

SD VETERANS COMMISSION MEETING
Grand River Resort Mobridge, SD 57601
October 12-13, 2005

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 PM by Chairman Gene Murphy in the Conference Room of the Grand River Resort Missouri Banquet Room. He led the pledge and then asked Loren Murren to offer a prayer of Invocation. Introductions were made around the room.

There will be some changes to the agenda:

- General Gorman will not be able to attend, reported through Dennis that 173 have now been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. There has been talk of redeployments which should only occur after two years back in the State. There have been some activations in Aberdeen.
- Dennis Foell gave his report:
 - Field Operations proceed as usual, but busier;
 - Mini-Conferences will be held in November in four sites around the State.
 - Demob and Family Briefings as the Guard Units return are open to any veterans!
 - The Veterans License Plate Issue—the State Adjutants or representatives and he met with Deb Hilmer of DRR on Thursday, October 6th in Pierre. Foell had examples of the proposed plate. It will indicate selected branch of service emblem and may yet be able to include a short line of text below the emblem. The target/effective date is January 1, 2007. Foell urged unity of all veteran organizations to support the legislation in the 2007 Legislature.
 - For information purposes any State Legislation changes that may be offered need to be presented soon. Get in touch with Dennis, Dave Wherry or Larry Person with proposed changes.
 - The Purple Heart Dedication was held on August 7th, 2005, on the front lawn of the Soldiers & Sailors Building.
 - The Vietnam Memorial Dedication preparations are in progress. There are brochures, flyers/posters, and registration blanks here to be disseminated to any who would wish to help with distribution or posting them. Foell understands that there are no rooms left, but that the Commission has rooms. There are still camping and camper areas to be reserved. There might be a possibility of private rooms available later. Foell stressed that this dedication event is to honor all Vietnam *ERA* veterans.
 - The State Fair and the Sturgis Rally were venues for promoting the Vietnam Dedication, registering veterans, and doing some fund raising.

Don Loudner was presented a picture that showed him receiving an award. It was presented by Gene Murphy who had been given the picture.

Don Loudner commented that today (October 12, 2005) was beginning of Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Inauguration of new Tribal Council Members. The new Chairwoman is hoping to make it in to part of the Veterans Commission Meeting. Loudner is Commander of the National American Indian Veteran Organization of the U.S. Members of the Wakpala Lodge are attending this meeting.

There was a motion by D Loudner to approve the agenda, second by B. Locken; the motion passed.

There was a motion by R. Benson to approve the minutes as printed, second by P. Evenson, motion passed.

The next order of business was 7b, the Congressional Delegate representative Judy Vrchota who is the NE Region Director for Senator John Thune. Her report on Legislative issues is attached.

A thank you to Senator Thune was extended for his hard work at saving Ellsworth. He was encouraged to sign on for Mandatory Funding. He was urged to try to get the Code Talkers Bill 1035 out of committee and onto the floor for a vote.

Murphy then returned to Item 6. The VA Directors Reports were the next order of business. Peter Henry, Director, presented his report on the Black Hills Health Care System. He was pleased to tell of a \$2 million grant to buy a Mobile MRI system plus the staffing for two years. He is in talks with Ellsworth, Black Hills Health Care Center and the IHS about shared use. The Category 7 and 8 applications stay constant, with Category 8 still not allowed to register. (A table showing these Fiscal Year 2005 applications was added to the Director's report on October 20, 2005.) The Medical Cost Collections exceeded goal by \$1.1 million. An additional note is "Mr. Loudner inquired about amounts that VA may have paid the Indian Health Service in VISN 23. Mr. Henry indicated he did not know, but would follow up. After the meeting, Mr. Henry learned from the VISN 23 Chief Financial Officer that VISN 23 had not paid IHS anything during the previous Fiscal Year; IHS, however, had paid VISN 23 approximately \$31,191.47 during FY 05 for services rendered by VA."

In conjunction with the Rapid City Clinic and Air Force Personnel, there is national sharing with DOD. There is an acute need of hospitalization, some mental health issues, and urology in particular.

Mr. Henry's written report is attached.

Murphy commented that veteran employment statistics could be better. He also wanted to know more about the out-placing of 26 long-term patients from the Domiciliary in Ft. Meade. What is the nature of the DOM? Henry's response was that most across the US are not providing long-term care. Most are providing housing for those in for mental health issues or other lengthy treatment programs.

