

SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING
Ft. Meade Medical Center
October 1-2, 2003

The Commission Meeting was called to order by Chairman Keith Goodhope at 1:00 P.M.; Chairman Goodhope led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance and then asked everyone in the room to introduce themselves.

Changes to Agenda: Delete current item #9 and replace with election of Chairman/Vice-Chairman. Add tour of Medical Facility that will take place at end of meeting on Wednesday, 10/01/03.

Minutes of July 15-16, 2003 Commission Meeting: Commissioner Murphy made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Evenson to approved the minutes from the July 15-16, 2003 Commission Meeting. Motion carried.

MG Gorman gave an update on SD National Guard unit status. There are currently 750 soldiers deployed in Iraq and 250 soldiers deployed in CONUS. The SD Air Guard currently has 2 people in Germany. The 1085th Helo Company is scheduled to go to Kosovo.

MG Gorman spoke about the extension of tours from a few months to one year.

MG Gorman spoke about the implementation of the R&R Program and some of the problems that had been encountered initially MG Gorman went on to discuss resolution of these problems.

Commissioner Evenson had questions about personnel status.

Chairman Goodhope had questions about the mission requirements for SD National Guard Units.

Commissioner Clarke stated that he wishes there were a way to convey to the people of South Dakota what a great job the SD National Guard has done and continues to do.

MG Gorman spoke about his time on radio and other ways that the SD National Guard is spreading the word about their missions and capability.

MG Gorman spoke about a national level meeting he had attended and those SD National Guard units that were mentioned/recognized.

Commander Vetter, American Legion stated that the SD American Legion would be happy to publish information about the SD National Guard in the Legion Newspaper.

MG Gorman spoke about the POW Memorial at Camp Rapid. He displayed a drawing/depiction of the completed memorial. MG Gorman indicated that the National Guard would try to officially dedicate this memorial in 2004. MG Gorman also went on to speak about the completion of a POW Memorial in Pierre sometime in the future.

He spoke about the Veterans Summit that is scheduled for 11/13/03 in Pierre. This summit is to be attended by major Veteran Organizations, National Guard and other personnel.

MG Gorman indicated that he would be the Veterans Day speaker at Hot Springs on 11/11/03.

MG Gorman spoke briefly about the work that is being done on the Veterans Bonus Program. This Bonus Program is to include personnel that have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chairman Goodhope asked for a moment of silent prayer for the units/personnel deployed.

State Veterans Home Report

A report was provided on the status of the Veterans Home to include residents, Hero's Park, Memory Lane, permanent personnel (73 FTE) and the budget. Also provided was information on the new golf cart that the Home had recently acquired to assist in the transportation of residents.

Commissioner Murphy had questions about beds available and asked for a list of what the Home needs to assist in their operation. Commissioner Murphy also had questions on the budget for the Home.

Chairman Goodhope had questions on the length of time required to complete the application process for the Home. He also asked about the geographic distribution of the residents.

VA Director's Reports

Mr. Joe Dalpiaz, Director/COO, Black Hills Health Care System provided a detailed briefing on Staff/FTEE/Vets Employed, Program Initiative, Clinic Wait Times, Workload, Challenges and Strategic Initiatives. (See attachment.)

Commissioner Locken had questions about Dental Care for returning National Guardsmen. He expressed concerns about Priority Group 8 and wondered if the freeze would continue by VHA?

Mr. Dalpiaz responded that he encourages veterans in Priority Group 8 to continue to enroll. This will enable the VA to track those veterans that are seeking healthcare.

Commissioner Murphy had questions on the budget, collection process, clinic wait times and needed equipment list.

Commissioner Clarke asked questions about the Rapid City CBOC and indicated an interest in touring that facility.

Commissioner Evenson had questions about the status of a surgeon on duty at Hot Springs.

At this point Mr. Dalpiaz provided information to the Veterans Commission that he was given by VAMC Sioux Falls. There was no representative present from the VAMC Sioux Falls.

Commissioner Murphy commented on the date of reports (outdated) that were provided by VAMC Sioux Falls.

At this point in time it was decided to hold any questions on the VAMC Sioux Falls operation for Dr. Petzel, Director, VISN-23.

