

MINUTES
COUNCIL ON VETERANS PROGRAMS
Meeting of August 22, 2014
Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs
201 W. Washington Ave. Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Members

Fernando Rodriguez, AGIF (excused)
Paul Fisk, American Legion (excused)
David Schmidt, AMVETS
Mike Soehner, American Red Cross (excused)
Paul Fine, ANU (excused)
Gary Traynor, Blind Veterans Assoc. (excused)
Bill Rosenau, CVSOA
Al Labelle, DAV
Ben Berlin, JWV (excused)
William Lobeck, MOPH (absent)
Brian Yount, MCL (absent)
Roger Fetterly, MOAA
Russ Alsteen, NCUSA
John Recklies PLAV
Ken Ness, PVA
Lenny Shier, TREA (excused)
Russell Collins, USSVWWII (absent)
Ashley Natysin, UWV
Mike Furgal, VFW
Robert Piaro, VVA
Rich Peters, VVAW
Mike Gourlie, WACVO (Arrived at 10:25)
Bill Hustad, WVV
Don Heiliger, Am. Ex-POWs (excused)
CWV (inactive)
NABV (inactive)

WDVA Present

Michael Trepanier, Deputy Secretary
Kathleen Marschman, Assistant Deputy Secretary
Jim Parker, Office of Budget, Finance and Facilities
Ken Grant, Administrator, Veterans Services
Nancy Crawford, Veterans Accelerated Certification

1. Call to order, roll call of members and introduction of guests

The meeting of the Council on Veterans Programs was called to order by Chairman Roger Fetterly at 10:08 a.m. Roll call; 12 members present—not a quorum. Meeting continued as a conference, no action was taken until a quorum was present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence observed in remembrance of fallen comrades and POW's.

3. Certification of notice of meeting

The meeting was certified by Julie Van Metre as being properly noticed.

4. Council communications;

Council Chairman made a request to Patricia Martin at VISN12 (Veterans Integrated Service Network) to provide a representative to give the Council an update on VA Healthcare activities at Wisconsin hospitals and clinics. Ms. Martin, assistant to VA Administrators Renee Oshinski and Robin Olsen, sent regrets saying that vacations and prior commitments precluded attending our meeting, but looked forward to attending a future meeting.

5. Update from the Department on Veterans Programs.

Deputy Secretary Michael Trepanier introduced staff members who gave briefings as follows:

Budget, Finance and Facilities – Jim Parker: Described the biennial budget process and the Department's work on recommendations for the 2015-17 budget due to the Department of Administration by September 15th. DOA's budget instructions require that a zero percent budget increase be submitted.

Administrative Rule for Grants to Non-profit Organizations – Kathleen Marschman. Reviewed the rules for implementation of grants to non-profit organizations that provide financial assistance or other services to Wisconsin veterans and their dependents, as authorized under s. 45.46, Wis. Stats. Application forms will be available on line beginning in September.

National Governor's Association Veterans Institute Presentation – Nancy Crawford: Provided an update on the Wisconsin's Proposal to Accelerate Pathways for Veterans' Licensing and Certification made possible by a grant from the National Governor's Association to recognize military training and experience toward civilian licensed occupations. Its purpose is to reduce unemployment and fill high-demand jobs for separating military personnel. The goals of the project team assembled to implement the proposal are:

- Reduce the number of veterans who are on unemployment
- Reduce the time that veterans receive unemployment
- Reduce the time from separation to employment with appropriate licensure
- Measure the effectiveness of the licensing and certification demonstration
- Development of programs which can be replicated by other states or adapted for other occupations

The project team is continuing to work on the following three occupations to accelerate veterans licensing and certification:

- Registered Nurse (RN): Refocused from LPN to RN offered by Herzing University accelerated program
- Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
- Law enforcement (LEAD)

WDVA and the team are encouraging participation by members of professional associations, professional licensing boards, major employers, post-secondary schools, veterans service organizations, and government officials to be part of the discussion about accelerating pathways to licensing and credentialing for Wisconsin veterans.

Veterans Services – Ken Grant provided an update on:

- Statistics on veterans unemployment in Wisconsin
- Homelessness, “House a vet”, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program
- Outreach and Veterans Benefits Expos

Note: At 10:25 Mike Gourlie arrived, a quorum is present, the Council convened in regular session.

