

**WEST VIRGINIA VETERANS COUNCIL  
DONEL KINNARD MEMORIAL VETERANS STATE CEMETERY  
JANUARY 27, 2012  
MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Epling, followed immediately by the Invocation, led by Ralph Stump, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll call taken by Cabinet Secretary, Keith Gwinn. Seven members were present-enough members in attendance for a quorum.

Those present were: Mr. Miles Epling, Mr. William "Bill" Harris, Mr. Randall Bare, Mr. Ralph Stump, Mr. James DeCarlo, Cedric Greene, and Robert Vass. Those members unable to attend were: Patrick Farrell and Debra Tompkins

Chairman Epling asked for a reading of the minutes from the October meeting. Motion made to dispense of reading of the minutes due to the fact that they have been printed out and sent to the members. Motion seconded, voted on, and carried.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- **Requirements for Council Members:**

Secretary Gwinn: Mr. Chairman, I put into each member's package a copy of the code, changes that were made last year stating that if a member was not present from that era that a peace time person can be nominated.

Chairman Epling: Any questions on that? (No questions)

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

- **West Virginia Dept. of Veteran's Assistance Budget**

Secretary Gwinn: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the first thing to discuss is the WVDVA Budget. The Governor made a couple of changes in our budget. We had no cuts, we had a million dollar increase for the Veteran's Bonus Program. We had a \$225,000.00 increase in our van drivers program. We had enough for increase in salary for staff for the Administration Office. One thing we have to take up with the committee next week during the budget hearings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> is the move. We have found a new location and are moving March 1<sup>st</sup> to 1514 Kanawha Blvd. where we will have a whole floor and conference room to ourselves. We will have that move done by the 7<sup>th</sup> of March, we will be moving that week. The only thing we will be requesting from the Budget Hearings is an additional \$30,000 for an increase in rent.

- **Launched new website along with National Guard and Workforce, WV**

Secretary Gwinn: We launched a new website [www.wvmilitaryconnection.org](http://www.wvmilitaryconnection.org) last week, along with National Guard and Workforce, West Virginia. It's called The WV Military Connection. It shows employment for veterans, allowing companies to post jobs on that website. During the first week, it had 2,000 hits and 75% of those were asking questions and looking for employment. It's going very well and if we can get more companies to list these jobs for veterans, we can get these veterans hired.

- **Memorials Approved**

Secretary Gwinn: In discussion the last three weeks with the Governor, along with the Military Order of Purple Heart Memorial, we also approved the Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial. I met with the State Commander, Kelly Goddard, and he approved the Memorial to be a selected statue. The Governor also approved last week, a Gold Star Memorial, to be placed on the Memorial Walkway and next week the architects are coming down to work with Woody Williams on designing of the Gold Star Memorial for Mothers. We have also been approved to have a memorial for the American Legion, so I will be working with the State Commander and Miles Epling to get a memorial for that.

- **Donel Kinnard Memorial Veterans State Cemetery**

Secretary Gwinn: I would like to go over the Cemetery real quick while discussing the memorials. We are having this meeting in the Maintenance Building. After this Council meeting is over, we will be having a tour of the facility. Larissa Wines, Administrator, will lead you on the tour. You're welcome to drive.

Some of the things we are waiting on are: Memorial Walkway to be finished, we're putting the fountain in, the statues, the memorials, the Global War on Terrorism Memorial. What you see out here right now is the first layer of asphalt and we plan to wait until April, when we put the sod in, we will put the top coat of asphalt in and that way this whole place will be beautiful. So right now, we're in the last phase of construction.

Chairman Epling: What is our dedication date?

Secretary Gwinn: Dedication is still Memorial Day.

Chairman Epling: So, it hasn't changed. – Is that it?

- **Purchase of Vans**

Secretary Gwinn: One more thing. We just received our money for the vans and will be able to purchase eight new vans this year and have already ordered them.

## **This completes the Secretary Report.**

Chairman Epling: Any questions on the Secretary's report?

### **VETERANS HOME REPORT**

- **Chairman Epling requested report from Stacy Brown, Administrator**

Stacy reported: Basically we have 101 residents in the home at this time. We have been getting a lot more applications for paroles, Veterans who are paroles and I have discussed with my bosses and I really don't want to turn the home into a halfway house for paroles. I want to make sure that we are reminded of the mix that we have there, based on the residents. The residents don't want to have a lot of those with criminal backgrounds. Of course, I have stressed too, that it is the Parole Board's non-violent offenders. Regrettably though, we have been getting a lot of applications for violent offenders. That's been difficult, to say the least, having to make decisions based on that. **I'm looking at maybe keeping it at 10% of non-violent offenders** that having served their time, need somewhere to parole.

