

SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING
American Legion Post #8, Log Cabin
Pierre, SD 57501 July 15-16, 2003

The Commission Meeting was called to order by Chairman Keith Goodhope at 12:45 P.M. Chairman Goodhope led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance and then asked everyone in the room to introduce themselves.

Chairman Goodhope spoke about a letter he had received from a service member stationed in Iraq. He indicated that he had been corresponding with this service member for some time.

Chairman Goodhope spoke about letters that had been signed by the Governor. These letters addressed the issues of Healthcare Funding, Concurrent Receipt and the Pension Maintenance Center.

Chairman Goodhope spoke at length about the letter signed by the Governor, addressed to the President, which discusses the need to establish full concurrent receipt.

Changes to Agenda: Delete item #7D from the agenda.

Minutes of May 22-23, 2003 Commission Meeting: Commissioner Murphy made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Loudner to approve the minutes from the May 22-23, 2003 Commission Meeting. Motion carried.

MG Gorman, The Adjutant General, spoke about the ceremony that is being planned to honor Korean War Veterans at the State Fair. This ceremony with related activities is scheduled for July 27, 2003.

MG Gorman spoke about Army National Guard Unit mobilization status. Currently there are seven units overseas comprised of approximately 790 personnel and four units in CONUS comprised of approximately 200 personnel.

MG Gorman spoke briefly about the difficulties that are being encountered with NOK notifications for KIA's and WIA's. MG Gorman said this is a problem that has been aggravated by our own technology. Some Army troops in the field have access to Sat phones which means they can call CONUS and give immediately information to whomever they choose on battlefield casualties.

MG Gorman also spoke about the demobilization process. Decompression time is considered essential for returning units. The SDNG is currently identifying local assets available for counseling services and any other type of assistance for returning units.

MG Gorman discussed the letter on concurrent receipt that was signed by Governor Rounds and sent to the President urging his support of this legislation.

MG Gorman proposed that the senior leadership of Veterans' Service Organizations have a summit in Pierre once a year. Purpose of this summit would be to discuss veteran issues and other topics deemed appropriate.

MG Gorman said that a flagpole for the POW/MIA Flag would be installed at a prominent site located on Camp Rapid. He also proposed the construction of a POW Memorial in Pierre. MG Gorman asked for the assistance of the various service organizations with this project.

MG Gorman indicated that he would be attending the Annual C/TVSO Training in Pierre that is scheduled for 8/25 -0 8/28/2003.

Commissioner Loudner asked MG Gorman if the POW Memorial would have a list of names?
Answer - Yes.

Chairman Goodhope thanked MG Gorman for the comprehensive briefing provided to the Commission and the audience.

Mr. Dale Bertsch-Governor's Office-Mr. Bertsch spoke about the Korean War commemorative events that are scheduled for the State Fair on 7/27/03. He said that the ceremony to honor Korean Veterans at Pierre would take place sometime in 2004. Mr. Bertsch indicated this ceremony would resemble the WWII event that was held in Pierre and he spoke about working with South Dakota Public Broadcasting and conducting interviews with Korean War Veterans.

Commissioner Clarke wondered if there would be any attempt made to contact Korean War Veterans with information about the ceremony in Pierre. Director Foell responded that the SDDVA would follow the same procedure utilized for the WWII Ceremony.

Commissioner Evenson asked if a specific date had been established for the 2004 Ceremony.
Answer-to be held in either June or September, probably September.

Mr. Steve Gomez spoke about the need to get an accurate list of Korean War KIA's for a book that is being assembled.

Mr. Joe Dalpiaz, Director/COO, BHHCS gave a detailed report on Staffing/FTE's/Veteran Employment, Budget, Program Initiatives, Clinic Waiting Times, Workload, Challenges and other Strategic Initiatives. (See attachment.)

Commissioner Murphy had questions about the equipment list that was provided and how this equipment shortage affects healthcare for veterans.

Commissioner Evenson asked questions about hiring FTE's for security positions. Would this action take away from healthcare? Answer-No.

Commissioner Locken wondered if the Commission Meeting scheduled for October 1-2, 2003 at Ft Meade creates a conflict with VA IG personnel that will be present at BHHCS. Answer-No.

