

Summary of Minutes

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

Date: June 4, 2014

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Location: Hall of Heroes, Department of Public Safety Standards and
Training, Public Safety Academy, Salem, OR

Advisory Committee Members Present:

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

Guests:

Ron Morgan, Vietnam Veterans of America, Oregon State Council
Fredrick White, VA Medical Center, Portland
Robert Haltiner, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Karen Haltiner, Ladies Auxiliary, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Charlie Upton, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Barbara Weatherill, Non Commissioned Officers Association
Steve Bobb, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
Wayne Harvey, United Veterans Groups of Oregon
John Stensland, Military Officers Association of America
Michelle Deister, Legislative Fiscal Office
Joe Williams, United Service Organizations
Elliot Shuford, Secretary of State's Office
Vicki Horn, Washington County Veterans Service Officer
Brock Bursey, Vets Helping Vets

ODVA Staff Members Present:

Cameron Smith, Director
Sue Shaffer, Executive Assistant to the Director
Laurie Skillman, Senior Policy Advisor
Eric Belt, Veterans Services Administrator
Bruce Shriver, Administrator, Financial Services Division
Cody Cox, Home Loan Program Manager
Nichol Hoeft, Public Information Manager

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Mary J. Mayer** at 9:36 a.m. and began with the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions.

Al Herrera gave the invocation.

Chair Mary J. Mayer gave an overview of the three primary goals of the Advisory Committee to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) for the past year, and indicated that there had been a lot of progress made in all three areas. She was especially pleased that the Advisory Committee had been receiving steady inputs from the various veterans' groups on issues that they wanted the Advisory Committee to address. 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 March 5, 2014 meeting as written.

Minutes were approved unanimously.

Cameron Smith, ODVA Director, thanked the Oregon Public Safety Academy for hosting the meeting and mentioned the historic displays throughout the building.

Director's Report:

Director Cameron Smith began with thanking the Advisory Committee members for their roles as advocates for all Oregon veterans and gave an overview of the ODVA's Strategic Framework. ODVA has presented similar presentations to a range of partners including the state legislators, National Service Organizations, the Oregon Congressional Offices, Oregon County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs), and the Oregon National Guard. On April 1, 2014 **Director Cameron Smith** and **Chair Mary J. Mayer** briefed Governor Kitzhaber on the ODVA Strategy and the Goals and Accomplishments of the Advisory Committee.

The Strategic Framework covers ODVA's vision, mission, goals, objectives, and strategies to serve Oregon Veterans.

The main goals of the five-year Strategic Framework are to Target Veteran Services, Mobilize Partnerships, Drive Veteran Engagement, and Invigorate Core Operations.

Cameron gave an update to ODVA's submission of Legislative Concepts and E-Board requests for the 2015 –2017 legislative session.

Cameron briefed the updated Federal VA expenditures in Oregon for 2013. Oregon received \$2.2 billion in Federal VA funds. The state remains in the top ten in the country for VA expenditures for disability compensation and low income pensions (\$1.1 billion) which speaks to the advocacy of veteran service officers.

ODVA Director Cameron Smith stated that the Second Veterans' Summit, held on May 29, 2014 in Salem, OR, was very successful and attracted around 300 attendees.

Vacancy on Advisory Committee: On December 31, 2014, **Irv Fletcher** will be leaving the Advisory Committee, and a replacement will be appointed by Governor Kitzhaber. **ODVA Director Cameron Smith** stated that ODVA would be sending out a letter to the leaders of all veterans' organizations in Oregon in the fall asking for nominations.

ODVA Director Smith presented **Kevin Owens** with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Governor of Oregon for his service on the Advisory Committee to the ODVA.

Subcommittee Reports:

Veterans' Benefits

Chair: Gerard Lorang; Al Herrera; Trisa Kelly.

Chair Gerard Lorang began with an update of the March 28-29, 2014 Oregon Women Veterans' Conference held in Eugene, OR.

Gerard addressed the Rural Veterans' Transportation Grant and the progress that is being made.

Home Loan Program

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

Chair Kevin Owens began with the ODVA Home Loan Program and highlighted the increased loan amounts in 2014.

He acknowledged the efforts by Cody Cox and the loan department staff to reach out to the community to raise awareness of the ORVET Home Loan program.

Kevin encouraged all in attendance to share the ODVA Home Loan benefit program with their communities.