The MCCF funds were also questioned. Is it a detriment, meaning a decrease, in federal dollars received when the collections are significant? Henry said this is not a major problem or even the case. The MCCF Funds stay at the collecting agency. In fact Minneapolis is getting better organized and is really beginning to be successful in 3rd party collections.

Questions from members of the audience to Mr. Henry follow:

Why was IHS not paid by the VA to do physicals and other procedures, saving time and money in travel to Ft. Meade?

"Uniques" how is it that 65 vets have 870 visits at BHHCS? This is high compared to other locations.

Can anything be done about the open pit uranium mine in this area that is probably causing far-reaching health problems?

Phil Anderson praised the Home Based Health Care. He too felt that veteran employment is not good in the VA or at the SD Veterans' Home. Out placing DOM residents to other health care facilities just shifts the expense to another pocket—away from the VA.

Commissioner P. Evenson asked about the demobilized Guard personnel. There is a high percentage going into the VA; is there a reimbursement schedule from DOD? No after 180 days of TRI-Care, they go to veteran status.

Peter Henry then gave the report from Joe Dalpiaz, Director of the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center. The report is attached. Henry said any questions could be directed to either J Dalpiaz or Gary Million at that facility. There was concern that wait time for the OEF/IEF veterans or the 50% service connected veterans have bumped the regular veteran or non-emergency person for appointments.

The Network report was next. Dr. Petzel was not able to make timely travel arrangements, so he had asked Peter Henry to present for him.

Katrina Relief efforts have taken several management personnel out of VISN 23 to set up one of ten field hospitals set up by the DOH in the hurricane-ravaged area.

The report said \$16 Million was kept in VISN 23 for facilities; this was not part of the budget. Under the continuing resolution everything is funded at the original level which does not include the \$1.5 billion addition, so it is inadequate.

Important to mention is a "prescription scam" that is being investigated now which says the VA is changing the pharmacy or medication policies. This is not true and the VA is trying to get that information out to the general public.

Tentative word is that new CBOC's will be opening due to savings on transportation costs within the Network. The opening dates are not known or which ones may be opening.

There was a short break and the meeting reconvened at 3:50 pm.

Kati Bachmayer from Senator Johnson's Office emphasized that he is committed to ensuring all veterans will receive health care. There is a need to ensure that those already returned are cared for as well as those yet to return. Her report on Legislative issues is attached.

Maeva King from Representative Stephanie Herseth's office emphasized that Representative Herseth believes Congress must live up to its obligations and promises to the fighting men and women as well as the veteran. Her report on Legislative issues is attached.

Lynn Carpenter was next on the agenda representing John Smith of the Dakota Regional Office in Sioux Falls. He was able to report that under staffing issues, the position recently vacated by retiring Gaylyn Reiners was advertised nation-wide and closed last month. Also two Veteran Service Representatives have just finished formal training, bringing the number of full time employees to 41.

Mr. Carpenter addressed questions: Murphy asked about the PTSD cases that were in question and to be under study by an IG. This is all on hold pending some Congressional action. Mr. Carpenter felt that probably none of the cases decided in SD would be questioned if this does come to re-evaluation of PTSD grants. A written report is also attached.

Dan Cassidy, the new Director at Black Hills National Cemetery has a report. There is discussion of irrigation for the Ft. Meade National Cemetery and an agronomist on staff will assist with this as well as some other projects there. They are also looking at replacement of the carillon at the National Cemetery. The flags they fly will not be the actual burial flags except in protected or in a limited area around the Chapel due to damage specifically from wind. Mr. Cassidy had a written report which is attached.

Earl Schultz from the US Department of Labor, VETS was Item 8. He began with information on a SMOCTA bill that the American Legion is trying to get introduced into Congress. Mr. Schultz encouraged the VFW to join the support for the bill. He also said that Governor Rounds is again promoting the "Hire Veterans First" month of November with a proclamation. There will be a signing ceremony. The case load is increasing for Schultz. The employers are realizing the economic impact of employees being activated. The employee feels the same thing—pressure from employer, economic impact, especially when it is for the 2nd or 3rd time of deployment. This results in anger on both sides. Also to be considered are persons returning to jobs but who are not doing well with supervisors (and this is also found in families). The mental health issues are also a part of this.

D. Foell mentioned that George Summerside from the Division is attending a National Conference about "Honoring—Fulfilling the promise to Veterans" set up by the VA.