Commissioner Murphy requested that a list of VA approved West River nursing homes be sent to his office. Answer-List will be sent.

Commissioner Murphy had questions about the procedures used to advertise job openings within BHHCS. Commissioner Murphy requested that any announcements for job openings at BHHCS be forwarded to his office.

Commissioner Loudner informed Mr. Dalpiaz that he should be careful with any correspondence that refers to Native Americans, for example utilizing the word "Lakota" incorrectly.

Commissioner Clarke spoke about CARES information and indicated that the Commission can/should support the CARES effort.

Commissioner Loudner thanked Mr. Dalpiaz for the invitation to attend the groundbreaking ceremony at Pine Ridge for the new PTSD clinic.

Ms. Rose Hayslett, Acting Director/COO VAMROC Sioux Falls gave a detailed briefing on construction, regional office, CARES, enrollment, waiting times, CBOC's, budget, projects, equipment and HIPPA. (See attachment.)

Commissioner Murphy asked if anything could be done to provide more lead-time before appointments. Commissioner Murphy indicated that a one-week lead-time is not long enough.

Commissioner Locken spoke about his concerns with HIPPA and just how HIPPA does affect C/TVSO's.

Ms. Hayslett spoke about the low number of veteran hires and indicated that the number of veterans employed by VAMROC Sioux Falls will probably go down as time passes.

Commissioner Murphy requested that a breakdown of waiting times for specialty clinics be provided. Mr. Murphy also requested that he be provided with a list of VA approved nursing homes for the VAMC Sioux Falls catchment area.

Commissioner Murphy had questions about a monetary settlement with the former Director/COO Ron Porzio. Who would be required to pay this settlement? VAMROC Sioux Falls, VISN-23 or VACO? Mr. Rob McDivett, VISN-23 responded that he guaranteed VAMROC Sioux Falls would not have to pay a settlement with Mr. Porzio.

Commissioner Loudner had questions about the VA hiring practices and just how they work? Answer: Hiring is aimed at best qualified for the job.

At this point Director Foell indicated that agenda item #9 should be deleted. Mr. Earl Schultz would not be able to attend the meeting.

Mr. Gene Eiring, Superintendent, Veterans Home gave a briefing on personnel, admissions/ discharges, unit status, budget and significant events. (See attachment.)

Mr. Wayne Vetter, Department Commander, American Legion talked about the tour he had gone on at the Veterans Home. Mr. Vetter said the residents of the home he spoke with gave excellent reviews about the quality of life at the home. He also complimented the staff of the Home for their outstanding service.

Commissioner Clarke read a short letter he had received from a resident of the Home. This veteran was very positive about the Superintendent and his leadership.

Commissioner Locken had questions about VA Healthcare for non-veterans. He asked if the Veterans Home could act as a fiduciary for a resident. Answer-Yes. Mr. Locken asked if there has been a movement at the Home toward prepaid burials. Answer-No. Commissioner Locken wondered if the Veterans Home was in need of and looking for computers? Answer-No.

Commissioner Murphy asked if the budget was adequate for this FY. Answer-Yes.

Commissioner Evenson had questions on the census and wondered if there is enough staff to support the residents. Answer-Yes.

Mr. Rob P. McDivett, COO VISN-23, gave a briefing on VISN Integration, number of Veterans served, backlog & waiting list, FY 03 Budget, FY 03 Collections, VA Enrollment Decisions, CARES Proposals and CARES Hearings.

Commissioner Locken spoke about collection money and how it is misleading in the budget process.

Commissioner Clarke spoke about the uniqueness of South Dakota and how important the CARES process is to the State. He stated that South Dakota cannot afford to lose existing assets.

Commissioner Locken had questions on the number of veterans served that is contained in Mr. McDivett's report. He also had questions about the BHHCS taking over a CBOC located in Nebraska.

Commissioner Murphy wondered if Mr. McDivett could tell him who was going to be testifying at the CARES Hearings. Answer-not sure.