It's been successful in the past, we've always had paroles there. We always want to remind everyone that we're still educating the public of who we are. Sometimes they still think we are a nursing home or assisted living.

Speaking of that, we've brought up the issue of perhaps adding on an assisted living or some beds and I've done some research on that. Sir, in regard to your question, unlike nursing home beds, there is no cap to the number of beds in assisted living and there is not as many headaches involved in getting certified or being approved. However, in beginning the site survey, I looked at the property in the back of the hill and we have about an acre and a quarter of flat land that is not being used that if we were going to go forward to look at maybe adding some assisted living. I have to tell you that in this last year, we've had several veterans who have been here a long time and still have a lot of their faculties, it's just that their bodies are giving out and it's difficult to place them elsewhere and have to say goodbye. If we had a few beds potentially with that next higher level of care that would definitely be a benefit, I think. I talked to the Director of the one who is in charge of the Assisted Living Care evaluations and I printed out all the rules and regulations with that, and she encouraged me to, at the very least, research it, ask for a site survey, it doesn't cost anything to have them come out and tell us if it's even viable. We also discussed perhaps all females. Looking at the past applications, we've only received in the last (going on three) years that I've been there, five applications from females, three of those were housed at the Veteran's Home. Right now we're not seeing a lot of female applications, and so I don't know if that would be beneficial at this time. I do believe this is going to change with the current situations that we're having overseas and a lot more women serving.

Mr. Bare, you also asked about perhaps emergency housing. We continue to research this. One of the issues is obviously emergency housing. If they come

in and they have let's say, active Hep B which is transferrable, so we would have to look at how we could house them and things of that nature. I did put together for the Board and have printed off copies of a contact list of the Huntington and Charleston Areas. I tried to put detail in the information regarding what they do, such as where is the best place to call for assistance for women, and/or men, or children. If you have any questions, you can call me anytime.

Question raised on the half-way house or what-ever you call this: Are they convicted felons?

Stacy responds: Are you talking about the ones that we have now?

Response: I'm talking about any, because a convicted felon regardless of whether they are a veteran or not, they lose certain rights to benefits and I'm just wondering if they are living on taxpayer dollars that they are not entitled to.

Stacy: They are entitled to Veteran Benefits and they can go to the VA and receive medical attention.

Question: But are they convicted felons?

Stacy: I would have to look...no...not offhand, I don't know.

Response: I just want to make sure that we don't fall in that category.

Stacy: Example, we have applications for convicted felons and we've had to deny them, of course, their crime was violent in nature. The ones we have currently are not under that category.

We had an inspection and we did well. The only draw-back to the new inspections is that it's a new team every year because the VA contracted inspectors and so last year, our care plans were fine and received no deficiencies. This year, the team did not like our care plan, and regrettably, here again, the inspectors still try to throw us in with nursing home or assisted living. We try to educate them as best as we can, as far as letting them know that we don't have the same rules and regulations as those. This year the tags were regarding documentation and I spoke with Mike and Doctor Syler, at the VA Hospital. One of our tags is about information not being received by them in a timely manner including medical records of our residence, such as proof that they are getting their annual physicals. I told Dr. Syler, I said Sir, we have been trying to work through the clinical side as far as getting information and making sure we know when Meds change. It's bad when your van driver knows more about the medical goings on of your residents and can report more to you than what you're receiving from the VA. So that's my current, you might say, focus right now. Our contract is an extension, extended through March 31<sup>st</sup> and I'm requesting that these issues be corrected as soon as possible. As far as continuity of care, when you're looking at taking care of our veterans, if the nurses, when they go to an appointment, and we're not getting a report back in

a timely manner and let's say meds just show up, with no supporter, that can keep a veteran from taking their medication in a timely manner until we verify the dosage and everything. Those are the kinds of problems we are currently faced with.