Todd Kolden from the SD Department of Labor was Item 9. He was pleased to say that the Rapid City Career Center had been second nationally in a VFW sponsored competition for their award for providing service to veterans. He also announced that the Rapid City Career Center had won the National Association of State Workforce Agency's (NASWA) Mark Sanders Award for providing service to disabled veterans. As the appointed VFW and DAV State Employment Chairman, he is encouraging people to submit nominations for various Veterans Service Organization awards. The funding for the SD VETS stayed the same. They hosted a successful Tri-State Training Conference at Ellsworth AFB which was attended by participants from SD, ND, and WY. MG Gorman and Director Foell were also in attendance. SD DOL will continue to participate in the Veterans Forums to explain the employment services provided for veterans and businesses. They will also market to the public and businesses the veterans programs and promote "hiring veterans first." This is an ongoing campaign in SD and the SD DOL also encourages the US Department of Veterans Affairs in SD to hire veterans first. Mr. Kolden's written report is attached.

One question was raised about the "skills test"—is there a time limit? It is 2 years after discharge.

If people have a business they would like to nominate for exemplary work for hiring veterans, Don Grandpre is the American Legion Employment Officer that should be contacted or T. Kolden for VFW or DAV awards.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 and the Veterans Commission went into Executive Session. The meeting will reconvene at 8:00 AM Thursday morning, October 13, 2005.

The meeting was reconvened at 8:05 AM on October 13. Item 14 was Wayne Vetter, President of the SD Association of C/TVSO's. He thanked D. Foell, D. Wherry and the Division for the training at the Annual Benefits School. Mr. Vetter felt the testing and the letters sent to the County Commissions of those who "aced" the test were good. Thank you also from those who had gone to National Training. There was a special thank you extended to the veteran service organizations and to Larry Person for his work for the steak fry during the Benefits School. He also thanked the American Legion and Warren Aas for work in setting up the several Veterans Forums. Vetter commented that the relationship between the C/TVSO and the Division has really improved. He said TREA has also stepped forward with a donation of money to fund more C/TVSO's to go to national training. One last thank you is given to Division of Veterans Affairs for including C/TVSO's in the teams that went to the Demob sites as the South Dakota Guardspersons were returning. It was valuable especially for those from the sites of activated Guard units.

Don Clarke had an announcement for the Commission and attendees. There is an All-Veteran Memorial being dedicated in Hand County on Veterans Day, 10:30 AM in the Armory at Miller. The site is actually at the Hand County Courthouse.

Vetter continued with a report on the proposed legislation for an increase in the salary supplement for C/TVSO's. The work will continue on this because there is concern about the C/TVSO wearing several hats in one county and/or job sharing between 2 or possibly 3 counties. The committee would like to meet with General Gorman about this.

Todd Kolden also thanked the Division for the training for the DOL personnel. They had a representative there not to train on the benefits but to have information for maintaining the network.

Item 15 was Larry Wilcox, Superintendent of the SD Veterans' Home. He wants to encourage C/TVSO's and others to talk with veterans about the openings at the Veterans' Home. He reported on projects at the Home:

- Canyon Cottage is done.
- Primary Focus is the greenhouse and then Heroes Park.
- The campus has now hooked into the city water supply, but they still have the original facility supply hook-up, too, providing dual coverage. This was a safety issue.

Activities include CWT people from the VA, computers (Draw poker is very popular and has caused a need for volunteers to deal actual poker hands.) Mr. Wilcox has sent a letter out explaining needs and activities.

He is also working on revising the Administrative Rules for the Home. The application form for the Home will be revised, because C/TVSO's have expressed concern about it. It will be one form only plus one sheet explaining that the Home will come back against the estate of persons not paying full fare at the Home. The written report is attached.

W. Vetter thanked Larry on behalf of the C/TVSO's for the newsletter they receive.

Acting Team Leader Jerry Muhs of the Sioux Falls Vet Center was Item 16. He reported that his Central Regional Office is again in St. Louis—moved from Chicago. There was a Stand-Down on September 9, 2005, targeting homeless veterans or veterans in need which was held indoors at

the Salvation Army. This was much easier logistically but not as popular to some as those held out-of-doors. He also reported that they are seeing many Iraqi Veterans from the "recent" Guard returnees, who had been contacted through the demob station visits. His concern now is that there will be a lot of divorces as was the case following return from Persian Gulf conflict. There was a motion made by D. Clarke, seconded by D. Loudner. The SD Veterans Commission will go on record by writing a letter to encourage the timely filling of the Team Leader position at Sioux Falls. Motion passed.

