

Minutes for Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission

October 18, 2018 – Boise, Idaho

Call to Order

The quarterly meeting of the Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission was held on Wednesday, October 18, 2018, 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 and Patrick Grace**

IDVS Staff Members in attendance included: IDVS Administrator **Marv Hagedorn**, IDVS Deputy Administrator **Tracy Schaner**, IDVS Human Resource Specialist **Roberta Hartz**, IDVS Financial Officer **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 Service Officer **Kelly McCartney**, IDVS Financial Specialist **Ashley Muir**, IDVS Executive Assistant **Kevin Wallior**, IDVS Administrative Assistant **Mitzi Cheldelin**,

Not in attendance: Commissioner **Leo Dub**, Commissioner **Art Gimpel**, Office of Veterans Advocacy Bureau Chief **Bill Heyob**

Number of Citizens in attendance: 0

Announcements

New IDVS Administrator **Marv Hagedorn**, Financial Specialist **Ashley Muir** and Administrative Assistant **Mitzi Cheldelin** were introduced to the Commission.

The next IVAC meeting will be Thursday, January 10th in Boise to coincide with the Legislative Reception.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous July 18, 2018 meeting was made by **Jinny Cash** and seconded by **Patrick Grace**.

Division Bureau Reports

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. Pay increase requests for CNAs and Registered Nurses have been submitted so salaries can remain competitive with the private sector.
3. On-Boarding Process – Follow up with new hires will be taking place to ensure employees are understanding the information they are receiving when they start. The timeframe for the on-boarding process will be expanding to provide more time to grasp everything employees need to learn about their position and IDVS.

4. 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.
5. Incentives – Competition is tough (especially in the nursing positions). We are looking at ways to show appreciation, shift differentials, pay increase for CNAs, employee recognition and recruitment incentives.

Financial Report presented by **Debbie Spence**

1. Veterans Homes are the primary revenue generator for IDVS. Only 3.1% of our funding comes from general funds. The Cemetery generates some funds, Education has some Federal Funding, but majority of our programs are funded by revenue from the Homes
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 October 15, 2018, the average occupancy of the Homes is running at 89% for domestic/residential care and 88% for nursing care. Our goal is 88% or higher.
4. We have received "unofficial" notice that the VA State Home per diem rate will be increasing 2.4% from \$107.16 to \$109.73 for FY19. This is an additional \$142,100 projected revenue.
5. Total appropriation for FY19 will be \$34,239,400.00. We closely watch the cash flow because we can't spend money that hasn't come in yet.
6. FY20 Budget Request is \$78,634,900. This includes:
 - a. Change in Benefit Costs - \$80,100
 - b. 1% Change in Employee Compensation - \$189,300
 - c. Market Equity - \$894,400
 - d. Additional Staffing - \$540,600
 - e. New Capital Outlay & Operating - \$103,300
 - f. Intergovernmental Transfer - \$200,000
 - g. 4th State Veterans Home in Post Falls - \$43,023,400 (65% will be reimbursed with VA Grant)
 - h. Reappropriation Authority for 2nd Veterans Cemetery
 - i. 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
7. FY20 DPW Projects – Requested Permanent Building Funds for 7 Total Projects
 - a. Replace Flooring at Lewiston Home – estimated \$60,000
 - b. Replace Lighting Fixtures at Lewiston Home – estimated \$280,000
 - c. Replace Call Light System at Pocatello Home – estimated \$48,300
 - d. Remodel East Hall Staff Lounge into Shower Room at Pocatello Home – estimated \$161,500
 - e. Replace New Drains and Resurface Parking Lot at Pocatello Home – estimated \$208,750
 - f. Concrete Pavement Preservation at Boise Cemetery – estimated \$40,500
 - g. Remodel Business Office at Pocatello Home – estimated \$134,000

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

1. Average daily census for last quarter was 102 nursing care residents – 78% occupancy; and 31 residential care residents – 87% occupancy
2. UPL (Upper Payment Limit) error was found in OUR favor and \$480,000.00 was returned.

3. Major projects taking place:
 - a. Sewer project nearing completion – 3 months overdue. Only flooring replacement remains.
 - b. Boiler replacement project – the building was built around the original boilers in 1965 so they had to be cut into pieces to be removed. New boiler was installed, but contractor forgot to hook up one pipe and it gushed water into the kitchen attic. Ceiling has been removed, asbestos abatement is required and then it will be replaced.
 - c. Completion of the parking lot project delayed. Sidewalks are done. Contractor installed a concrete barrier which was not in the plans and now must be removed.
4. Five more CNAs need to be hired before we can fill the remaining beds in the facility. Positions are open and posted but it is very difficult to fill in this area with our low unemployment.
5. During Breakfast and Lunch all staff members at the Home (Administration, Business Office, Admissions, HR) help take the residents to the dining room. It has really helped the morale of the CNAs to see the rest of the staff assisting with this time intensive duty.
6. Town Hall Meetings will be held with all staff shifts to get input directly from employees.

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

1. Census was stable last quarter at 84% of the 62 available beds.
2. Staffing is under control. Looking at doing some marketing with local hospitals to find patients who are Veterans that can be served at the Home.
3. Pharmacy costs have been reduced by using formulary medications and training by the new Medical Director.
4. Great leadership in place with the hiring of a new Director of Nursing and an RN Manager.
5. Outstanding volunteers really make a difference in the ability to care for the residents. There were 2,433 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 averages 96% - some days have been at 100%. Working with the Valley Veterans Commission to educate local service organizations and hospitals about the services the Home can provide and who qualifies.
2. Overall receipts are up. Medicaid receipts are up due to the help of **Rick Holloway** and the UPL. Medicare revenues have gone down because of a new Medicare residential facility that has opened in Lewiston. The facility is also paying higher wages, so some employees have left.
3. New dietary services manager is doing a great job keeping food costs at a level amount even when the census increases.
4. Local citizens raised over \$10,000 to remodel the "Butterfly Room". The room is a quiet place for families to gather while their veteran is in their final days.
5. Oxygen tank is scheduled to arrive for installation this week. IT Room under construction. Fire barrier will be completed in the next 3 weeks. Chapel construction will be the next upcoming project.