Lastly, we have always had issues and problems at the Veteran's Home. I love my veterans...they tickle me at times, because like right now, we have all kinds of nice TVs that no one wants because they're not flat screens. My veterans want flat screens now and will accept nothing less. With that said, we have problems waiting on purchasing to say ok, we approve this contract, we will get this bid out – it's a headache and a half. Anyone's welcome to come and speak with me to look at what we are doing, what we're not doing and any problems, you can certainly call me and I will give an open honest answer as I always have. We have four water fountains, two are down, two are working. Residents are upset, regarding purchase orders, it's one of those situations of is it feasible to keep a water fountain, keep fixing it, or buy new. The veterans don't want to walk the extra footage to go to the working water fountain. These are some of the problems and issues that we have and will always have, but I thank you for your time.

Question raised by Woody Williams: Are any communications being sent out from the Veterans Home to folks at the VFW Posts and their division posts as to the status of the Veteran's Home, the fact that you have 101 or 104 but can handle 150 to encourage and let those people know that there are vacancies there. We have with us today, maybe for the very first time, the State Commander of the VFW.

He needs to stand up and take a bowel. Mr. Commander, did you get any questions or do people know out there in the community that there is a veteran's home and vacancies and that there's a possibility of getting in there.

VFW State Commander, Kelly Goddard: As far as communications to us, we get requests from the General Store when you're low on supplies and information like that, but a fact sheet or a flyer or anything, I would be glad to publish it to every VFW Post in the State.

Stacy: Sir, if I could get your email.

Secretary Gwinn: Mr. Chairman, what we could do is take their staff report weekly and send it out on our distribution list which everybody gets on the meetings. That would take care of that.

Woody Williams: What is the distribution list, I'm not familiar with that.

Secretary Gwinn: Our distribution list, just like you get emails of minutes, date, agenda. We can put that on the agenda list and send it out.

Woody Williams: They do let the public know, but there are an awful lot of people who still don't know that there's a Veteran's Home down there. An awful lot of people don't know that they could get in there. We're not doing any public

service announcements, no radio, or newspaper announcements. How are we supposed to know that it is available and people can get in it. If I were a Legislator providing money for that thing, I would be upset. When we could handle 150, but we just can't seem to get more than 104 or 102 then it bounces back to 95 and then it goes back up again. For some reason, we are hooked right there in that 100 bracket.

Stacy: As I said in the last meeting, sometimes they leave for positive reasons. Some of them are able to get their education and get back on their feet and leave, so we do have that fluctuation. Looking at the layout, to say that we can handle 150, and I know that Sir, that when you ran the hill, you had more than that at one time, you're looking at 125 comfortably, but if you get above that, it's going to get more crowded. Here again, the VA standards for footage per man is actually quite small and we try to have more than that. I don't want my veterans to feel like they are incarcerated or that their room is a cell. We try to give them as much room as possible to make it more comfortable for them. Speaking of comfort, we're stuck with buying things on contract and we can't always get what we want or what the veterans want. That's also an issue, like our day care furniture is practically brand new, they would like to have a more living room feel and we can't blame them. But because of the fire codes, we can't move in nice loungers and things of that nature.

Secretary Gwinn: Mr. Chairman, on the issue about the Public Service Announcements, we had requested \$20,000 in our budget for next year to do Public Service Announcements since we have a Public Affairs Coordinator now, that was not included in our budget and we are trying to take that up in our budget hearings next week.

Chairman Epling: Ok – Kelly?

VFW State Commander, Kelly Goddard: Yes Mr. Chairman, I'll stand beside Stacy so she can answer my questions. I've been down to the Veterans Home for three visits since my term in office. My first meeting there, back in July. I went back for the Christmas party. In December when I was there, I was approached by the chairman of your Resident Council, Earnie. Earnie said he had some concerns and he would like to give me some material. He sent this information to me and I got it last Saturday night up in Flatwoods. He had some concerns, as I and some of my other officers. You addressed about the water fountain being out, we were told three months, I believe it was six weeks that we had to order parts and get outside maintenance to fix it. Don't we have four maintenance people that work there. I'm not pointing fingers or anything, but I believe there are five gallon buckets setting in the hall where water is leaking. The Council has asked for handicap doors to the Rec Center for two years and been told that we don't have the money, but yet we have the money to buy other things?

Stacy responds: We have the money, Sir. We just can't put it where they want it.

I have a packet here that this chairman wrote to Veterans Affairs on February 10, no response.

He wrote to Manchin, who was Governor on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, no response.

Finally he wrote to Senator Rockefeller on October 4<sup>th</sup>, and got a response on November the 8<sup>th</sup>, a letter was received from you on November 16<sup>th</sup> and a meeting was set up with you and the Director and they feel that nothing was accomplished at this meeting.

