sugar, flour, beans and canned goods donated.
8. State Survey took place in November; results received in December – we received 14 federal citations and 1 state citation. We are disputing at least 4 of the federal citations and the state citation.
9. **April Floyd** has been hired as the Activities Director and is doing a great job.
10. Town Hall Meetings have been taking place with staff on all three shifts to get feedback from staff.

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

1. Census last quarter was 81% of the 62 available beds.
2. Cost savings have been realized in the Pharmacy with changes that have been made.
3. Lighting in the Home and on the Grounds have been updated for cost savings. Idaho Power awarded a \$45,000 rebate for our energy updates.
4. Hats off to the Pocatello Home Activities Director/Volunteer Coordinator **Carrie Leavitt** for all the things she does to keep our residents engaged and active.
5. Outstanding volunteers really make a difference in the ability to care for the residents. There were 6,514 volunteer hours the last quarter.
6. Slide show was shown highlighting special resident activities over the last few months.

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

1. Census last quarter averaged 92% of the 64 available beds.
2. LPN staff is full, we have 2 CNA positions open, but we are severely lacking in keeping our RN positions filled. We have great hopes for the hiring fair that will take place next week.
3. Receipts are holding steady. The VA reimbursement was not received in November due to a glitch in the Lewiston VA system, but we should receive that payment in January. It has not impacted daily operations.
4. The oxygen tank was replaced in December. The IT fire suppression system has had issues. The contractor and DPW are going back and forth about the problem.
5. Employees mentioned by family members are featured in the newsletter and it has become a point of pride and competition amongst the staff.
6. **Becky Huminsky** was hired as the new Storekeeper; **Jerry LaSalle**, the Boise storekeeper, came up and got her off to a good start.
7. Slide show was shown highlighting special resident activities over the last few months.

Veterans Cemetery Report presented by **James Earp**

1. There were 175 internments for the second quarter of FY19 and 145 pre-registration applications.
2. All available columbarium niches in Wall C have been completed. Future internments will be in the expanded sections of Wall E.

3. Internment revenues for the 2nd quarter of FY19 were \$137,971.00.
4. Twelve volunteers put in a total of 723 volunteer hours during the 2nd quarter. In November, two volunteers were recipients of the Spirit of Freedom Award from Senator Crapo's office – they were **Dr. LeRoy Barker** and **Col. Karl Wheeler**.
5. The DPW construction project for road repairs is completely stalled. There has been no updates or communication from DPW.
6. Repairs have been made to the damaged kiosk touchscreen. Security camera updates will include provide coverage of the kiosk and the columbarium.
7. Group Military Honors ceremony was held to recognize those laid to rest during the year who did not receive military honors for various reasons.
8. In December, over 1,000 people attended the annual Wreaths Across America National Remembrance ceremony. Over 4,800 wreaths were donated and placed at gravesites.
9. Administrative positions were reclassified to Financial Tech Sr. and Tech Records Spec. 2 to better reflect the job duties of these positions.
10. Significant Actions for the Southeast Idaho Veterans Cemetery in Blackfoot (DPW 17-603/ID-13-05)
 - a. Master Plan successfully submitted for review on 11/28/2018
 - b. Initial Master Plan review by the NCA required comment responses and a redesign of key features to incorporate improved flow of operations.
 - c. Developed site was reduced from 18 acres to 13 acres. No reduction in gravesites and this size will allow for better ease of operations.
 - d. Estimated project cost is \$7.4 million
 - e. Updated designs and overall Master Plan were submitted 1/9/2019.

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

1. OVA continues to see an increase in calls and appointments with Veterans. Home visits are down, but we are more efficient if appointments are at our offices, unless necessary.
2. The VA is not affected by the current government shutdown. Their budget is funded through 2019.
3. A 2.8% cost of living allowance increase went into effect on 1/1/2019 for all VA and Social Security benefits.
4. The Appeals Modernization Act (AMA) will go into effect in February, but we don't feel it is going to benefit our Veterans, but time will tell.
5. Board of Veterans Appeals Travel Board will come to Boise July 15-19. It will be the last Travel Board because the AMA is eliminating this service and will only do video appeals.
6. The VA has changed how they calculate assets for non-service-related pensions and survivor pensions, the process is more complicated to explain to Veterans.
7. Blue Water Navy coverage for Vietnam Veterans exposed to Agent Orange was not approved by the U.S. Senate.
8. National Academy of Science Engineering & Medicine has recommended to the Secretary of the Navy to add hypertension (high blood pressure) and a precursor to multiple myeloma to the list of approved Agent Orange presumptive conditions.
9. The VA has implemented a new program called VA360 so the computers with VHA, VBA, NCA all talk to each other and Veterans only need to change their information once to be updated in all the VA systems.
10. Boise OVA staff attended the VFW Advanced Skill Level Training in Annapolis, MD. Six of our 9 attendees scored above average on the final exam.
11. Property Tax relief of \$1320 for 100% service-connected disabled veterans. Must be applied for between January 1 – April 15 with your County Assessor and discount will be reflected on your December 2019 property tax bill.

