

**APPROVED**  
**South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting**  
**October 29, 2013**  
**Highlands Room - Redrossa – Pierre, SD**

The meeting of the South Dakota Veterans Commission was called to order at 8:00 am (CT) on Tuesday, October 29, 2013, in the Highlands Room at the Redrossa in Pierre, SD, by Chairman Russell.

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

Chairman Russell led the commission and guests in the pledge of allegiance.

**Roll Call** - Commissioners present were: Mike Birnbaum, Wade Hubbard, Gene Murphy, Jim Ross, and KC Russell.

Staff Present: Secretary Zimmerman, Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard, Public Information Officer Audry Ricketts and Veterans Field Supervisor Larry Person.

Guests Present: Dennis Foell (DAV).

**Review of Agenda** – Chairman Russell asked if there were any additions or changes for the proposed agenda. Commissioner Birnbaum asked that “Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman” be added to the agenda. Commissioner Birnbaum made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Murphy, to approve the agenda with the addition of election of chairman and vice chairman. Motion carried.

**Consideration of Minutes** – Chairman Russell asked the Commission how they wished to handle the March 21, 2013, Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Murphy moved approval of the March 21, 2013, Commission meeting minutes as presented. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hubbard and motion carried.

**Department Report** – Chairman Russell called on Secretary Zimmerman. Secretary Zimmerman welcomed all those in attendance and thanked them for what they are doing. Zimmerman then updated the Commission on the Department’s reorganization, the Department’s new website, the goal of reaching South Dakota’s 75,000 veterans and the proposed outreach efforts, room occupancy at the State Veterans Home, VA regulations on veterans using nursing homes, State Veterans Home eligibility for enrolled veterans who are tribal members, construction project at the Claims Office, and the new State Veterans Home project.

**Legislative Update** – Chairman Russell called on Secretary Zimmerman. Secretary Zimmerman briefed the Commission on the upcoming Legislative Breakfast scheduled for January 31, 2014. Secretary Zimmerman then reviewed legislative changes that the Department of Revenue is proposing. Discussion ensued regarding DOR’s proposed changes.

**East River Veterans Cemetery** – Chairman Russell called on Larry Person. Person reviewed information the Department had obtained from Vital Statistics. Discussion ensued regarding criteria for national, state

and tribal cemeteries. Secretary Zimmerman noted that this is not on the radar screen at this time for the Department and that all focus is on the West River State Veterans Home.

**Study of Delivery of Services to Veterans** – Chairman Russell called on Secretary Zimmerman.

Zimmerman reviewed the findings and recommendations of the task force. He noted copies of the report would be sent to the commissioners. Commissioner Hubbard who served on the task force said he walked away with two things --- the need to communicate the economic impact that can be generated to county commissioners and to legislators.

**VA Backlog** – Chairman Russell called on Deputy Secretary Pollard for an update on the VA backlog. Pollard updated the Commission on the backlog and reviewed the number of brokered case the Department assisted with. Secretary Zimmerman and the Commissioners commended Aaron and his staff for their dedication and commitment to this project.

**ADA Accessibility at DVA** – The Commission discussed their concerns with the inability for all veterans to get upstairs to the field staff and to view the Medal of Honor Wall. Staff will visit with BOA regarding these concerns.

**Veterans Commission Role** – Chairman Russell called on Secretary Zimmerman. Zimmerman noted that he had changed the vision and mission of the Department and thought it was appropriate for the Commission to review theirs to see if it needed any changes. After considerable discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Birnbaum, seconded by Commissioner Murphy, that Secretary Zimmerman, Chairman Russell and Commissioner Hubbard meet with the Lt. Governor to discuss the role of the Commission. Motion carried.

**Old Business** – Chairman Russell asked if there was any old business. No old business was presented.

**Election of Officers** – Chairman Russell noted that the Commission needed to select new leadership for the Commission. Chairman Russell then opened the floor for nominations for chairman. Commissioner Murphy nominated Wade Hubbard for chairman, Commissioner Birnbaum seconded the nomination and voice vote indicated unanimous support for Wade Hubbard for chairman. Chairman Russell then opened the floor for nominations for vice chairman. Commissioner Ross nominated Mike Birnbaum for vice chairman, seconded by Commissioner Hubbard. A voice vote indicated unanimous support for Mike Birnbaum for vice chairman. Chairman Russell indicated these individuals will take office January 1, 2014.

Commissioners commended Commissioner Murphy for his recent recognition of “Veteran of the Year” and his never ending commitment to South Dakota’s veterans.

Meeting adjourned at 11:53 am

KC Russell, Chairman