

South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting
American Legion Post #8
Log Cabin, Pierre, SD 57501
January 27-28, 2003

The Commission Meeting was called to order by Chairman Keith Goodhope at 12:50 P.M. January 27, 2003. Chairman Goodhope led all gathered in the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Goodhope requested that everyone in the room introduce themselves.

Agenda item changes were discussed and Director Foell requested that George Summerside, SDDVA Education, be inserted as item #7D on the agenda. Request approved.

Chairman Goodhope requested that the Commission draft a resolution of support for Mr. Ron Porzio, Former Director of the VAMROC Sioux Falls. Motion made by Commissioner Loudner, second by Commissioner Locken to draft a resolution. Motion approved.

The minutes from the September 25-26, 2002 Commission Meeting were corrected/amended to include the following: Chairman Loudner questioned Dr. Becker on the status of closing the CBOC's on the Indian Reservations. Dr. Becker stated that the VA would not open the CBOC's at Sisseton and Wagner plus the CBOC at Flandreau would eventually close. Dr. Becker indicated that he had the concurrence of VISN-23 on this.

MG Killey, Adjutant General for South Dakota delivered a comprehensive briefing to the Commission. MG Killey expressed appreciation to the people of South Dakota for their support of National Guard units as they mobilize. MG Killey thanked the Veterans Commission and the various service organizations for their support. MG Killey talked about the funeral for Joe Foss that he had attended on behalf of the South Dakota National Guard and the State of South Dakota. MG Killey described in detail the services that were conducted in Arizona and at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. MG Killey stated that at this point in time he was still not aware of what was being planned at the State level to honor Joe Foss.

MG Killey gave a detailed briefing on the status of the South Dakota Army/Air National Guard. MG Killey spoke about the units that have been mobilized/activated. MG Killey stated that the SD National Guard is ready to carry out the assigned mission. The SD National Guard is rated #1 in the nation for Strength Management. MG Killey stated that B Btry, 147th Field Artillery is the best Army Artillery Battery in the United States. MG Killey indicated that there will be more mobilizations and that the South Dakota National Guard is ready to go to war.

MG Killey spoke about the creation of the Department of Public Safety and the impact that action would have on the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Emergency Management Division will be taken out of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and moved to the Department of Public Safety. MG Killey stated that he is pleased with the operation of the State Veterans' Home and the SD Division of Veterans Affairs. MG Killey spoke briefly about pending legislation at the state level. Finally MG Killey recognized Director Foell for his exceptionally meritorious service to the SDDVA and the veteran community.

Commissioner Loudner thanked MG Killey for his detailed and comprehensive briefing to the Veterans Commission. He also commented on the rousing sendoff that the 200 Engineer Company, SDNG received when activated and underway.

Commissioner Evenson thanked MG Killey for the briefing. Commissioner Evenson wondered what was being done to protect our service personnel from exposure to chemical agents. MG Killey responded that he believes we now have better protection and detection capability than we had 12-13 years ago during the Gulf War.

Chairman Goodhope wondered if a letter of support from the Commission to the deploying units would be appropriate. Chairman Goodhope also questioned what else could be done to support the SD National Guard units. MG Killey spoke in great detail about the National Guard support structure. MG Killey indicated that retired National Guard members provide critical support for the deploying personnel. MG Killey encouraged the Commission Members to attend an activation ceremony to show support.

Mr. Al Janzen, CVSO Codington County, SD indicated that he was interested in doing a program in the Watertown area for the families of National Guard members that are left behind. MG Killey said that he should coordinate his effort with the Battalion Headquarters located in Watertown.

Mr. Ron Boyd, State Adjutant, American Legion spoke about the Family Support Program that the American Legion has in place. MG Killey stated that the SD National Guard has a family coordinator in uniform; but appreciated any assistance provided by service organizations or other entities because Family Support is a must to the National Guard.

Mr. Earl Schultz, Director, SD Veterans Employment & Training spoke about reemployment rights for National Guardsmen. Mr. Schultz also spoke about the problems associated with filling critical positions that had been created by departing guardsmen.

Commissioner Don Clarke thanked the General for the briefing and stated that service organizations stand ready to provide support to deploying National Guard members.