12. OVA has worked out a verification system with Health & Welfare Long Term Care. OVA verifies VA income and benefits for H&W LTC so Medicaid claims can be processed faster. A recent application was approved the same day it was submitted, where previously submitted claims could take up to six months with verification through the VA.

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 344 VA approved facilities in Idaho – an increase of 14 over last quarter. Categories include Institutes of Higher Learning or IHL (Colleges/Universities), Non-College Degrees or NCD (ex. truck driving schools, cosmetology, etc.), On-the-Job Training & Apprenticeship or OJT/APP (ex. Police, Fire, Plumbing, etc.) and Flight.
3. Any significant changes to the approved programs need to be resubmitted to the VA for approval so benefits can be paid. During the first quarter FY19 VEB processed 192 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 83 of these inquiries for the first quarter of FY19.
5. Made 32 on-site visits during the first quarter FY19 to gather information or make inspections for VA approvals.
6. We are targeting more certifications for OJT and Apprenticeship Programs. That is where the job demand is – skills not degrees.
7. The last quarter was our largest growth quarter in all areas.

Division Headquarters Report presented by **Tracy Schaner**

1. There is a nationwide shortage of skilled nursing staff. We are seeing that shortage in our homes. This will be a continuing problem for the foreseeable future. Staff is the driving force behind our Home census.
2. LPNs are encouraged to become RNs and there is tuition reimbursement available.
3. We are still waiting to hear where we will be placed on the priority list for the fourth Veterans Home. There is a possibility we can received a grant. We are working on meeting the VA grant application deliverables, so we are in a good position to accept grant opportunity should it be offered. We will have a better understanding of grant opportunity once the Priority List is published showing our ranking – probably February.
4. The IDVS presentation to JFAC will be Monday, January 14, 2019 at 8:30 a.m. We have color handouts with stats on all IDVS Bureaus. The stats emphasize the fact that \$538,000,000 comes into our State because of the services from the Bureaus of IDVS. For every dollar spent by IDVS we have a return on investment of \$491. Thank you to **Kevin Wallior** for designing these handouts to reflect this important information.

Chief Administrator Marv Hagedorn Comments

1. Most people leave a job for two reasons – (1) Pay and benefits and (2) They don't like their supervisor or leadership team. IDVS will be focusing on market equity adjustments and Supervisor training to ensure supervisors know how to treat new employees and retain existing ones.
2. We are increasing our Social Media prescience via Facebook and will be expanding to other platforms. We also want to do some radio and television advertising to get let people know what IDVS does and to distinguish us from the VA.

3. Looking for potential land in Boise for a location for a Boise Home replacement in the future. The age of the current Home incurs a lot of maintenance expenses that will only increase.
4. **Rick Holloway** at our Boise Home has done an outstanding job of keeping the aging home running and managing staffing.
5. Our employee turnover in the Homes has decreased from 33% to 17%. Thank you to the Team for making this happen.
6. We need more OVA Service Officers. Currently there is a 2 month wait to get a face to face appointment with a Service Officer.
7. We have formed a real Team here at IDVS. Bureaus are communicating with one another and Bureau Chiefs understand the needs of the other Bureaus.
8. IDVS has taken a leadership role in Joining Forces for Treasure Valley Veterans, a networking organization that brings together Veteran Service Organizations to communicate their services and needs with one another. Our Administrative Assistant **Mitzi Cheldelin** is the co-organizer along with **Lt. Matt Jones** from the Boise Police Department. They have 400 people on an email group and over 40 organizations who attend a monthly meeting. This is currently just Treasure Valley, but we would like to replicate this model around the state.

Adjournment

Commissioner **Leo Dub** moved that the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Commissioner **Art Gimpel** and was adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Mitzi Cheldelin

Administrative Assistant
Idaho Division of Veteran Services

3/26/2019

Date Completed