The Veteran Organizations are also encouraged to write letters in support of Jerry Muhs appointment as the Team Leader.

Question was asked if the Vet Center people travel to reach persons not right in Sioux Falls. Muhs reminded the Commission they are only two people. They do some travel to reach or establish groups that will use their services. The Rapid City Team gets to Veterans Industries in McLaughlin about once a month. Muhs was advised the Mobridge area would be grateful for a visit from a Vet Center.

D. Loudner moved, second by B. Locken, that Dr. Alfonso R. Batres of the VA in Washington, D.C. be invited to South Dakota to visit the State and attend the next Veterans Commission Meeting in February. Motion passed. A. Batres is the VA person in charge of the Vet Centers and there are 26 Vet Centers in this Region 2 with 7 team leader positions vacant at this time. Other positions within the Vet Centers are also vacant.

Dave Wherry, the Claims Office Supervisor at Item 17, reported that besides the regular work load at the office, the VSO's also go out for outreach purposes. He has a full complement of good office staff and they are trained. Presently there is work being done on the position descriptions with the goal of a salary increase. Attached is Mr. Wherry's written report including a chart which tracks new and re-opened claims since February of 2005.

After a short break the Veteran Service Organizations were invited to bring greetings and report on their activities. The American Legion Commander, Phil Anderson, was first. He felt that at the beginning of the year, the main focus is membership, but he also feels that working the programs is a way to increase membership as well. He has the "Dakota Dream Post" concept to encourage local Posts to generally push various programs or aspects of post support to enhance the State.

For the VFW Gary Knudson, State Commander explained that SD membership is leading the Big 10 Conference; they are 6th in the nation. There were 139 VFW baseball teams playing this year and it was a good year. The only complaint was that the newspapers do not print the news about them, although the information is provided to them. The Voice of Democracy and "Patriotic Spin" for Middle School competitions are being encouraged. Southern Gulf Region has received thousands of dollars from South Dakota; Brandon should be highlighted with a donation of \$4,000. Everyone is reminded that June 7 - 11, 2006 is the Centennial year Celebration for VFW in South Dakota. Another project mentioned was the first Handicapped Pheasant Hunt set up by the Commander at Faulkton. Knudson introduced Bill Cerney, who is on the National Legislative Committee representative from SD. They deal with the resolutions formulated at the National Conventions and this year the four issues are full funding for the VA budget; a GI Bill for the 21st Century; concurrent receipt; and military quality of life—for the service person but also for the family, especially of deployed service personnel.

Loren Murren representing the DAV told of a meeting between the leadership of Ford Motor Company and the DAV. There is a free van for South Dakota from them. The history of the relationship between DAV and Ford goes back to Henry Ford who gave DAV 50 Model T's. The funds to support the transportation network come from all sources: State, communities, civic organizations, etc. They are always in need of volunteer drivers for the van project which wants to get vans out to the communities for their widest use. There is a Town Hall Meeting proposed for Sioux Falls in November on Veterans Health Care, Budget Reform, Veteran Disability Commission, COLA for Veterans. They are carefully managed and they would like to have any and all veteran organizations there as sponsors.

Around the United States there are coalitions of the many Veteran Service Organizations working face to face with federal entities. This Town Hall Meeting is an example of that

A motion was made by B. Locken, second by D. Clarke, that a letter from the Veterans Commission be written to encourage the Legislative representatives to attend the Town Hall Meeting, when that meeting is set. Motion passed.

Dave Jungemann was there to represent TREA. He is grateful to all who worked on keeping Ellsworth AFB open. The mission at Ellsworth needs to be expanded. The Legislative Representatives need to work on that. The infrastructure is improving with building going on. There is only one chapter of TREA in SD but there are approximately 830 members which is down so they are working on outreach with the assistance of the National Headquarters. The Scholarship Program has 12 scholarships available and there were only 21 applications for them this past year.

The PVA is preparing for their annual banquet on October 21st. They hosted a very productive trap shoot meet followed by pheasant hunting at White Lake.

Etheleen Jewett from the IHS at Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe attended the Commission Meeting and was asked for comments. She praised the CWT Program in Eagle Butte where they do housekeeping and maintenance work for the IHS facility. It has never looked better she felt. Bill Locken asked her about issue of dual eligibility for health care—Indian veterans at the IHS. They are eligible for both, not to be excluded from either. Ms. Jewett knew nothing of anyone being denied care at the Eagle Butte IHS, because as a veteran they needed to go to the VA instead.

