

Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs



Board of Trustees Annual Report

Christopher McDavid
Chairman

February 15, 2018



“Serving Those Who Served”



February 15, 2019

Dear Governor Lamont and Members of the Veterans Affairs Committee:

I am pleased to submit this report in accordance with C.G.S. §27-102n(i). The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Board of Trustees (Board) continues working hard to serve Connecticut's Veterans through the oversight of and collaboration with the DVA along with local, state and federal agencies, Veteran Service Organizations, community partners and volunteers to ensure the delivery of Veterans programs and benefits in accordance with best practices in a sustainable manner.

The current DVA Board was established pursuant to Public Act 15-197, now codified in C.G.S. §27-102n, which expanded and reorganized the Board and provided it with greater oversight of the DVA. The new law also required, for the first time, that the DVA provide comprehensive quarterly reports to the DVA Board detailing information on more than a dozen areas of DVA operations. In addition to providing these quarterly reports the DVA also provides all Veteran Residents with a semi-annual report on the revenue and expenditures of the DVA Institutional General Welfare Fund and the opportunities to submit suggestions for the use of the IGW.

The DVA Board has fulfilled its duties through active engagement in the oversight of both operational issues and policy changes at the DVA as well as in the budgetary and legislative process. Board members have regularly contacted State Legislators and other elected officials to provide information on issues impacting Veterans at the DVA Rocky Hill Campus and across the State.

The DVA Board has worked with the DVA to improve the DVA Residential Program through implementation of community best practices, updates to major policies including the Residential Program Fee, Veterans Work Program, increased personal privacy and enhanced case management. The DVA Board is closely monitoring the transition of the DVA Healthcare Center to a Skilled Nursing Facility and has been active in implementation of operational and policy updates at the State Veterans Cemetery. When budget cuts of nearly ten percent threatened the ability of the DVA to deliver on its core functions, Board members joined with Veterans from across the State to lobby for the restoration of those funds. These and other activities are explained in detail herein.

In the spirit of full transparency, this report is required to be filed annually, however while advised at the new DVA Board's initial meeting of the requirement, with the multitude of substantive issues before the Board the reports for 2016 and 2017 were not filed. As such, I am filing an Omnibus report retroactive to the first meeting of the new DVA Board in May 2016.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher McDavid,
DVA Board Chairperson, May 2016 – December 2018
Veteran, United States Air Force

DVA Board of Trustees Annual Report for 2018¹

Introduction

This report is submitted in accordance with C.G.S. §27-102n(i), which requires in pertinent part that the DVA Board report on the progress in fulfilling its mission based on programmatic outcomes and provide recommendations, if any, for improving the delivery of services to veterans and the addition of new programs. The Board's statutory mission is to review and comment on the DVA Budget and major policy and programmatic changes and to review agency regulations prior to adoption by the Commissioner relating to:

- a. Admission and discharge or transfer of Veterans.
- b. Fee schedule for programs, services and benefits.
- c. Participation of eligible family members in programs or services.

Beginning with the first meeting in May 2016 the DVA Board has fulfilled its statutory mission through increasingly active engagement with the DVA leadership and oversight of DVA operations, policies and programs. This highly collaborative process was initiated by former Commissioner Sean Connolly and expanded under current Commissioner Thomas Saadi. At the DVA Board's regular quarterly meetings, since May 2016, the DVA Commissioner and DVA Senior Staff have provided comprehensive and detailed PowerPoint briefing updates regarding the agency budget, staffing, facilities, projects, legislation and policies along with proposals for expanded and additional programs and current and anticipated challenges.

In addition to the briefings provided at each DVA Board meeting the DVA provides quarterly written reports to the DVA Board with information necessary for the Board to fulfill its mission. These reports include program and policy updates, data and performance measures in the following areas:

- (1) Budget revenues and expenditures.
- (2) Staffing levels.
- (3) Facilities and fleet management.
- (4) Current and planned projects.
- (5) Residential Facility and Patriot's Landing Family Housing applications for admission including number of Veterans admitted, reasons for denials or withdrawals of applications for admission and overall monthly occupancy rates in residential programs.
- (6) Summary of voluntary and involuntary discharges from Veterans from the Residential Program and reasons for discharge (e.g. community based transitional housing, independent living, disciplinary actions, etc . . .)
- (7) Summaries of Healthcare Center patient census, clinical services and any incident rates.
- (8) Summary of programs overseen by the Office of Advocacy and Assistance and caseload figures for veterans' service officers.
- (9) Cemetery and memorial services including burial statistics.
- (10) Results of any federal and state inspections.

¹ For reasons explained in Chairperson's cover letter this report also includes 2016 and 2017.

- (11) Summaries by type, frequency and resolution, of concerns raised by Veteran Residents of the petitions and complaints filed by Veteran Residents and relatives or authorized representatives of such Veteran Residents.
- (12) Additional reports which have included updates on the Bed Bug eradication program, results of client surveys, and the status of transitioning the Healthcare Center to a Skilled Nursing license.

In providing this information and in responding to inquiries by DVA Board members on a myriad of issues, the DVA has exhibited a welcome openness and transparency that has contributed greatly to the ability of the DVA Board to effectively perform its mission.

Organizationally this report summarizes the Board's activities and provides recommendations for each of the DVA's four core functions and concludes with general recommendations for the DVA overall.

Board Activities and Recommendations for DVA Core Functions

I. Residential Programs and Services

The DVA Board has been actively engaged in many major program and policy updates implemented over the past two and half years in the Residential Program.

In 2016, the DVA presented a proposal to update the Residential Programs and Services (RPS) Detail Work and General Work Program and replace it with an updated all voluntary Veteran Vocational and Therapeutic Program (VVTP). This proposal was reviewed and approved by the DVA Board. The new VVTP follows Federal guidelines and best practices which include training and hands on learning, supervision and regular performance evaluations focusing on developing vocational marketable job skills and for Veterans not necessarily seeking employment. The program provides therapeutic work opportunities which support greater self-esteem and a greater sense of purpose and stability.

The RPS Residential Personal Property Policy was updated in August 2016, with input from the Board, to address complaints by Veteran Residents and DVA staff that some Veteran Residents were unhygienic, hoarding and utilizing living areas not assigned to them. The new policy addressed prior inconsistent enforcement and varied interpretation of allowed and prohibited items.

The Board has supported the DVA entering into Memoranda of Agreements throughout 2016 – 2018, with State agencies and Community based non-profits to enhance direct support to Veteran Residents in securing community based housing, employment, educational opportunities and address personal legal issues. This included, the CT Department of Labor providing on Campus employment support services to Veteran Residents; comprehensive daily housing and employment case-management by the Chrysalis Center to individual Veteran Residents; the CT Veterans Legal Center providing legal assistance and support to Veteran Residents; and assigning a DVA Veteran Service Officer to assist Veteran Residents in applying for any State and Federal benefits and pensions for which they may be eligible. Some of these partnerships were initiated and developed through the work of Board members.

Among the most significant changes the Board worked on with the DVA Commissioner was a complete revamping of the Residential Programs and Services Program Fee.

In 2017, after multiple Sub-committee meetings, review of community based best practices in transitional housing, the DVA Board voted to update the RPS Program Fee Policy and change from a flat \$200 per month Program fee for Veteran Residents to a monthly Program Fee based on 30% of income. The Program Fee is authorized by the Federal VA which certifies the DVA Residential Facility as a federally recognized Veterans Home and is intended to assist with the cost of the provision of programs and services to Veteran Residents. The 30% amount is a standard best practice in the majority of community based long-term transitional housing programs. In doing so the DVA Board noted that unlike many community based transitional housing programs, DVA RPS provides an onsite outpatient clinic, all meals, recreational opportunities on and off Campus, substance abuse treatment and other programmatic support.

This new policy also extended the Program Fee exemption period from three months to four months to allow Veteran Residents a greater opportunity to focus on improving their life condition without the obligation of paying a monthly Program Fee. In determining the 30% Program Fee amount the DVA adjusts the Veteran's income downward to reflect any payments for child-support, alimony, education tuition and any court or government agency ordered mandatory payments to state or local government (e.g. income or other taxes). This is to encourage Veteran Residents to be responsible and make payment toward these important obligations.

In the Fall of 2018 the Board, consistent with prior assurances to Veteran Residents, reviewed the Program Fee policy to determine whether it should be altered or updated. The Program Fee Sub-committee and ultimately the Board determined in Dec 2018, that the policy was operating well and recommended no changes at that time. However, the Board did recommend reviewing the Program Fee policy when planned semi-private rooms are available to Veteran Residents on a limited basis pursuant to a planned pilot program.

Board members are actively involved with DVA Stand Down, which is an annual event on Campus that each year has brought together an increasing number of federal, State and local agencies and social service organizations to provide Veterans with services such as medical and dental screenings, employment and educational assistance, legal and motor vehicle help, state and federal Veterans Affairs benefits information, and housing referrals. In 2016, approximately 70 organizations participated and approximately 800 Veterans attended Stand Down and in 2018, the number of participating agencies was over one 100 with nearly 1000 Veterans attending.

Recommendations

The DVA should pursue the funding needed to provide proposed semi-private rooms for Veteran Residents. While the design for the renovation of an entire wing of residential rooms in A-Wing of the Residential Facility was completed in 2018 there is a gap of approximately \$250,000 in funding for this project with \$450,000 in donation funds available. This project, known as A Wing Quality of Life Improvements, will for the first time in the Residential Facility provide semi private upgraded rooms in a modern setting. These renovations should be accompanied by a new residential program which stresses independence and increased self-reliance. Veteran Residents should be required to collectively maintain their living space and

common areas in the new Wing, designated study rooms and the ability to refrigerate items and cook with a microwave. Of course for safety and care plan compliance purposes, inspections will be necessary and those who do not follow the policies should be removed from the program. It should follow community based best practices and be time limited to not more than 24 months. This type of program will support increased success for those seeking employment, education and develop or hone the skills necessary to living in supportive or independent community based housing.

There should be enhanced recreational activities including additional off Campus trips including out of State tourist type destinations such as Washington, D.C., New York City and Boston.

The DVA should provide continuum of care for those Veteran Residents who are aging in place and unable to either secure or function in a community based setting. Essential to this continuum of care is the transition of the Healthcare Center from a chronic disease hospital to a skilled nursing facility as discussed in greater detail herein below.

II. Healthcare Center

In 2017, the DVA Board reluctantly agreed with the imposition of an Administrative patient census cap in the wake of ongoing funding cuts in the State budget which resulted in staff reductions and reduced capacity to deliver care to a full complement of patients. The census cap was set at 100 Veteran Patients which was determined to be a level which would allow for the proper care of Veteran Patients with available staff.

While the Board conducted general oversight of Healthcare Center (HCC) operations since May 2016, this oversight evolved into more active directed participation in the setting of long-term policy regarding the future of the HCC. More specifically, in late 2017 the DVA initiated an in depth review of the long-term clinical care needs of current HCC Veteran Patients and the more than 30 Veterans pending admission on the HCC waiting list. This review resulted in the determination that transitioning the HCC from a Chronic Disease Hospital (CDH) to a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) would better address the needs of existing Veteran Patients and better serve the needs of a large number of Veterans across our State in the provision of long-term clinical care.

The Board has been conducting oversight of this transition process through the DVA quarterly reports, Board meetings and conference calls and multiple site visits by Board members who have provided helpful guidance to the DVA. The Board members have aggressively advocated for the maintaining of the additional clinical and operational services at the DVA Campus not traditionally associated with a community based SNF such as an onsite pharmacy, laboratory, onsite physician along with many other ancillary programs and services with a Veteran centric focus.

Recommendations

Integral to the transition is the DVA focusing staff restructuring to provide greater direct clinical care to Veteran Patients and reduce cost through the streamlining of administrative and not direct care overhead. The DVA should move expeditiously with the transition of the HCC to a SNF and as soon as possible begin the admission process for the more than 30 Veterans on the HCC waiting list who are not CDH admission eligible but are SNF admission eligible.

The DVA must continue to retrain HCC staff to provide the highest standard of care through the implementation of best practices, use of new technology and ensure there is no longer a culture of performing tasks in a manner because “that is the way we have always done it.”

III. Office of Advocacy and Assistance

The Office of Advocacy and Assistance (OA&A) employs Veteran Service Officers, all combat deployment Veterans, who provide representation to Veterans and eligible dependents in their claims for Federal pensions and benefits. OA&A is also responsible for determining eligibility for the Veteran flag on the state driver’s license or identification card, certifying Veteran Owned Micro Businesses for state contract bidding, administering the Municipal Veterans Representative Program, validating Veterans as eligible for pretrial diversionary programs and for determining eligibility for the issuance of the CT Wartime Service Medal. Board members have been active in promoting the services of OA&A to Veterans and Service Members across the State.

A new program administered by OA&A was made possible through the collaborative work of Board members with Commissioner Saadi, the Yale Law Clinic and Veterans across the State to pass Public Act 18-47, providing benefits for certain Veterans with a military discharge characterization of Other Than Honorable and who are certified as having a Qualifying Condition: (1) Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; (2) Traumatic Brain Injury; and/or (3) have experienced Military Sexual Trauma. This new law is the first of its kind in the nation and provides for these Veterans to receive certain state and municipal benefits and services. When first proposed, the idea was not widely accepted in the Veterans community, however through education and advocacy by early 2018 a critical mass of support formed and the bill became law.

Recommendations

It is important to note that over the past decade the DVA has been tasked with administering a multitude of additional programs and services and the promulgation of new reports without an increase in funding or staff. The responsibility for compliance with the majority of these new mandates has come within the ambit of the DVA Commissioner’s Office and OA&A. While the DVA has fulfilled its responsibilities, additional staffing in OA&A is recommended in order to ensure the timely provision of services to our State’s Veterans.

Also, members of the General Assembly should avoid imposing new reporting mandates on DVA without first reviewing existing requirements to determine whether existing reports can be consolidated and/or altered to address the informational needs sought.

IV. Cemetery and Memorial Services

OA&A is responsible for overseeing DVA Cemetery and Memorial Services which administers three state Veterans’ cemeteries. The first, and oldest, is located in Darien and closed to new burials in the mid-1980s; the second is Colonel Gates Cemetery located in Rocky Hill which is reserved for Veteran Resident and Patients of the DVA; and the third is the federally recognized State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown.

Several Board members have been active in working with the DVA in developing solutions to problems associated with reduced cemetery staffing (from five to three persons in three years) and

the expedient increase in annual burial rate over the past ten years from approximately 400 per year to nearly 650 per year. These solutions include the creating of internal efficiencies through new operational policies, scheduling burials throughout the week, cross leveling staff from other divisions within the DVA to support Cemetery and Memorial Services and upgrading one staff member from a part-time to full-time position. Also, after failing to secure a qualified bidder for the opening and closing of burial plots, the DVA worked with Board members to develop a restructured RFP which resulted in securing a vendor which has provided excellent services over the past year.