There is a list of 13 issues they have in here. What I am recommending to the Council here today is to set up an independent committee, with a representative from each VSO, to go to the Veteran's Home and sit down with Stacy and the Resident Chairman and go over these issues to see if we can get some of them resolved. I don't know of any other way. I'm not saying he's right and you're wrong, because I don't know. But if the Council would make the recommendation to appoint a committee with representative from each VSO and go down and let's talk about it. One thing they did say is that they are afraid of retaliation against them for giving this to me. A lot of these people know me and I served on this Council for two years and a lot of people call a spade a spade and I just kinda call it what it is, it's nothing but a shovel. I'm just telling you what I was told and that would be my recommendation, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Epling: Thank you Kelly. Are there any other questions?

Secretary Gwinn: Mr. Chairman, can I comment on that? We have provided responses to their questions, but when they didn't like them, they wouldn't recognize them. They wanted residents thrown out because they didn't bathe. I said, I can't do that, so they didn't like that.

I will welcome an investigation if someone wants a committee to go down and check into these, I will welcome that and work with them.

Chairman Epling: My proposal would be to appoint a committee to go down and meet with Stacy to check into these issues.

So we'll appoint a Committee of: Robert Vass from the Council, Kelly Goddard from the VFW, Tommy Hayes from the American Legion, Dennis Rayburn, AMVETS of West Virginia, Joe Wilson, State Council of Vietnam Veterans, Owen Stout of Marine Corp League, and Secretary Keith Gwinn. You all can work out your time and all that.

Question to Stacy: You stated that handicap doors on the recreation building cannot be provided.

Stacy responded: There **is** a handicap door but they don't like the location. They would prefer that it be on the front of the building which, if you notice, is where the little ramp is and the glass doors. We've already had it looked at and we can't do that. The access is on the side when they come down (where the barbecue grill is). Stacy continues, I love my veterans, I don't blame them, everyone wants convenience and you would like to have everything where you want it and when you want it, but it's not always possible. But yes sir, it is provided.

Chairman Epling: Any other questions?

Woody Williams: I want to make a statement on this word "handicapped". Disability sounds so much better than being handicapped and I think it's the appropriate word to use. Instead of saying someone is handicapped, they have a disability. It just sounds so much better, so please try to put that word in your vocabulary. I've dealt with that word, when I was with a State Agency, that was my job and we stayed away from that word, handicapped several years ago.

Woody continued: Mr. Chair, I would suggest, not to take your job, I don't want it.

I would suggest out of that committee that you designate a Chairman so somebody will know they've got to organize the date, time, and place.

Requested that Keith, as Chair work with everyone so that everyone knows the right date.

## **CLARKSBURG NURSING FACILITY**

Chairman Epling requested a report from Dr. Kevin Crickard, Administrator:

Dr. Kevin Crickard: I apologize for missing the last Veteran's Council Meeting. My name is Kevin and most of you know me. I run the State Veterans Home in Clarksburg.

### **I have some really awesome news to report and that's that we are now in the "end of the beginning".**

For the longest time, it seems like at the State Veteran's Home, we have always been at the beginning, in formation, trying to get this done, get that done. The fact is that two weeks ago, we hired the last of our nurses. We're talking about state workers. I had twenty nurses in our organization class, 7 LPNs, 13 Health Service Workers, a few stragglers that are getting larger than normal notices that are coming in next week or two weeks, but the fact is that all 180 positions are now filled are going to be filled with state's employees making what I consider to be excellent wages. Since July 1<sup>st</sup>, we've hired 30 licensed nurses, many who have come in at wage exceptions. The existing nurses within our facility that were there originally, the Secretary, (it was actually his idea from the very beginning), we went back and did what is called an internal equity adjustment and that was approved through the Personnel Board and there were nurses that received an increase to bring them up to what we are now hiring other experienced nurses in at a wage exception. So, in essence, what this means is, we are in our last two to three weeks of using any agency nurses.

There have been some very, very positive changes, but unfortunately, the US Nursing Network, the temporary nurses that we use, that company didn't take the news well that we weren't going to be paying them a million dollars this year. I don't know why anyone would be upset that they weren't going to get a million dollars this year. The fact is, with the recommendations that the Secretary has made, and the approvals that the Governor has given, we will save the State of West Virginia in this next fiscal year, 1.2 million dollars.

