WEST VIRGINIA VETERANS COUNCIL
WVDVA CABINET SECRETARY/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
MAY 4, 2012
MEETING MINUTES

Meeting called to order by Chairman Epling, followed immediately by the Invocation, led by Randall Bare, and the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Patrick Farrell.

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 Patrick Farrell. Those members unable to attend were: Robert Vass and Debra Tompkins

Chairman Epling asked for a reading of the minutes from the January 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

- ***Recommendations resulting from meeting on April 18, 2012 at Veteran's Home in Barboursville:**

Woody Williams: Passed out copies of and read the list of seven recommendations resulting from meeting with Veteran Residents and Mrs. Stacy Brown, Administrator, and other representatives of Veteran's Organizations on April 18, 2012. * Copy attached with minutes

Secretary Gwinn: Mr. Chairman, my recommendation is to take these recommendations and upon vote of Council, make effective July 1st, 2012.

Chairman Epling: Ok, what's the feeling of the Council? Say "I" to approve these recommendations –

Cedric Greene: What is the Administrator's take on this?

Stacy Brown, Administrator: I'm going to do whatever I can to help the Veterans.

Cedric Greene: Ma'am, have you seen these?

Stacy Brown, Administrator: Yes, just now. I've been briefed a little bit about them. The Residents Council as it stands right now has kind of become, with a couple of the individuals, it's more about their own personal agendas and not really about the whole of the veterans on the hill and some of the bi-laws are written to where the current chairman has a lot of power in picking his own

cabinet and things of that nature which probably shouldn't be. I allowed them a lot of autonomy because I wanted to show that I trusted them to partake of the Resident's Council and conduct it properly. This current chairman has not only had problems with me but with the secretary and anyone – I guess when they have disagreements, and that's going to happen. Hopefully this will help smooth some of that out. He may not be happy with some of those recommendations, however, I did speak with him the other day and once again, I often tell him, my doors always open and if you have a problem, you can come and talk to me. As far as any personal feelings he has towards me, that can be up for debate, but I just want to help the Veterans as best as I can. This is the beginning as far as getting the resident council to focus not on their own self power but more on empowering the residents and helping the residents.

Chairman Epling: ....and we're going to re-write them, so....

Patrick Farrell: (to Stacy) - So, do you support these recommendations?

Stacy Brown: Here again, if it's going to help my veterans, I will support it. It doesn't mean that some of them can't be revisited. In the course of writing the by-laws, if you all want to maybe approve it with some exceptions, that's up to you. Here again, everything is trial and error. See if it works, see if it helps and if it doesn't you go back and tweak it....

James DeCarlo: Are there any particulars Stacy that you might want revisited?

Stacy Brown: At this time, as a person in the Military, I still follow my upper commands and I respect Mr. Williams and he's like a grandfather to me. I know everyone has the best interest as far as the veterans and I know that Mr. Bailey can assist to help me implement the changes, I take any and all assistance, I don't think I'm a one woman powerhouse that I can do it all, so I always appreciate everyone's input.

James DeCarlo: With respect to items 2 and 3, I notice they use the term "all the residents"- how many residents do you have?

Stacy Brown: We currently have 98.

James DeCarlo: And how many might attend any of these meetings on average?

Stacy Brown: Well to be honest with you, about half of the population could care less if there is a resident's council.

James DeCarlo: I have the dubious position of being the president of my homeowner's association and I imagine it's very difficult to get some consensus without a lot of back and forth, arguing, personal agendas, and things that don't even concern the home.

Stacy Brown: I would hope that I have your confidence that you can come into my office at any time, look at any my records, look at what I'm doing or not

doing, make recommendations to me, as I've told other organizations as well. I would request that you trust me to do my job. Regrettably, as the Administrator or anyone in charge, you're always going to have people who may not like you for one reason or another and you just have to work through that.

Secretary Gwinn: Mr. Chairman, I have a comment on that. Not very many residents attend these meetings. I was privileged to sit down with Mr. Williams and the Committee to discuss some of this. One of the reasons they don't attend is because it's a closed meeting and they don't invite any of the Administrative Staff, they invite the residents they want to and once the President is elected, he selects the rest of the committee, so basically it's a dictatorship right now. This will open it up and probably get more residents involved because we're not going to see the same residents running the thing.

Woody Williams: Jim, if I may, we know that 100% of the people are not going to attend anything, but ***all*** means that anyone who wants to come, can. As Keith said previously, it was a closed meeting.