Mr. Dennis Foell, Director SDDVA, gave a report on personnel, budget and education. (See attachment.) Mr. Foell spoke about the changing status of Gulf War Veterans. Director Foell indicated that a letter had been sent to the C/TVSO's encouraging them to continue the enrollment of veterans into the VA Healthcare system.

Chairman Goodhope had questions on the State Bonus Program and what is being done? Answer-figures are currently being assembled.

Commissioner Evenson spoke about the letter sent out by Director Foell on continuing enrollment into the VA Healthcare System.

Mr. Dave Wherry, Supervisor SDDVA Claims Office, gave a report on personnel status, Combat-Related Special Compensation and miscellaneous issues. (See attachment.) Mr. Wherry also spoke about problems with the Pension Maintenance Center (PMC) and a recent meeting that had been held to discuss these problems.

Mr. Larry Person, Senior Field Officer SDDVA, briefed the commission on the Annual C/TVSO Training School that is scheduled for August 25-28, 2003 in Pierre.

At this point Commissioner Evenson introduced Mr. and Mrs. Allen and Sherry Lance. Mr. Lance is a Past National Commander of the American Legion. He thanked Commissioner Evenson for the introduction and warm welcome and commended the Commission on their work.

Mr. Jerry Lolley, SD Association of County/Tribal Veteran Service Officers gave a report on the NACVSO National Level School that is scheduled for May 2004 in Rapid City, SD. He asked Commissioner Loudner for a list of the Sioux Code Talkers. Mr. Lolley indicated that the names from the list would be read at the Mt. Rushmore Lighting Ceremony. The attendees at the NACVSO School will be at this ceremony.

Mr. Lolley spoke briefly about the Avenue of Flags that was being implemented at Black Hills National Cemetery.

Commissioner Locken thanked the Veterans Commission for their support of the NACVSO National Level School that was scheduled for May 2004 at Rapid City.

At 5:35 P.M. Commissioner Clarke made a motion to adjourn for the day, seconded by Commissioner Evenson. Motion carried.

Chairman Goodhope reconvened the meeting at 8:00 A.M. on July 16, 2003 and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Vince Crawford, Director St. Paul VA Regional Office, Mr. Ed Barloon and Mr. George Zechman PMC, VARP, St. Paul gave a detailed briefing about the Pension Maintenance Center (PMC). (See attachment.)

Commissioner Locken had questions about due process, overpayments, debt management and waiver requests.

Mr. Dave Wherry, SDDVA Claims Office spoke about problems with phone calls to the PMC and waiver requests.

Chairman Goodhope talked about attitude problems within the VA regarding Gulf War Syndrome. Chairman Goodhope asked Mr. Crawford if the VA is now smarter in recognizing

Gulf War Syndrome. Mr. Crawford replied that he is not sure at this point. Mr. Crawford spoke about problems associated with undiagnosed illnesses.

Commissioner Evenson spoke about problems being encountered by Gulf War Vets filing claims for the 90/91 Gulf War.

Commissioner Loudner talked about problems with John Smith, Service Center Manager, VARO Sioux Falls. Mr. Loudner stated that John Smith has a problem with discrimination/race relations. Commissioner Loudner also spoke about problems getting a certificate of eligibility for a veteran.

Commissioner Murphy asked Mr. Crawford how many veterans were new hires to work in the PMC. Answer-approximately one-third.

Mr. Mark Gerhard, Senator Daschle's Representative spoke about an additional FTE (Psychologist) being added to the Sioux Falls Vet Center.

Mr. Gerhard said that Senator Daschle's office in Sioux Falls has been receiving numerous calls from veterans/widows complaining about the PMC in St. Paul. Mr. Gerhard went on to say that his office had setup/coordinated a meeting at the VARO Sioux Falls with VSO's and PMC personnel to discuss and resolve these complaints.

Mr. Gerhard indicated that he had nothing new on concurrent receipt.

Commissioner Locken thanked Mr. Gerhard for the action taken by Senator Daschle's office to resolve problems with the PMC.

Mr. Tom Leckey-Congressman Janklow's Representative-spoke about the various House Bills that Congressman Janklow had signed either as a co-sponsor or to support.