1.2 Million Dollars out of our budget alone and part of that will be offset by some minor increases in the better wages that we are now paying our licensed nurses, a feat that has been a long time coming. So it's really a win, win for us right now.

I can tell you, for example, questions like, when are you going to open the Alzheimer's Unit? Well my dad's down there, so I'm certain that it's up and running or I wouldn't have my father there. He was a Navy Chaplain. We are admitting three veterans per week.

The last time we had spoken, I had given you December as the date that we were to be completely full and I can tell you that December and January were a couple of the most difficult months that I have ever had there. Primarily because we had fifteen of our dearest veterans pass on and these were all natural deaths, they were deaths as a result that our vets come to us, often times, very frail. I could stand here today and say that we would have been completely full right now, but the fact is that we lost some wonderful people and I think many of you know exactly who I was talking about. They were good, close, and personal friends of mine. The average length of stay at a State Veteran's Nursing Home is 3.6 years. I've been there 3.6 years and so now I'm seeing people that I've known and have been with, as a matter of fact, this June, I will have spent as much time at this Veteran's Home as I spent in my entire stint in the US Marine Corp.

So I'm really vested in this right now, it's something that I take very seriously and personally. I'm also very proud to tell you and announce that we are at the end of the beginning. This is it...we really are going to be, from a statistical standpoint, at or near 100% in the next several weeks and there is nothing to hold us back now, thanks to the Secretary's support. That being said, I will be glad to answer any questions.

Question raised: What's the waiting list now?

The last time I checked, we have 138 veterans to get in our home. The average waiting time is 1.2 years.

That's at 3 admissions a week. We keep bringing people in....but our normal death rate is 3 deaths a month.

Fifteen in two months hurt...it hurts us emotionally.

Bill Harris (Council Member) asked: Are you saying that the federal salary equates to the WV salary level?

Kevin: Not necessarily, I will tell you that, based on years of experience, for licensed nurses, we're as competitive now as anybody in our market. We're certainly not the highest paid, your not going to get rich working for State Government, but I will tell you that we're in the ball park now, we're not outside trying to get in. We are in the ball park and we're attracting some truly wonderful nurses, I have some unbelievable talent. By the way, there are 48 licensed nurses on the payroll at State Veteran's Home, there are 58 Health

Service Workers, there are 106 nurses taking care of 101 veterans. We actually have 100 plus 1 in the hospital today.

Question raised: If a veteran is not in the system, how easy is it to get them into the State Veterans Nursing Home?

Kevin: We experience the same problem, not with every veteran. With a lot of our admissions, we have referrals from veterans throughout the state who are not in the VA system. They've never stepped foot into a VA Hospital, they've never enrolled. We then have to take two steps backwards, because in fact, they do have to be registered in the Federal System, before I can admit them. So what you're saying is 100% correct, I see what you're talking about on a pretty regular basis and we do have to add an extra step if they're not in the system. I don't know what the answer to getting them into the system.

Chairman Epling: Any other questions? Thank you, Dr. Crickard, for your report.

Dr. Crickard: Thank you for your time.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Military Credit for State Employees under CPRB:**

#### **Secretary Gwinn: The first part of new business is military credit for State Employees under CPRB, that's Consolidated Public Retirement Board.**

As some of you may or may not know, a couple of weeks ago, a veteran went up to have his military time included on his retirement, or counted for a conflict that is not listed by Retirement Board. The Retirement Board states that they will not recognize anything that is not in the code. They only recognize the Persian Gulf, Vietnam, WWII, Korea, and the current conflicts they are looking at. So, people are losing their military time and this resulted in them having to go outside and go to the court and sue them. I think the last one won, this one just filed his case with the court. This has been going on for several years. Former Governor, now Senator Manchin, put in a bill to try and get it changed to recognize the conflicts and got turned down, cut down to committee. Again, for the third year in a row, I put a copy of the bills in your record. There are copies of the bills on the tracking report that we have out now and will be emailing out every week.

There are two bills in there: One of them is to include military time for those conflict eras, the other one is to just straight recognize how much time you did up to five years, you get those five years credit. So, there are two different versions of the bill. We should be working with the Legislature to try and get one of these bills passed to resolve this situation.