Recommendations

The DVA requires additional funding for the perpetual care of the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown as current cemetery operations are funded through appropriations for general DVA facility operations. Possible source of funding is the federal plot allowance funds of approximately \$700 per burial at the Veterans Cemetery. The General Assembly should consider allocating these funds, currently deposited in the General Fund, to a dedicated budget line item for the perpetual care of the Veterans Cemetery. This would provide needed funds for current and long-term maintenance and improvements at the Veterans Cemetery in Middletown.

The State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown will reach burial capacity within ten years, as such the DVA must soon initiate the process of securing additional land for either the expansion of the Veterans Cemetery in Middletown or for a new State Veterans Cemetery. The recommended course of action is the acquisition of land adjacent to the existing cemetery which will avoid the need for staff to maintain an additional cemetery. Also, the Veterans Cemetery in Middletown has undergone significant recent improvements and is a landmark for State Veterans. Acquisition of the land for the Middletown Cemetery will require a financial commitment from the state as federal Cemetery Administration funding is not available for the purchase of land to expand the cemetery.

V. Additional Recommendations

Overall the DVA appropriations have been reduced by a third in less than a ten year period. While the agency has absorbed these cuts and continued to provide quality services to our State's Veterans the Board recommends stable funding for the DVA as additional funding reductions will certainly have a negative impact on the delivery of quality services and compromise the essential task of transitioning the Healthcare Center to a Skilled Nursing Facility. The General Assembly also must exercise restraint when considering adoption of unfunded mandates for new programs, services or reporting requirements.

The DVA should continue to enhance its programs and services through partnerships, especially with community based non-profits by providing low cost operational space on Campus in exchange for the provision of care and support to DVA Veterans and Community Based Veterans.

VI. Board Minutes

Attached hereto are the minutes from each Board's meeting since May 2016, which demonstrate the activities of the Board in carrying out its mission and the transparency of the DVA in providing the Board with detailed information regarding operations, programs and services.

Department of Veterans Affairs
Board of Trustees
Regular & Special Meeting Minutes
May 2016 – December 2018



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
May 31, 2016**

(Draft minutes subject to review and approval at next Board Meeting)

I. Opening and Introduction:

The Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Christopher McDavid at 3:01PM in the DVA Commissioner's conference room.

In attendance: Christopher McDavid (Chair), Paul Barry, Richard Benson, Ronald Coveney, Amy Donahue, Richard Dziekan, Peter Galgano, Steven Harris, Brien Horan, Frederick Leaf, Patrick Nelligan, Tatiana Quinzi, Michael Thomas, Kjell Tollefsen, Rebecca Wareing

Absent: Philip Cacciola, Robert Cheslock, Paul Tarbox,

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chairman McDavid followed by administration of the oath of Office to Board members by Tom Saadi, DVA Chief of Staff and General Counsel.

Chair McDavid introduced DVA Commissioner Sean Connolly who delivered welcoming remarks followed by Board members introducing themselves and providing brief biographical backgrounds.

Commissioner Connolly introduced the members of the DVA senior leadership team followed by introducing Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman who welcomed and thanks the Board members for their military service and continued service to their fellow Veterans.

Chair McDavid then explained the statutory role of the Board as well as the basic structure of the DVA.

II. Overview Reports of DVA Senior Leaders

Chair McDavid introduced Commissioner Connolly to open the formal presentations by DVA senior staff. Commissioner Connolly gave a brief overview of DVA and then introduced DVA Staff who provided reports on each of their respective areas of responsibility as follows:

Tom Stefanko, Director of the Office of Advocacy and Assistance
Maria Cheney, Director of Residential Programs and Services
Sue Krassler, Administrator of the Levitow Healthcare Center
Michael Clark, Chief Fiscal Officer
Noreen Sinclair, Director of Human Resources

BOT Member Coveney asked why DVA was not providing greater VSO support to on-Campus Veteran Residents. Tom Stefanko responded that beginning next week DVA VSOs will provide services to Campus residents on a rotating basis. Commissioner Connolly explained that since January DVA has brought on additional case managers to assist Veteran Residents with goals and objectives.

BOT Member Thomas asked about the sustainability of the IGW fund. Mike Clark responded that the fund is sustainable as long as projected savings and revenues are realized based on policy and structural changes at DVA.

BOT Member Benson asked about the DVA Veteran Worker program and any litigation. Tom Saadi Responded with a brief explanation of the State and Federal Department of Labor cases stating that the State case will be closed out soon and in the Federal case there is a meeting with the Federal Department of Labor in July.

III. Old Business

Joe Danao, Director of Projects and Operations provided an update on the DVA Rocky Hill Reimagine/Transformation 2035 Plan.

BOT Members Benson and Coveney asked about ADA and fire alarm code compliance issues. Danao responded with an explanation of recent upgrades to the fire alarm system explaining that DVA is currently code compliant and that several long-term ADA and Fire safety upgrade projects are moving forward pursuant to grant applications and approvals.

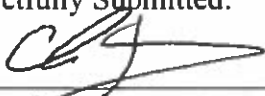
IV. New Business

Tom Saadi, Chief of Staff & General Counsel provided an update on the DVA Interim Residential Programs and Services and Medical Marijuana Policies. He also discussed potential changes to existing policies and the DVA program and Legislative matters impacting the DVA.

Administrative Announcements - Commissioner Connolly announced several upcoming DVA and Veterans events and Chair McDavid then asked Board members for input as to the future meeting schedule with a consensus that he will circulate some dates for feedback from Board members.

There being no further business, Chair McDavid entertained a motion to adjourn – Motion made by BOT Member Harris and seconded by BOT Member Benson. Motion passed unanimously at 4:55 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Christopher McDavid, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 8/26 / 2016

Notes: Meeting was followed by a Tour of the DVA Residential Facility and Healthcare Center.



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
September 20, 2016**

(Draft minutes subject to review and approval at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Christopher McDavid at 3:36PM in the DVA Commissioner's conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chairman McDavid followed by taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance: Christopher McDavid (Chair), Paul Barry, Richard Benson, Philip Cacciola, Robert Cheslock, Ronald Coveney, Amy Donahue, Richard Dziekan, Peter Galgano, Steven Harris, Brien Horan, Frederick Leaf, Patrick Nelligan, Paul Tarbox, and Michael Thomas.

Absent: Tatiana Quinzi (E), Kjell Tollefsen (E) and Rebecca Wareing.

Oath of Office Administered to Board members Cacciola, Cheslock and Tarbox who were not present at the May 31, 2016, Board meeting. Oath was administered by Tom Saadi, DVA Chief of Staff and General Counsel.

Chair McDavid introduced DVA Commissioner Sean Connolly who welcomed the Board and introduced DVA staff present – Tom Saadi, Fausto Parra, Maria Cheney, Joe Danao, Sue Krassler, Shumei Chu, Thomas Stefanko, Noreen Sinclair and Emily Hein.

Chairmen McDavid entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion made by Trustee Harris and seconded by Trustee Thomas. Motion passed unanimously without any corrections or edits to the minutes.

II. Reports:

Commissioner Connolly presented a general update of DVA activities to the Board highlighting recent Veteran and DVA achievements such as; Give back Garden, Veterans Express, CT Wartime Service medal ceremonies, platform to Employment, LEAN program, staff training and then discussed upcoming DVA and Veteran events.

Commissioner Connolly reported that the DVA will have a balanced budget for FY 2017 which included recent budget reduction of approximately \$750,000 as required by the Office of Policy

and Management, staff reduced through attrition and one layoff. Further reported that DVA is working with OPM to develop budget to FY18 and FY19.

Joseph Danao (Director of Projects and Operations) provided a general update on DVA projects including the new Middletown Cemetery Columbarium, Healthcare Center Sculpture renovation and renovations in the Winner's Circle. Mr. Danao also reviewed a list of ongoing projects and their design stage highlighting future expansion of the DVA Middletown Cemetery, DVA Rocky Hill Campus site survey and Environmental Study.

Trustee Coveney asked about electrical shortage on Campus. Mr. Danao explained that the current system has deficiencies due to years of layered renovations and review is part of the full Site Survey.

Trustee Barry asked about the cost of the proposed generator. Mr. Danao responded that the cost of between \$600,000 - \$700,000.

Trustee Benson questioned whether there is a backlog on the installation of headstones beyond the 90 day install time to which Mr. Danao responded in the negative.

Trustee Tarbox asked about the condition of the DVA onsite boilers. Mr. Danao explained that there are multiple options being considered for replacement and that this too is included in the Site Survey.

Chairman McDavid asked if there were any critical projects behind schedule. While no projects are behind schedule Commissioner is always looking to move things forward and many projects are large and will take time.

III. Old Business

Residential Locker Search and interim Residential Policy update presented by Chief of Staff Saadi as a follow up to May Board meeting briefing. Mr. Saadi explained that disciplinary violations and related involuntary discharges increased after implementation of the interim policies which ceased searches of Veterans' vehicles, packages, and lockers. However, violations and involuntary discharges peaked in the June – July timeframe and have been steadily declining. Therefore, the Commissioner will not revert to the terminated searches and will reissue the interim policy as a permanent DVA policy.

Trustee Nelligan asked about the impact of involuntary discharges on the Residential census. Saadi explained that while it had a short term impact the census has stabilized between 195-200 Veteran Residents.

Trustee Tarbox asked who can initiate a search. Mr. Saadi explained that searches only occur now if there is a reason to believe someone has contraband on campus and that searches are performed of vehicles, packages and lockers by Residential staff coordinating with DVA Security personnel.

Residential Program Fee update was provided by Commissioner Connolly followed by Mr. Saadi who presented the research and analysis supporting the proposal to base the Program Fee on one-

third of a Veteran Resident's income with a \$500 cap and that no Veteran Resident would pay a Program Fee for the first four months of residency.

Significant discussion followed with Trustee Nelligan and Trustee Thomas asking about the current cost/market value of the residential program for Veteran Residents. Mr. Saadi and Fiscal Officer Chu explained that the cost to the state is approximately \$110 per day. Trustee Coveney asked about rules governing Program Fees and the use of money in the IGW to which Saadi responded that the fee is not rent but to offset some of the cost of programs for Veterans and that IGW funds are for the direct benefit of Veterans and cannot be used for state salaries. Trustee Barry asked whether Federal Per Diem is paid to the DVA or General Fund. Ms. Chu explained that per diem is paid to General Fund.

Trustee Coveney explained concerns with the proposal stating that some Veterans may leave due to the higher payment as examples he stated that there are veterans on disability collecting \$4,000 per month, another Veteran who recently received a \$200,000 lump sum settlement of a claim and other veterans who have homes off Campus however they prefer to reside at the DVA Campus. He said if the cap is too high Veterans may leave the Campus. Commissioner Connolly explained that the proposed approach reflects best practices and that DVA has provided greater case management support to help Veterans find permanent housing in the community including housing that caters to Veterans. Trustee Nelligan asked about Residential demographics and suggested possibly grandfathering in current Veterans. Trustee Benson proposed a subcommittee be appointed to review the issue. Trustee Barry explained that the Board are responsible to eh Veterans and also to serve as guardians of taxpayer funds. In response to Trustee Horan's question Saadi explained that the Program Fee is based on income and not assets. Trustee Harris asked whether the DVA was running out of Residential space to which the Commissioner replied no however, staffing is limited. Trustee Dziekan stated his concern as to the fee increasing in the future to which the commissioner responded that since is based on a percentage of income there is no need to raise the amount in the future. Trustee Tarbox, explained that the Program Review and Investigations Committee suggestion of adding a COLA to the fee was not based on an imperial data as there are no good compatibles. Trustee Leaf asked how the IGW is impacted by Legislative appropriations, the Commissioner explained that while there may be some correlation between appropriations and the funds in the IGW the DVA cannot spend the IGW on employee salaries. Trustee Coveney asked whether IGW funds were used for the Winner's Circle renovations and Mr. Danao responded in the negative.

IV. New Business

The update Personal Property Policy was introduced by the Commissioner and further explained by Ms. Cheney and Mr. Saadi. In response to Trustee questions Ms. Cheney stated that Veterans were allowed to have cell phones and chargers and that while there was no on Campus storage many Veterans store excess property off Campus.

Changes to the Detail Work and Vocational programs were explained by Commissioner Connolly and Mr. Saadi. The Detail work program is being phased out and combined with an updated Vocational and Therapeutic work program following Federal guidelines and best practices which include training and hands on learning, supervision and regular performance evaluations focusing on developing vocational marketable job skills.

Trustee Leaf asked whether basis legal support services are available for DVA Veteran Residents including preparation of willing wills and healthcare proxies to which Ms. Cheney replied that both items are address by DVA staff however more substantive legal support must be obtained outside of DVA. Discussion ensued regarding potential community partners that may be able to provide such services including Yale and Quinnipiac Schools of Law. Trustee Harris recommended contacting the Harford Probate Court for legal support at future Stand-downs.

Trustee Coveney expressed concerns for Veteran workers suggesting that the State should award more civil service points to Veteran Residents at the DVA Campus for purposes of State employment. Commissioner Connolly explained that DVA has many Veterans as employees and has hired several while they were Residents at DVA.

Trustee Coveney presented a proposal to establish a non-profit operated by the DVA Veterans' Council to help obtain vehicles and other items for DVA Veterans. Discussion ensued with Trustees suggesting the Veterans' Council work with existing Non-profits due to the structure of the Veterans' Council not being conducive to establishing a non-profit as well as the length of time to obtain non-profit status. Trustee Thomas expressed an interest in assisting

V. Closing remarks

Commissioner Connolly announced that effective October 1, 2016, Veteran Owned Small businesses will receive a 15% preference when bidding on State contracts and that the certification is process by DVA and that the application is on the DVA website.

Chairman McDavid stated that he intended to begin forming sub-committees to assist the DVA with a focus on items before the Board as well as the four Core function areas. More information will follow via email.

There being no further business, Chair McDavid entertained a motion to adjourn – Motion made by Trustee Harris and seconded by Trustee Horan. Motion passed unanimously at 5:27PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Christopher McDavid, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 10/31/2016



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
December 1, 2016**

(Minutes subject to review and final approval at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting was called to order by Chairman Christopher McDavid at 3:42PM in the DVA Commissioner's conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chairman McDavid followed by the taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance: Christopher McDavid (Chair), Paul Barry, Philip Cacciola, Robert Cheslock, Ronald Coveney, Richard Dziekan, Peter Galgano, Brien Horan, Patrick Nelligan, Paul Tarbox, and Kjell Tollefsen.

Absent: Richard Benson, Amy Donahue, Frederick Leaf, Steven Harris, Tatiana Quinzi, Michael Thomas and Rebecca Wareing.

Chairman McDavid entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion made by Trustee Dziekan and seconded by Trustee Barry. Motion passed unanimously without any corrections or edits to the minutes.

Chairman McDavid introduced DVA Commissioner Sean Connolly who welcomed the Board and introduced DVA staff present – Thomas Saadi, Fausto Parra, Maria Cheney, Michael Clark and Emily Hein.