Commissioner Loudner asked what the status of the Sioux Code Talkers Bill was. Answer-not sure but will find out.

10:00 AM Break 10:15 Reconvene

Service Organization Reports

VFW-no report

American Legion Auxiliary-Mrs. Irene C. Sears, President of AL Auxiliary thanked the Commission for supporting veterans. Mrs. Sears also stated that she wished more women veterans would attend Commission Meetings.

Commissioner Gene Murphy, DAV talked about resolutions, status of veterans' legislation, Vet Stand Down and miscellaneous items. (See attachment.)

Mr. Jim Foster, DAV spoke about the Veterans' Stand Down scheduled for September 5-6, 2003 in Sioux Falls, SD.

Commissioner Don Clarke gave the American Legion report and discussed the SD American Legion annual convention held in Spearfish, SD.

Commissioner Locken asked Director Foell about the status of the new FTE bill within the SDDVA for a Public Relations Specialist? Director Foell answered that the SDDVA is putting a request forward in FY 2005 Budget request, which will be completed in the month of August, 2003.

Commissioner Locken made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Murphy to approve the following:

Future dates and locations of Commission Meetings:

October 1-2, 2003	Fort Meade	
February 2-3, 2004	Pierre, SD	(National Guard Museum)
April 19-20, 2004	Hot Springs	

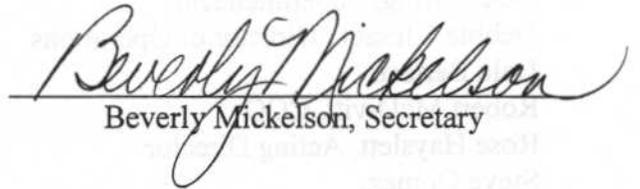
Motion carried.

Commissioner Loudner said that he wants to make sure that Veterans Commission Meetings are advertised. Further, Commissioner Loudner stated that the Commission meeting locations should be rotated around the State.

The Commission Meeting was adjourned at 11:00 A.M.



Dennis Foell, Director, SD DVA



Beverly Mickelson, Secretary

8-18-03

Date

**SD Veterans Commission Meeting
July 15-16,2003
Pierre American Legion Cabin
Pierre, SD**

Dennis Foell, Director	SD DVA, Pierre
Dave Wherry, Supervisor	SD DVA Claims Office, Sioux Falls
Bill Locken, Veterans Commission	Spearfish
Gene A Murphy, Veterans Commission	Sioux Falls
Don Loudner, Veterans Commission	Mitchell
Donald Clarke, Veterans Commission	Wessington
Keith Goodhope, Chairman Veterans Commission	Winner
Paul A Evenson, Veterans Commission	Renner
Jim Melgaard, Hughes CVSO	Pierre
Wayne Vetter, Faulk CVSO/AL State Commander	Cresbard
Duane Jackson, DAV	Pierre
Dave Stroh, Field Officer	SD DVA, Sturgis
Jerry Lolley, Meade CVSO	Sturgis
Larry Person, Sr. Field Officer	SD DVA, Pierre
Irene C. Sears, ALA State President	Rapid City
Delbert "Jim" Foster	PVA
Dave Morgan, SD Veterans Council/State Fair Bldg	Huron
John G. Moisan	BOA, Pierre
Mike Gorman, The Adjutant General	DM&VA, Pierre/Rapid City
Andy Gerlach, Finance Officer	DM&VA, Pierre
Marshall Michels, Legislative Liaison	SD National Guard
Gene Eiring, Superintendent	SD Veterans' Home
Debbie Klesack, Director of Operations	SD Veterans' Home
Dale Bertsch	Governor's Office
Robert McDivitt, COO	VA VISN-23, Minneapolis
Rose Hayslett, Acting Director	VAMROC, Sioux Falls
Steve Gomez,	SDNG Museum, Pierre
Glenn R. Green	Pierre
Vince Crawford	VA Regional Office, St Paul
Richard Steams	VA Regional Office, St Paul
Ronald Boyd, State Adjutant AL	Watertown
Tom Leckey	Congressman Janklow's Representative
Loren Murren	Veterans' Council
Hal Weber	Veterans' Council, Rapid City