Chester Fleming: I made a trip with the American Legion up to the home right after she took over as manager and we were doing Bingo and giving out presents and things like that. When they found out I was on the Council, a couple of them came to me and wanted to talk to me and basically there was a political fight that's going on there and there was just a bunch of mouthing going on. I think you have an excellent manager up there.

Patrick Farrell: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank Mr. Williams and the group that went down and put these recommendations together. In light of the fact that Mrs. Brown just saw these for the first time, before we take a vote on it, I would like to give her the chance, not today, but in the coming weeks to respond with any of her thoughts on these recommendations before we take action on it.

Chairman Epling: Motion made and seconded, voted on and carried to bring this back up at the next Council Meeting.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

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

Secretary Gwinn: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the budget came out after the last Council Meeting and unfortunately they did not approve any changes/increases requested for the van drivers. The Governor's Office is working with me right now and currently, as it stands, we will <u>not</u> have funds available to pay the drivers for May and June.
After July, we'll be able to pay them for next Fiscal Year back but then after that, we'll be short next year too. The Governor's Office is working with me to resolve this problem probably when the special session comes in or he'll direct it from his rainy day fund and I will keep you updated as soon as I have an answer.

- **Couple of Bills Did Get Passed**

Secretary Gwinn: One was the Drivers HB 4330, effective June 4, 2012. Veterans who have a driver's license, even though it's not expired, can go into DMV to get it renewed and they will put a "V" on the license to show "veterans status" and honorably discharged veteran. We're working with companies to get this information out to allow them to get discounts if they are being offered, like through Lowes and Home Depot.

- **Dedication of DCKMSV Cemetery still scheduled for May 28 at 3:00 pm**

Secretary Gwinn: The dedication for the DCKMSVC is still on for May 28th at 3:00 pm and Governor Tomblin, Senators Rockefeller and Manchin, Congresswoman Capito will be there. Have a sad report that we did have vandalism there the night before last. Someone got onto one of the machines, decided to do some donuts and wheelies on the concrete pad in front of the committal shelter, damaged a few of the concrete pads, broke a few of the curbs, tore up some of the grass, knocked the light tower over – we're in the process of repairing now. Security cameras were supposed to be in two months ago and we're trying to find out why they're not in now. Trying to get that taken care of and hopefully, that will remedy the situation. It is gated, but unfortunately it was not locked on one end. It is permanently locked now – but we will never be able to stop 4-wheelers from getting in. – It's sad.

This completes the Secretary Report.

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

Michael Dawson, DAV Commander: With driver's license deal, will that include CDLs?

Secretary Gwinn: Yes, I believe so and all the way up to class 7, I believe all classes.

VETERANS HOME REPORT

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

Stacy reported: Currently have 98 veterans/residents at our facility. We have two admissions scheduled for next week.
Ironically, we lost two veterans this week due to positive reasons, they got employed and left – So we lost two and gained two.

We've really been pushing the education and especially since we're seeing a younger generation coming in. They are motivated and excited about their opportunities and we've certainly been trying to help them there.

The Social Workers are currently working on 19 applications. We are receiving more applications from around the state, so as people are talking about us, they're getting to know that we are there.

Roofing Project: Bids were received and the vendor was selected by the agency but not awarded yet by purchasing. Obviously, we cannot disclose who was selected until the award. This contract covers all roof structures on the property, with the exception of one residential building that was redone in 2010. We don't have a tentative start day until it gets awarded.

The Treasurer's Office will start charging the agency $15 for every return check received for resident's who present checks with NSF for maintenance fees. It doesn't happen that often, but it does happen.

All doors in the facility are receiving new locks and handles; the intercom system takes a lot of electricity hits during electrical storm and they fry. We did take hits earlier this week and nursing can still page but no one else can. We're looking into maybe changing the contract so that we can have an emergency system.

We will also be adding a couple of new additional speakers to assist the residents with hearing the announcements and putting them in strategic places.

Ramps are ADA compliant, but with the newer scooters, they don't turn quite as easily as some of the older scooters, so we're looking at what we can tweak there as far as assisting our residents in getting around in there scooters.

Recreation part is running smoothly and all the kinks have been worked out and we are getting paid on time.

I do want to thank Mr. Williams and Kelly Goddard and all of those that worked on the committee to assist me in trying to help our veterans.

