



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
May 29, 2019**

I. Convene Meeting:

The meeting was called to order by newly appointed Chair Michael Thomas at 3:30 PM in the DVA Commissioner's conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Trustee Paul Barry followed by the taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance were Trustees: John Banks, Paul Barry, Philip Cacciola, Juan Cruz, Richard Dziekan, Peter Galgano, Alyssa Kelleher, Frederick Leaf, Patrick Nelligan, Michael Tetrault, Michael Thomas, Kjell Tollefsen, Sherri Vogt and Dawn Works-Dennis. Also in attendance from the DVA staff, Commissioner Thomas Saadi, Patrice Olson, Laura Nelson, Ryan McKenna, Steve Scatena, Joe Danao, Lesbia Nieves, and Darlene Deschaine.

Absent Trustees: Richard Benson, Steven Harris and Heather Sandler.

New Trustees, Sherri Vogt, Dawn Works-Dennis and Veterans Council President Michael Tetrault, and the Chairman Thomas were administered the oath of office by DVA Staff Attorney Patrice Olson. The Chair then appointed Trustee Nelligan as Vice-Chair of the Board who was sworn in by Attorney Olson. Chairman Thomas entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion by Vice-Chairman Nelligan and seconded by Trustee Galgano. Motion passed unanimously with Trustee Vogt abstaining as she did not have an opportunity to read the minutes.

Commissioner's update: Commissioner Saadi reported on recent events and achievements of the CT DVA. The Commissioner attended many events throughout the state including the ribbon cutting dedication ceremony at Columbus House on May 20th and many Memorial Day Ceremonies and parades over the previous 2 weeks in Hartford, New Britain, Saybrook, Bristol, Simsbury, Woodbury and Waterbury. The upcoming events include the 4th Annual Quinebaug Valley Community College Stand Down on June 8th, the CT Veterans Legal Center, "Ride for Veterans" which will have participants from the DVA including the Commissioner. On July 23rd the DVA will host a cookout on campus for Veteran Residents along with a performance by the 102nd CT Military Band and September 20th the CT DVA Annual Stand Down Event will be taking place.

II. Old Business

A. DVA Healthcare Center Update (HCC) – License Transition:

Chairman Thomas asked Commissioner Saadi for an update on the Healthcare transition. The Commissioner explained that the process from a Chronic Disease Hospital (CDH) to a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) is near complete and that the Veteran Outpatient Clinic (aka “B-Clinic”) will be a separately licensed clinic, with upgraded facility and equipment, within the Residential facility opened a full shift 6 days a week. The Commissioner asked Hospital Administrator Laura Nelson to update the Board on this process of inspections being held by DPH. Ms. Nelson reported on the percentage of being at approximately 87% compliant with meeting federal and state regulations, the facility is gearing up for an inspection on June 17th of the B-Clinic. Ms. Nelson reported that the physical inspection for HCC is scheduled for June 26th & June 27th.

Trustee Barry asked if any of the 40 open beds are opened primarily to DVA Veteran Residents. The Commissioner reported that DVA Veterans will have priority. Trustee Vogt asked if beds are still held open for respite care and the Commissioner responded in the affirmative.

B. Fiscal Report:

The Commissioner reported on the State Budget and staffing trends explaining that the Governor’s proposed budget adequately funds the DVA. However, he explained that due to unforeseen circumstances, particularly related to increased expenses for electricity, natural gas, fuel, and water there is an over run in DVA operating expenses and that the DVA has asked that OPM transfer approximately half of the \$550,000 salary surplus to cover the overage. The Commissioner explained that there were two water main breaks on campus, as well as a pipe burst in the old hospital and that the DVA is in the process of moving assets from Building 5 to Building 50, impacting operating expenses. The Commissioner stated that Veteran Service organization and other tenants now in three locations will be consolidated in building 50 which will help reduce operating expenses. Easterseals Rally Point, over the next few months, will be occupy multiple buildings on Levitow Drive and will be responsible for their own heating expenses.

C. Projects Update

Projects and Operations Director Joe Danao provided a DVA Projects update reporting that the cemetery appearance project is nearly complete and the appearance project is projected to finish in the spring of 2020. Mr. Danao reported that the abatement projects in B-Wing are complete and that Patriot’s Landing Homes will soon be connected to the MDC water system. The estimated completion date for the Fire Alarm and Suppression System is the Fall of 2019. Mr. Danao also reported that the DVA is awaiting state bond allocation to match \$1.6 million Federal Grant for ADA Upgrades to Buildings 2, 3 and 4 as well as bond allocation request for Minor Capital Repairs such as Asbestos Mitigation and waterline repairs. The next bond meeting is scheduled for June 28th.

D. Semi-Private/Independent living model

Commissioner Saadi introduced Residential and Program Director Leslie Nieves to give an update on the Semi-Private Independent living model. Director Nieves reported that the rooms are repainted, floors polished and privacy walls will soon be installed. She reported that Bob’s Store is donating all the new furniture including couches, recliners and rugs. The Veterans living in the updated wing will be part of a new program in which they will participate in the basic maintenance and upkeep of the

wing, 6 days per week, consistent with Federal VA State Veterans Home rules. Each 7th day DVA custodial staff member will conduct a deep clean. There will be a ribbon cutting event on June 25th. The Commissioner stated that A-Wing is gutted and ready for renovations when the DVA is able to secure some additional grant funding, until then the project is on hold.

III. New Business

A. Legislative Update

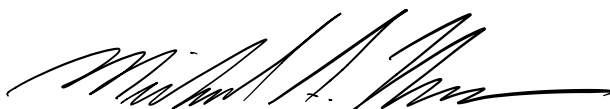
Chairman Thomas asked Commissioner Saadi for a legislative update. The Commissioner explained that HB 7064, will update the name of the Municipal Veterans service contact person to “Municipal Veterans Representative” and allow volunteers to service as said Municipal Veterans Representatives in addition to Municipal Veterans Commissions and Employees. The bill has passed the house and is now in the Senate. The Commissioner reported on SB 861, which will clarify the definition of “service in time of war” and formally removed the two year state residency requirement for admission to the Residential Facility and Healthcare Center. This bill is pending action in the House.

IV. Closing

Chairman Thomas discussed the goals for the coming year including the continuation of successful work of previous years with the DVA and Commissioner Saadi; establish standing Committees to work on various issues ranging from healthcare to legislative initiatives and to set long term goals for the Board. The list of Standing Committees will be emailed to each Trustee so they may indicate the preferred Committee assignments.

Chairman Thomas asked Commissioner for his closing remarks, Commissioner suggested that if a Trustee cannot attend a Board Meeting that they may call in with prior approval by the Chair, but only in rare circumstances. The Commissioner asked Director Nieves to report on the upcoming DC trip for approximately 30 DVA Veteran Residents. She reported that the trip is scheduled for October 18th – 21st, focusing on Military monuments and historic sites. More information will be emailed to the Trustees and any trustees interested in serving as chaperons should contact Director Nieves. Chairman Thomas stated that the next board meeting will be on July 10th, 2019 at 3:30 pm. There being no further business, Chairman Thomas entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made and passed unanimously at 4:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Michael Thomas, Chairman
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 6/13/19