

## Summary of Minutes

Quarterly Meeting of the Advisory Committee  
to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

**Date:** March 5, 2014

**Time:** 9:30 a.m.

**Location:** Elks Lodge # 357, Eugene, OR

### Advisory Committee Members Present:

Mary J. Mayer, Chair	Kevin Owens	Ryan Howell
Al Herrera, Vice Chair	Irv Fletcher	Mike Jones
Trisa Kelly, Secretary	Gerard (Jerry) Lorang	

### Guests:

Henry Nussbaum, Korean War Veterans, Southern Oregon  
Drury Wood, Korean War Veterans, Southern Oregon  
Heather Miewald, Oregon County Veterans Service Officers Association  
Janice Raisl, Oregon County Veterans Service Officers Association  
Jim Brann, Eugene Vet Center  
Jim Fitzpatrick, Douglas County Veteran Service Officer  
Ron Morgan, Vietnam Veterans of America, Oregon State Council  
Ken Howard, Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 293  
Van Moore, Veterans Care Centers of Oregon  
Guy Avenell, Lane Community College Veterans Club  
Kelly Odegaard, Veterans Care Centers of Oregon  
Jerry Shorey, American Legion  
Whitney Couture, Congressman DeFazio  
Fredrick White, VA Medical Center, Portland  
Sharon Wade Ellis, Senator Jeff Merkley's Office  
Norm Hoffman, Employer Support of Guard and Reserve  
Don Epperson, American Legion

### ODVA Staff Members Present:

Cameron Smith, Director  
Edward Van Dyke, Deputy Director  
Sue Shaffer, Executive Assistant to the Director  
Laurie Skillman, Senior Policy Advisor  
Eric Belt, Veterans Services Administrator  
Aaron Hunter, Controller  
Dallas Swafford, Admissions & Liaison Officer, Oregon Veterans' Home  
Cody Cox, Home Loan Program Manager

The meeting was called to order at 9:39 a.m. and began with the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions.

Chaplain Trisa Kelly gave the invocation.

Chair Mary J. Mayer asked for the introductions of those present. Mary encouraged those present to sign in and to announce their upcoming events via the ODVA website.

**Motion:** Chair Mary J. Mayer asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2013 meeting as written. Minutes were approved unanimously. Cameron Smith, Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) Director, thanked the Eugene Elks Lodge for hosting the meeting and discussed future meetings across the state.

Director Cameron Smith spoke of his one year anniversary as ODVA Director and thanked Mary Mayer for her committed work as Chair of the Advisory Committee. Cameron presented the Advisory Committee members with official Appointment Certificates from Governor John Kitzhaber and thanked the members for their service on the committee.

Cameron recognized attendee Mr. Drury Wood for his dual service in WWII and Korea and his service to our country. He also recognized ODVA Deputy Director Ed Van Dyke for his commitment to serving Oregon veterans and his expert knowledge of veteran's services.

Cameron gave an overview of the Strategic Planning underway at ODVA, highlighting the Leadership Team and ODVA'S Vision and Mission Statement.

### **Director's Report:**

Cameron Smith began with a WWII Memorial update and progress report. Also noted was the ceremony to honor veteran Bob Robison who was awarded two Purple Hearts for his service in the Korean War.

Highlighting his report, Cameron addressed the excellent forward progress the ODVA staff has accomplished in the first quarter of 2014.

Cameron gave an overview of the first ODVA Advisory Committee Orientation and thanked those who participated.

Cameron asked for input from the Veteran Service Organizations regarding a proposed Strategy Briefing in April.

Cameron highlighted the agency's goals and mission for the next two years.

Last was the recognition of Oregon casualty in Afghanistan, Army Specialist John A. Pelham of Portland / Beaverton. Cameron was honored to attend his service in February.

## **Subcommittee Reports:**

### **Veterans' Benefits**

Chair Gerard Lorang; Al Herrera; Trisa Kelly.

Chair Jerry Lorang began with recognition of Mr. Drury Wood for his service and a presentation of the WWII Memorial coin.

He gave an overview of the Veterans' Benefits Report highlighting the \$600,000 received from the Veterans' Extended Outreach Grant Program for Oregon counties. Jerry also discussed the process to award those funds to the counties.

Jerry also highlighted the Highly Rural Veterans' Transportation Grant application progress. He also recognized the role of the ODVA Conservatorship Program noting that Kelly Breshears has been accepted to the 2014 Leadership Oregon cohort.

### **Home Loan Program**

Chair: Kevin Owens; J. Ryan Howell; Michael Jones.