Chairman Epling: This completes the report, any questions?

Patrick Farrell: Are you having any problems with drugs up there?

Secretary Gwinn: Let me comment on that. I did order a drug sweep down there, just a minor one. I asked the State Police to bring the drug dog in, which is allowed in policy. Not to go into the resident's rooms, but through the common areas, through the hallways, and there were no hits with no warning of the drug sweep. What was strange about this was that the resident president had requested that we do one, but then the day we did it, he came forward and told the residents that it wasn't fair and he asked Mr. Williams why did we do that? Mr. Williams pointed out that it's in the rules and bi-laws that we are allowed to do that.

CLARKSBURG NURSING FACILITY

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

Secretary Gwinn: Dr. Crickard is unable to attend and I am giving the report on his behalf.

We have currently 109 residents. We had two more pass away last week.

We are now putting the emergency chiller in. We had that issue last year where some days it got up to 100 degrees and got very hot. They are currently putting this emergency chiller in to back up in case of more hot days.

That concludes the report.

Chairman Epling: Any questions or comments?

NEW BUSINESS

Nominations for Replacing Ralph Stump on Veterans Council:

We have two so far and the closing date is next Friday.

Chairman Epling: Get them into Keith or the office.

Secretary Gwinn: Will forward them to the Council for review before submitting to the Governor

Chairman Epling: The recommendation was for Afghanistan Veterans but we've got two other wars on here, so I guess we will accept any.
At the last meeting, everyone was on us about getting the other vets on, so that's why we put Afghanistan Vets –

Introduction of Visitors:

Kent Morrison and LeAnn Bills: Spearheading an effort to raise money for homeless veterans through the Huntington Regional VA.
A group of bicycle riders from Huntington are doing a ride from Huntington to Washington, D.C. - Riding 425 miles in 6 days to raise awareness and funds for the Homeless Veterans Resource Center in downtown Huntington. The Resource Center is a VA-run facility that has a goal of finding permanent housing and employment for homeless veterans. - Initial Goal to raise $6,000 and it's gone far better than we thought – right now we have $18,000 and we're fairly certain we're going to hit the $20,000 mark before we go and what this money will be used for is 100% of what we raise will go to the Veterans. We have a home starter kit to give to the homeless veterans helping them find a new place to stay. *Information on this program is attached

Secretary Gwinn: Mr. Chairman, if they will get this information to Heather, she can get posted and distributed on our website.

Woody Williams: Are the funds for them to stay just in the Huntington area?

LeeAnn Bills: The homeless veteran's resource center opened last July. Our homeless program is located in various sites across the community. We took our homeless vets and put them in one building downtown Huntington within a block of the Huntington City Mission, but we provide on-going homeless services. It's a one-stop shop for any homeless veterans. Past three years, we've averaged housing one homeless person a week and we are covering ten WV Counties, twelve in Kentucky and two in Ohio. This is the hub of our services - however, our products are used for all of our veterans, whether they're in Huntington or any of our communities. We have about 70 in one of our housing programs here in the Charleston Area. The moving kits that will be purchased through this will be going to those who will be moving in. Handouts were passed out during the meeting. We welcome anyone to come by and see our facility. Last year about $2,000 was raised, this year we are at $18,000 and we have a specific plan on how to use the money.

Chairman Epling: Are there any other questions? (no questions)

Bob Henry Baber: Provided update on the Veteran's Legacy Project through Glenville State College which has raised about $57,000 toward memorabilia, photos, and capturing stories of veterans. Current waiting list of about 55 people and though we are trying to branch out, must be currently placed on a waiting list. Will debue from November 3 – 10 in Glenville and many projects will then travel the state. Agreed to interview Mr. Stump, as suggested by Patrick Farrell of Council.

Secretary Gwinn: Would like to thank Dennis Rayburn, who has helped through AmVets to enable us to purchase a bell tower which will be up before the DCKMSVC dedication date and also former Secretary Rob Ferguson who worked very hard getting veterans service corrected before the veterans retirement board and to me, I feel that he was attacked unfairly by the media and I think he deserves a round of applause. (Everyone applaused)

Meg Cianfrocca (Rockefeller's Office) – We are networking for an abandoned cemetery (Bethel Cemetery) of veterans graves which was very overgrown. I am asking for manpower and volunteers in the Huntington area. We have set a date of May 12 and 13 for an initial clean out. If it rains, we will reschedule.
*Information attached

Chairman Epling: Requesting visitor questions or comments

Woody Williams: I want to apologize for last time. I didn't know I was wound up like an 8 day clock until I read the minutes. I must have been wound up for a 16 day clock. I have copies of a resolution that was passed by the Legislature this year on a Veteran's Court and we are very pleased that this happened and that we now have something concrete to say that something is going to happen. I have extra copies if anyone needs a copy.