6. Live Community-Wide Evacuation Drill with area Emergency Services took place in September. FEMA representative sent a personal email saying he was VERY impressed with the way the Lewiston Home Staff handled the drill.
7. A challenge to cut call out hours was issued from Mark to the Nursing Staff. He will personally pay for a BBQ for the staff because they cut call out hours from 440 the previous month to 220 in September. Will continue to come up with innovative ideas to keep these hours down.
8. Slide show was shown highlighting special resident activities over the last few months.

Veterans Cemetery Report presented by **James Earp**

1. There were 201 internments for the first quarter of FY19.
2. All available columbarium niches in Wall C will be completed by the end of October. Future internments will be in the expanded sections of Wall E.
3. Internment revenue is up 14% for the same quarter last year to \$173,426.00
4. New burial plot allowance effective October 1, 2018 is now \$780.00.
5. IDVS IT team has created a solution to the VA's internment updates to the on-site grave locator kiosk. The VA system was down for almost 7 months, but our in-house solution now allows our staff to make internment updates.
6. The VA awarded a grant for FY19 to establish the Veterans Cemetery in Southeastern Idaho. The initial project amount is estimated at \$7.4 million; the actual grant will be based on the final costs of construction.

Office of Veterans Advocacy Report presented by **Kelly McCarthy**

1. OVA Service Officer **Bob Cooper** in Lewiston has retired, and former Fremont County service officer **Stacy Whitmore** has been hired to fill his position.
2. Tri-Care Dental program for retirees expires 12/31/18. OVA is doing all possible to let retirees know that they MUST reenroll in the new program, there is not an automatic rollover.
3. Idaho Tax Commission has announced a property tax reduction of up to \$1320 for 100% service related disability.
4. Currently discussing changes to the rules for the Idaho War Veteran's Emergency Grant program. The current IDVS rules are so restrictive that zero emergency grants were issued in FY18 and only 6 were approved in FY17.
5. 2018 Women Veterans Conference will take place in Boise on Saturday, October 21, 2018.

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

1. The Veterans Education Bureau (VEB) operates on the Federal fiscal calendar so report information reflects FY18.
2. Currently there are 330 VA approved facilities in Idaho, with 11 more pending. Categories include Institutes of Higher Learning or IHL (Colleges/Universities), Not 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 FY18 VEB processed 1,055 changes. Each program at an IHL needs to be reapproved, if for example they have a fee increase.
4. Made 109 on-site visits during FY18 to gather information or make inspections for VA approvals.
5. We are targeting more certifications for OJT and Apprenticeship Programs. That is where the job demand is – skills not degrees.
6. Trying to get Administrative Assistant **Tonya Erhardt** certified to make approvals. She is qualified, and it would speed up the process.

Division Headquarters Report presented by Tracy Schaner

1. Idaho should be on the priority list for the Federal FY19 to receive a grant opportunity for a fourth Veterans Home. The grants priority list is expected to be released in January. Currently working to complete the required deliverables to better position IDVS to move forward with a fourth Veterans Home.
2. We are examining the rules related to County Service Officer training.
3. Also looking at submitting temporary rules change related to technical corrections and simplifying the eligibility criteria for our Emergency Relief Grants

Chief Administrator Marv Hagedorn Comments

1. IDVS will be creating the position of a Business Operations Manager in the Central Support Office to manage and mentor the "business" side of IDVS which includes IT, Finance, Purchasing and HR staff. Deputy Administrator **Tracy Schaner** will focus on the management of the Veteran Homes – including a possible new home in Post Falls. Cemetery Bureau Chief **James Earp** will focus not only on the Boise Veterans Cemetery, but also the building of the new Cemetery in Blackfoot.
2. IDVS Job Positions will be examined to make sure job descriptions reflect the true job individuals are performing. Positions will be reclassified if necessary. Employee recognition and retention is a top priority for IDVS.
3. Wants to make sure the Legislators know more about what IDVS does. Making a point of bringing Legislators to the Boise Home to meet residents, so they realize their decisions are affecting real people.
4. We will examine the cost of sending Commissioners to visit the Lewiston Home because it is valuable and will be less expensive than having the entire IVAC meeting in North Idaho (because of transportation costs).
5. Our own rules (IDVS) are so restrictive for awarding Idaho War Veteran's Emergency Grants, we will be looking at revising the rules. The legislature gives us \$30,000.00 each year but we have not been awarding those funds because of our own rules.
6. IDVS will continue to work with the legislature to get military experience transferable to civilian certification in various job categories. Many certifications are dictated by State statute.
7. **Tracy Schaner** and the entire IDVS staff have done an amazing job while being without an Administrator for an extended period. Thank you for her leadership and the great teamwork from everyone.

8. IDVS needs to provide more outreach to public so our Veterans know what IDVS does. We would like to implement a video and/or audio recording for future IVAC meetings, so the public can have more detailed information about what is going on. We will be increasing our social media presence to get the word out. We need to work more closely with the VFW, American Legion, and MOAA to get the information out – not only to their leaderships – but also to their memberships.

Adjournment

Chairman **Melvin Napier** moved that the meeting be adjourned, and this was agreed upon at 11:26 a.m.

Administrative Assistant
Idaho Division of Veteran Services

Date Completed