State Veterans' Homes

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

Chair Mary J. Mayer stated that there was a lot of activity taking place in this area and asked Al Herrera and Dennis Guthrie to give updates.

Al Herrera started his report with an acknowledgment that the soon-to-be completed Veterans' Home in Lebanon may affect the census at the Oregon Veterans' Home (OVH) in The Dalles.

Al acknowledged the commemoration of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Highway (I-84) in The Dalles, OR in May 2014 and added that Ron Morgan (VVA) is a source for additional information.

Dallas Swafford, Admissions and Liaison Officer to the OVH, has started a program of outreach in areas close to The Dalles home in an effort to maintain full occupancy at the OVH.

Dennis Guthrie highlighted the Lebanon Veterans' Home Report and the progress as the project moves forward to completion of the home in September and occupancy in October. Interior work on the home moves toward completion, is progressing as scheduled, and is currently on budget.

Finance

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

Chair Ryan Howell gave an update of the ODVA Home Loan Program finances and highlighted the authorized expenditures for the Lebanon Home through 2015.

Ryan mentioned that the current census was above ninety percent at the OVH, which will assist the Lebanon home.

He further highlighted that privately insured mortgages are showing improvement. Financial Services is currently planning the 2015-2017 budget proposals.

Legislative Affairs

Chair: Irv Fletcher; Dennis Guthrie; Kevin Owens.

Chair Irv Fletcher gave an overview of the ODVA legislative progress and addressed the issue of whether Oregon National Guard and Enlisted Reserve Vets were Eligible for the Oregon Preferred Worker Program. Addressed was the issue of these veterans being eligible for the Preferred Worker Program while on active duty. **Laurie Skillman** of ODVA determined those on active duty are not eligible due to their federal government employment.

Update on Lebanon Veterans' Home

John Osborn from ODVA gave an update for the Lebanon Veterans' Home, highlighting that the home is 80% complete. John shared photos of the progress.

The dedication of the Lebanon Home is scheduled for September, with occupancy in late fall.

Cameron Smith acknowledged the 6-year process of submission and application, along with the construction, of the Lebanon Veterans' Home.

Break

Unfinished Business:

Follow-up on Public Comments from December 4, 2013:

Making Oregon National Guard and Enlisted Reserve Vets Eligible for the Oregon Preferred Worker Program: **Irv Fletcher** had discussed this issue in his Legislative Affairs Report.

Volunteer Drivers and Certification: **Gerard Lorang** gave a follow-up to the DAV volunteer drivers, their coordination, and stipends for those drivers. **Kevin Owens** shared his support for the state to fund transportation access for rural Oregon veterans.

After some discussion, **Chair Mary J. Mayer** assigned two action items to the Veterans' Benefits Subcommittee: (1) Pursue state funding for stipends for DAV drivers. (2) Determine whether drivers can be certified in other locations besides Portland.

Military Family Memorial: **Steve Bobb** gave an update of the concept of a Military Family Memorial. **Cameron Smith** indicated that ODVA was working on an overall policy for establishing new memorials on the grounds of ODVA.

Follow-up on Public Comments from March 5, 2014:

Reciprocity of State Benefits for Veterans: **Gerard Lorang** indicated that this is a very complex issue, and he will have more to share on the subject of shared benefits with bordering states at the September meeting.

Encourage State of Oregon to Set a Standard as to Who is Considered a Veteran: **Gerard Lorang** stated that there was a consistent definition of “veterans” in Oregon law. In response to the individual who made this request, a letter has gone back to him and his supervisor telling them about Oregon law and asking what the real issue is. Gerard is awaiting a response.

Feedback from Advisory Committee Members on Orientation at ODVA Portland Claims Office and VA Regional Office, ODVA Strategy Briefing, and Veterans’ Summit: The Advisory Committee members gave positive reinforcement that all of these activities were very worthwhile, increased their knowledge of claims processing, and made them more aware of veterans’ issues throughout the state and the efforts of ODVA to address them in a strategic way.

Feedback from the 2014 Oregon Women Veterans’ Conference: **Chair Mary J. Mayer** gave an overview of this conference and acknowledged its importance for the women veterans of Oregon to meet on a regular basis, learn more about their benefits, and share their experiences. Mary recognized and thanked Conference Chair Renee French for all her efforts in putting on this excellent venue.