Chair Kevin Owens began with the introduction of Cody Cox, the new ODVA Home Loan Manager.

He gave an overview of the ORVET Home Loan Program and encouraged the community partners to support legislation that impacts the ODVA Loan Program.

Kevin also requested that all parties present support the home loan program by getting the word out to the public.

### **State Veterans' Homes**

Chair: Mary J. Mayer; Dennis Guthrie; Al Herrera

Al Herrera highlighted the report with mention of the Oregon Veterans' Home being rated as one of the best care homes in Oregon with an overall 2013 Five Star Rating. He thanked Dallas Swafford and his staff for their hard work and dedication at the home and their determination in applying for the Gold Award for the Oregon Veterans' Home in The Dalles.

Van Moore, Veterans Care Centers of Oregon, gave an overview of the significance of the Gold Award and the process to apply.

Chair Mary J. Mayer also gave an overview of the progress at the Lebanon Veterans' Home highlighting the covered walkways and the community concept of the project.

John Osborn gave an overview of the progress with the Alpha and Bravo neighborhoods at the Lebanon home, which is on time and moving briskly. First occupancy is expected for early October.

John also introduced Kelly Odegaard as the newly appointed Westcare Administrator for the Lebanon home.

## **Finance**

Chair: J. Ryan Howell; Gerard Lorang; Trisa Kelly.

Chair Ryan Howell gave an overview of the finances of the ODVA Home Loan Program, highlighting the increase in loan processing.

He reported that, as of the 12/31/2013 reporting period, there were 7 state owned properties in inventory and eleven properties in bankruptcy. ODVA has a delinquency rate lower than both conventional and government loans.

Ryan briefed that the Oregon Veterans' Home (OVH) continues to do well on its census, and any reserves from OVH will be held for the Lebanon home to cover potential revenue gaps. He also noted online donations for both homes will be available by May 2014.

He reported that Financial Services and the Executive Staff are preparing for the upcoming 2015-2017 ODVA Budget.

Ryan also acknowledged recent legislation that clarifies that the \$417,000 loan limit is a per loan limit and not an aggregate total. This should help further expand loan opportunities to veterans and their families.

## **Legislative Affairs**

Chair: Irv Fletcher; Dennis Guthrie; Kevin Owens.

Chair Irv Fletcher gave an overview of the Preferred Worker Program and asked Laurie Skillman to give clarity to legislative bills that impact ODVA.

Laurie Skillman gave an update on the 2014 legislative session and provided a Legislative Bill Summary handout for those attending.

She addressed the request to the committee to provide current legislative information by recommending the Oregon Legislative Information System (OLIS) as a source for that information. She encouraged all attending to eSubscribe to ODVA for more information.

Laurie announced that ODVA legislative concepts are due by May 2014 and a report of the concepts will follow at the next Advisory Committee meeting.

## **Break**

### **Unfinished Business:**

#### **Follow-Up on Public Comments from September 4, 2013**

**Tribal Veterans' Services:** Cameron Smith indicated that the potential for the sovereign tribes to have their own TVRs is a continuing action item.

#### **Follow-Up on Public Comments from December 4, 2013:**

**Improved Communication on Legislative Initiatives:** Irv Fletcher indicated that this item was closed with the publication of the new ODVA Oregon Veteran Legislative Bill Summary.

#### **Making Oregon National Guard and Reserves Eligible for the Oregon**

**Preferred Worker Program:** Irv Fletcher indicated that this issue was being worked with Laurie Skillman.

**Volunteer Drivers and Certification:** Jerry Lorang indicated that this was an ongoing issue. There are considerable challenges to certifying drivers. VA is working the issue, but the Advisory Committee will continue to keep this item on the agenda.

**Doctor Issue in Roseburg, OR:** Jerry Lorang indicated that, although the Advisory Committee sent a letter of encouragement to hire more doctors, it was not really an item for the Advisory Committee to resolve.

**Military Family Memorial:** Cameron Smith announced that public memorial space and future rules for such space will be developed by the end of this year.

### **Advisory Committee Member Orientation**

A discussion of the Advisory Committee Member Orientation conducted on January 13, 2014 at the ODVA Building in Salem, OR ensued. Chair Mary J. Mayer asked for input from those Advisory Committee members who had attended.

Trisa Kelly found the Member Orientation very valuable and thought it should continue. Jerry Lorang said he learned a lot, and Al Herrera said the orientation should continue and acknowledged that he enjoyed getting to know the ODVA staff. Cameron said the Orientation was good for the ODVA staff, as well as the Advisory Committee members, as there were many new ODVA staff.

