

APPROVED MINUTES
South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting
November 16-17, 2015
RedRossa - Pierre, SD

The meeting of the South Dakota Veterans Commission was called to order at 1:00 pm (CT) on Monday, November 16, 2015, by Chairman Birnbaum. The meeting was held in the Prairie Room of the RedRossa Italian Grille in Pierre, SD.

Chairman Birnbaum noted that all legal requirements as outlined in SDCL 1-25-1 and 1-25-1.1 were met with regard to this meeting.

Roll Call - Commissioners present were: Mike Birnbaum, Helen Parr, KC Russell, Jim Ross and Lori Vosika.

Staff Present: Secretary Larry Zimmerman, Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard, Audry Ricketts, and Program Manager Steve Oliva.

Guests: Lorie Martinec (South Dakota Municipal League), Bob Wilcox (South Dakota Association of County Officials and Commissioners) and Tom Thompson (South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources).

Review of Agenda – Chairman Birnbaum asked if there were any additions or changes for the proposed agenda. Commissioner Vosika asked that there be some discussion on the Veterans Choice program. A motion was made by Commissioner Russell, seconded by Commissioner Ross, to approve the agenda as presented with the addition of the discussion on Veterans Choice. Motion carried.

Consideration of Minutes – Chairman Birnbaum asked the Commission how they wished to handle the January 29, 2015, Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Russell moved approval of the January 29, 2015, Commission meeting minutes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Parr and motion carried.

Review of Veterans Preference – Chairman Birnbaum called on Secretary Larry Zimmerman to review SDCL 3-3-1 through 3-3-8 – Veterans Preference. Zimmerman also thanked the Commissioners and staff that worked on collecting data from other states regarding their veteran's preference laws and practices. Zimmerman commended South Dakota for tracking the number of veterans employed by the state. He noted that very few states do that. Zimmerman also reviewed the study that was done by the Department in 2008, as well legislation that was being proposed for 2015 by Representative Deutsch. Secretary Zimmerman also reviewed the legislative issues that the South Dakota Veterans Service Officers Association and the veterans service organizations might bring forward in 2016.

Presentations were then made by Mike Ortner and Bob Wilcox (South Dakota Association of County Officials and Commissioners), Lorie Martinec (South Dakota Municipal League), and Tom Thompson (South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources). Each reported on how their respective entities were handling veteran's preference. Each presenter addressed suggestive changes and provided the Commission and Department with forums and avenues to educate their members and entities. Secretary Zimmerman shared a report that had been received from Rob Munson of the South Dakota School Administrators.

Consensus was that we need to focus more on education and awareness, and encourage municipalities, counties and schools to follow the model that the State of South Dakota uses. Commissioners agreed that all that DD214/214R/NGB22 forms should be required to be submitted with application as proof of service.

Commission meeting recessed at 5:00 pm

Meeting reconvened at 8:00 am with the following Commissioners present: Mike Birnbaum, Helen Parr, KC Russell, Jim Ross and Lori Vosika.

Cemetery Updates – Chairman Birnbaum reviewed information he had received from the National Cemetery Administration with regard to cemetery establishment criteria as well as the grants program. No action was taken.

Review of Boards and Commissions Portal - Chairman Birnbaum reviewed existing content on the Veterans Commission section of the Boards and Commissions Portal and asked the Commissioners to review it and forward any suggestions they would like to see added to our respective section. No action was taken.

SDDVA Update – Chairman Birnbaum called on Secretary Zimmerman. Secretary Zimmerman briefed the Commission on Department activities, the new State Veterans Home, the legislative breakfast, the Korean Peace Medal program, and legislation that associations, organizations, and legislators might be bringing forward in the 2016 legislative session. No action was taken.

Old Business – no old business.

Commissioner Vosika briefed the Commission and staff on the challenges that veterans are experiencing with the Veterans Choice Act.

New Business – Chairman Birnbaum noted that the Commission needed to discuss and study their role. Commissioners noted that the Council is doing a lot of the things the Commission used to do and that with a Department Secretary that has constant contact with the Governor, the role of the commission has changed.

Election of Officers – Chairman Birnbaum noted that the Commission needed to select new leadership for the Commission. Chairman Birnbaum then opened the floor for nominations for chairman. Commissioner Russell made a motion to nominate Jim Ross for chairman; Commissioner Vosika seconded the nomination and motion carried. Chairman Birnbaum then opened the floor for nominations for vice chairman. Commissioner Vosika nominated Helen Parr for vice chairman, and made a motion that the nominations cease. Commissioner Russell seconded the motion and motion carried.

A motion was made by Commissioner Ross, seconded by Commissioner Parr to adjourn. Motion carried and meeting adjourned at 11:51 am (CT).

Mike Birnbaum, Chairman