Transcribed by Angela Meadows, Executive Secretary

Mr. Simmons tells me that right now in West Virginia, even in my own county, Cabell County, that we do have a Veteran's Court already established and the other one is in Fayetteville. They are unofficial because they had no authority to do it, but this actually gives the authority to have Veteran's Courts. If we just sit back and let it happen, it may not happen. The individuals in the county are going to have to pick this up and work it or it's not going to happen. The recommendation was and the resolution that they passed was that it be established in Charleston, WV on a one year trial basis so that we could see if it's going to work. Unless we keep on top of it, it could just drop dead.

Secretary Gwinn: Mr. Chairman, I've already had one meeting with Steve Canterbury, Administrator for the Supreme Court and we have another meeting next week that we will try and set some rules for the future for the Veteran's Court, similar to the drug courts.

Jack Tincher: James McCormick is the new chairman of the Veteran's Coalition. Also, I passed out to some of you a resolution that passed this year – SR 15 to build a new Veterans Nursing Home in Beckley and this has to go through the process and the interim sessions to get funding for this project. We need to make this a joint effort from the Council, Secretary's Office, and from every Veteran's Organization to get this Veteran's Home built in Beckley as soon as we can...we need it – the Clarksburg Nursing Home still has a waiting list of 150 people on it. We need to get this done this year. Messing around for the last 15 years has doubled the cost and if we fool around another 10 years and watch it go to 80 million which means that we'll never get it. The veterans in West Virginia need this veteran home and we all need to sign up for this thing together. – That's it, Mr. Chairman

Chairman Epling: What's the waiting list on the Nursing Home in Clarksburg?

Secretary Gwinn: I think the primary is 79 right now and we have been taking in three per week for the last two months.

Chairman Epling: So we've got a need, the need is there.

Ira Latimer: I came across a veteran's organization I hadn't heard about before and it was kind of unique, it's called "Missing in America Project". Every year thousands of veterans without family ties or homeless pass away and they are usually cremated and their remains stored in Funeral Homes around the Country. In fact, two funeral homes in Virginia had twenty seven hundred cremated veterans in storage. This group reaches out to make sure that veterans have a decent burial in a veteran's cemetery. I thought this was interesting. If you want to learn more, go to www.miap.us

James McCormick: Thanks to Jack Tincher for his service as the chair with the WV Veteran's Coalition and to everyone that is here for your service and for your service now. To add to what Jack was saying, we really want to put together a powerful team that's going to be working with the veterans so if there's anything

I can do, I am available anytime – email me, call me – if it's 1:00 in the morning, it doesn't bother me. Thank you

Chairman Epling continued through the entire list of attendees and welcomed any and all comments and/or concerns.

Randall Bare, Veteran's Council: Barboursville Home – they are on the tax payers dollar and that gate swings both ways and they will not be changing the laws in West Virginia to benefit themselves as four or five people in a power struggle. That has to come through this Council and it's not going to happen that way. That's the first thing. Second thing: Thank you for what you do down there for our homeless, there's a lot of them and we need all we can do. How does that conflict with you? (question addressed to Stacy Brown, Administrator).

Stacy Brown: Oh it doesn't conflict at all. Actually, it's a good partnership. They make a lot of referrals to us, if they're appropriate, we of course, we take the veterans in. We had talked about the assisted living because they sometimes have homeless veterans who need a little more assistance so they're not appropriate for the dom, but if we were able to utilize that back lot, which I'm still looking into, I feel that would be most beneficial all the way around. There is definitely a need in that area. We appreciate their help and as a matter of fact, we finally got our new pamphlets/brochures updated and printed. We have their information in them as well and we gave a little more information of what they need to get into the home, as far as requirements. In regard to the this (the by- laws), I had an opportunity to look at this during this meeting and I'm ok with it, if you want to go ahead and vote on it.