## **Adjustment Requirements for Operation Recognition High School Diploma (WV Code §18-2-34):**

Angela Meadows, WVDVA Manager over this program, has composed a letter to the Council requesting that a review and adjustment to the current language used in WV Code §18-2-34 be recommended to the Legislature this session. She has included this letter in the Council packets and handed out information, along with supporting documentation of two or three well deserved applicants whom she recently had to deny their diplomas, due to the current language contained in Code. She requested and received approval by Secretary Gwinn to pursue this change and to invite Ms. Jordan from WV Board of Education to speak at the Council Meeting and to relay the Board's support.

Secretary Gwinn: We have someone here to speak on that. Ms. Jordan, would you introduce yourself?

Ms. Betty Jo Jordan: I would be delighted to. My name is Betty Jordan and I work with the WV Department of Education and the Department is privileged to work with the WV Veterans Affairs in the administration of Operation Recognition providing Diplomas to West Virginia Veterans: WWI, WWII, the Korean Conflict, as well as, the Vietnam Conflict. I do have some information for the Council that might be helpful, if I may distribute it. I also have some extras for the audience, if anyone would like a copy of the material.

I thought it might be of interest to the Council, first of all to know how we have progressed since 2000 when the Legislature passed, WV Code §18-2-34 and the State Board of Education approved policy 4350 with the procedures that we use.

As of yesterday, when we queried, of course January was a busy month for diplomas for West Virginia veterans. We have an ebb and flow of applications. As of yesterday, the State Board of Education had approved a total of 1,473 applications for Operation Recognition, High School Diplomas for Veterans. Those diplomas have been issued in 25 different counties. You can see on the chart how these diplomas go across the various wars and conflicts. We have not awarded any diplomas to any WWI veterans. Mr. Buckles, with his passing, I believe was our last surviving WWI Veteran in the state. 514 WWII Veterans have received their High School Diploma through this program, 299 Korean, 660 from Vietnam. All were males, with the exception of one female. So I come to the Council with that information, but also with a conversation that Secretary Gwinn's office and our office have had that the Code provides that any WWI or any WWII veteran, as long as they have an honorable discharge, automatically receive their diploma. There is a provision however, and we have provided in the hand out, a copy of the WV Board of Education Policy, as well as the State Code, so that you can see that language. If the veteran was a veteran of either the Korean Conflict or the Vietnam Conflict, they must have been attending school upon their entry into the military. Unfortunately, that is where we have an issue. We have not had a lot of applications that have been disapproved, but we have a little less than 100, most of them being from the Vietnam era where individuals for some reason decided

to exit school. There was a down time of sometimes five, six, or seven months, before they decided they were going to enter the military. Therefore, the provision in the State Code, that said they had to be in school when they entered, means that we can't approve those diplomas. Secretary Gwinn said that with the Department and the Board being willing to consider a recommendation to the Legislature to entertain a code language change that would give those veterans the same stance as our WWI and WWII veterans if they provide evidence of honorable discharge or having served our State and our Country, said diplomas could be awarded to those individuals too. I told him I would be delighted to join the meeting today for the purpose of that conversation. Of course, I cannot speak for the WV Legislature in terms of what they would be willing to entertain or change in the code, but certainly, the State Board would be willing to partner, in support of that.

Just a little bit of historic information, if I may. I did a little bit of research, in terms of why that particular condition was added to the code for Korea and Vietnam and the thinking at that time was that the individuals who enlisted or may have been drafted at that time, still had an opportunity to complete their High School Diploma, whereas, the urgency of WWI and WWII seem to be leaving immediately to serve their Country. Perhaps, the urgency was not the same. So, that was some of the reasoning at that time.

I can give you that bit of history, and I would be glad to entertain questions from the Council or from anyone from the Audience.

Chairman Epling: Any questions?

Woody Williams: Comment and Question regarding the Korean Conflict.

Chairman Epling: Korean combat/war veteran means any veteran who performed military service between a specific time period.

Chairman Epling: We need a motion regarding the Operation Recognition Program and asking the Legislature to change the code.

Mr. Bill Harris: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Veteran's Council recommend a change to the code to the Legislature to accommodate these individuals that are being denied a High School Diploma from Korea and Vietnam. Motion seconded, voted on, and carried.

Secretary Gwinn: Mr. Chairman, that's all of the new business.

### **Introduction and Remarks from Visitors Present:**

**Chairman Epling introduced a guest speaker, Dr. Bob Henry Baber to speak on the WV Veteran's Legacy Project (Glenville State College)**

Mr. Baber discussed a \$350,000 grant that we have been working on for the last year and half called the Veteran's Legacy Grant and came out of Congress.