Commissioner Connolly presented a general update of DVA activities to the Board highlighting recent Veteran and DVA achievements, such as the Vietnam War 50th Anniversary Ceremony at the DVA with more than 1100 attendees and 400 Vietnam Veterans presented awards. He also spoke of the Veterans Small Business Workshop, Purple Heart Parking Space Dedication, DVA Veterans Day Ceremony and the launch of the Braveminds-DVA Collaboration. Commissioner Connolly then discussed upcoming DVA and Veteran events, such as the Veterans' Hall of Fame on December 7th noting that Trustee Tollefsen is one of the honorees, the CT CVEB at Gateway Community College on December 8th and Wreaths Across America on December 17th.

Chairman McDavid then thanked the Commissioner for his report and commented positively on the number of events and list of accomplishments of the DVA staff.

II. Old Business

Chairman McDavid then presented a brief background of the proposed Residential Program Fee update initially presented by Commissioner Connolly at the Board's September 2016 meeting to base the Program Fee on a Veteran Resident's income with or without a cap and that no Veteran Resident would pay a Program Fee for the first four months of residency, which would add an additional month of no Program Fee.

Chairman McDavid stated that a special sub-committee had been appointed with Paul Barry as Chairman and Committee members Richard Dziekan, Paul Tarbox, Patrick Nelligan, Kjell Tollefsen and Ronald Coveney. The charge of the Committee was to review the Program Fee matter and make recommendations to the full Board regarding the proposal to update the DVA Residential Program.

The Committee held two meetings in October and November 2016 during which the Committee deliberated and voted on a recommendation they would present to the Board for discussion. He noted that Trustee Coveney had sent an email to all Board members regarding 38 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61 and how it applied to state veterans homes and that the Program Fee could not be established without federal approval and that the amount was to be set based on market rate.

Chairman McDavid stated that DVA General Counsel Saadi held a conference call with the Committee to explain the inapplicability of that regulation and called on Saadi to explain the same to the full Board.

Mr. Saadi explained that the grant per diem (GPD) homeless program under 38 CFR Part 61 does not apply to State Veterans Homes (SVH). Instead, it applies to private non-profit and other community based Veteran Homeless temporary housing programs that are time limited to a 24 month stay. Rather, 38 CFR Part 17.190-200 sets forth the general governing principals and parameters for SVH Domiciliaries including the State Veteran Home Per diem program. He explained that GPD programs differ from SVH as they are generally non-profit organizations and, other than for tax compliance proposes, not regulated. State Veterans Homes, on the other hand, are subject to a multitude of regulations and oversight, including State Statutes, State Regulations, Review by State Auditors, Legislative Oversight Committees, Boards of Trustees etc...

He then explained how the per diem rate is set and the legal limits on the amount a State Veterans' home may collect as a program, which is addressed in both the Uniform Administrative Requirements Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (See 38 CFR Part 200.100 et seq) and VA Manual M-1, Part I Chapter 3. Collectively, they prohibit, in lay man's terms, double dipping. In other words, a SVH cannot collect more than its Total Residential Cost of care after netting out \$45.79 Federal Per Diem, which leaves \$95.21 per day, as determined by the State Comptroller.

Chairman McDavid asked if there were any questions for Mr. Saadi and with none he called on Committee Chairman Barry to present his report on the Program Fee update.

Trustee Barry had copies of the Committee report distributed by DVA staff to all Trustees and then read the report, which is incorporated in its entirety herein by reference (see attachment A).

The report set forth the number of meetings held and the process the Committee members engaged in over the previous two months in developing the Committee's recommendation as

follows: that for the first 4 months of residency at DVA, the Program Fee be waived; that beginning in the fifth month an income-based Program Fee of one-third of gross income be charged for the duration of a Veterans stay at DVA and that applicants be denied admission and residents be discharged if they refuse to provide the required supported documents and information.

Trustee Nelligan moved to receive the report and adopt the recommendations therein including the requirement that a required income statement be sworn and updated annually or upon change in income. Seconded by Trustee Tollefsen.

Chairman McDavid then entertained discussion on the motion at which time Trustee Barry offered a clarifying friendly amendment to reduce the amount from 1/3 of income to thirty percent of income which was accepted by the maker and the seconder of the motion.

Significant discussion followed on the amended motion with Trustee Horan asking why the Committee decided on gross income rather than adjusted income as the base and why no cap such as the five hundred dollars? Trustee Barry responded that the Committee looked to best practices in a variety of settings in determining the percentage and that they decided against a \$500 cap, in part because to have one would discriminate against those making less income. For example, he explained that someone making \$1,500 would pay 1/3 which equals \$500 and that if there was a cap someone making \$3,000 would pay \$500 and keep much more money.

Trustee Coveney stated that the best practices are for rental units and private or semiprivate housing and not for a barracks type domicile. He stated that if there is a problem with Veterans taking advantage of the \$200 fee who make thousands of dollars a month, then the DVA should put a cap on the income level for Veterans applying for admission to the Facility. Trustee Coveney said he knows of some Veteran Residents who have houses they rent out and large boats and some who make three or four thousand dollars a month who stay because it is convenient and they like the comradery. He also asked the Board to consider putting a floor or fee exemption for Veterans making under a certain amount of income.

Trustee Nelligan then described how the Committee deliberated and considered all options stating that the Commissioner left the Committee meeting prior to these deliberations and voting on the final recommendation. He then stated that the 30% approach means that those who make less will pay less and he further explained that many of the examples cited by Trustee Coveney do not provide meals, recreation, medical and other support services available at the DVA.

Trustee Barry stated that the Committee considered a step approach and a cap but again rejected it as discriminatory. Trustee Cacciola stated that while he supports the proposal he agrees that there should be a means or income test to be eligible for admission at the DVA. Trustee Tarbox thanked Trustee Barry for his work on the Committee and while he understands the 1/3 approach he believed there should be a fee cap as well as a low income exemption. Trustee Coveney said that the DVA currently exempts anyone making less than \$600 from having to pay the Program Fee. He further stated that the DVA generates \$34 million in Federal dollars which should be used to fund the agency which costs less than that per year to run. Trustee Coveney said he understands that there are Veterans here with houses, boats and lots of income however many are institutionalized and so there must be a better way to update the Program Fee

Commissioner Connolly explained that while the \$600 exemption has been a practice it is not a formal policy of the DVA and then called upon Fiscal Director Clark to explain DVA revenues, expenditures and costs. Mr. Clark explained that the amount cited by Mr. Coveney included

Medicaid billable amounts of which 50% is the drawdown and it is not covered by the state since we are a state agency and the state does not pay itself. He further explained that the DVA actually costs about \$47 million per year to operate when fringe and other benefit costs are included therefore reliance solely on Federal dollars would not cover DVA's operational costs.

Chairman McDavid asked if there was further discussion and there being none called for a vote on the main motion as amended, which passed with Trustees McDavid, Barry, Cacciola, Dziekan, Galgano, Horan, Nelligan, and Tollefsen voting in the affirmative and Trustees Cheslock, Coveney and Tarbox voting in the negative.

III. New Business

Trustee Coveney thanked the members of the Board explaining that as his term as Veteran Resident Council President will end in January he would no longer be a member of the Board.

IV. Closing remarks

There being no further business, Chairman McDavid entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Trustee Barry and seconded by Trustee Galgano. Motion passed unanimously at 4:41PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Christopher McDavid, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 12/16/2016

Attachment A - Report of DVA Board of Trustees - Program Fee Committee

The Program Fee Committee convened at 2:05PM on October 12, 2016, in attendance were Chairman Paul Barry, Committee members Richard Dziekan, Paul Tarbox, Patrick Nelligan, Kjell Tollefsen and Ronald Coveney. Also in attendance was DVA Chief of Staff and General Counsel Thomas Saadi.

Chairman Barry stated the charge of the Committee as set forth as the September Board of Trustees meeting to review and make recommendations to the full Board regarding the Commissioner's proposal to update the DVA Residential Program Fee policy from the current \$200 per month to the fee being one-third of a Veteran Residents income with no program fee the first four months of residency.

After a presentation on the background of the Program Fee and the current proposal by Mr. Saadi discussion ensued regarding the type of housing DVA provides, whether one-third is the correct amount to charge and how to ensure the funds would remain in the IGW fund and not taken by the General Assembly.

While members agreed Veterans should pay a reasonable amount there was concern as to whether the proposed one-third of income fee would negatively impact Veterans trying to save money in order to leave campus. However, members recognized that the current \$200 Program Fee is being taken advantage of by some Veterans who have significant income and property while other Veterans need an opportunity to save money and get back on their feet.

Chairman Barry stated that based on the discussion the Committee would not be able to reach a determination at this time and scheduled a second meeting for November 9th at 2PM. He further asked Mr. Saadi to provide the Committee with the demographic data for Veteran Residents as well as the previous two IGW semi-annual reports. The meeting adjourned at 3:20PM

The Committee reconvened at 2:00PM on November 9, 2016, in attendance were Chairman Barry, members Dziekan, Nelligan, Tollefsen and Coveney. Tarbox was absent due to illness. Also in attendance were Commissioner Connolly, Theresa Nicolson of the Chrysalis Center and DVA Chief of Staff Saadi.

Chairman Barry asked Commissioner Connolly to address the Committee. The Commissioner explained the proposal and reiterated that one-third of income approach is a best practice. He introduced Ms. Nicolson who explained the one-third of income concept in community based assisted living and other government provide housing as a best practice. This was followed by discussion as to why someone should pay one-third when living in a communal environment rather than private or semi-private rooms. Ms. Nicolson responded that the DVA provides many services such as three meals per day, prescription drugs and recreation.

After the Commissioner and Ms. Nicolson left discussion continued on what is a fair amount reflective of their income with Mr. Coveney stating his concern with a perception that Committee members want the Veterans to "move on" and a one-third approach was too high for many Veterans. Discussion ensued regarding a cap on the monthly fee with all but Mr. Coveney supporting a one-third approach without a cap.

Mr. Nelligan motioned that for the first 4 months of residency at DVA the Program Fee be waived, that beginning in the fifth month a Program Fee of one-third of gross income be charged for the duration of a Veterans stay at DVA without a cap. Seconded by Mr. Tollefsen. Discussion ensued regarding a refusal to disclose income to the DVA. Mr. Nelligan proposed an amendment that applicants be denied admission and residents be discharged if they refuse to provide the required income statement. Seconded by Mr. Tollefsen.

The amendment passed unanimously and main motion passed with Barry, Nelligan, Tollefsen and Dziekan voting in the affirmative and Mr. Coveney in the Negative. Meeting Adjourned at 2:41PM.

Respectfully Submitted.

Original signed Dec 1, 2016

Chair, Paul Barry



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
March 21, 2017**

(Minutes subject to review at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting was called to order by Chairman Christopher McDavid at 3:31PM in the DVA Commissioner's conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chairman McDavid followed by the taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance: Christopher McDavid (Chair), Paul Barry, Richard Benson, , Robert Cheslock, Amy Donahue, Richard Dziekan, Peter Galgano, Steven Harris, Brien Horan, Frederick Leaf, Patrick Nelligan, Paul Tarbox, Michael Tetrault, Kjell Tollefsen, Rebecca Wareing.

Absent: Philip Cacciola (A), Michael Thomas (E) and Tatiana Quinzi (E).

Chairman McDavid entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion made by Trustee Harris and seconded by Trustee Tarbox. Motion passed unanimously without any corrections or edits to the minutes.

Chairman McDavid asked DVA Chief of Staff and General Counsel Thomas Saadi to swear in the re-appointed and newly appointed members of the Board.

Chairman McDavid spoke of his recent trip overseas concluding that he was pleased to be back and to work with the Board this year. Chairman McDavid then introduced DVA Commissioner Sean Connolly who welcomed the Board and introduced DVA staff present – Thomas Saadi, Fausto Parra, Maria Cheney, Michael Clark and Joe Danao.

Commissioner Connolly presented a general update of DVA activities to the Board highlighting recent Veteran and DVA achievements, including the Connecticut Hall of Fame Ceremony, visit by Major General Troy of the 99th RSC to the DVA Campus and the "Ruck to Remember" at the DVA Campus honoring CT's OIF and OEF fallen heroes. Commissioner Connolly then discussed upcoming DVA and Veteran events, such as the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Ceremony on March 30th at the State Capitol and the Veteran Small Business Series at the DVA Campus from April 26-27th.

Chairman McDavid then thanked the Commissioner for his report and commented positively on the number of events and list of accomplishments of the DVA staff.

II. Old Business

Chairman McDavid asked Commissioner Connolly to provide an update on the new Residential Program Fee adopted by the Board at its December 2016 meeting. Commissioner Connolly briefly explained the policy and stated that Veteran Residents have been cooperating with DVA Staff in submitting required financial statements and that the DVA is on track to send out the updated Program Fee bills in May 2017.

Commissioner Connolly then explained the new DVA Transportation policy which adds to the many existing transportation options and temporary transportation support for Veteran Residents to access employment and educational opportunities within 25 miles of the DVA Campus.

Chairman McDavid asked if there were any questions for the Commissioner and with none the Commissioner then asked Chief of Staff Saadi to provide an update on the DVA DOL Detail and General Worker settlement. Chief of Staff Saadi explained that Notices and claim forms have been mailed to 191 eligible Veterans and that as the DVA receives the claim forms the data is entered into a spread sheet and DOL receipt which will then be sent to the claims administrator to mail payment to verified recipients. While the deadline set by the DOL for the initial mailing is July 8, 2017, the DVA hopes to mail out most checks prior to the end of May. Timing is highly dependent on Veterans submitting completed claim forms to DVA in a timely manner.

Chairman McDavid asked Commissioner Connolly and Fiscal Manager Michael Clark for a DVA Budget update. Commissioner Connolly explained that the current proposal reduces the DVA personal services by \$868,510 which will need to be addressed through savings (\$400,000) achieved through the use of an automated pill machine for the Healthcare Center and further savings (\$468,510) through attrition in staff positions. Trustee Barry asked whether the projected savings was per annum or over a longer period of time. The Commissioner stated that the savings is projected per annum.

Chairman McDavid then asked for a projects update by Projects and Operations Dir. Joe Danao. Director Danao provided an update on the Middletown Veterans Cemetery plot expansion grant and the maintenance and beatification grant. Director Danao explained that DVA has several other projects ranked high on the Federal reimbursement list including a new Fire Alarm and suppression system, Emergency generator, and ADA upgrades. Director Danao stated that the DVA has addressed problem with thefts from Cemetery shed by now using secure storage containers and also reviewed several smaller ongoing and planned projects including the creation of the Residential F-Wing computer and business office Resource Center.

Trustee Benson asked for the status on installation of headstones at the Middletown Cemetery. Director Danao stated that the DVA is behind on installations due to loss of a staff member and weather however that the planned use of new federal e-system or ordering headstones will help in the future and that he is reviewing options for addressing the backlog. The Commissioner then explained that the DVA was looking to engage Czaja to assist at which time Director Danao added that no determination has yet been made on Czaja.