Director Foell indicated that he is in the process of coordinating a meeting with the National Guard to address returning troops/units about veteran's benefits.

Mr. Phil Ringstrom, Team Leader, Sioux Falls Vet Center said that Vet Centers have been given the green light to help returning guardsmen. Mr. Ringstrom indicated that both Vet Centers, Sioux Falls and Rapid City, are willing to provide family support.

At this point Mr. Ron Boyd introduced Mr. Don Mason, National Vice Commander for the American Legion.

Chairman Goodhope thanked MG Killey for the condolence card that was sent to the Joe Foss family on behalf of the Veterans Commission.

Chairman Goodhope spoke about the importance of corresponding with deployed personnel. Chairman Goodhope thanked the General for taking care of the troops. Chairman Goodhope stated that closeness between returning Guard units and VA personnel is essential with respect to claims, healthcare, awards and other matters.

Dr. Robert Petzel, Director, VISN-23 spoke about the CARES process that is currently underway. (See attachment.) Dr. Petzel indicated that the plan for VISN-23 must be submitted by 4/23/03. Dr Petzel also spoke briefly about the establishment of the new Priority Group 8. (See attachment.)

Mr. Al Janzen asked why Watertown was not listed on page #3 of the CARES Handout. Dr. Petzel responded that he would look into this matter.

Commissioner Evenson spoke about the waiting list for VAMC Sioux Falls. Commissioner Evenson stated that a CBOC located at Worthington, MN would provide much needed assistance in removing the backlog from the VAMC Sioux Falls.

Commissioner Clarke asked Dr. Petzel if the towns identified on page #3 of the handout had been consulted on being considered as potential sites for a CBOC. Dr. Petzel responded that no, they had not.

Mr. Walt Lindemann, American Legion Department Commander South Dakota spoke about the utilization of vacant space at the VAMC Hot Springs.

Dr. Petzel spoke about the size of the waiting list at VAMC Sioux Falls 2,255 compared to the waiting list at Minneapolis 20,000. Dr. Petzel also stated that the FY 2003 budget should help to reduce the waiting list at VAMC Sioux Falls. The FY 2003 budget will also help to expand the capacity of the CBOC's at Sioux City and Aberdeen. Commissioner Murphy wanted to know what extra dollars are designated for veterans on the waiting list. Answer \$2.1 million.

Commissioner Evenson had a question about VA healthcare plus Medicare as it would affect Priority Group 8 veterans. Dr. Petzel stated that this is being looked at.

Commissioner Locken expressed concern about Priority Group 5 veterans that might overlook completing the required annual means test. The veterans would then be placed in category 8 and, under the current system, frozen out and unable to reenter. Dr. Petzel responded that yes, they were aware of this problem and are working on a solution.

Commissioner Loudner had several questions for Dr. Petzel. First, what is the status of the MOU between the VA and the Indian Health Service? Second, how many people are on the CARES steering committee and why aren't there any Native Americans? Dr. Petzel responded that he would have to check on the MOU and that he would also have to find out why there were no Native Americans on the CARES Committee.

Commissioner Loudner said that once again he is asking for a detailed listing of VISN 23 personnel that clearly indicates whether or not they are veterans. Commissioner Loudner

emphasized that he has asked for this list repeatedly. Dr. Petzel said that the list would be provided.

Mr. Jerry Lolley, CVSO Meade County, had questions about the veterans that will be returning from Southwest Asia and will the VHA be better prepared to handle Undiagnosed Illnesses and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Dr. Petzel responded that this would not be as large of a problem this time because of the experience gained from the Gulf War.

Commissioner Murphy questioned if the PSL's would be continued. Dr. Petzel responded that the current plan was to discontinue use of the PSL's.

Mr. Joe Dalpiaz, Director/COO BHHCS gave a detailed briefing on his operation to include Staffing/FTEE/Veteran Employment, Budget, Program Initiatives, Clinic Wait Times, Workload, Challenges, Strategic Initiatives and National Mandate-Outsourcing Initiatives. (See attachment.)

Commissioner Murphy wanted to know if the Rapid City Clinic had been capped. Answer: No.