**Motion:** To approve the ODVA Member Orientation for all current and future committee members. Motion approved unanimously.

### **New Business:**

#### **Advisory Committee Annual Report:**

Chair Mary J. Mayer indicated that the Annual Report from the Advisory Committee to the ODVA was due to Governor Kitzhaber in late August 2014. She requested input from the Advisory Committee members that could be incorporated into that report.

Cameron Smith suggested that, to get the best input from the Advisory Committee members, staff will aim to have a first draft ready for review at the June Advisory Committee Meeting.

**Next Advisory Committee Meeting:**

Date: Wednesday June 4, 2014

Time: 9:30a.m.

Location: Hall of Heroes , Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, Oregon Public Safety Academy, 4190 Aumsville Hwy SE, Salem, OR

Chair Mary J. Mayer requested that any veteran concerns be summited to the Advisory Committee by email to [vaac@odva.state.or.us](mailto:vaac@odva.state.or.us) a few weeks before the meeting.

Chair Mary J. Mayer then indicated that the September 3, 2014 Advisory Committee Meeting was to be held in either Burns or Ontario, and a decision needed to be made.

**Motion:**

Mike Jones motioned to have the September Advisory Committee Meeting in Ontario, OR. Motion approved unanimously.

**Public Comment:**

Guy Avenell, Lane Community College Veterans Club, gave an explanation of the PTSD Degaussing Program, a stress relief and resilience program in which he is involved at the U.S. Army's Fort Bliss, TX.

Chair Mary J. Mayer, ODVA Advisory Committee, suggested this issue be submitted by email to the Advisory Committee for consideration.

Dick Tobiason from Bend, OR had submitted an input on "Reciprocity of State Benefits" to the Advisory Committee via email before the Advisory Committee Meeting.

Chair Mary J. Mayer, ODVA Advisory Committee, assigned this issue to Jerry Lorang as the Chair of the Veterans' Benefits Subcommittee.

Fredrick White from the Portland VA Medical Center introduced himself and gave an overview of the VA Medical Center in Portland. He provided updates to the claims backlog issue and the veteran homeless population issues at the Veterans' Administration. Frederick also gave an overview of the changes to the VA enrollment process.

Jim Brann, Eugene Vet Center, addressed the issue of homeless veterans, acknowledging the problems they face and his efforts to serve what he calls a "zero service population" of veterans--if they do not meet the definition of veteran under VA statutes. He asked the

Advisory Committee to encourage the State of Oregon to set a standard as to who is considered an Oregon veteran.

Jerry Lorang, ODVA Advisory Committee, suggested the issue be submitted by email to the Advisory Committee for consideration.

Ron Morgan, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), gave a progress report on the I-84 Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Highway to be dedicated on Memorial Day 2014. He also gave an overview of the VVA efforts regarding veterans Agent Orange health care; there are four town hall meetings planned to raise awareness. Finally, he mentioned that the VVA were providing trees to landscape the grounds of the Veterans' Home in Lebanon, OR.

Chair Mary J. Mayer, ODVA Advisory Committee, requested a summary of these issues and a Town Hall schedule be submitted to the Advisory Committee at [vaac@odva.state.or.us](mailto:vaac@odva.state.or.us).

### **Announcements:**

Chair Mary J. Mayer announced that Mr. Drury Wood was inducted into the Bob Hoover Aviation Hall of Fame last week.

Cameron Smith described the Advisory Committee Tour of the ODVA Portland Claims Office and the Regional VA Office, scheduled on March 19, 2014 at 10:00 a.m., and encouraged all committee members to attend.

Cameron also announced that ODVA would be hosting the Oregon Women Veterans' Conference on March 28-29, 2014 at the Eugene Hilton in Eugene, OR. The Advisory Committee Chair will be a guest speaker at the event.

Jerry Lorang said that the Oregon World War II Memorial is to be dedicated at 1:30 p.m. on June 6, 2014 on the grounds of the Capitol in Salem, OR. Jerry asked the veteran community to reach out and ensure that as many World War II veterans as possible attend the dedication. Jerry announced the ongoing Crowd Funding Campaign to raise funds for the Memorial; he requested that the attendees go to the Facebook page of the Oregon World War II Memorial to raise awareness of the ongoing educational fundraising. Money needs to be raised for the continuing education of the Memorial on-line data base, collection of war stories, and spreading the word to the younger generation on the exploits of the "greatest generation."

### **Motion to adjourn:**

Approved unanimously.