Trustee Benson then asked to return to the budget and asked whether the DVA Cemetery Services will get line item funding and whether the federal plot allowance can be directed to that line item. Fiscal Manager Clark explained that the line item is being considered for submission to OPM for the next fiscal year and stated that the federal plot allowance was treated by the State the same as per diem funds and deposited in the General Fund. Commissioner Connolly added that he would be reviewing the options for maintaining such cemetery funds for perpetual care and operations in the next fiscal year. Trustee Barry commended Director Danao and Fiscal Manager Clark commenting that \$6 million in cemetery projects and upgrades is great however it was necessary as the Cemetery has been ignored for many years adding that he supports the establishment of a perpetual care fund.

III. New Business

Chairman McDavid then asked Commissioner Connolly and Chief of Staff Saadi for a Legislative update. Commissioner Connolly provided an overview of the DVAs legislative package as well as bills the agency supports and called on Chief of Staff Saadi explain the details of the bills. Chief of Staff Saadi explained SB 342 which would clarify the definition of Veteran in CGS 27-103(a)(2) to include, number of days of active service notwithstanding, any one honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions from the Armed Forces within the definition of Veteran. Trustee Barry asked whether this will alter eligibility for burial in State Veteran Cemeteries to which Saadi responded no as eligibility is set by Federal law as the DVA is the recipient of Federal funding for its Cemeteries. Trustee Benson asked what impact this would have on other benefits including municipal tax abatements. Saadi noted that the bill would not expand the number of Veterans who would qualify for benefits or honors reserved for disabled Veterans, Wartime Service Veterans or Veterans just coming off of active duty or their eligible survivors (e.g. municipal tax abatements, wartime service medal, tuition waiver, one year waived motor vehicle registration, etc . . .) those statutes expressly define eligibility in a manner more restrictive than the baseline definition of Veteran in C.G.S. 27-103(a)(2). Trustee Tarbox further explained that many municipal tax abatements are permissive and subject to wartime service and/or disability rating requirements.

Chief of Staff Saadi then explained that H.B. 7102 would provide increased protection to Veteran and service member information including Selective service or Military Identification numbers, military discharge documents, and copies of military identity cards by including such information within the ambit of information, such as Social Security Numbers, protected pursuant to C.G.S. § 42-471. Violators would be subject to civil penalties of up to \$500 for each violation as well as injunctive relief. He further explained that SB 857 seeks to designate the DVA Ricky Hill Campus as the "Connecticut Veterans Center" which communicates to all Connecticut Veterans that the campus is a Center for them. He stated that the Committee amended the bill to rename the campus the "Rocky Hill, Connecticut Veterans Center" and that is a misnomer communicating that the campus is a Municipal entity which the DVA is working to address. Chief of Staff Saadi explained that HB 7101 clarifies, consistent with federal law, that members of the National Guard and Armed Forces Reserve components who do not have active duty service beyond that for initial entry training are eligible for burial in our State Veterans Cemeteries if they are entitled to receive retirement pay under 10 USC chapter 1223 or, but for, their age would otherwise be eligible to collect such retirement pay.

Chairman McDavid then asked Commissioner Connolly to discuss the DVA strategic objectives. The Commissioner outlined four strategic objectives directly related to the DVA Core

Functions and improving agency operates as (1) Continue Revitalizing DVA's Residential Program; (2) Begin Three Key Projects, two cemetery projects and one campus project which is the fire alarm and sprinkler replacement and upgrades in Building 2; (3) Review and Update Office of Advocacy and Assistance and Burial and Memorial Service; and (4) Expand Partnerships and Collaboration for Connecticut's Veterans Center of Excellence

Trustee Tarbox mentioned that he was pleased to read a news article reporting that DVA VSO Anne James is holding an informational session on Veterans benefits in Milford.

IV. Closing remarks

Commissioner Connolly asked Trustee Tetrault to introduce himself and provide the Board with his background. Trustee Tetrault stated that he is an Army Cold War veteran and has resided at the DVA Residential Facility for 11 years.

There being no further business, Chairman McDavid entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Trustee Tarbox and seconded by Trustee Harris. Motion passed unanimously at 4:428PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Christopher McDavid, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 3/31/17

Attachment A - Report of DVA Board of Trustees - Program Fee Committee

The Program Fee Committee convened at 2:05PM on October 12, 2016, in attendance were Chairman Paul Barry, Committee members Richard Dziekan, Paul Tarbox, Patrick Nelligan, Kjell Tollefsen and Ronald Coveney. Also in attendance was DVA Chief of Staff and General Counsel Thomas Saadi.

Chairman Barry stated the charge of the Committee as set forth as the September Board of Trustees meeting to review and make recommendations to the full Board regarding the Commissioner's proposal to update the DVA Residential Program Fee policy from the current \$200 per month to the fee being one-third of a Veteran Residents income with no program fee the first four months of residency.

After a presentation on the background of the Program Fee and the current proposal by Mr. Saadi discussion ensued regarding the type of housing DVA provides, whether one-third is the correct amount to charge and how to ensure the funds would remain in the IGW fund and not taken by the General Assembly.

While members agreed Veterans should pay a reasonable amount there was concern as to whether the proposed one-third of income fee would negatively impact Veterans trying to save money in order to leave campus. However, members recognized that the current \$200 Program Fee is being taken advantage of by some Veterans who have significant income and property while other Veterans need an opportunity to save money and get back on their feet.

Chairman Barry stated that based on the discussion the Committee would not be able to reach a determination at this time and scheduled a second meeting for November 9th at 2PM. He further asked Mr. Saadi to provide the Committee with the demographic data for Veteran Residents as well as the previous two IGW semi-annual reports. The meeting adjourned at 3:20PM

The Committee reconvened at 2:00PM on November 9, 2016, in attendance were Chairman Barry, members Dziekan, Nelligan, Tollefsen and Coveney. Tarbox was absent due to illness. Also in attendance were Commissioner Connolly, Theresa Nicolson of the Chrysalis Center and DVA Chief of Staff Saadi.

Chairman Barry asked Commissioner Connolly to address the Committee. The Commissioner explained the proposal and reiterated that one-third of income approach is a best practice. He introduced Ms. Nicolson who explained the one-third of income concept in community based assisted living and other government provide housing as a best practice. This was followed by discussion as to why someone should pay one-third when living in a communal environment rather than private or semi-private rooms. Ms. Nicolson responded that the DVA provides many services such as three meals per day, prescription drugs and recreation.

After the Commissioner and Ms. Nicolson left discussion continued on what is a fair amount reflective of their income with Mr. Coveney stating his concern with a perception that Committee members want the Veterans to "move on" and a one-third approach was too high for many Veterans. Discussion ensued regarding a cap on the monthly fee with all but Mr. Coveney supporting a one-third approach without a cap.

Mr. Nelligan motioned that for the first 4 months of residency at DVA the Program Fee be waived, that beginning in the fifth month a Program Fee of one-third of gross income be charged for the duration of a Veterans stay at DVA without a cap. Seconded by Mr. Tollefsen. Discussion ensued regarding a refusal to disclose income to the DVA. Mr. Nelligan proposed an amendment that applicants be denied admission and residents be discharged if they refuse to provide the required income statement. Seconded by Mr. Tollefsen.

The amendment passed unanimously and main motion passed with Barry, Nelligan, Tollefsen and Dziekan voting in the affirmative and Mr. Coveney in the Negative. Meeting Adjourned at 2:41PM.

Respectfully Submitted.

Original signed Dec 1, 2016

Chair, Paul Barry



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
June 1, 2017**

(Minutes subject to review at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting was called to order by Acting Chair Patrick Nelligan at 3:33PM in the DVA Commissioner's conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Acting Chair Nelligan followed by the taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance: Paul Barry, Richard Benson, Philip Cacciola, Robert Cheslock, Amy Donahue, Richard Dziekan, Peter Galgano, Steven Harris, Brien Horan, Frederick Leaf, Patrick Nelligan, Tatiana Quinzi, Michael Thomas, Michael Tetrault, Kjell Tollefsen.

Absent: Christopher McDavid, and Paul Tarbox.

Acting Chairman Nelligan asked DVA Chief of Staff and General Counsel Thomas Saadi to swear in the re-appointed members of the Board not previously sworn. Those sworn in were Trustees Cacciola, Harris and Quinzi.

Acting Chairman Nelligan entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion made by Trustee Harris and seconded by Trustee Thomas. Motion passed unanimously without any corrections or edits to the minutes.

Commissioner Connolly presented a general update of DVA activities to the Board highlighting recent Veteran and DVA achievements, including the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day at the Capitol, The first Annual Connecticut Medal of Honor Recipients Ceremony at the State Capitol and the Groundbreaking ceremony for the Fisher Foundation House on the West Haven VA Campus. Commissioner Connolly then discussed upcoming DVA and Veteran events, such as the UCONN Veterans Administrators Conference on June 6th, Quinnebaug Valley Community College Stand Down on June 10th, Wartime Service Medal ceremony at Middletown Elks Club on June 21st and the Yard Goats Veterans Appreciation Game on August 13th.

II. Old Business

Acting Chairman Nelligan then requested, without objection, that item A under New Business be moved to the first item under Old Business and asked Chief of Staff Tom Saadi to introduce Assistant Attorneys General (AAG) Gary Hawes and Caitlan Calder. AAGs Hawes

and Calder presented the proposed multi-state Veterans Charities Sweep being coordinated among all the States' Attorneys General. The purpose is to identify "bad actors" and educate potential donors in ways to avoid scams and questionable charities. Chief of Staff Saadi commented on the importance of the sweep and explained how Trustees and others can contact the Attorney General's Office with ideas and concerns. Acting Chairman Nelligan stated that he knew of three charities of concern and asked how to deal with them prior to the Sweep. Trustee Galgano also mentioned charities of concern and the use of paid solicitors. AAG Hawes explained that at any time a person may file a complaint with the Department of Consumer Protection which has primary jurisdiction on such matters and he want onto say that the use of paid solicitors were not per se illegal. Trustee Leaf asked whether the OAG could require the display of charitable credentials to which AAG Hawes responded that such requirement is a Legislative issue. Trustee Benson asked whether Charities must register locally to which AAG Hawes responded that it depends on the level of conduct in CT and other states. Commissioner Connolly asked about enforcement and whether the OAG has a consumer fact sheet the DVA could distribute to which AAG Hawes responded that enforcement is ongoing and that there is a fact sheet on the OAG website.

A. Residential Facility Program Fee Update

Commissioner Connolly updated the Board as to the overall success in the implementation of the updated DVA Program Fee and the first month's collection rates. Acting Chairman Nelligan asked whether new Veteran Residents are utilizing the 4 months Program Fee waiver successfully to which the Commissioner replied in the affirmative.

B. Residential Voluntary Discharge Data:

Commissioner Connolly explained the general increase, this year over last, in the number of voluntary discharges of Veteran Residents highlighting the fact that most were to community based housing with some Veterans purchasing their own homes. Trustee Barry asked whether the DVA tracks success. Commissioner replied that we provide three months of post discharge support and monitoring but do not track discharged Veterans after that period. Director of Residential Services Maria Cheney explained that after the 90 days the DVA does receive anecdotal information regarding success in community based housing. Trustee Tollefsen asked whether the return rate to DVA by voluntarily discharged Veterans is less than 20% to which Director Cheney responded in the affirmative.

C. DOL Detail and General Work Program Settlement update:

Acting Chair Nelligan asked Chief of Staff Saadi to provide an update on the DVA DOL Detail and General Worker settlement. Chief of Staff Saadi explained that the DVA is working with the outside claims administrator to finalize the payment mailings to 139 verified Veteran Claimants and Estates. He explained that while the DVA is ahead of the Federal deadline, it is behind on its internal time line as additional tax and DOL receipt of payment documents had to be processed in response to Veteran Claimants' concerns and DOL requirements. Trustee Benson asked for the name of the Claims Administrator and whether it was affiliated with the State Claims Commissioner. Saadi identified the Administrator as Garden City out of Washington and Florida and explained that they are a state of CT approved contractor and utilized by the OAG for process consumer restitution payments and that it is not affiliated with the CT Claims Commissioner.

Commissioner Connolly asked Chief of Staff Saadi to provide an update on the Aillon Cemetery disinterment matter. Saadi explained that Mr. Aillon, a Vietnam era Veteran, has been incorrectly buried in the Middletown Veterans Cemetery as the DVA did not know at the time of burial that he was a convicted triple murderer. According to the Federal Cemetery Administration he must be disinterred if the DVA is to receive the two pending Federal Grants (approximately \$6 Million). The DVA attempted directly and through the OAG for over a year to work out a settlement with the family of Mr. Aillon without success and have now filed for a Probate Court order for custody of the remains for the purpose of disinterring the remains.

D. Budget Update:

Acting Chair Nelligan asked the Commissioner for a budget update. Commissioner Connolly reviewed the Governor's proposed Budget revisions equaling cuts of \$310,569 in FY 2018 and \$2,389,989 in FY 2019. He explained that this is one of several budget proposals being considered by the Legislature and that the Governor's revisions were not based on input from DVA prior to publication. Trustee Barry said that several years ago there was a proposal to eliminate OA&A and wanted to know who makes these decisions and why is OA&A Manager position eliminated? Commissioner Connolly explained that the OA&A Manager position was not eliminated but due to the hiring freeze DVA has not been able to fill the vacancy. He further explained that DVA was resubmitting to have the position approved for refill. Trustees Barry and Benson both criticized the proposed cuts and stated that the DVA has been cut from \$34 million in 2007 to about \$25 million in 2017 and that these cuts are drastic and that the Board needs to say no to this budget and send a letter to OPM Secretary Ben Barnes and the Governor. Trustee Tollefsen agreed with the concerns but suggested meeting with Secretary Barnes. Acting Chair Nelligan stated that Trustees should contact Legislators directly. Trustee Harris said that this issue should be treated similarly to civil rights issues and that Board members should get directly in front of Legislators to express objections to proposed cuts to DVA. Chief of Staff Saadi recommended that the Board members contact elected officials directly and encourage others to do so because if the Board sent a collective letter others may not take action on their own. Saadi stated that multiple letters, calls and emails from a broad range of Veterans and friends of Veterans will have a greater impact. Trustee Thomas stated that the Board must be cognizant of the fact that the state is in dire fiscal straights.

Commissioner Connolly stated that in spite of recent reductions and holdback the DVA continues to Serve Those Who Served and have done more with less funding through partnerships, expansion of internship and volunteer programs and new ways of delivering services. He stated that he does not want to see these or any cuts and while he opposes such cuts he stressed that the DVA and the Board must look at new ways to support Veterans and deliver services. Commissioner Connolly then said he would look into holding a Special Board meeting or setting up a meeting with Secretary Barnes and would follow up with the Board.