Mr. Jeff Kelso, Facilities Planner, VAMROC Sioux Falls gave a detailed briefing for Dr. Becker, Acting Director, VAMROC. Mr. Kelso spoke about Construction, Personnel, Regional Office Update, Benefit Info for South Dakota, C&P Exam Status, CARES, Enrollment for Healthcare, Waiting Times, Specialty/Primary Care, Emergency Preparedness, Co-managed Care, Budget and Project Update. (See attachment.)

Commissioner Locken had questions about the statistics contained in the Regional Office Update. Commissioner Locken requested that statistics be provided on the claims backlog situation.

Commissioner Evenson spoke about waiting times and priority groups. Commissioner Evenson wanted to know if VAMC Sioux Falls was aware of any unmet healthcare needs to veterans. Mr. Kelso responded that he was unaware that there were any and went on to say that if a veteran presents with an acute/emergency healthcare need the VA will see/assist that veteran regardless of enrollment status/priority group.

Commissioner Murphy had questions about qualifications of Doctors doing C&P Exams and also wanted to know the status of appointing a new Director for VAMROC Sioux Falls? Mr. Kelso responded that he did not know the answer to these questions.

Commissioner Locken spoke about scheduling and no shows.

Commissioner Loudner wanted to know of the 2,300 veterans on the waiting list at Sioux Falls how many want prescriptions. Answer: Do not know because a survey has not been conducted.

National Congressional Delegation Reports/Comments

Director Foell provided a handout that was prepared by Senator Daschle's office. (See attachment.)

Mr. Dave Volk, Representative for Congressman Janklow indicated that the Congressman's staff is in the process of standing up offices in South Dakota.

Commissioner Locken requested that at the next commission meeting a briefing be given on where Congressman Janklow stands on veteran's issues.

Commissioner Loudner requested that an update be provided on the Sioux Code Talkers Bill.

Mr. Volk ended his briefing by stating that Congressman Janklow sits on the following committees: Agriculture, Foreign Relations and Government Reform.

Mr. George Summerside, Supervisor, Veteran's Education SDDVA gave a briefing on the status of education programs. (See attachment.)

Mr. Wayne Vetter thanked George Summerside on behalf of the American Legion for the class he taught to American Legion Post Service Officers at the mid-winter conference.

Ms. Deb Hillmer, Director, SD Division of Motor Vehicles gave a briefing on organizational license plates. Ms. Hillmer spoke about the new specialized flat plates that were being issues, e.g. Purple Heart Plates (provided example.)

Commissioner Loudner asked a question about how many organizations could use the special organizational plates? Ms. Hillmer responded that there are many organizations on the list.

Mr. Ron Boyd, Department Adjutant, SD American Legion stated that he has seen VFW stickers on organizational plates and that the VFW stickers are not authorized. Ms. Hillmer stated that for state purposes special organizational plates do not require a sticker of any kind. The stickers are intended to be a revenue generator for that organization.

Mr. Phil Ringstrom and Mr. Gary Johnson, Team Leaders from the Sioux Falls and Rapid City Vet Centers gave briefings on their respective operations. (See attachment.) Both team leaders spoke about Workload/Personnel, Outreach, Vet Standdown and Homeless Program.

Commissioner Murphy had questions about the Vet Center budget.

Chairman Goodhope spoke about the Moving Wall and the professional manner in which it had been set up at Ghost Hawk Park. Chairman Goodhope stated that on behalf of the Veteran's Commission he wanted to commend everyone that was associated with this project.

Mr. Earl Schultz, Director, SD Veterans Employment and Training (US Department of Labor) spoke about completion of their 2-year calendars and the funding of the Vet Center Standdown.

Veterans Service Organization Leaders Reports/Comments

Mr. Walt Lindemann, State Commander, SD American Legion gave a report for the SD American Legion and began by stating that he disagreed with the remark by MG Killey that the General was the only person representing South Dakota at the Joe Foss funeral in Arizona. Commander Lindemann stated that three American Legion members had traveled to Arizona for the funeral.

Commander Lindemann read a prepared statement for the commission that discussed the 34th Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Pierre, the VA CARES Program and the status of the Department Service Officer (DSO) position. (See attachment.)