6. Action on minutes of April 14, 2014 COVP meeting

Moved by Al Labelle, second by Bob Piaro to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2014 Council on Veterans Programs meeting. Motion carried.

7. Election of COVP officers for 2014-15.

Nominations for the Chair. Dave Schmidt nominated Bob Piaro. There were no further nominations. Russ Alsteen moved that a unanimous ballot be cast for Bob Piaro. Motion carried. Bob Piaro declared Chair of COVP for 2014-15.

Nominations for Vice-Chair. Russ Alsteen nominated Michael Gourlie. Bob Piaro nominated Dave Schmidt. There were no further nominations. Michael Gourlie requested that his name be removed from consideration. Russ Alsteen moved that a unanimous ballot be cast for Dave Schmidt. Motion carried. Dave Schmidt declared Vice-chair of COVP for 2014-15.

Nominations for Secretary. Bob Piaro nominated Ken Ness. There were no further nominations. Russ Alsteen moved that a unanimous ballot be cast for Ken Ness. Motion carried. Ken Ness declared Secretary of COVP for 2014-15.

8. VSO Resolutions.

- a. Motion by Mike Furgal, second by Bob Piaro to support VFW Resolution – Veterans in the Classroom Initiative (2001 Wisconsin Act 16.) The Resolution requests that DPI provide documentation of Veterans in the Classroom activities since 2001. Motion Carried.
- b. Motion by Mike Furgal, second by Al Labelle to support VFW Resolution – Veterans Trust Fund. The Resolution urges that lawmaker and candidates be encouraged to work hard and communicate to veterans their leadership effectiveness in replenishing the Veterans Trust Fund. Motion carried.
- c. Al Labelle introduced the following 2014-15 Wisconsin DAV legislative priorities:
 - Expansion of Wisconsin GI Bill eligibility to include spouses and dependents of veterans with service-connected disability ratings of 30% or greater who have resided in Wisconsin for 5 consecutive years. (Resolution 2014-45)
 - Increase employment of veterans with service-connected disability ratings in state government by codifying Executive Order #137 into the Wisconsin state statutes. (Resolution 2014-48)

- Ensure that State Independent Contractors are governed by the same employment requirements for veterans with service-connected disability ratings of 30% or greater as State Agencies. (Resolution 2014-49)
- Support the enhancement of the state-wide goal for Wisconsin's Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Program (Resolution 2014-47)
- Increase awareness and effectiveness for the Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Program (Resolution 2014-46)

9. Update on Milwaukee Fisher House.

Russ Alsteen reported that Fisher House Wisconsin broke ground on June 3, 2014 on the grounds of the Milwaukee VA Hospital and held a fund raiser at a Milwaukee Brewers ball game at Milwaukee County Stadium. It is expected that the Fisher House will be open for occupancy by veterans by the summer of 2015.

10. Report on veterans legislation from the 2013-14 legislative session.

A summary of veterans legislation enacted into law was made available to members.

11. Wisconsin Veterans Courts.

In a report provided by Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson, Wisconsin has at least 17 Veterans treatment courts in 33 counties which increased from 11 programs in 27 counties in 2012. Dane County was added to the list in July 2014.

12. Proposed Protocol on Electronic Communications.

Motion by Mike Furgal, second by Dave Schmidt to adopt the Protocol on Electronic Communications. Discussion ended when 2 members asked to be excused to meet other commitments, which resulted in a loss of a quorum.

13. Council members' matters not subject to adoption

Numerous members expressed their concerns about the large number of absentees which make it difficult to conduct Council business. It was the general consensus that all members have an obligation to represent their respective organization on veterans issues by making every effort to participate in Council meetings and fulfill its statutory mission.

Al Labelle gave a detailed analysis on the Veterans' Access to Care Act of 2014 and provided a handout explaining the legislation intended to correct the shortcoming in the current VA's health care delivery system.

14. Public input.

No one came forward to provide public input.

15. Future meeting

The next meeting will be scheduled on the call of the newly elected Chair.

16. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Roger Fetterly
Chair