



VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

May 17, 2012

I. Call to Order – Don Beasley, Chairman

The regular meeting of the Veterans Affairs Commission was called to order by Don Beasley, Chairman, at 9:00 a.m., on Thursday, May 17, 2012. The meeting was held in Carville, Louisiana, at the Louisiana National Guard, Gillis W. Long Center in conjunction with the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs (LDVA) Annual Veterans Assistance Counselors (VAC) Training Conference. The pledge of allegiance was led by Ms. Lonnette, followed by prayer by Mrs. Wilkewitz. Roll call was conducted by the Chairman. Mr. Carroll Knott's absence was noted as excused due to illness.

Present: Don Beasley, Charles Huggins, Russell Henry, Sulanda Lonnette, Rudy Bourg, Richard Garner, Lee Richard, and Precilla Wilkewitz.

LDVA STAFF: Lane Carson, Secretary; David LaCerte, Deputy Secretary; Tom Burbank, Undersecretary; Richard Blackwell, Deputy Assistant Secretary/Benefits; Kevin Butler, Deputy Assistant Secretary/Homes; Robin Keller, Press Secretary; Don Howard, Troops to Teachers Director; and Charmagne Scott, Administrative Assistant

Guests: Mrs. Rudy Bourg, Mrs. Mary Henry, Ms. Delores Guillory, and Mrs. Betty Garner

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the February 15, 2012, meeting had previously been distributed to the Commissioners for review. It was motioned by Mr. Richard, seconded by Mr. Henry, to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion passed, with Commissioner Knott absent for the vote.

III. Division/Program Reports

Fiscal/Human Resources. Mr. Burbank briefed on the Fiscal and Human Resources divisions per handout. The operating budget as of May 3, 2012, reflected a Table of Organization (TO) of 825; 83.7% of budget expended; and 16.3% free budget. No budgetary issues were noted. The full-time employee personnel status report (excluding the Veterans Homes), as of May 4, 2012, reflected two current vacancies: Human

Resources Director (Administrative Office) and Horticultural Attendant (Northwest LA Veterans Cemetery/Keithville). Another vacancy noted was in Calcasieu Parish (not shown on the report) due to the retirement of Michael Palmer. Mr. LaCerte stated this position will be filled. Interviews have been held for the HR Director position and an appointment is expected soon. It was motioned by Mrs. Wilkewitz, seconded by Ms. Lonnette, to approve the Fiscal/Human Resources reports as presented. The motion passed, with Commissioner Knott absent for the vote.

State Veterans Homes (Mr. Butler). The State Veterans Home System Report noted the following developments as of May 17, 2012:

- All five homes are 93.8% occupied collectively, which is a decrease in census over the last quarter.
- Implementation of the electronic software program for medical records at all five homes is anticipated for completion by September 2012.
- All Veterans Homes Administrators attended the National Association of State Veterans Homes 2012 Winter Conference in Washington, DC, which afforded them the opportunity to meet with federal VA officials to discuss recent VA surveys and other concerns.
- The LWVH/Jackson has averaged the highest Medicare census of all the homes this year.
- Census growth has been an area of concern at the NELWVH/Monroe due to a decrease in demand for services over the last year. Better communication with local hospitals and the Bossier City VA Clinic have increased referrals to the facility.
- A new Director of Nursing has been hired at the SWLWVH/Jennings, effective April 2012. This facility has also been awarded a generator replacement contract and installation should occur within the next 90 days.
- A federal VA survey was recently conducted at the NWLWVH/Bossier City with no deficiencies noted.
- The Director of Nursing at the SELWVH/Reserve has submitted her resignation effective the end of May.

CENSUS STATS PER HOME (as of May 17, 2012)

Facility	Bed Capacity	Current Census	Available Beds
LWVH/Jackson	161	143	18
NELWVH/Monroe	156	139	17
SWLWVH/Jennings	156	145	11
NWLWVH/Bossier City	156	147	9
SELWVH/Reserve	156	147	9

In other comments, Mr. Burbank stated a request for Capital Outlay funding has been submitted for improvements at the Veterans Homes.

It was motioned by Mr. Henry, seconded by Mr. Richard, to approve the State Veterans Homes Report as presented. The motion passed unanimously, with Commissioner Knott absent for the vote.

State Cemeteries (Mr. Burbank). Handouts of the Facility Access Report for the Northwest LA Veterans Cemetery/Keithville and the Central LA Veterans Cemetery/Leesville were distributed. The reports reflected totals of 172 gravesites maintained at the Keithville facility and 29 gravesites maintained at the Leesville facility for FY 2012, as of May 16, 2012. Mr. Burbank also briefed on the third veterans cemetery to be located at the Louisiana National Guard/Camp Villere in Slidell. He displayed engineer's drawings of the proposed cemetery site and stated that documents required by the federal VA are being submitted timely. Mr. Burbank concluded his report by announcing Memorial Day Services will be held at the Leesville cemetery on May 25 at 11am and on May 28 at 12N at the Keithville cemetery.

It was motioned by Mr. Bourg, seconded by Mr. Henry, to approve the report on the Northwest and Central LA Veterans Cemeteries as presented. The motion passed unanimously, with Commissioner Knott absent for the vote.