After reading the prepared statement Commander Lindemann read comments that he had prepared regarding the status of the Department Service Officer (DSO). Commander Lindemann spoke about how the SD American Legion was not being allowed to place an independent service officer in the SDDVA Claims Office. Commander Lindemann spoke about his dissatisfaction with a memorandum of agreement (MOA) that had been drawn up by the SDDVA. This MOA was drawn up to clarify the working relationship between the American Legion DSO and the SDDVA Claims Office. Commander Lindemann stated that because of his lack of cooperation it is time that Dennis Foell be transferred out of his job as the Director, SDDVA. Commander Lindemann went on to say that he nominates Mr. Jim Deremo as a replacement.

Commissioner Murphy stated that the commission should adjourn for the day and discuss this matter in the morning.

Chairman Goodhope asked Commander Lindemann what he meant by the statement that the South Dakota Division of Veterans Affairs is not adequately representing Veterans of South Dakota.

Commissioner Evenson requested an executive session to discuss these matters.

Commissioner Locken asked Commander Lindemann what it is that is not being done to represent claims by the SDDVA.

Commander Lindemann was not able to name specific cases but did say that veterans had told him that no one would help them with their denied claims.

Mr. Ron Boyd, State Adjutant, South Dakota American Legion stated that the SDDVA was not conducting a satisfactory Veterans Outreach Program. Mr. Boyd stated that there were poor turnouts at the Veterans Forums conducted during calendar year 2002 and the SDDVA was responsible.

Commissioner Murphy made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Loudner. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 5:50 PM to reconvene at 8:15 AM January 28, 2003.

Chairman Goodhope reconvened the meeting at 8:15 AM on January 28, 2003.

The agenda was revised and Mr. Al Janzen, President SD Association of C/TVSO's gave a report on National Level training that the Association is attempting to host in 2004 at Rapid City, SD. Mr. Janzen reported on fund raising activities currently underway for this training. Chairman Goodhope wondered if the Veterans Commission could help in any way. Mr. Janzen responded that he was not sure.

Mr. Janzen spoke about problems being encountered recruiting C/TVSO's to attend this training.

Commissioner Clarke asked if C/TVSO's could attend either this national level training or the annual SDDVA training held in Pierre. Director Dennis Foell, SDDVA responded that yes, the C/TVSO could attend either training. Director Foell said the state would pay the same rate to attend either training session.

Commissioner Locken spoke at length about the problems being encountered trying to raise funds for this training.

Commissioner Murphy representing the DAV gave a report on CARES, Healthcare, Budget and Personnel. (See attachment.)

Commissioner Murphy also spoke about the retirement of Darrell Jepson from the PVA.

Commissioner Clarke wanted to know if the SDDVA has a position on CARES. Director Foell indicated that the SDDVA has listened and gathered information on the CARES process. Director Foell stated that the SDDVA has taken this information under consideration.

Commissioner Evenson stated that the South Dakota American Legion is taking a keen interest in the CARES process and that once a plan is put into place it will be too late to provide input.

Mr. Rich Schwanke provided greetings to the Commission on behalf of the VFW.

Reports: Division of Veterans Affairs

Director Foell stated that item #14 on the agenda had been cancelled.

Mr. Dennis Foell, Director, South Dakota Division of Veterans Affairs gave a briefing on the current status of the SDDVA to include Budget, Travel Funding, Equipment Additions, Emergency Loan Fund and Pending Legislation. (See attachments.)

Commissioner Clarke asked Director Foell if the SDDVA could adjust the budget to compensate for shortages in certain areas. Answer: "Yes, we have that ability."

Commissioner Loudner had a question about the status of recent loans. Are these loans being repaid? Answer: in some cases.

Mr. Ron Boyd, State Adjutant, South Dakota American Legion wondered why there was a 50% disapproval rate for these loans. Answer: many of the requests do not meet the criteria for emergency loans, e.g. Christmas presents.

Commissioner Clarke asked if, when the Commission reviewed the loans, was the approval/disapproval rate substantially different. Answer: no.