It's a listening grant, an interview grant, where we interview vets, transcribe their interviews, and upload those interviews onto the web. I have information for you and if you know any vets, young or old, who want to be interviewed and have their interviews uploaded. We also give them a copy themselves of their interviews.

We're going to be asking for an extension to this project. There's about \$100,000 left in it. We really want to take this thing to the next level.

We want to capture WWII Veterans. We are very centrally located in West Virginia. We really want to get around the state. We are hoping to make an hour long PBS quality DVD that can go across the United States. We will probably have to raise in the neighborhood of an additional \$100,000, but I am a Major Gifts Office at Glenville State and I have no problem getting out and begging for money for beautiful products that show off our WV Vets. Please anyone who wants to be interviewed, or anyone who has lost someone, we would be willing to come to you or you can come to Glenville.

Question raised: Is this associated with the Veterans Memory Project that they are doing at the Culture Center?

Response: No, and also I learned that there is a project going on from WVU. (WV Veteran's Oral History Project)

I would like to become aware of all these and pull everyone together in one room and there's bound to be resources we can share.

Chairman Epling: Anything else?

James McCormick: I'm a veteran of the Persian Gulf War and the Operation Iraq Freedom and I'm telling you that those two wars are totally different.

My experience in Persian Gulf War and my experience in Operation Iraq Freedom are totally different. I would like to see equal representation. I would like to see two veterans from the Persian Gulf War and two veterans, one from Afghanistan and one from Iraq. They face different things over there. The issues I had coming back from the Persian Gulf War were nothing compared to what I am dealing with now, coming back from Operation Iraq Freedom. I cover a 10 county area and work with disabled veterans and I'm seeing so many of these guys and gals coming in with traumatic brain injury and PTSD. Not only do they not have a flat screen TV, but they don't have electricity to plug a TV into. So the jobs, and having someone to speak for them would probably encourage them to get involved and I know right now, there's not very many involved. We'd love to reach out. I know that I've had people in the American Legion, VFW, Jack Tincher, and all these people who have reached out to me. So, it's happening, but if we had people with fair representation, I believe that's going to bring in more people. I believe that if they feel like they're not being represented as well as the WWII, or the Korea, or Vietnam Veterans, they're going to feel second best. That's the only thing I have and thank you.

Mr. Baber: We also have the same problem. We have very, very few young vets so we don't want to put out a documentary that doesn't recognize the younger vets. There is attention to the older vets who we really do need to catch, but we have very few modern vets.

Joe Wilson: Dave Simmons, State Council President, Vietnam Vets sent me an email the other day regarding a vet who went to DMV and was turned down due to a change in documents needed at the DMV. Beginning January 1, 2012, under the Real ID Card Law, you have to provide an original Social Security card. They will not recognize Military ID Card. Need to work on this through Legislature.

Woody Williams made suggestion that the Legislative Officer, Billy Wayne Bailey, make a proposal to the Legislature to get this changed.

Cedric Greene: This cannot be changed, this is from the Federal level due to Homeland Security.

Billy Wayne Bailey: We might be able to get the State Legislature to adopt a resolution asking Congress to revisit that. Sometimes it gets cumbersome to try to do business, but I will ask the Legislature.

Meg Cianfrocca, (Rockefeller): Should talk with all Congressional Officers about this.

Ira Latimer: Like a lot of people, I'm a veteran of two conflicts, the Korean War and the Cold War. Also, the cemetery really looks good and I look forward to coming here in the Spring, when the grass is growing and the flowers are blooming. I'm proud to have served on Don Kinnard's Committee to put all this together.

Jack Tincher: It's Legislation time. Veteran's Visibility Day this year is going to be on February 20<sup>th</sup>. It will start at 9:00 in the House Chambers.

The last couple of years, the legislation gets to a committee and it dies. A veteran is not a public servant. We have to educate our Legislatures somehow that we are veterans and not public servants.

There are a couple of bills coming out. A resolution for an additional cemetery somewhere between Summersville and Bluefield and another Veteran's Nursing Home to be located at the Beckley VA. We've still got 150 on the waiting list at Clarksburg and this list is not going to go down. If we can't get the funding for these projects this year, we'll work on the funding if we can get it through. The bill for this cemetery was passed in 1985 and it laid there for 20 years before we got the funds to build it. Sounds to me like, we probably need another Veteran's Home somewhere in the northern part of the state. I don't think there is anything up there in that part of the state for the Veterans. I went to a meeting last week, and got Billy Wayne involved in it, The Center of Excellence for Disabilities down at WVU that already has a built in program for PTI, for

anybody, if you fall off a horse and get hurt, or are in a car wreck. Now this is being expanded to include veterans.