Troops to Teachers (Mr. Howard). The Troops to Teachers standard report reflected accomplishments from January 1-March 31, 2012. During this time period, one teacher was hired in the Morehouse School District; two state conferences were attended; and nineteen (19) outreach visits were made to school administrators and military installations. Mr. Howard noted that 80% of the Troops to Teachers participants are males. Mr. Howard also announced his plans to participate in upcoming events at Fort Polk (May 22) and Barksdale AFB in June.

It was motioned by Mrs. Wilkewitz, seconded by Mr. Bourg, to approve the Troops to Teachers report as submitted. The motion passed unanimously, with Commissioner Knott absent for the vote.

Military Family Assistance Fund (Mr. Blackwell). A handout showing the fund balance, donations, and expenditures to date as of May 9, 2012, was reviewed. Mr. Blackwell also mentioned there will be upcoming deployments next year, and Mr. LaCerte stated that proposed bills are currently being considered by the Louisiana Legislature that will expand the eligibility requirements for need-based claims. If passed, those bills will be briefed on at the next meeting.

FUND SUMMARY:

Starting Balance (July 1, 2011)	\$474,272.87
Donations to date	\$107,070.44
Expenditures to date	\$38,174.42
Fund Balance (as of February 13, 2012)	\$543,168.89

It was motioned by Mrs. Wilkewitz, seconded by Mr. Bourg, to approve the MFAF report as presented. The motion passed unanimously, with Commissioner Knott absent for the vote.

Public Relations/Outreach. Via handout, Ms. Keller briefed on the following topics:

- **LDVA Mobile Unit.** A 2012, 28-foot Tioga RV was donated to the LDVA from funds raised by Cooking in Central. Funds will also pay for a full vehicle graphic design wrap as displayed in a rendering circulated for the Commissioners' review. The mobile unit will be used for outreach services to rural areas and a visual presence at statewide events such as conferences, job fairs, etc.
- **Memorial Day 2012.** A copy of a press release from Secretary Carson was provided. The release highlighted the *LDVA Tribute to Louisiana's Fallen Heroes* poster, created to feature the photo, name, rank, date of death, and hometown of all 131 Louisiana military personnel who have died since September 11, 2001. The poster will be displayed at various statewide locations and Memorial Day events. A copy of the poster was also sent to all state legislators.
- **MFAF.** The annual fundraising campaign concluded on May 15. Information on the funding totals will not be released until fall 2012.
- **LDVA Website.** The website is currently undergoing a redesign that will be more user-friendly and offer online forms.
- **Other Matters.** The Vernon Parish Veterans Service Office in Leesville recently moved to a new location; a ribbon-cutting event will be held in June. The Women's Veterans Conference has been tentatively scheduled for October at the VA Medical Center in Shreveport. Mrs. Wilkewitz encouraged the Commissioners to help spread the word about the conference to help ensure maximum attendance. The LDVA newsletter, to be released July 1, will feature an end-of-session summary of all veteran legislation.

It was motioned by Mr. Richard, seconded by Ms. Lonnette, to accept the Public Relations/Outreach report as presented. The motion passed unanimously, with Commissioner Knott absent for the vote.

IV. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting date was set for Tuesday, August 7, 2012, 10:00am, at the LDVA Administrative Office in Baton Rouge.

V. Other Matters

- Mr. LaCerte briefed via handouts on the veteran/military related legislation and resolutions currently being considered during the 2012 legislative session. Some of the LDVA-sponsored bills and resolutions include veterans designation on drivers' licenses and ID cards; licensure of individuals with military training and their spouses; eligibility requirements for disability benefits for National Guard troops during an active duty deployment; establishment of a Veterans Business Enterprise

Program; feasibility study of Veterans Treatment Courts; and the creation of the Louisiana Military Advisory Council.

- Mr. Bourg stated AMVETS has applied for a grant for a carillon at the Leesville cemetery.
- The Commissioners announced the following state convention dates for their respective organizations:
 - **DAV**, May 17-19, Lafayette
 - **MOPH**, May 18-19, Covington
 - **AMVETS**, June 6-7, Hammond
 - **American Legion**, June 7-10, Alexandria
 - **VPW**, June 21-24, Alexandria
- Ms. Lonnette is coordinating with Ms. Keller and Mr. Mike McNaughton, Veterans Outreach Director, on the donation of computers from the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP).
- Mr. Henry announced the VA Mobile Unit Clinic will open in Lake Charles the week of May 21st and operate three days a week. He also announced the Wounded Warriors Amputee Softball Team will be in Louisiana on July 13-14 for two games. A free luncheon sponsored by Mrs. Mary Henry will be held at the local post on July 14.
- Secretary Carson invited the Commissioners to participate in the remainder of activities during the Annual Veterans Assistance Counselors Training Conference, if their schedules permit.

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business to be brought before the Veterans Affairs Commission, it was motioned by Mrs. Wilkewitz, seconded by Mr. Bourg, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

/s/ Don A. Beasley, Chairman

/s/ Lane A. Carson, Secretary

08/07/2012

Date of Approval

Minutes submitted by Charmagne Scott, AA6. Copies of all handouts are filed with the Commission minutes.