Director Foell spoke about bills/legislation that had been submitted in particular HB 1024 and HB 1025. These bills deal with the protection of DD-24 and changing the ending date for the Gulf War to June 30, 2004. (See attachment.)

Director Foell spoke briefly about the discontinuance of the use of social security numbers by the Department of Defense DOD.

Director Foell spoke about a letter sent to Governor Rounds from VA Secretary Principi. (See attachment.)

Commissioner Loudner requested that he be provided a copy of the state statute that contains the criteria for appointment as a C/TVSO. Commissioner Loudner also spoke briefly about a Town Hall meeting in Gann Valley, Buffalo County.

Commissioner Locken wondered if the Commission should consider requesting a change in the requirements contained in state statute to become a veteran.

Commissioner Evenson stated that he is not in favor of changing state statute that established criteria for being a veteran.

Mr. Dave Wherry, Supervisor, Claims Office SDDVA gave a report on TRIP Training, VA's DGX Report, FY 2003 Defense Authorization Act and personnel scheduled to attend training. (See attachments.)

Mr. Larry Person, Supervisor, Field Office SDDVA spoke about his concern with the operation of the VA Consolidated Pension Maintenance Center in St. Paul, MN.

Mr. Person spoke about the annual C/TVSO School that is scheduled for August 25 - 28, 2003 at the Ramkota, Pierre, SD.

Mr. Person indicated that he is currently coordinating the Spring Mini-Conference with the Claims Office and right now we are looking at the May/June timeframe.

Commissioner Evenson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Murphy to go on record to oppose any type of consolidation of the Regional Office Sioux Falls and the Regional Office Fargo, ND. Motion approved.

Mr. Gene Eiring, Superintendent, State Veterans' Home gave a detailed report to the Commission that addressed Management, Personnel, Business Office, Nursing, Buildings and Grounds, Residents and Resident Services and Outlook. (See attachments.)

Commissioner Clarke complimented Mr. Eiring on his report and thanked him for having Deb Klesack in attendance at the American Legion Mid-Winter Conference. Commissioner Clarke spoke about the admission procedures at the Home. Commissioner Clarke questioned where does the additional pay come from for the employees? Answer: Additional funding comes from the budget (Reserve).

Commissioner Loudner asked Mr. Eiring if he received a copy of the Commission minutes. Answer: Yes. Commissioner Loudner then asked why the Commission wasn't provided with a monthly report on the Food Service Situation. This monthly report was asked for at the September 2002 Commission Meeting at Ft. Meade. Answer: Only received the minutes in January 2003.

Commissioner Loudner went on to say that he is extremely concerned about not receiving information that is asked for by the Commission. Commissioner Loudner stated that if a Commission member asks that information and/or a report be provided, then the Commission expects that some form of action will be taken to honor the request.

Commissioner Locken asked Mr. Eiring how many times has the Veterans Home gone across the state for admission interviews? Answer: Twice. Commissioner Locken wondered if there were any vacancies at the Home. Mr. Eiring responded that when Building #4 opens, there will be vacancies. Commissioner Locken had questions about the budget problems that the Home is facing in the area of prescription drugs and wondered if the Commission could do something to help? Mr. Eiring stated that he was not sure if the Commission could help or not.

Chairman Goodhope spoke about the Veterans' Home budget, Population, Employees and Admission Procedures/Dismissals. Chairman Goodhope is extremely concerned about the admission procedures/criteria for the Home. Chairman Goodhope requested that information be provided on the expanded activities program. Chairman Goodhope wanted information on the current status of the casket program. Mr. Eiring responded that the casket program is an independent program outside of the Home. Mr. Eiring went on to say that the Home will get a casket through this program for residents of the Home. Commissioner Goodhope discussed the article/letter that was written about the food service program.

Commissioner Murphy asked if a survey of food was done with the residents. Answer: This is done on a daily basis. Considering a written survey.

Commissioner Evenson spoke about changes in Home policy and what does that mean. Answer: This was a change in employee policy that deals with the exchange of gifts between residents and employees.

Commissioner Loudner requested the Commission be provided with a report that indicates veteran's name, period of service (era) and county

Chairman Goodhope said that the image of the Home has been tarnished. Chairman Goodhope stated that the Commission started receiving complaints about the Home approximately 1 1/2 years ago.