Acting Chair Nelligan then asked for a projects update by Projects and Operations Director Joe Danao. Director Danao provided an update on the Middletown Veterans Cemetery plot expansion grant and the maintenance and beautification grant. Director Danao explained that DVA has several other projects racked high on the Federal reimbursement list including a new Fire Alarm and suppression system, Emergency generator, and ADA upgrades. Director Danao announced that the Residential F-Wing computer and Entertainment room is complete and will open soon for Veteran Residents.

Trustee Thomas asked about the functional life of alarm systems to which Director Danao responded that the norm was ten years. Trustee Tetreault asked if the F-Wing room will have Wi-Fi to which Director Danao responded in the affirmative. Director Danao then reviewed a list of planned smaller projects across the DVA Campus including a new generator, future Day room renovations and the cleaning of the DVA Veterans' Monument.

III. New Business

A. CT Attorney General Veteran Charities Sweep:

This issue was taken up as first item under Old Business.

B. Legislative Update:

Acting Chair Nelligan asked Chief of Staff Saadi for a Legislative update. Chief of Staff Saadi explained the details of the bills and status as follows:

(1) S.B. 342, which would clarify the definition of Veteran in CGS 27-103(a)(2) to include, number of days of active service notwithstanding, any one honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions from the Armed Forces within the definition of Veteran. This bill is pending a vote on the Senate calendar. Saadi noted that the bill would not expand the number of Veterans who would qualify for benefits or honors reserved for disabled Veterans, Wartime Service Veterans or Veterans just coming off of active duty or their eligible survivors (e.g. municipal tax abatements, wartime service medal, tuition waiver, one year waived motor vehicle registration, etc . . .) because those statutes expressly define eligibility in a manner more restrictive than the baseline definition of Veteran in C.G.S. 27-103(a)(2).

(2) H.B. 7102 would provide increased protection to Veteran and service member information including Selective Service or Military Identification numbers, military discharge documents, and copies of military identity cards by including such information within the ambit of other protected information pursuant to C.G.S. § 42-471. Violators would be subject to civil penalties of up to \$500 for each violation as well as injunctive relief. The bill passed the House and is pending in the Senate.

(3) S.B. 857 would designate the DVA Rocky Hill Campus as the "Connecticut Veterans Center". Saadi stated that the Committee amended the bill based on a proposal by State Rep. Anthony Guerrero to rename the campus the "Rocky Hill, Connecticut Veterans Center" and that is a misnomer communicating that the campus is a Municipal entity instead of a statewide campus for all Connecticut Veterans. The bill is not on the Senate calendar but as attempts to amend the bill to reflect the original language failed due to objections by Rep. Guerrero, the bill will likely not come up for a vote.

(4) H.B. 7101 clarifies, consistent with federal law, that members of the National Guard and Armed Forces Reserve components who do not have active duty service beyond that for initial entry training are eligible for burial in our State Veterans Cemeteries if they are entitled to receive retirement pay under 10 USC chapter 1223 or, but for, their age would otherwise be eligible to collect such retirement pay. The Bill is pending a vote in the House.

Commissioner Connolly then presented updates as to progress on the DVA strategic objectives outlined at the previous Board meeting as follows: (1) Continue Revitalizing DVA's Residential Program with greater support services, new Vocational program, additional partnerships; (2) Begin Three Key Projects, two cemetery projects and one campus project which is the fire alarm and sprinkler replacement and upgrades in Building 2; (3) Review and Update Office of Advocacy and Assistance and Burial and Memorial Service; and (4) Expand Partnerships and Collaboration for Connecticut's Veterans Center of Excellence.

IV. Closing remarks

There being no further business, Acting Chair Nelligan entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Trustee Benson and seconded by Trustee Thomas. Motion passed unanimously at 5:10PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Patrick Nelligan, Acting Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 12 June 2017



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2017**

(Minutes subject to review at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting was called to order by Chair Christopher McDavid at 3:38PM in the DVA Commissioner's conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chair McDavid followed by the taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance: Paul Barry, Richard Benson, Philip Cacciola, Robert Cheslock, Richard Dziekan, Peter Galgano, Steven Harris, Brien Horan, Frederick Leaf, Christopher McDavid, Patrick Nelligan, Paul Tarbox, Michael Thomas, Michael Tetrault, and Kjell Tollefsen.

Absent:, Tatiana Quinzi and Amy Donahue.

Chairman McDavid thanked Trustee Nelligan for presiding at the June meeting of the Board while Chair McDavid was overseas.

Chair McDavid entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion made by Trustee Horan and seconded by Trustee Harris. Motion passed unanimously without any corrections or edits to the minutes.

Commissioner Connolly presented a general update of DVA activities to the Board highlighting recent Veteran and DVA achievements, including ribbon cutting ceremonies for the opening of the Veterans Entertainment & Technology Connection ("VET Connection") and the abated Main Dining Room in the Residential Facility. The Commissioner also attended and spoke at UTC Flag day and Vitas Healthcare Honor and Remembrance Event, and he also awarded Wartime Service Medals in Southbury, Middletown, East Granby, Portland and Hartford. Commissioner Connolly threw out the first pitch at the Yard Goats Veteran Appreciation Game in August. Commissioner Connolly then discussed upcoming DVA and Veteran events, such as the Annual DVA Stand Down on September 22 at the DVA Campus, CT Hall of Fame Ceremony on November 30, 2017, and Wreaths Across America on December 16, 2017.

II. Old Business

A. DVA Meeting with OPM

Chairman McDavid called on Commissioner Connolly to brief the Board on the meeting with OPM Secretary Ben Barnes attended by several Trustees. Commissioner Connolly explained that he and various Trustees informed OPM that certain budget proposals to reduce the DVA budget would actually cost the state millions more than the projected savings. He also informed the Board that he and others explained that any budget must continue to fund the Office of Advocacy and Assistance (OA&A) as well as reconsider the proposal to transition the Healthcare Center from a chronic care hospital to a nursing home. He explained that discussion ensued focused on DVA reducing its physical footprint in order to continue to deliver services with reduced budgets and indicated that there were no funds for large scale renovations or expansions.

Chair McDavid spoke to the state's fiscal situation and that OPM's comments were not unexpected but that those in attendance learned that it is important to remain actively engaged with OPM to ensure a depth of understanding of the DVA budget and its impact on Veterans.

Trustee Barry stated that he was shocked by the proposal to change the HCC license and with OPM's inaccurate assessment of potential savings from the change. He is also very concerned with the reduction of the DVA appropriated budget by nearly 1/3 over the past 8 years which makes him very concerned that the DVA may close. Trustee Benson asked whether the Commissioner received a response to his 3-page email to OPM after the meeting. He stated that DVA and Veterans should be a priority for funding. Trustee Tollefsen stated that OPM did not seem to know of the many DVA partnerships and activities the Commissioner implemented to deliver more and better services despite budget cuts. Trustee Nelligan stated that Board members need to speak up as that is what OPM and legislators respond to and that the Board should be looking to strengthen campus-based Veteran Organizations. Trustee Tarbox said that OPM was correct in explaining that there is greater competition in the community for funding with non-profits. Chair McDavid said that we need a response from OPM and also need to determine whether we can assess the scope of community-based services for Veterans.

Commissioner Connolly stated that DVA Fiscal staff is actively engaged with OPM discussing the licensure issue, DVA staffing levels, and other elements of the budget and that he and DVA staff would be meeting with OPM staff the following week to discuss DVA staffing.

B. DVA Budget and Staffing:

DVA Fiscal Manager Michael Clark explained that the DVA has maintained a balanced budget for the past 10 years and provided a general brief on the current Executive Order funding for the DVA, noting that there is an overall 6% reduction in the budget for fiscal year 17-18. Trustee Nelligan asked for clarification of the funding mechanism for the Soldier Sailor Marine Fund which was explained by Mr. Clark and Trustee Tarbox. Mr. Clark explained that DVA revenue to the State has increased in both the HCC and Residential Facility. Trustee Tollefsen asked about a budget synopsis and the best way to reach out to legislators. The Commissioner encouraged all Board members to contact members of the General Assembly.

Commissioner Connolly asked, without objection, to move New Business item C forward on the agenda as Residential Director Maria Cheney has another meeting. There was no objection.

C. Stand Down Update.

Maria Cheney provided a general update explaining the new Stand Down times of 8AM – 2PM. She also noted that to date there are more than 200 volunteers and 100 benefit providers registered. Commissioner Connolly commended Ms. Cheney for her great work and stated that Ms. Cheney is a 2017 recipient of the State’s Manager Award.

D. Projects Update

Projects and Operations Director Joe Danao provided a general DVA Projects update which included the DVA being awarded more than \$8 million in cemetery grants for two major projects that will expand the Middletown State Veterans Cemetery’s capacity as well as straighten headstone alignment and beautify the cemetery. Mr. Danao explained that these are 100% federally-funded so there is no cost to the State of CT. Chair McDavid asked whether there was a concern that the federal grants would be more difficult to obtain in the future. Mr. Danao explained that the federal grant funding seems stable but that some federal mandates have been relaxed allowing the DVA to move forward with some projects at a lower cost. Trustee Benson asked whether the cemetery projects would impact ongoing services and operations. Mr. Danao said that staff would work to minimize any such impact but that some impact could be expected. Mr. Danao explained that burials have increased 40% in 7 years, yet DVA continues to provide our Veterans and families with the honor they deserve.

III. New Business

A. Residential Facility Quality of Life Updates:

The Commissioner briefed the Board on the proposed quality of life improvements to A wing of the Residential Facility which include a new gym in the A Wing day room and upgrades to the living areas which will transition the Wing from three connected pods with 4 beds in each to semi-private rooms with two beds and a shared common area. Improvements will include new flooring, walls, lighting, painting and furniture. The Commissioner explained that this is the first renovation of this kind in the Residential facility since it opened in 1940.

B. Municipal Veteran Representatives Training:

Chief of Staff Tom Saadi provided a general update on the upcoming Municipal Veterans’ Representative Training on September 14, 2017. Mr. Saadi explained that more 70 attendees are expected and that the DVA has updated and expanded the training this year as well as updated its data base for each CT municipality. He further stated that 11 Veteran Service providers will have tables at the event.

C. Stand Down Update: previously reported.

D. Harford Veterans Day Parade Update:

Commissioner Connolly explained that the Veterans’ Day parade has been organized by a private non-profit organization and that due to funding issues the parade will not take place this year. He explained that he offered to assist with bringing Veterans and others together to support the Parade and held two meetings at DVA to that effect. However, the parade organizers made the decision not to hold the parade this year.

Chair McDavid then stated that in this difficult fiscal environment the DVA is on a good trajectory due to the work of Commissioner Connolly and the DVA team. He stressed that the State budget issues should be a call to arms to the Board to assist the DVA. Trustee Nelligan asked whether the DVA has a development fund. Discussion ensued on possible ideas for establishing a 501c3 or foundation in the future and that it should be added as an agenda item for the next Board meeting.

IV. Closing

There being no further business, Chair McDavid entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Trustee Cheslock and seconded by Trustee Thomas. Motion passed unanimously at 5:13PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Christopher McDavid, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 9/26/2017



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2017**

(Minutes subject to review at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting was called to order by Chair Christopher McDavid at 3:37 PM in the DVA Acting Acting Commissioner's conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chair McDavid followed by the taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance: Paul Barry, Richard Benson, Philip Cacciola, Robert Cheslock, Richard Dziekan, Peter Galgano, Frederick Leaf, Christopher McDavid, Patrick Nelligan, Paul Tarbox, and Kjell Tollefsen.

Absent: Amy Donahue, Steven Harris, Brien Horan, Michael Thomas & Tatiana Quinzi

Chair McDavid entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion made by Trustee Benson and seconded by Trustee Nelligan. Motion passed unanimously without any corrections or edits to the minutes.

Chair McDavid commented on how active we all are during Veterans Day and also wished Acting Commissioner Saadi an early "Happy Birthday."

Acting Commissioner's update: Acting Commissioner Saadi explained the many Veterans Day events across the State he attended as well as mentioned the Saluting Branches event/in-kind donation held at the Middletown Veterans Cemetery on December 1, 2017, where arborists from across CT provided their services (approx.. \$100K of work) removing and trimming several overgrown and diseased trees and shrubs in the cemetery. The Acting Commissioner also discussed the new Residential fitness center ribbon cutting and groundbreaking ceremony for improvements being made to the Residential A Wing. He spoke about the success of the 2017 CT Veterans Hall of Fame ceremony held on December 4th and went through upcoming events including the DVA Residential Holiday Party, Wreaths Across American ceremony and the groundbreaking ceremony at the State Veterans' Cemetery on December 16, and 19 respectively.

II. Old Business

A. DVA Healthcare Center (HCC) – License & Level of Care:

Chair McDavid reported on the background of the HCC licensure issue explaining that the Legislature included a \$2 million cut to the HCC based on forcing a change in the license from a Chronic Disease Hospital (CDH) to a nursing home. He stated that the HCC Sub-committee appointed as the previous Board meeting held two committee meetings and that members contacted many legislators to urge them to remove the cut from the state budget.

Trustee Nelligan, Chair of the HCC Sub-committee, explained that it was formed to assist in navigating what information would establish that changing from a CDH to a nursing home is not the way to best serve our Veterans. He explained that the committee was able to gather information that the HCC is providing a broad range of care and services commensurate with the CDH license and meet or exceed the required level of care despite the continued fiscal and staffing cut-backs. Trustee Nelligan explained that there is still a \$2M budget cut in the FY 2019 budget and that the Board must work to reverse this cut which would severely lower care for Veterans. Even if the HCC license remained as a CDH that proposed cut must be reversed as a \$2million hit to other parts of the agency would be catastrophic. Sub-committee will work to provide all Trustees with a “one pager” summarizing the relevant information to help educate legislators in the upcoming session. He highlighted that all Board members need to educate state officials so they understand that the DVA cannot absorb a \$2million cut.

Acting Commissioner Saadi explained that the DVA has done a “deep dive” on the care of each patient in the HCC for a broad range of data related to the care they are receiving and is providing this information along with myriad other documentation to DSS which is conducting a level of care review of the DVA among other agencies.

B. Residential A-Wing Update:

The Acting Commissioner briefed the Board on the status of the quality of life improvements to A wing of the Residential Facility which is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2018. He also explained that the new Fitness Center is open and operating and that there are additional asbestos abatement and upgrade projects taking place in the Residential Facility.

C. Budget & Staffing Update:

Shumei Chu and Michael Clark from DVA’s Fiscal Office presented a report in response to previous requests by Trustees of the historical staffing and fiscal trends at DVA. They explained the downward trend over the previous ten years during which staffing went from 292 full-time employees in 2008 to a current 192 level. During that same time part-time staffing went from 87 to a current level of 64. Ms. Chu explained that this represents a 32% drop in total staffing over ten years. In 2008, DVA’s Personal Service Expense was approximately \$24 million and the current FY18 is approximately \$19 million. When asked by multiple Trustees whether the DVA can sustain services, they explained that the DVA can’t sustain these cuts along with the change in licensure of HCC to Nursing Home and a \$2 million cut in FY19.

