

**APPROVED**  
**South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting**  
**October 10, 2012**  
**SDNG Museum – Pierre, SD**

The meeting of the South Dakota Veterans Commission was called to order at 8:30 am (CT) on Wednesday, October 10, 2012, at the South Dakota National Guard Museum in Pierre, SD, by Chairman Bill Locken.

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

**Roll Call** - Commissioners present were: Mike Birnbaum, Wade Hubbard, Bill Locken, KC Russell and John Noyes.

Staff Present: Deputy Secretary Steve Harding, Director Charles Claussen, Public Information Officer Audry Ricketts and Veterans Field Supervisor Larry Person.

Guests Present: Larry Zimmerman and Paul Gremse.

Deputy Secretary Harding introduced Jim Ross and noted that Governor Daugaard appointed Ross to the Commission effective October 1, 2012, to fill the seat currently held by Bill Locken. Secretary Harding thanked Commissioner Locken for his service to the Commission and to South Dakota's veterans. Harding presented Locken with a certificate of recognition from Governor Daugaard.

**Review of Agenda** – Chairman Locken asked if there were any additions or changes for the proposed agenda. Commissioner Hubbard made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Russell, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

**Consideration of Minutes** – Chairman Locken asked the Commission how they wished to handle the February 8, 2012, Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Russell moved the approval of the February 8, 2012, Commission meeting conference call minutes as presented. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Noyes and motion carried.

**Department Report** – Chairman Locken called on Deputy Secretary Harding for the Department of Veterans Affairs report. Deputy Secretary Harding started his report by providing an update on the status of the eastern and western state veteran's home projects. Challenges facing the east river veteran's home project are tied to funding and occupancy. Harding noted that the engineering and environmental studies have been completed for the west river veteran's home. He then outlined the six phases of the project and the costs associated with the project. After answering numerous questions, Harding moved on to provide an overview of the Department's legislative agenda for 2013. At this time, the Department will have one bill and that will be to request additional funding for the construction of the State Veterans Home in western South Dakota.

Discussion ensued regarding the Commissions role in the legislative process. After considerable discussion, Chairman Locken stated that it should be the Governor and the Secretaries call to utilize the Commission for lobbying.

**Division Report** – Chairman Locken called on Director Charles Claussen for his report. Claussen reviewed the number of claims processed and the number of veterans bonuses paid out to date.

**Tribal Cemeteries Update** - Chairman Locken called on J. R. LaPlante, Secretary for the South Dakota Department of Tribal Affairs. Mr. LaPlante briefed the Commission on the two new tribal cemeteries in South Dakota - Sicangu Akicita Owicaha Veterans Cemetery, located near Rosebud, and the Lakota Freedom Veterans Cemetery, located near Kyle. LaPlante noted that the Sicangu Akicita Owicaha Veterans Cemetery was in construction process and they are hopeful it will be completed by year-end. The tribe received \$7 million for this project. This cemetery would be open to tribal members who are military veterans, as well as their spouses and eligible children. Groundbreaking for the Lakota Freedom Veterans Cemetery was held October 4 near Kyle. \$6.5 million has been allocated for this project.

**VABHHCS Update** – Debra Dodson, from the VA Black Hills Health Care System joined the Commission via telephone. Dodson apologized that Director DiStasio was not able to participate in the call due to conflicts in Washington, DC. Dodson reviewed the VA’s plan, the counter proposals received, stakeholder meetings, cost analysis of the proposals, town hall meetings, discussions with the State of South Dakota regarding potential partnerships with regard to the construction of the new west river veterans home and the impacts the election might have on this project.

**USD’s Traumatic Stress Study** – Professor Jeffrey Simons, USD Department of Psychology, joined the Commission via telephone. Dr. Simons provided the Commission with an overview of the study that he will be conducting on traumatic stress. The study will be conducted over the next four years and they will be working with OEF/OIF Veterans. The study is funded via a grant from the National Institute of Health. Discussion ensued.

Chairman Locken noted that the update on the Veterans Courts had been overlooked. Deputy Secretary Harding noted that Director Claussen had to leave the meeting to participate in a VA conference call. Harding noted that Director Claussen has met with the Attorney General’s office and the Chief Justice and that this is a project in progress. He noted that Jim Seward from the Governor’s office is also working on this project via the judicial branch.

**Old Business** – Chairman Locken asked if there was any old business. There being none, the Commission moved on to “new business.”

**New Business** – Chairman Locken noted that a few items he would like to see addressed at the next Commission meeting were: an update on the number of veterans employed by the state of South Dakota and a review of the veteran’s preference laws. Locken then noted that the Commission needed to select new leadership for the Commission. Chairman Locken then opened the floor for nominations for chairman. Commissioner Birnbaum nominated KC Russell for chairman, Commissioner Hubbard seconded the nomination and voice vote indicated unanimous support for KC Russell for chairman. Chairman Locken then opened the floor for nominations for vice chairman. Commissioner Russell nominated Wade Hubbard for vice chairman, seconded by Mike Birnbaum. A voice vote indicated unanimous support for Wade

Hubbard for vice chairman. Chairman Locken indicated these individuals will take office immediately following this meeting.

Larry Zimmerman addressed the Commission and noted that he would begin his duties as Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs on January 8, 2013. He noted that he would be working closely with the Commission and staff to carry out his mission and vision.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Bill Locken, Chairman