Mr. Hal Weber stated that he has visited the Home frequently over the past few months and that he has not received any complaints about the food.

Chairman Goodhope indicated that the C/TVSO's need to be encouraged to sit in on the admission interview that is conducted.

Commissioner Locken stated that a veteran needs to be present when the admission interview is taking place.

Chairman Goodhope indicated that the Commission wants to ensure that future Commission Meetings are announced to residents of the Home. Chairman Goodhope said he wants the Resident Council placed on the agenda.

At this point Commissioner Murphy made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Clarke to show support for SB #19 and SB #50. Motion carried.

Chairman Goodhope thanked American Legion Post #8 for hosting this meeting of the Veterans' Commission.

Chairman Goodhope recessed the Commission meeting at 11:20 AM and immediately went into executive session.

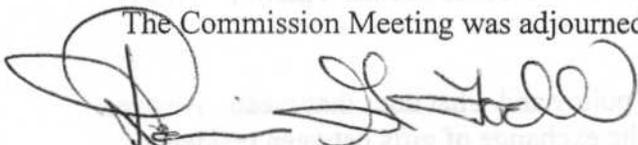
Chairman Goodhope adjourned the executive session at 1:40 PM.

Commissioner Murphy made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Locken to give unanimous support and approval for the job that has been and continues to be done by Director Foell. Motion approved.

Future dates and locations of Commission Meetings for 2003:

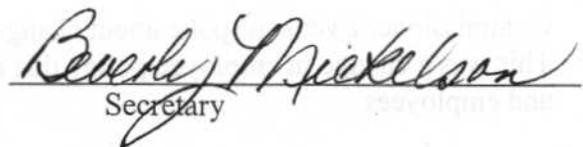
April 30, May 1, 2003	Sioux Falls
July 15-16, 2003	Hot Springs
October 1-2, 2003	Fort Meade

The Commission Meeting was adjourned at 1:45 P.M.



Director, SD Division of Veterans Affairs
2-13-03

Date



Secretary

ATTENDEES, SD Veterans Commission Meeting, January 27-28, 2003 at American Legion
Post #8 Home in Pierre, SD

MG Philip G. Killey	Secretary, DMVA/SDNG
Dennis Foell	Director, SDDVA
Keith Goodhope	Chairman, SD Veterans Commission
Paul Evenson	SD Veterans Commission
Don Clarke	SD Veterans Commission
Bill Locken	SD Veterans Commission
Don Loudner	SD Veterans Commission
Gene A Murphy	SD Veterans Commission
Al Janzen	CVSO, Codington County
Walter F Joynt	SD Veterans Cemeteries Support Council
Kay Rypinski	SD Veterans Cemeteries Support Council
Jeff Kelso	Sioux Falls VAM&ROC
Glenn Hartman	CVSO, Hutchinson County
Ron Boyd	SD American Legion State Adjutant
Walt Lindemann	SD American Legion Commander
Joe Dalpiaz	Black Hills Health Care System, Ft Meade
Wayne Vetter	CVSO, Faulk County/SD American Legion/ Council
Bob Gabrielson	Former Commissioner
Earl R Schultz	State Director, VETS-US DOL
Todd Kolden	SD DOL, State Vets Coord
Bill Bullard	Chapter 18, DAV
Larry Person	SDDVA
Phil Ringstrom	Vet Center, Sioux Falls
Gary Johnson	Vet Center, Rapid City
Jerry Lolley	CVSO, Meade County
Dick Steams	VFW
Dave Morgan	State Fair Veterans Building
Bob Voeltz	Chapter 18, DAV
Myron Zeeck	State Fair Veterans Building
Hal Weber	SD Veterans Council
George Summerside	Veterans Education, SDDVA
Don Mason	National Vice Commander, A.L. Platt, SD
Glenn Green	Pierre
Dr. Robert Petzel	VISN-23 Network Director
Thomas Murphy	Veterans Education, SDDVA
Dave Wherry	Supervisor, SD DVA Claims Office
Dave Parr	SD DVA Claims Office