Trustees Barry and Benson voiced concerns and frustration asking what is the motivation of those seeking to cut the DVA by \$2 million when it is a small agency that has absorbed so many

other cuts. Trustee Barry asked if there other reasons for this cut other than a “mistake” being made?”

Chairman McDavid agreed with the other Trustees concerns and also expressed his concerns with the motives for the proposed cuts. Acting Commissioner Saadi explained that he had no reason to assign a secret motive stating that many legislators who have become aware of the proposed cuts expressed dismay and hope that they could address the issues in 2018. Trustee Nelligan stated where can our Veterans in need of specialty care go if the HCC becomes a nursing home? There may not be another location that can admit these veteran and for those who can stay there level of care will be reduced.

Acting Commissioner Saadi stated that in response to request by legislators and Trustees that he will be inviting Legislators to tour the DVA Campus to see firsthand the services provided to our Veterans. Trustees asked if they can attend these tours to which the Acting Commissioner responded in the affirmative. Trustee Benson stressed the need for all Trustees to be present during on site Legislative meetings. Chairman McDavid assured that all will be notified of meeting dates and times.

D. Projects Update

Projects and Operations Director Joe Danao provided a general DVA Projects update including an explanation of the Middletown State Veteran Cemetery Expansion project with a completion date of December 2018, and the Cemetery Appearance project with a completion date of February 2020. These two projects total approximately \$8.6 million in improvements fully funded by the federal Cemetery Grants program.

Director Danao also updated Trustees in the efforts to secure State Bonding funds for a new Campus fire alarm and fire suppression system. Also, a new chiller for the HCC is awaiting award of construction and the Campus emergency generator is under construction with an estimated completion date in May 2018. He also reported on the A-Wing improvements and the new DVA website which is experiencing a record amount of use as well as the DVA Mobile application which has 388 downloads since inception.

III. New Business

A. Residential Facility - Bed Bug Protocol:

Chuck Leone of the DVA Residential Program provided update on bed bug situation. In December 2014 first evidence of bed bugs found in Residential living areas. In January of 2015, Pest Management Plan put in place. Monthly inspections conducted by residential staff along with regularly scheduled canine inspections of living areas, common areas, office and B-Clinic conducted. While bed bug activity was under control for much of 2015, 2016 and early 2017 in October 2017 bed bug activity increased significantly. Mr. Leone explained that additional treatments for all living areas affected took place and that new admissions must heat treat all personal belongings upon arrival.

Acting Commissioner Saadi explained that he received complaints from Veteran Residents about the procedures and notices related to the bed bug treatment protocols and asked the Residential Director to provide him a detailed report on the issue and to update the Integrated

Pest Management Plan. Mr. Leone explained that the Residential Director held a Staff educational seminar and working group on November 28, 2017, which included experts from the State's Agricultural Experiment Station. This was followed by a Town Hall Meeting for staff and Veteran Residents on December 19, 2017, which included the State's expert. Mr. Leone explained that new procedures are being implemented which included better notification to Veteran Residents.

B. Program Fee Update:

Acting Commissioner Saadi gave update on the DVA Program Fee including revenue, compliance and non-compliance trends. He explained that there was an uptick in involuntary discharges immediately after the implementation of the new program fees for noncompliance and that absent a jump in non-compliance in October 2017, most Veterans Residents are making the required payments of 30% of income beginning on their 5th month of residency. Acting Commissioner Saadi explained that non-compliance discharge appeals are usually by providing the Veteran Resident a period of time to pay an arrearage and attend credit counseling.

Acting Commissioner Saadi explained that Veteran Resident Mike Tetreault, resigned at Veteran Residential Facility Council President and thus was no longer a statutory member of Board. However, he and former Veteran Council President expressed concerns about the Program Fee to the Acting Commissioner and that Mr. Coveney sent him an email with a proposed alternative approach. Acting Commissioner Saadi stated that he assured Mr. Coveney he would present the email to the Board which he did. The email stated that the Council voted unanimously to ask that the Program Fee be altered to a level of \$100 and that Veterans with income under \$600 be exempt from the Program Fee. The email also asked that the Acting Acting Commissioner have broad discretion to forgive arrearage owed by Veterans who would like to return to the DVA. The intent, explained the email, is to help "fill" the residential facility again while helping those who struggle with financial issues.

Trustee Nelligan suggested reconvening the Program Fee sub-committee to discuss the issues raised in the email and to review the Program Fee issue overall. Chairman McDavid agreed, reappointed the Committee and asked for a report back on findings and suggestions at the Board's March 2018 meeting. New BOT member from Residential Facility will be voted in January 2018, and that person will also be included as a member of the Program Fee sub-committee.

Trustee Cheslock reported that he presented Acting Commissioner Saadi with a petition from all HCC patients opposing the proposed licensure change. Acting Commissioner Saadi said that he forwarded the petition to all Board members as would provide it to visiting Legislators as well.

Chair McDavid surveyed feasible dates with the Board and set the next Board meeting for Tuesday, March 13, 2018 at 3:30pm. The Chair and Acting Acting Commissioner wished everyone a Happy Holiday.

IV. Closing

There being no further business, Chair McDavid entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Trustee Leaf and seconded by Trustee Benson. Motion passed unanimously at 5:26 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Christopher McDavid, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 12/31/17



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
March 20, 2018**

(Minutes subject to review at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting was called to order by Chair McDavid at 3:32 PM in the DVA Commissioner's conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chair McDavid followed by the taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance: Paul Barry, Richard Benson, Philip Cacciola, Robert Cheslock, Ronald Coveney, Peter Galgano, Christopher McDavid, Paul Tarbox, Michael A. Thomas, and Kjell Tollefsen.

Absent: Amy Donahue, Steven Harris, Brien Horan, Frederick Leaf, Patrick Nelligan, and Tatiana Quinzi

Chair McDavid entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion made by Trustee Tollefsen and seconded by Trustee Thomas. Motion passed unanimously without any corrections or edits to the minutes.

Chair McDavid commented on the challenge our agency is dealing with regarding the budget and congratulated the Commissioner on his confirmation.

Commissioner's update: Commissioner Saadi introduced new members of the DVA staff, Office of Advocacy and Assistance (OAA) Manager Ryan McKenna and Executive Secretary, Darlene Deschaine. The Commissioner spoke briefly about budget issues which included public hearings attended by many Veterans from around the state as well as members of the DVA BOT. The Commissioner spoke of recent events that he participated in including Wreaths Across America, the Ground Breaking Ceremony of the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown, DVA event honoring female WWII Marine Veterans and the DVA Black History Month celebration. The Commissioner reported that he accepted a donation from AT&T and Verizon from the proceeds of the Veterans Day Charity 3 Miler. Commissioner Saadi reported on upcoming events including the Vietnam Memorial Monument Rededication on March 29th in Danbury, the AUSA Spring Awards Dinner, the Welcome Home & Freedom Salute Ceremony for CT Air National Guard and a Tree Climbing Competition on May 5th at the Rocky Hill Campus.

II. Old Business

A. DVA Healthcare Center Update (HCC) – License & Level of Care Review:

Chair McDavid explained that Trustee Nelligan, Chair of the HCC Sub-committee, had a schedule conflict and could not attend the meeting and asked Commissioner Saadi brief the issue. The Commissioner explained the dual license approach regarding the DVA Healthcare Center and stated that the issue of saving 2 million dollars and changing the license has been decoupled. He reported that OPM, DSS, DPH and DVA team are working on the dual license approach. The Commissioner explained that the intent is to provide Veterans with a continuum of care and to maintain the DVA pharmacy, Laboratory and B-Clinic. He informed the Board that OPM and DSS toured the HCC facility and were very impressed with the Healthcare facility and the pharmacy. The Commissioner emphasized that the essential element of this is to bring on an independent Healthcare Management Consultant to oversee this transition. The Commissioner reported that the DVA Healthcare Director will be leaving the agency soon and that Jeff Lord, the Nursing Director, will serve as Acting Directory.

Trustee Barry spoke of major concerns of Trustees regarding other agencies involved in the licensing process and trying to impose their positions and policies on the DVA. Trustee Benson spoke about the need for the DVA to hire a Healthcare Director with dual licensure experience. The Commissioner addressed the Trustees concerns explaining that other agencies will not dictate staffing and bed numbers to the DVA.

B. Program Fee Sub-Committee Report:

Trustee Barry reported that the sub-committee held three meetings regarding the structure and amount of the DVA Residential Facility Program Fee and discussed several options for changes. Trustee Coveney submitted multiple recommendations suggested by Veteran Residents. Trustee Barry stated that while some Veteran Residents have a relatively higher income many have a small income and that a reasonable argument can be made that thirty percent of income payment is difficult for that group of Veteran Residents. Trustee Barry reported that there should be no change in the Program Fee at this time however the BOT and Commissioner should reconsider the issue in the Fall of 2018 in light of the renovations to A-wing of the Residential Facility. Commissioner Saadi stated that he is open to exploring changes to the Program Fee in the future.

C. Budget & Staffing Trends:

DVA Fiscal Manager Michael Clark provided an update on the DVA budget and staffing trends explaining that the agency will have a fiscal year end budget projections of a \$200,000 surplus due to the many positions that remained vacant for several months. Mr. Clark reported a \$100,000 operating expense deficit in the current quarter and that that FY19 Personnel Salary Budget Projections has a \$2 million deficit based on the current state budget for FY19. Mr. Clark explained that the Commissioner submitted follow-up information to the Legislature's Health and Human Services Sub-committee on details of the DVA budget. Mr. Clark also reported that he agrees with the Commissioner that a dual license approach for the HCC is the right approach for our Veterans.

Trustees Tollefson and Barry asked for clarification on the disbursement of funds from the General Fund to the DVA and how Federal Medicaid billables are handled.

Commissioner Saadi explained that Medicaid and other Federal reimbursements are by law deposited into the State's General Fund. He explained that appropriations to the DVA are not based on federal reimbursements but on the determination by the General Assembly and Governor as to the amount of funding. The Commissioner explained that he testified before multiple Legislative Committees as to the amount of funds generated by the DVA for the General Fund as well as the impact of the proposed cuts to the DVA budget in FY19. Commissioner Saadi also testified that the DVA could not continue to absorb budget cuts and shift expenses to the IGW which will soon be in deficit spending which will eventually erode the corpus of the IGW. The Commissioner also stated that it could be said that our agency is generating more revenue than the appropriations that we receive. Michael Clark then stated that our receipts would exceed our appropriations not including fringe benefits. As stated by the Commissioner, appropriations are cost driven not revenue driven.

D. Projects Update

Projects and Operations Director Joe Danao provided a general DVA Projects update including an explanation of the Middletown State Veteran Cemetery Expansion project with a completion date of December 2018, and the Cemetery Appearance project with a completion date of February 2020. These two projects total approximately \$8.6 million in improvements fully funded by the federal Cemetery Grants program.

Director Danao updated the Trustees on other DVA projects and renovations including the Fire Alarm and Suppression System, the Campus Emergency Generator Replacement with an estimated finish date of May 2018 and the Quality of Life Improvements to A Wing of the Residential Facility with a projected construction phase of August to December 2018.

Director Danao reported on the recent bond allocation approvals which included \$500,000 for capital repairs and renovations, \$202,000 for a Cemetery Services Master Plan and \$860,852 for the DVA Fire Alarm and Fire Suppression System.

Trustee Tarbox questioned Director Danao as to how long the generator can power the Campus. Director Danao responded that the generator could operate for up to five days without refilling the 7,500 gallon fuel tank.

III. New Business

A. Legislative Updates:

Commissioner Saadi updated the BOT on multiple legislative initiatives including SB 287, the Definition of Veteran bill that would clarify the definition as currently state agencies used varying interpretations based on the Federal definition of Veteran. The clarified definition would recognize as qualifying service active duty service for training purposes.

Trustee Barry asked the Commissioner how many people employed by the DVA know how to read a DD-214. The Commissioner responded that he couldn't answer that particular question at the moment however he has been working with the DVA admissions team and other staff to ensure that they know how to read a DD-214 and when there are questions he addresses them directly.

Commissioner Saadi reported on legislation as to the name change of the Municipal Veterans' service contact person to "Municipal Veterans Representative." This program is administered by the DVA which provides training for all Municipal Veterans Representatives who are important partners with the DVA in connecting Veterans to programs and services.

Commissioner Saadi reported on a bill that would direct proceeds from sale of property abandoned by Veterans Charitable organizations to the Department's Institutional General Welfare (IGW) fund. This statutory fund is limited to expenditures that directly benefit Veterans, the DVA Veteran Residential Services Facility and DVA Healthcare Center. Therefore the original intent or purpose of the charitable organization and donors of supporting Veterans would be achieved. The Commissioner testified in support of HB 5319.

Commissioner Saadi reported on a SB 284 which will provide benefits to certain veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury or who have experienced military sexual trauma. He explained that the DVA supports the concept but raised concerns with the administration of the process.

B. Cemetery – Saturday Burial Policy:

Commissioner Saadi reported on his decision to temporarily suspend Saturday burials at the Veterans Cemetery in Middletown as a result of fiscal and staffing constraints. Several Trustees expressed their strong disagreement with this decision and the ongoing cuts to the DVA budget. Commissioner explained that the agency could not continue to cover Saturday burials through the use of overtime and that he is doing all he can to reinstate Saturday burials.

Trustees Benson, Barry, Tollefson, Galgano, and Harris all expressed dismay at this decision. Trustee Benson stated that families and funeral homes would be affected by this decision and that the placing of headstones would be delayed due to this decision. Trustee Tollefson stated that this lowers the respect level for Veterans and should not be a first choice for cuts. Trustee Galgano felt this was the wrong place to cut money. Trustee Harris expressed frustration at this action. Commissioner Saadi explained that this was not the first choice to cut services as the DVA has been under fiscal pressure for several year making changes in order to sustain programs and services such as the census caps in the Residential and HCC, changes the Transportation schedule, not filling Executive and staff positions and updating MOUs savings hundreds of thousands of dollars. He further explained that the options presented by the Trustees will be explored including changing staff schedules consistent with contractual obligations. Charging fees for burials was suggested by Trustee Benson. The Commissioner repeated that the Saturday burials suspension is a temporary policy and he will continue to review options and will update the Board.

Commissioner Saadi then instructed OAA Manager McKenna and Director Danao to report back to him regarding cemetery staffing schedules.

Chair McDavid reviewed meeting dates with the Board and tentatively set the next Board meeting for Tuesday, June 5, 2018 at 3:30pm.

IV. Closing

There being no further business, Chair McDavid entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Trustee Harris and seconded by Trustee Tollefsen. Motion passed unanimously at 5:47 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Christopher McDavid, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date May 9, 2018



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
June 5, 2018**

(Minutes subject to review at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting was called to order by Chair McDavid at 3:34 PM in the DVA Commissioner's conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chair McDavid followed by the taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance: Paul Barry, Richard Benson, Philip Cacciola, Robert Cheslock, Ronald Coveney, Frederick Leaf, Peter Galgano, Christopher McDavid,, Paul Tarbox, Michael A. Thomas, and Kjell Tollefsen.

