

ADVISORY BOARD ON VETERANS AFFAIRS



MINUTES

Tuesday, 7 March 2017
11th floor, Suite 1114
441 4th Street NW/One Judiciary Square
Washington DC 20001
6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

- I.** The meeting was called to order by Chairman Wingo at 1830, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
- II.** The Secretary took roll call of Board Members, and 11 voting members were present.
- III.** The February minutes, posted online, were approved by voice vote.
- IV.** Old Business
 - A) Mr. Wingo updated the board on his intent to leave the chairmanship and the advisory board.
 - B) Pursuant to the by-law amendment approved at the February meeting, the board took up the election of an interim vice-chair, to fill those duties until Ms. Pridemore returns from deployment and resumes her position.
 1. Mr. McLendon and Mr. Dier stood as candidates and presented their qualifications and vision for their service in the position. Mr. Dier was elected by secret ballot.
 - C) As required by the board by-laws, the board took up the annual election of Secretary and Parliamentarian for 2017.
 1. Mr. Dalzell was unopposed for Secretary and reelected by voice vote.
 2. Mr. Locks and Ms. Grant stood as candidates for Parliamentarian. Mr. Locks was reelected by secret ballot.
 - D) Director Ely Ross presented his suggestion that the board create a committee on veterans' caregivers. After discussion, this was approved by voice vote.
- V.** Director's Report
 - A) Operations:
 1. MOVA had another successful month.

2. Performance oversight hearing – MOVA had more individuals testify than any other agency that day, with “mostly positive” input.

B) It was an active month for the director.

1. He supported an American Legion conference on families and service members.
2. The No Wrong Door initiative is moving forward, and OVA is a part of it (<https://dds.dc.gov/page/no-wrong-door>).
3. He met with the Director of Washington DC VA medical center, and plans to start holding monthly office hours there.
4. The Home Depot Foundation is looking to have bigger role in DC, and OVA will help them partner with local groups.
 - a. Much of the Conway House furnishings came via the HDF, which also provides manpower. The question is how to leverage them
 - b. Home Depot is also participating in the VFW’s Hiring Heroes event this month.
5. Attended a conference of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA, <https://www.naswa.org/>).
6. Attended the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA, <http://www.nasdva.us/>), a great opportunity to take away some great ideas from other states.
 - a. One great take away was listening to the new VA Secretary’s top 10 priorities:
 - i. Accountability legislation
 - ii. Extending the choice program deadline past August 2017
 - iii. Choice 2.0 Legislation – eliminate the 40/30 rule (driving distance)
 - iv. Infrastructure improvements and consolidations
 - v. Enhance foundational services in VA
 - vi. VA/DOD/Federal Coordination. Mr Ross noted that the participants needed to remind him that states should also be a part of it, as the next bigger providers of services
 - i. Jurisdictions are the ones taking on vet homelessness. Montgomery County, Los Angeles, and New Orleans are among the leaders
 - vii. EMR interoperability and modernization (IT)
 - i. There is a new benefits platform – vets.gov, replacing e-benefits
 - viii. Breakthrough in suicide prevention
 - i. There is no ‘magic pill,’ and they still average around 20/day

- ii. Mr. Dier said he would like to know more demographics – is it Vietnam vets or post-9/11? Do we know it's service-related or aging in general?
- iii. Mr. Ross said we need new ideas, since what we are doing isn't working

ix. Appeals modernization

- i. The VA is expecting/hoping for a legislative solution, not changes in policy/process
- ii. Mr. Ross was impressed by a demonstration of the new system for tracking statuses – a scatter graph drawing attention and accountability to those not being processed.

x. Accelerating VBA performance on claims

C) Updates:

- 1. 2nd Newsletter is out – subscriptions are above 2,600. Can subscribe by going to <https://ova.dc.gov/service/veterans-affairs-newsletter>
- 2. More website updates are up, with more in the works.

D) Working with Lawyers for Warriors, a pro bono service, and will do mobile clinic. This will support discharge upgrades to address the needy ones who are barred from assistance.

- 1. Mr. Wingo asked if the problem was at the separation point, where we miss a chance to start the engagement with vets. Mr. Ross is working to develop an agreement on getting DD214s or other ways to interface with DMV or other systems.

VI. Special Guests:

A) Marsha Netus and Matthew Shope, America Works described their work under the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant.

- 1. This includes assessments, help with job training, resumes, and interview skills
- 2. They work with Friendship Place and other ways to provide transition housing or get clothing for interviews and beginning jobs.
- 3. Mr Khan suggested they linking to VFW, other main vets groups. Mr Dier agreed with this, noting that they need to get on the list of those who are already reaching the homeless, so the homeless and their supporters can find you, instead of focusing on you finding them.
- 4. Donna Tabor, Secure Benefits Alliance, spoke about the United Health Care program.
 - a. This is a Medicare Part C plan, but unlike other populations, veterans can have their VA benefits and Part C.

VII. No committee reports

VIII. There was no other old business or new business

IX. Public Comment

A) Elizabeth Fletcher, a recovery support specialist for the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, introduced herself and described her work.

1. She is based at Walter Reed NMMC and works with veterans with traumatic brain injury, covering many of the issues the board had discussed this meeting (housing, employment, training, etc.)

B) Dudley, a Ward 6 resident, introduced himself to the board as an ex-Marine and entrepreneur.

X. Upcoming

A) Next board meeting 4 April 2017

B) From the Director:

1. GWU Veterans National Day of Service – March 25
2. March 30 – State of the District – UDC Theater of Arts
3. Budget hearing – April 11th 10 am, Room 412
 - a. Mr. Ross expects to be going first on this event.
 - b. He also expects to see 2018 budget proposal released shortly, and will share the 2017 budget as well to let us see the change

XI. Mr. Wingo adjourned the meeting at 2005.