D. Loudner spoke then as a representative of the American Indian Veterans of which he is National Commander. They are incorporated in South Dakota and nationally and several members were present from the Wakpala Lodge. There are six lodges in South Dakota. Right now the Congressional charter is being held up in the Judiciary Committee in the House. Perhaps a "discharge petition" can be initiated to get it pushed out of committee to be voted on in the House.

Item 19 was Future Meetings:

6-7 February, 2006	Holiday Inn Express in Fort Pierre, to convene at 1:00 on 6 th .
5-6 April, 2006	SD Veterans' Home in Hot Springs
July, 2006	TBA—to try to avoid conflict with National Conventions

Item 20 was election of a new chairman. Paul Evenson was nominated as Chairman by Bill Locken, second by D. Loudner. D. Clark moved the nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for Paul Evenson. Motion carried.

Don Clarke was nominated for Vice Chairman by D. Loudner, second by B. Locken. B. Locken moved the nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for Don Clarke.

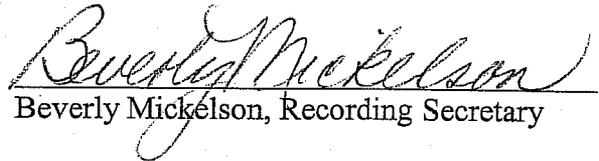
Don Loudner thanked the Commission for having this meeting at Mobridge, on the Standing Rock. He is hopeful that at least one meeting a year might be held on a Reservation.

Richard McLaughlin (Red Eagle) also wished to thank the Commission for meeting in Mobridge and to commend D. Loudner for his work on behalf of American Indian Veterans.

A motion to adjourn was made by B. Locken, seconded by D. Clarke. Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 on October 13, 2005.



Dennis G. Foell, Director, SD DVA



Beverly Mickelson, Recording Secretary

11-22-05

Date

ATTENDEES OF THE 12-13 October, 2005, Veterans Commission Meeting, Grand River Resort at Mobridge, SD

Roland Benson	SD Veterans Commissioner
Don Loudner	SD Veterans Commissioner
Gene Murphy	SD Veterans Commissioner
Dennis G. Foell	Director, SD DVA
Bill Locken	SD Veterans Commissioner
Don Clarke	SD Veterans Commissioner
Paul Evenson	SD Veterans Commissioner
Juanita A. Red Bird Young	Veteran Widow—Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Eagle Butte, SD
Phil Anderson	American Legion Dept Commander
Hal Weber	Sec/Treas SD Veterans Council
Dan Cassidy	Director, Black Hills National Cemetery
Loren Murren	DAV, Dept Sr. Vice
Edward R. Fried	Disabled Peacetime Veteran, Mobridge
Gary Knudson	State Commander, VFW
Bill Cerny	VFW National Legislative Council
Rick W. Barg	State Adjutant/Quartermaster, VFW
Judy Vrchota	US Senator John Thune's Office, Aberdeen
Peter Henry	Director, VA Black Hills
Steve Oliva	SD DVA
Dave Wherry	Claims Office Supervisor, SD DVA
Lynn Carpenter	Veterans Affairs/Dakota Regional Office, Sioux Falls
Larry Wilcox	Superintendent, MJF SD Veterans' Home, Hot Springs
Etheleen Jewett	IHS CRSU, Eagle Butte, SD
Earl Schultz	Director, VETS, US DOL, Aberdeen, SD
Todd Kolden	SD Dept of Labor, Aberdeen, SD
Don Jones	Adjutant, Wakpala Indian Veterans
Randy Kills Small	Vietnam Veteran
Richard L. McLaughlin	Vietnam Veteran
John Luke FlyingHorse, Sr	American Indian Veterans, Wakpala Lodge
Kati Bachmayer	Senator Tim Johnson's Office
Maeve King	Representative Stephanie Herseth's Office
Wayne Vetter	President, C/TVSO Association
Jerry Muhs	Acting Team Leader, Sioux Falls VET Center
Ron Boyd	American Legion State Adjutant, Watertown
Dave Jungemann	TREA, Rapid City
Edgar Yellow Earrings	Bullhead, SD
Kerman Shoestring	Bullhead, SD
Beverly Mickelson	Recording Secretary, Military & Veterans Affairs, Pierre