Absent: Steven Harris, Patrick Nelligan, and Tatiana Quinzi

Chair McDavid entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion made by Trustee Tarbox and seconded by Trustee Thomas. Motion passed unanimously without any corrections or edits to the minutes.

Chair McDavid commented on the past prior quarters achievements regarding the budget and then introduced Commissioner Saadi.

Commissioner's update: The Commissioner thanked everyone for the hard work on restoring the \$2 million into the budget and then went on to speak of the events attended and accomplishments of the DVA during the previous fiscal quarter. This included the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Ceremony at the State Capitol, Holland Club Luncheon in Groton and the Welcome Home & Freedom Salute Ceremony in honor of 103rd Airlift Wing & 103rd Control Squadron held on April 8, 2018. He also attended the Military/Veteran Yard Goat Appreciation Game held on May 18, 2018 and several War Time Service Medal Ceremonies across the State. The Commissioner discussed the Re-Dedication and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the "Returned Soldier Monument" and spoke of the three Memorial Day Parades and ceremonies he attend in Berlin, Enfield and Danbury. He acknowledged the volunteers from Cigna that came onto the DVA Campus for "Cigna Day of Giving" and thanked Advocacy and Assistance Director Ryan McKenna for conducting Municipal Veteran Representative Training on the DVA Campus for 50 trainees. The Commissioner then spoke on many upcoming

events including the July 4th VFW Massing of the Flags Ceremony & August 10th Veteran Unclaimed Cremains Ceremony.

II. Old Business

A. DVA Healthcare Center Update (HCC) – Dual License Working Group:

Chair McDavid asked Commissioner Saadi for an update who then explained that the DVA continues with a dual license approach as to the HCC through a working group with OPM, DSS and DPH to transitions from a single chronic disease license to a dual license facility. The working group is developing an RFP to hire a Healthcare Management Consultant (HMC) to assist with the transition.

Trustees questioned the Commissioner on the funding of the HMC which he explained would come from existing DVA appropriations however, the funds will not be taken away from any of the funding that services the Veterans.

B. Budget & Staffing /Manager Update:

The Chair recognized Fiscal Manager Michael Clark from DVA's Fiscal Office to give an update on the budget and staffing trends. Mr. Clark explained that the DVA has a projected salary surplus of 480,000 dollars and a projected operating budget deficit of \$204,000. He further explained that OPM has refused to approve using part of the salary surplus to cover operating expenses as a one-time event. He further stated that OPM told him to have the Commissioner use IGW Funds to cover the deficit which both Mr. Clark and Commissioner Saadi oppose.

The Commissioner then provided an update as the DVA staffing highlighting the status of the searches for HCC Director, Residential Director and Safety and Security Director. In response to questions the Commissioner explained that a Staff Attorney was needed at the DVA to provide continuity and consistency in DVA Rules, regulations, MOU/MOAs and to oversee FOIA, CHRO and several other categories of legal and administrative issues.

Trustees Thomas and Tarbox asked for a clarification of the regulation applying to transferring funds from Personal Services to Operating Expenses which was explained by Mr. Clark. Trustees Benson, Barry and Cacciola expressed their concerns about a backlog of the installation of headstones at the Middletown Veterans Cemetery and the staffing issues in Cemetery and Memorial Services. The Commissioner responded to these concerns stating that both issues would be reviewed immediately and action taken in a timely manner.

C. Projects Update

Projects and Operations Director Joe Danao provided a general DVA Projects update including an explanation of the Middletown State Veteran Cemetery Expansion project with a completion date of December 2018, and the Cemetery Appearance project with a completion date of February 2020. He further explained that there is no paving date at the Cemetery due to the weather which delayed the progress of the project. Director Danao went on to say that these two projects total approximately \$8.6 million in improvements fully funded by the federal Cemetery Grants program.

Director Danao also updated the Trustees on the Residential Facility A-Wing renovations and the Returned Soldier Monument was funded by donations and is now considered a public monument. He reported that retiling of building 50 is nearly complete and we are awaiting the award of construction phase of Building 2. Director Danao went on to explain that the agency is moving forward with fire alarms updates campus wide based on allocation of \$186,000 by the bond commission. The Campus Emergency Generator Replacement has been completed and the Security and Safety improvements are awaiting state funding pre-design. Director Danao reported on the recent bond allocation approvals including \$300,000 is allocated for replacement of the HCC Chiller and \$353,000 for ADA Upgrades to Buildings 2, 3 and 4.

Trustees Benson and Thomas raised the issue of the backlog of headstones to which Director Danao answered that the delay of installation of the headstones had to do with matters not in the agencies control. Commissioner Saadi directed Mr. Danao and other DVA staff to present him with a new plan to address this issue within a week.

III. New Business

A. Legislative Updates:

Commissioner Saadi explained that the Definition of Veteran Bill – SB 287, which would have clarified the issue of who is a Veterans under state law died on Senate Calendar, however if he is Commissioner in 2019 he plans to reintroduce the bill.

Commissioner Saadi reported that the Municipal Veterans’ Bill - HB 5317 which would have updated the name of such persons to “Municipal Veterans Representative” and provided more flexibility to municipalities died on House Calendar, however, if he is Commissioner in 2019 he plans to reintroduce the bill.

Commissioner Saadi reported on a bill HB 5319 which would have directed proceeds from sale of property abandoned by Veterans Charitable organizations to the Department’s Institutional General Welfare (IGW) fund. This was not reported out of Financial, Revenue or Bonding Committee however, he hopes that the VA Committee will reintroduce in 2019.

Commissioner Saadi reported on a bill providing benefits for certain veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury or who have had an experience of military sexual trauma – HB 284 which passed. The Commissioner explained that the DVA will provide the appropriate form and guidance to State agencies and municipalities but the DVA will not be the arbiter of denials of eligibility.

B. Cemetery – Saturday Burial Policy:

Commissioner Saadi and Mr. McKenna reported that effective July 7, 2018, Saturday burials will be restored at the Middletown Cemetery. Additionally, updated rules and regulations for individuals visiting the Veterans Cemetery have been promulgated and the Federal Marker Reimbursement Procedures have been updated.

C. Residential Facility Saturday Transportation Update:

Commissioner Saadi reported that due to the staffing constraints and budget reductions DVA temporarily suspended regular Saturday transportation for Veteran Residents in March 2018. However, working with Physical Plant, Transportation Department and Residential Services the Commissioner has authorized Recreational Saturday Transportation to resume on June 16, 2018.

D. Respite Care Beds Reopened in HCC:

Commissioner Saadi reported that in 2017 former Commissioner Connolly issued a moratorium on the HCC Respite Care Program to focus staff on care for regularly admitted chronic care Veteran Patients. DVA conducted a review of this moratorium and based on input from medical, fiscal and human resource staff the Commissioner lifted the moratorium and HCC began accepting Respite Care admissions a few weeks prior and beds are booked through August. The Commissioner also reports there are 12 individuals on the waiting list.

Chair McDavid recognized Commissioner Saadi for additional new business. Commissioner Saadi reviewed the current Program Fee Policy which is based on 30% of income with no cap on payment and no minimum income exemption. The Commissioner explained that in light of the previous work performed by BOT Program Fee subcommittees and internal DVA review that he is recommending the reconvening of the Subcommittee to entertain the following recommendation:

1. Update the Program Fee to 25% of Income;
2. Cap the program Fee at not more than \$900 monthly;
3. Exempt from the Program Fee any Veteran with \$300 or less of monthly income,

Chair McDavid reappointed the Program Fee subcommittee as follows: Trustees Barry, Coveney, Dziekan, Nelligan, Tarbox and Tollefson. The Commissioner asked that a representative from the fiscal office be included. The Commissioner asked that the committee on Program Fees meet before the fall, preferably before the next Board of Trustees meeting set for September, 2018 to provide recommendations to be implemented, if appropriate, in the late fall of 2018.

Chair Mc David recognized Trustee Coveney for new business. Trustee Coveney made a motion that this board advise the Commissioner to immediately contact the proper authorities to investigate staff or staff members who purportedly administered incorrect overdoses of morphine to a patient in the DVA HCC. Trustee Coveney expressed his concerns that no one is above the law and such incidents must be properly and fully investigated and the Commissioner must ensure this happens. Trustee Coveney also stated that the Commissioner should advise staff of their Whistleblower Protection Act rights.

Based on the potential of both medical and personnel information being discussed it was recommended by Chairman McDavid to go to Executive Session. Motion passed unanimously. After deliberations in executive session Chairman McDavid requested a motion to go back into regular session which passed unanimously. At 5:41 PM the Board reconvened in Regular Session. Trustee Coveney withdrew his motion based upon the discussion in the Executive Session that, among other things, the Commissioner will contact the appropriate state agencies, review the matter further and report back to the Board.

Chair McDavid reviewed dates with the Board and set the next Board meeting for Wednesday, September 12, 2018 at 3:30pm.

IV. Closing

There being no further business, Chair McDavid entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Trustee Thomas and seconded by Trustee Tarbox. Motion passed unanimously at 5:51 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Christopher McDavid, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 6/13/2018



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2018**

(Minutes subject to review at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting was called to order by Chair McDavid at 3:32 PM in the DVA Commissioner's Conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chair McDavid followed by the taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance: Paul Barry, Richard Benson, Philip Cacciola, Robert Cheslock, Ronald Coveney, Richard Dziekan, Peter Galgano, Steven Harris, Alyssa Kelleher, Christopher McDavid, Paul Tarbox, Michael A. Thomas, and Kjell Tollefsen.

Absent: Frederick Leaf and Tatiana Quinzi

Chair McDavid entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Trustee Dziekan stated that he was mistakenly listed as absent in the minutes of the Board Meetings on March 20, 2018 and June 5, 2018. Executive Secretary Darlene Deschaine will make the correction. Motion made by Trustee Tarbox and seconded by Trustee Thomas. Motion passed unanimously with corrections or edits to the minutes.

Chair McDavid welcomed new Board Member Alyssa Kelleher and then called on Commissioner Saadi to administer the oath of office to Ms. Kelleher.

Commissioner's update: The Commissioner introduced Chief Stephen Scatena, newly appointed Chief of Safety and Security for the DVA. The Commissioner also introduced Lesbia Nieves, newly hired Director of DVA Residential & Program Services. He stated that Lieutenant Colonial Nieves has served in the Army National Guard for 31 years. Director Nieves stated that her vision for the DVA is to continue working passionately for the rights of veterans and to create an environment safe and secure for the veterans. The Commissioner reported that the DVA hired Air Force Veteran Patrice Olson to serve as the DVA Staff Attorney. The Commissioner also reported that he hired a new Healthcare Center Administrator, Laura Nelson, who will be starting Friday, September 14th.

The Commissioner spoke of the events attended and accomplishments of the DVA during the previous fiscal quarter including six Wartime Service Medal ceremonies across the State and an event held in Windsor honoring female WWII Veterans. On June 15th a Quilts of Valor Ceremony presented several DVA veterans with homemade quilts. The Commissioner reported that Bud Neal (Vietnam Veteran) of Neal Tree Services and Sandy Ingellis, horticulturist, along with volunteers donated all labor and materials to create a Healing Garden (valued at \$140,000) next to the Healthcare Center for our veterans to enjoy.

The Commissioner reported that the DVA conducted an unclaimed cremated remains military burial ceremony for four WWII Veterans. The Commissioner attended a ceremony in New Britain for the dedication of a Global War on Terrorism monument which took place on 9/11/2018. The Commissioner then spoke of the many upcoming events including the Annual DVA Stand Down Event scheduled for September 21st, the Memorial Dedication for Medal of Honor recipient USAF TSgt. John Chapman on September 30th and the AT&T Veterans 3 Mile Charity Run at the DVA Campus scheduled for November 10th. The Commissioner also spoke of the Veterans Day ceremonies to be held on and off the DVA Campus and Wreaths Across America to be held on Dec. 15th.

II. Old Business

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

Chair McDavid asked Commissioner Saadi to provide an update on the HCC license. The Commissioner explained that the DVA initiated an in-depth review performed by the HCC clinical admissions team in consultation with the State Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Social Services (DSS) and Office of Policy and Management (OPM) for the long-term clinical care needs of current HCC Veteran Patients and the approximately thirty Veterans pending admission the HCC waiting list. The goal now is to transition the HCC from a Chronic Disease Hospital (CDH) to a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF).

This review resulted in the determination that transitioning the HCC from a CDH to a SNF with specialized beds, would significantly better address the needs of Veteran Patients and the needs of a larger number of Veterans across our State in the provision of long-term clinical care than the DVA's current license.

The DVA is assembling the Healthcare Licensure Transition team which will be led by the HCC Administrator and include key DVA internal assets from the Fiscal Department as well as representatives from DPH, DSS and potential asset augmentation by existing state vendors focusing on current patient assessments.

The transition to a SNF with specialized beds is to be accomplished without reducing the current level of care for existing Veteran Patients and will maintain the additional clinical and operational services not traditionally associated with a community based SNF such as an outside pharmacy, laboratory, full time onsite physician along with many other ancillary programs and services with a Veteran-centric focus.

Trustees questioned the Commissioner on the funding of the HCC and the swiftness of the decision to switch from dual licensure to SNF. The Trustees also questioned the staffing needs of the SNF. The Commissioner explained that transitioning to SNF had been a part of the dual licensing discussion

since December of 2017, and it was determined that the dual license option was no longer feasible. Trustee Nelligan reiterated that an internal assessment determined that the information given to the Commissioner regarding dual licensure being the best course of action was incorrect. The Commissioner explained that currently there are 29 veterans on the waiting list and the HCC has 29 empty beds yet Veterans cannot be admitted as they do not meet CDH admission criteria. The transition from CDH to SNF will allow continuity of care for DVA Residential Veterans and admission of those on the HCC waiting list. The Commissioner also reported that OPM and DAS approved refilling some staff positions but that he continues to engage DAS and OPM to obtain approval to refill other positions.

B. Program Fee Committee Update:

The Chair recognized Trustee Barry to report on the latest update on the Program Fee Committee. Trustee Barry reported that given the potential transition of Board membership and DVA leadership and that the A-wing renovation will not commence until November or December 2018, to table further decisions on the Program Fee until at least December 2018. Several components of the member's discussions ranged from fee levels to capping the program fee versus assessments.

C. Budget & Staffing Update:

The Chair then recognized Fiscal Manager Michael Clark from DVA's Fiscal Office to give an update on the budget and staffing trends. Mr. Clark explained that the DVA last year had a \$600,000 surplus in Personal Services line item. Mr. Clark and Commissioner Saadi were able to persuade OPM to transfer \$170,000 from Personal Services to cover Operating Expenses after OPM first recommended the DVA use the IGW to pay for the operating expenses. Mr. Clark explained that some key positions such as the Director of Safety and Security and Director of Residential Programs & Services have been filled while the positions of Administrator of DVA Healthcare Center and Staff Attorney, are incoming. Mr. Clark reports that more budget details are to follow at the next board meeting in December.