There is a HB 2087 that sets up a Traumatic Brain Injury Commission that's primarily for veterans. So we want to get behind that piece of legislation and try to get this done this year. If you know anyone with TBI, Billy Wayne has the contact information about this.

Further discussion continued regarding developing a committee to address these issues of TBI and PTSD. Also concern expressed regarding the negative news that the media is putting out about our veterans, our young veterans that are coming back now. We need to educate our people in the United States about what they are going through and what they have experienced in war. The veterans and organizations need to come together and discuss this and get a call to the news media to explain why these things do happen.

Woody Williams: Discussion about the Council. This is a terrific crowd and group of people with a tremendous amount of influence in the state who are here. This hasn't always been the case. This is how we get veterans together. I see a mixture here where we're all going down the same path. The only interest is the veteran. That's it. I compliment the Council on that.

Woody read the Code regarding the responsibility and term of the Council Members.

Woody expressed that the eligibility requirements for Nursing Home, Veterans Nursing Facility, and Cemetery should be the same, but somewhat differ on the website of WV Dept. of Veteran's Assistance.

Chairman Epling: Woody, those have been changed.

Keith Gwinn: We've been having an issue with "ghost websites" and are trying to get them eliminated.

Jack Tincher suggested that the standardized forms be attached to the minutes when they are disbursed.

Chairman Epling: Once something gets on the internet, it's very difficult to get it off.

Woody continued: The term of the Council is currently 6 years, and that's too long. I recommended that this should be changed. I suggested that the position of the Chair of the Council be for four years.

Chairman Epling: I'm up this year and I won't be back.

Woody: At the VFW Convention this past weekend, by the graciousness of the State Commander. The person who introduced the resolution and got it passed. This means that in the State of West Virginia, 17,000 people agreed to this resolution, because it was the Commander who introduced it, and the

Commander signed it. That says that the VFW as a whole approved this resolution. If we're going to get anywhere with the Legislature, we've got to convince those people that we're not out here alone. I'm not fighting this battle myself. I have 17,000 people back here, that if I write a letter and say that if you guys aren't doing your jobs, I've got 17,000 people that just might climb on you one of these days when you're out trying to get elected.

Resolution to establish a Veteran's Court: Because of the extra ordinary number of veterans returning from war with PTSD, and the minimal facilities of expertise to treat them, and the court being overwhelmed; the purpose of this resolution is to respectfully request that a Veteran's Court be established that can assist and adjudicate those veteran cases of a non-felony nature, assuring that those who suffer trauma, as a result of war, are given compassionate consideration and treatment...

(The resolution was read in its entirety by Woody and is attached with these minutes.)

Woody continued: There are 13 states now that have a Veteran's Court. If it's working in those states, why wouldn't it work in West Virginia? I have a copy for Governor Tomblin, One for the Chair of the House Veterans Committee, and one for the Senate Veteran's Committee. These are signed by the Commander of the VFW. The American Legion should also pass this resolution so that their members would be in support of the Veteran's Court. I have copies for anyone who wants a copy.

James McCormick: I want to say thank you for bringing this up. I have a case load of about 68 veterans that I'm working with in a 10 County area and twenty of these veterans are combat veterans who came home, got in trouble, got a DUI, got in trouble with drugs. Their DD-214 reflect excellent troops and they came home and got in trouble and I can't get them a job at McDonald's because they got arrested.

Woody: It's just not fair...we're letting them slide right through our fingers and not doing anything about it. Folks, we've got to be more concerned about our fellow man, because some of us have been there and only by the grace of God, did not end up in prison.

Woody: Discussed the need to have the road and bridge signs that are designated to honor the memory of a veteran who died serving our Country, identify the branch of service or war that they served in. A resolution has been presented to get the current signs changed and all upcoming signage to reflect these details.

Woody: The purpose of this resolution is to support HB 2087 regarding developing a *Commission* to identify those who need treatment and care and to coordinate the services that they need.

Discussion followed regarding the importance of disbursing information statewide and the best way to get information out there.

Chairman Epling: Any further business or questions to come before this meeting? If not, meeting stands adjourned.

**Minutes approved by Veteran's Council Chairman, Miles Epling,**

Signed:   
Date: 4-5-12