Mr. Bob Poe, Director Black Hills National Cemetery, provided a briefing for the Commission that discussed maintenance, daily operation and the making of National Cemeteries into shrines. Mr. Poe also provided information and an invitation to attend an Open House/Ceremony on 10/02/03 at 3:30 PM to dedicate the 55th anniversary of the Black Hills National Cemetery.

National Congressional Delegations

Mr. Darrell Shoemaker, representing Senator Johnson spoke about the Budget, Concurrent Receipt, CARES, Pharmacy Benefit-VHA, TRICARE for SD National Guard and the Continuing Resolution.

Mr. Armon Gaddy, representing Senator Daschle spoke about Concurrent Receipt, Wait Lists-VHA, SBP and Veterans Education initiatives.

Commissioner Locken spoke about the problems of a remarried widow being buried with her 1st husband in a National Cemetery. Current VA regulations do not allow this to happen.

Commissioner Murphy had comments about the budget and indicated that Congress needs to sign the discharge petition.

Commissioner Evenson talked about Congress being insincere about Veterans healthcare. Commissioner Evenson wanted to know why Congress isn't pushing Medicare subvention.

Chairman Goodhope indicated that he believes the VA Healthcare system is a dinosaur. He went on to say that this system should be "shot in the head" and started over again. He also said a study needs to be initiated to look at these problems.

Commissioner Murphy asked, what is the status of the "Code Talkers Bill"? Commissioner Murphy went on to say that he would like a letter sent to Commissioner Loudner outlining the status of this bill.

Mr. Dale Bertsch, Governor's Liaison discussed the Korean War Ceremony that took place at the State Fair. Mr. Bertsch also indicated that a date in 2004 for the Korean War Memorial dedication ceremony in Pierre, SD is being discussed.

Commissioner Clarke indicated that the ceremony at the State Fair was very good.

Mr. Larry Person, Senior Field Officer, SDDVA spoke about the annual C/TVSO Training School that had been held in Pierre during August. Mr. Person indicated that the school had been very productive.

Commissioner Clarke spoke about Mr. Bob Gabrielson and the contributions that he had made both to the Veterans Commission and the veterans of South Dakota. Commissioner Clarke said that the current Veterans Commission should commend Mr. Gabrielson for his dedication and unwavering allegiance to the veterans of South Dakota.

Election of Officers

Commissioner Murphy made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Clarke to nominate Commissioner Locken to be the Chairman for 2004. Motion carried.

Commissioner Clarke made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Evenson to nominate Commissioner Murphy to be the Vice-Chairman for 2004. Motion carried.

Commissioner Murphy spoke about the great job done by Chairman Goodhope during 2003.

MG Gorman presented Chairman Goodhope with a commemorative coin for the excellent job that he had performed as the Chairman of the Veterans Commission.

At 4:45 PM the formal commission meeting was adjourned to go on a tour of the Ft. Meade Medical Facility.

Chairman Goodhope reconvened the Veterans Commission meeting at 8:00 AM on 10/02/03. Chairman Goodhope led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Director Foell made an announcement about the ceremony that would take place at the National Cemetery and spoke about Capitol for a Day at Hot Springs.

Chairman Goodhope discussed the Veterans' Summit that will be held in Pierre on 11/13/03.

VISN-23 Report

Dr. Robert Petzel, Director VISN-23 announced that Mr. Joe Dalpiaz has been selected as the new Director of the VAMC Sioux Falls. Dr. Petzel indicated that Mr. Dalpiaz should begin work at Sioux Falls within the next 60 days. He also went on to say that Mr. Peter Henry would be the Director of the Black Hills Health Care System.

Dr. Petzel spoke about budget, continuing resolution, VERA-Budget Distribution and workload within the VISN. He spoke about the effort that had been put forth to eliminate the waiting list for new patients. Dr. Petzel spoke about the CARES process and the hearings that had been held in Minneapolis and Omaha.

Chairman Goodhope had questions on VISN-23 budget amounts.

Commissioner Locken had questions on multi-year money. Commissioner Locken spoke about Medicare and senior citizens that have never had Part B.

Dr. Petzel encouraged the continued enrollment of all veterans into the VA Healthcare System regardless of what priority group they fall under.