D. Projects Update

Projects and Operations Director Joe Danao provided a general DVA Projects update including the A-Wing Renovation, an explanation of the Middletown State Veteran Cemetery Expansion project with a completion date of December 2018, and the Cemetery Appearance project with a completion date of February 2020. The Commissioner explained that the A-Wing Renovation is funded fully by donations so this project is not subject to bonding approvals or State budget appropriations. Trustee Nelligan asked if it was possible to invite outside entities to lease some the empty buildings on campus and have them pay for and upgrade the renovations or to expand on those buildings. Mr. Danao explained that we have tenants currently and they pay for maintenance costs. He further explained that leasing sometimes helps with space utilization however bringing some buildings up to code can be costly. Mr. Danao reported on other working projects such as the HCC bedside televisions, energy conversation and multiple information technology upgrades.

Trustee Nelligan recommended forming a subcommittee to address the utilization of space on the Rocky Hill Campus. He further suggested creating an RFP to use buildings for veteran services providers. Commissioner Saadi explained that the DVA is currently engaged in this process with community based non-profits and intends to expand this approach.

III. New Business

A. Cemetery, Headstone Contract & Staffing

Ryan McKenna, Director of Office of Assistance and Advocacy reported on the new two year contract signed with Czaja Brothers, Inc. for headstone setting services which will address the backlog of the installation of headstones, the current count is approximately 60 headstones to be installed. Mr. McKenna reported that the cemetery expansion project is on scheduled to be completed this year and the cemetery appearance grant project is estimated to be complete in February of 2020. The last large cemetery project is cemetery services Master Plan. The Commissioner thanked Trustees Barry, Benson, Mr. McKenna and Mr. Danao for their work in updating the headstone contract.

Mr. McKenna went on to report that DAS listed the full time Office Assistant position to serve in Cemetery Services and as of September 12th, there were over 350 applicants.

B. Public Act 18-47 – OTH Qualifying Condition:

Commissioner Saadi reported on Pubic Act 18-47, which takes affect October 1, 2018. The Department supported this legislation to address the limited circumstances where military personnel with otherwise honorable service (OTH) records were discharged less than honorably due to misconduct related to a Traumatic Brain Injury, Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) or as a victim of Military Sexual Trauma to be known as a “Qualifying Condition.” A third party licensed professional is required to make the qualifying condition determination on the DVA form which is then submitted to a state agency when applying for a benefit.

The DVA is responsible for the administration of this new law, has developed the required Qualifying Condition Certification forms and the DVA Commissioner has provided notice of the new law to every municipality, State agency and statewide Veteran Service Organization. The Commissioner went on to state that if the veteran is denied the benefit they will have to appeal to the agency that is making the denial. DVA will not appeal for the veteran on this issue. Representative Brian Ohler was one of the key components of this act. Trustee Michael Thomas asked if the certified document be prior or proceeding the OTH. Commissioner Saadi states that the documents predate the OTH, however if the form is not working, then DVA will make the appropriate adjustments. The Commissioner went on to report that the State of Connecticut is one of the first states to present this act.

Trustee Nelligan brought up the fact that a few years ago, the state gave Veteran-owned businesses preference in the state contract bidding process. Trustee Tarbox asked the Commissioner to approach DAS to recognize the Veterans in the bidding process. The Commissioner stated that this is in place, however, if DAS is not recognizing the Veterans that are bidding and giving them the preference to let him know and he will investigate.

Trustee Tarbox asked if there were any politicians asking to come on campus to tour. Commissioner answered that there were no invites extended to political candidates explaining that the state cannot use any state apparatus for the advancement of a political candidacy. The candidates are welcome to visit if invited by a Veteran but they cannot campaign on campus.

Trustee Ron Coveney informed the Board that he will be resigning from the Veterans Council and the Board in order to focus more on his non-profit organization. He states that he's confident in the new leadership of Residential Director of Programs and Services, Leslie Nieves. The Commissioner thanked Ron for his service and that no matter the outcome of this year's elections and decisions he will strive to set the agency on a sustainable path forward with strong leaders that can sustain a change in administration.

Chair McDavid set the next Board meeting for Wednesday, December 12, 2018 at 3:30pm.

IV. Closing

There being no further business, Chair McDavid entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Trustee Harris and seconded by Trustee Barry. Motion passed unanimously at 5:16 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Christopher McDavid, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 10/5/2018



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2018**

(Minutes subject to review at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting was called to order by Chair McDavid at 3:30 PM in the DVA Commissioner's conference room.

Pledge of allegiance was led by Chair McDavid followed by the taking of attendance of Board members.

In attendance: Mark Altieri, Paul Barry, Philip Cacciola, Robert Cheslock, Peter Galgano, Steven Harris, Frederick Leaf, Christopher McDavid, Patrick Nelligan, Paul Tarbox, and Kjell Tollefsen.

Absent: Richard Benson, Richard Dziekan, Alyssa Kelleher, Tatiana Quinzi and Michael Thomas.

Chair McDavid entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion made by Trustee Nelligan and seconded by Trustee Tollefsen. Motion passed unanimously with no corrections or edits to the minutes.

Chair McDavid welcomed new Board Member Mark Altieri and then turned it over to Commissioner Saadi to administer the oath. Trustee Altieri pledged to uphold his responsibilities as a Board of Trustees member.

Commissioner's update: The Commissioner introduced Laura Nelson, newly hired Director of the DVA Healthcare Center. Ms. Nelson explained that she's been working in the healthcare field for over thirty years overseeing several skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities. Ms. Nelson also has several years of consulting experience in which she helped getting some facilities on track to achieve their license criteria. Ms. Nelson stated that she will, through the Commissioner, keep the Board members updated on the license conversion. The Commissioner also introduced Patrice Olson, newly hired Staff Attorney for the DVA who is a 20 year Air Force Veteran.

The Commissioner then spoke of events attended and accomplishments of the DVA during the previous fiscal quarter including the annual Stand Down Event, which was attended by over 1,000 Veterans, assisted by more than 300 volunteers and staffed by more than 100 service providers, the commissioner speaking at the monument dedication in honor of Medal of Honor recipient U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant John A. Chapman, Vets Rock event at the Mohegan Sun and the Veterans Small Business Week

at the DVA campus. The Commissioner highlighted the quilt donated by USMC Veteran Harvey Silverman, with each Unit patch of the USMC units that served in the Vietnam War and the very successful 2nd Annual AT&T Annual Veterans Charity 3 Miler on the DVA campus during which Mr. Armond Jolly, a 96 year old, WWII Combat wounded Navy veteran, walked the first mile. All proceeds from this event goes to AT&T Veterans Outreach and the DVA's Quality of Life programs. The Quarter concluded with two major events - the CT Veterans Hall of Fame ceremony during which nine CT Veterans were inducted and the Veterans Rock Concert in the DVA Auditorium which was organized by A Big Mac Production and Trustee Patrick Nelligan. Trustee Nelligan reported that the bands agreed to play for free and all proceeds raised during this event will be going to the DVA IGW.

The Commissioner then spoke on the upcoming events which included the DVA Holiday Extravaganza & Tree Lighting Ceremony in the Main Dining Room and Wreaths Across America at the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown on Dec 15th and the Governor-Elect's Health & Human Services report meeting taking place at the DVA on Dec 17th.

The Chair recognized new Trustee Mark Altieri and asked him to say a few words before going onto the next item on the agenda. Trustee Altieri stated that it was an honor to serve on the board and that this agency saved his life. Trustee Altieri went on to say that his time in the military allowed him to be at the DVA and the services that were offered him here has been lifesaving. Trustee Altieri is very humbled and happy to be on the board, he's happy to take his life experiences to serve the board and learn as he goes.

II. Old Business

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

Chair McDavid asked Commissioner Saadi for an update on the HCC License transition. The Commissioner stated the DVA continues to review current Veteran Patient and the clinical care needs of the Veterans on the HCC admission waiting list. The working group collaboratively determined that transitioning the HCC from a CDH to a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) will better address the needs of existing Veteran Patients, provide a continuum of care for Veteran Residents; and better serve Veterans across our State in need of long-term clinical care as demonstrated by the Veterans on the HCC admission waiting. The Commissioner reported that the transition team, led by HCC Administrator Laura Nelson along with our Project Administrator Bud Hodes, is working closely with all stakeholders, including the Office of Labor Relations, Union leadership, in determining the methods and timelines for this licensure transition. There are hundreds of check list items that need to be accomplished to obtain the SNF license. The Commissioner went on to say that the amount of oversight and regulations to obtain a SNF is far more regulated than a CDH. It is significantly more regulations than the CDH. The Commissioner has made the Governor-elect's transition team aware of this license Transition process.

The Commissioner addressed rumors that B-Clinic would no longer be able to service our veterans stating that the DVA is working UConn and the Federal VA to assure that the B-Clinic will remain operational which involves the maintaining of certain primary care services on Campus and establishing a Sharing Agreement with the Federal VA. The Commissioner explained that the DVA Pharmacy is already licensed independently and operates independently from the CDH. By a late spring is when the transition should be complete.

Trustee Paul Barry questioned the financial implications of transition to the DVA our budget. The Commissioner responded that there would not be a two million dollar savings for the transition of the license however, there may be savings in laboratory services and more savings in staffing changes and there may be potentially revenue generating opportunities primary care physicians billing third party payers under Medicare.

The Chair recognized Trustee Nelligan who asked whether the Clinic will be run independently and would the HCC be able to provide services such as x-rays and other services that community based walk-in clinics provide. Director Nelson responded that because most x-rays are done mobile now and it's usually billable to the patient she doesn't recommend this. She also stated that since the technology changes so often and the equipment is so expensive it is not cost efficient to lean in that direction.

Trustee Tarbox asked whether a survey of other states has been conducted regarding this SNF model. The Commissioner stated that he learned during over the summer from other state Directors at the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs conference that no other state has a state chronic disease hospital but instead they provide skilled nursing and adult day care among other similar services as those are what is needed most by Veterans. Director Nelson also stated that the Federal VA does not recognize Chronic Disease Hospitals and inspects the DVA HCC as a skilled nursing facility. Trustee Altieri wanted a time frame to give to the veteran residents for their piece of mind on the transition of the license. Commissioner answered the target is late spring.

B. Budget & Staffing Update:

The Commissioner reported on the Budget and staffing trends explaining that with the FY19 appropriation of \$19 million and the OPM adjustment of approximately \$600,000 DVA is operating with and appropriation of \$22.5 million. That is approximately \$10 million less over a 10 year period with the IGW contribution now of 3.2 million. The Commissioner stated that he will explain to the incoming administration that some of the IGW line items should be shifted back to appropriated funds. Trustee Barry asked about the SSMF Administration appropriation being affected by the shifting of these funds. Commissioner explained that is not affected by the shift of funds. Trustee Barry also expressed concerns with the processing of headstone reimbursements which are behind and wants to know what was being done to correct the issue. The Chair called on OAA Director Ryan McKenna to who explained that the loss of a staff member in July slowed the process but that a new fulltime staff person came on in November and the office is catching up on overdue files.

Chairman McDavid asked the Commissioner if there was any way of working on the budget priorities and efficiencies to present to the new administration and legislation as opposed to fixing this issue as we go along. The Commissioner stated that he would reach out to the Board as soon as he had an idea of the proposed budget for FY20-21.

C. Projects Update

Projects and Operations Director Joe Danao provided a general DVA Projects update explaining that the abatement projects on campus is ongoing and is funded by the Division of Construction Services (DCS). The new water line to Patriot's Landing Housing is ready to bid by DEEP and that the Fire Alarm and Suppression System for Patriot's Landing and Sgt. Levitow Road are complete with building 2, 3, 4 and 5 next on the list for installation. He reported that the ADA upgrades for buildings 2, 3 and 4 are

ready to bid by DAS and bid documents are being prepared for the Security and Safety Improvements, which includes building a new gatehouse further from the West Street entrance.

Mr. Danao further reported on the Quality of Life Improvements regarding the A Wing Renovation and that the Building 50 (formerly Fellowship house) renovation and upgrades are going well. The Commissioner stated this renovation will bring the building up to operational capacity for DVA operations as well as DMHAS and Veteran Service Organizations already on campus and expand opportunities to have more Veterans Organizations and providers on Campus. Mr. Danao reported on the cemetery expansion project including 2,000 preplaced vaults which will be concluded in spring 2019 and the appearance project which will be completed in 2020. Trustee Barry then asked if the repaving of the roads in the Middletown Cemetery included on this grant and is it safe to even go back to some parts of the cemetery. Mr. Danao replied that repaving is on the DVA budget and will know after the December 13th inspection and also that the ADA project is with DAS and is ready to go out to bid.

III. New Business

A. Governor & General Assembly Transition Update

Chairman McDavid asked the Commissioner to report on the transition.

Commissioner Saadi reported that the Governor elect's transition team has been in contact with him and that he has provided reports and updates on the status of recent, on-going and future operations and projects at DVA. The Commissioner reported that he was interviewed by the transitions team and has stated his interest in remaining as Commissioner but that the transition team has not made a decision yet. The Commissioner explained that as the Board members are all appointed by the Governor and members of the General Assembly they should express their intentions to their appointing authority.

The Chair then opened the meeting to any other comments. The Commissioner expressed a concern stated to him by Trustee Benson, (who could not be at this meeting) as to whether the Wreaths Across America project at the DVA Cemeteries organized by the Civil Air Patrol is a fundraising event for the Civil Air Patrol and if so, should not some of the funds go to the DVA for the support of CT Veterans or Cemetery Services? The Commissioner asked Ryan McKenna to research the issue. Trustee Barry would like several issues brought up to Wreaths Across America, specifically the high costs of the wreaths at \$15.00 compared to other such programs and determine where any profit goes. The Commissioner stated, through the chair, that any fundraising that is associated with the DVA is looked at very carefully, disclosures would have to be made and that he will report Mr. McKenna's findings to the Board.

IV. Closing

During closing remarks the Commissioner explained that Tom Flowers is seeking volunteers to serve on the Board of the West Haven Fisher House and he also advised the Trustees of the CT Fallen Star Memorial Project led by Congressman John Larson. The Commissioner reported the most recent CT Lawyer magazine recognized the success of volunteer Attorneys at the DVA annual Stand Down and that the most recent CBIA publication recognized that the DVA reduced overtime spending by the largest number of any state agency in the previous quarter. Commissioner then thanked everyone for their service and wished all a Happy Holiday.

The Chair stated that the next board meeting will be determined at a later date. There being no further business, Chair McDavid entertained a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Trustee Tarbox and seconded by Trustee Galgano. Motion passed unanimously at 4:51 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Christopher McDavid, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 1/3/19