Randall Bare, Council Member: One last thing and I'll be quiet. We had an opportunity last March to visit with our elected officials in Washington and one of our biggest concerns, of course, was the retirement plan for active duty and if they do away with that retirement plan, they might as well do away with the all-volunteer force because we're not going to have an armed group at all out there. But more important than that, are the guys who are coming back home. They're not processed out and Staff Sergeant Bales showed us that when he went back to Afghanistan and killed seventeen people. The man had a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), was found fit for duty, and sent back to Afghanistan. That could have happened in Rand, that could have happened in East Charleston, or that could have happened in South Charleston, he could have flipped out there as well. He should have NOT been put back into active duty. But because they felt that his TBI was taken care of, they sent him back, so we've asked our folks in Washington for a process for when they come back. The families need to be briefed, maybe a two or three day process at the airport. The families need to know what to expect, what to see, where they can go for help. It's not just for the mother to pack her bags, grab the kids and head out the door. They need to know where they can go for help and I don't think enough of that is happening and I don't think the medical system process is sufficient enough to handle what is going on right now. We need to make sure, and as you heard me say a couple of meetings ago, we need to make sure NOW that when they need help,

we can get it for them and not that we have to process a bunch of paperwork to get them someplace...that's not going to happen. They need it TODAY or they wouldn't be asking for help today. When it's going to take thirty days to process them, and I'm just using you for an example down in Barboursville, that's not the answer. If they have nowhere to go, they could be under a bridge someplace committing suicide.

James McCormick (Current Chair of Veteran's Coalition): Sir, I've been mentoring wounded warriors, both active duty, reserves, National Guard and wives and family members. What is happening on the return deployment physicals is that our soldiers are being lied to by their Commanders and they're being told that if they put anything down, they won't be going home.

Randall Bare: That's my point about the process. It needs to be a MANDATORY PROCESS - Three or four days where they have to sit there and they have to listen, and bring the families in. The last thing is that, on Tuesday evening in Washington, they brought in Wounded Warriors, you talk about a sad situation...those guys with no arms, no legs, they laughed and sat at the table with us. That's what we're all about, taking care of those guys and we need to keep that in focus at all times. Thank you.

Bill Harris (Council Member): I would like to have a resolution or something to recognize Ralph Stump as he is departing from our table here.

Chairman Epling: Ralph, do you have anything to say?

Ralph Stump (Council Member): It's been a pleasure working with the Council for the last twelve years and you are good people to work with for all this time.

Chairman Epling: Ralph, thank you for your service. (Applause by all in attendance)

Ralph Stump: Will I be replaced by another WWII Veteran?

Secretary Gwinn: The Governor's plan right now, he is looking at redoing this Council and is taking the conflict off and unfortunately the WWII Veterans are getting older and trying to find someone to replace the WWII Veterans is getting harder. He's looking at taking away the conflict and taking nominations to see who is best qualified to replace it. Right now, he's asking for Afghanistan and Iraq vets to try and get some of these younger veterans who have these problems, to try and get their views on the Council.

Ralph Stump: Last Monday was Secretary Gwinn's Birthday and we have cake back there if anyone wants any. Council gets cake today.

Chairman Epling: On behalf of the Council, I want to thank everyone for coming. Does anyone have anything else to say?

Secretary Gwinn: Mr. Chairman, I would like to recognize a couple of people on my staff, Heather Miles and Angela Meadows.
They've worked very hard to get these new pamphlets out and get this information out to the public (Heather), and Angela has been distributing through emails and you can see our turn out is getting larger now.

Chairman Epling: Heather, you and Angela stand up so everyone will know who you are. (Applause)

Chairman Epling: On behalf of the Council, I want to thank all of you for coming out and being here with us, it's what makes this thing work. Don't forget all you organizations, if you have a nomination for the Veteran's Council, get it sent in because the cut- off date is May 11th and please don't forget Memorial Day, and if you can, come out to the Dedication of the Cemetery, but if you can't come to the Cemetery, don't forget the Veterans on Veterans Day.

Angela Meadows: Did everyone get an opportunity to sign in on the roster?

Comment from one of Attendees: I think this room needs to be commended honestly. In the six years now that I've started to be familiarized with this, I've found out that there's a lot in West Virginia that Veterans don't know - that's going on to help them, but it's a small group of people and we see each other's faces all the time and I'm proud to be a part of it.

Audience adjourned after singing "Happy Birthday" to Keith, Cabinet Secretary.

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

Signed: Miles Epling

Date: July 29, 2012

Transcribed by Angela Meadows, Executive Secretary