Commissioner Murphy had questions on the proposed VISN-23 budget, MCCF and Priority Group 8 status. Commissioner Murphy asked for a definition of the waiting list. Commissioner Murphy also questioned the payment of bonuses for the elimination of the waiting list.

Dr. Petzel indicated that VAMC Sioux Falls had received 2.1 million dollars to hire new personnel and then received additional 600k dollars in workload money.

Commissioner Murphy indicated that he is not pleased with the performance of Rose Hayslett the Acting Director for VAMROC Sioux Falls. Commissioner Murphy stated that the Veterans Commission should be provided with current/accurate information.

Dr. Petzel indicated that the financial settlement with Mr. Ron Porzio would come from ViSN-23 and not from VAMROC Sioux Falls.

Commissioner Murphy indicated that he had been receiving complaints on Mental Health procedures at VAMC Sioux Falls.

Chairman Goodhope had questions about a chart that was passed out on 2002 VA Healthcare Users. Commissioner Evenson had questions about the increased size of the VISN.

Dr. Petzel spoke about the excellent network of C/TVSO's within South Dakota. He said that some states have little or no network of C/TVSO's.

Chairman Goodhope wanted to know if VISN-23 had treated any Iraqi veterans yet. Dr. Petzel responded that a handful had been seen at this point in time. However, Dr. Petzel did indicate that this number would increase with time.

Director Foell had questions for Dr. Petzel on the workload within South Dakota. He also asked about the treatment for returning National Guard personnel.

Commissioner Clarke spoke about the CARES process and made particular reference to clinics in Eastern South Dakota. Commissioner Clarke also wondered who had attended the CARES hearings in Minneapolis and Omaha.

Commissioner Murphy had questions about the loss of personnel within physical therapy and occupational therapy at the VAMC Sioux Falls.

Commissioner Locken asked questions about VISN-23 priority for opening CBOC's.

Commissioner Clarke had questions about Native American usage of CBOC's/VA Healthcare system.

Mr. Ron Boyd, Department Adjutant, American Legion, said that the American Legion has a concern about the CARES process becoming an annual event/procedure.

Reports of Division of Veterans Affairs

Mr. Dennis Foell, Director SDDVA gave a detailed briefing on budget, personnel, bonus program and ongoing training/education. (See attachment.) He also spoke about financial assistance available to counties/tribes from the SDDVA for C/TVSO's to attend the NACVSO School scheduled for May 2004.

Commissioner Evenson wanted to know if the SDDVA would notify the respective counties/tribes of this financial assistance. Director Foell responded that it would be the individual C/TVSO's responsibility to brief their respective leadership.

Commissioner Clarke had questions about interpreting the budget sheets provided by Director Foell.

Director Foell spoke about the addition of an N- 14 FTE within the Division. Director Foell indicated that the exact title for this position had not been decided upon yet.

Commissioner Clarke spoke about the involvement of the Veterans Commission and Service organizations in the SDDVA budget process.

Commissioner Evenson had questions about the number of absences at the annual C/TVSO training school held in Pierre.

Mr. Ron Boyd, Department Adjutant, American Legion had questions on a possible bonus and where would the money come from for this program. Director Foell answered that it would probably be a Governor's bill.

Chairman Goodhope said that the bonus should be for \$1,000 vice \$500 because \$500 is inadequate. Director Foell responded that many decisions will hinge on the economic condition of our State budget.

Commissioner Locken made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Murphy for the Veterans Commission to publish a resolution establishing the bonus in the amount of \$1,000.00. Motion carried.

Commissioner Locken requested information/guidance be provided to C/TVSO's concerning the administration of the Loan Program.

Mr. Dave Wherry, Claims Office Supervisor provided a detailed report on Pension Maintenance Center, Veterans Stand Down, Training, Personnel Status and Miscellaneous Information. (See attachment.)

Commissioner Locken indicated that he would like to see all C/TVSO's be given the opportunity to attend National Level Training with one of the major service organizations.

Commissioner Evenson requested that the VARO Sioux Falls report on claims backlog status.

Mr. Jerry Lolley, SD Association of C/TVSO's spoke about annual C/TVSO training, Pension Maintenance Center (PMC) and SDDVA assistance with the NACVSO School scheduled for May 2004 in Rapid City.

Veterans Service Organization Leaders Reports/Comments

VFW/Auxiliary-No Report

American Legion-Department Commander-Mr. Wayne Vetter announced that the American Legion would be conducting 20 Veterans Forums across the state. Mr. Vetter also stated that the American Legion would make a decision on their Department Service Officer, DSO, by 11/30/2003.

American Legion Auxiliary-Auxiliary President, Mrs. Irene Sears talked about her project for the year to update the chapel at the VAMC Sioux Falls.

Disabled American Veterans, DAV-Mr. Gene Murphy gave a detailed report on the current DAV status and also spoke about the van program. (See attachment.)

Commissioner Murphy spoke about telemarketing firms coming into South Dakota and raising money under the guise of assisting/aiding veterans. Commissioner Murphy requested that a letter be sent to the Secretary of State asking for a list of authorized companies that raise money through telemarketing.

Commissioner Murphy made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Evenson to send a letter from the Veterans Commission to Congressman Janklow requesting his support for mandatory funding. Motion carried.

Paralyzed Veterans of American, PVA-Mr. Jim Foster gave a report on the status of PVA. (See attachment.)

Commissioner Evenson spoke about the cutting of a position, DVOP's & LVER's within the Department of Labor and the impact this would have on the veteran population.

Commissioner Murphy made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Locken for the Veterans Commission to go on record to oppose the cutting of DVOP/LVER positions within the Department of Labor. Motion carried.

Vet Center Report

Mr. Gary Johnson of Rapid City gave a report on current projects with returning National Guard personnel. Mr. Johnson also gave a brief overview of the primary mission of the Vet Centers.

Commissioner Murphy asked questions on the budget for the Vet Centers.

Future Commission Meeting Dates

February 2-3, 2004

Pierre, SD

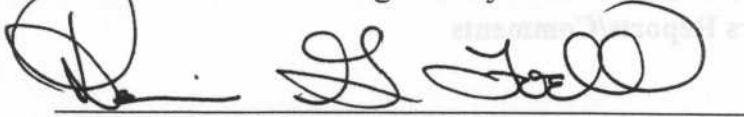
April 5-6, 2004

Hot Springs, SD

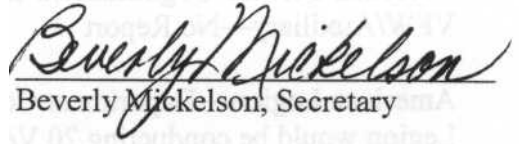
July 22-23, 2004
October 18-19, 2004

Sioux Falls, SD
Aberdeen, SD

The Commission Meeting was adjourned at 12:20 P.M.



Dennis G. Foell, Director, SDDVA



Beverly Mickelson, Secretary

November 3, 2003

Date

Attendees for South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting, October 1-2, 2003 at Fort Meade, SD.

Name	Address
Dave Wherry	SDDVA Claims Office Supervisor
Dennis Foell	SDDVA Director
Keith Goodhope	Chairman, SD Veterans Commission
Gene Murphy	Veterans Commissioner
Bill Locken	Veterans Commissioner
Dave Stroh	SDDVA VFO
Irene C. Sears	President, SD Dept American Legion Auxiliary
Armon Gaddy	Representative for Senator Tom Daschle-Rapid City
Jerry Lolley	Meade County VSO, SD Association of C/TVSO's
Bob Poe	Black Hills National Cemetery Director
Mike Gorman	SDDMVA, Department Secretary
Ron Boyd	American Legion State Adjutant, Watertown
Wayne Vetter	American Legion State Commander, Cresbard, SD
Darrell Shoemaker	Representative for Senator Tim Johnson-Rapid City
Joseph M Dalpiaz	VA Black Hills
Paul A. Evenson	Veterans Commissioner
Donald Clarke	Veterans Commissioner
Debbie Klesack	SD Veterans Home, Director of Operations
Dale Bertsch	Governor's Office
Randall Meyers	SDARNG
Loren Murren	SD Veterans Council
Mike Birnbaum	SDARNG
Delbert Jim Foster	PVA/DAV SD Veterans Council
Dr. Randy Petzel	VISN-23 Network Director
Dr. Michael Davies	Chief of Staff
Dave Morgan	SD Veterans Council
Claude Akins	DAV
Gary Johnson	Vet Center, Rapid City
Larry Person	SDDVA, Field Supervisor