Dedication of the Oregon WWII Memorial: **Gerard Lorang** announced that the dedication will be held on June 6, 2014 on the grounds of the state capitol in Willson Park and gave an overview of the memorial and requested those present to share names of WWII Veterans with the memorial foundation so they may be acknowledged for their service. Gerard indicated that at 1:00 p.m. on June 6, the Grand Ronde Tribe will bless the site of the memorial, and the dedication will begin at 1:30 p.m.

New Business:

Annual Report to the Governor: **Chair Mayer J. Mayer** gave an update on the Advisory Committee’s Annual Report. This report must be submitted to the Governor in August 2014. **ODVA’s Nicole Hoefft** will provide a draft Annual Report Draft to the Advisory Committee in June 2014. **ODVA Director Cameron Smith** requested all inputs from the Advisory Committee members for the Annual Report be submitted to **Sue Shaffer** by July 2014.

Annual Review of Bylaws: **Chair Mary J Mayer** indicated that the Executive Committee had reviewed the Bylaws and recommended to the Advisory Committee that no changes be made this year.

A motion was made and unanimously approved not to amend the Bylaws this year.

Advisory Committee Page on the ODVA Website: Chair **Mary J. Mayer** has discussed the idea of having a separate Advisory Committee Page on the ODVA website with **Cameron Smith** and **Nicole Hoefft**. Nicole will work with Mary to explore that possibility and to determine what information would be put on the page.

Subcommittee Assignments for 2014-2015: Chair **Mary J. Mayer** indicated that the new Chair would be contacting the Advisory Committee members regarding their preferences for Subcommittee Assignments for next year.

Opportunity to Contribute on the ODVA Website: ODVA Director **Cameron Smith** gave an update on the new Donation Page on the ODVA website, allowing individuals to contribute to the following areas: Veterans' Homes, Oregon Women Veterans' Programs, Suicide Prevention, and Veterans' Support Fund. This page will allow increased donations to ODVA.

Future Advisory Committee Orientations: Chair **Mary J. Mayer** stated that future Advisory Committee Orientations were being planned to the Portland VA Medical Center, Willamette National Cemetery, Lebanon Veterans' Home, and the Oregon Military Museum at Camp Withycombe (when it opens).

Election of Officers for 2014-2015:

As Chair of the Nominating Committee, **Kevin Owens** presented a slate of proposed officers for the ODVA Advisory Committee for next year: **Mary J. Mayer**, **Al Herrera**, and **Trisa Kelly** for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary (respectively).

The Chair of the Nominating Committee then requested any additional nominations from the floor for Chair of the ODVA Advisory Committee.

Motion:

Gerard Lorang, motioned to nominate **Al Herrera** for Chair of the ODVA Advisory Committee. Motion seconded by **Irv Fletcher**.

There being no additional nominations, the Advisory Committee voted and selected **Al Herrera** as the next Chair of the ODVA Advisory Committee.

The Chair of the Nominating Committee then requested any additional nominations from the floor for Vice Chair of the ODVA Advisory Committee.

Motion:

Kevin Owens motioned to nominate **Dennis Guthrie** for the position of Vice Chair. Motion seconded by **Irv Fletcher**.

Ryan Howell motioned to nominate **Trisa Kelly** for Vice Chair. Motion seconded by **Al Herrera**.

There being no additional nominations, the Advisory Committee voted and selected **Dennis Guthrie** as the next Vice Chair.

The Chair of the Nominating Committee then requested any additional nominations from the floor for Secretary of the ODVA Advisory Committee.

Motion:

Irv Fletcher motioned to nominate **Mike Jones** for the position of Secretary. Motion seconded by **Kevin Owens**.

There being no additional nominations, the Advisory Committee voted and selected **Mike Jones** as Secretary of the ODVA Advisory Committee.

Chair Mary J. Mayer congratulated those selected to the new positions, and indicated that she was looking forward to working with them in their new roles.

Locations for Advisory Committee Meetings for 2015: **Chair Mary J. Mayer** gave an update of the proposed location schedule for the 2014-2015 Advisory Committee Meetings. She also stated that the Advisory Committee needed to vote on having the September 2, 2015 at either Hermiston, OR or La Grande, OR. Mary also indicated that **Al Herrera** is working with Washington County Veteran Service Officer **Vicki Horn** to find a venue for holding the December 2, 2015 meeting.

Motion:

Kevin Owens motioned that the September 2015 Advisory Committee Meeting be held in Hermiston, OR. **Irv Fletcher** seconded the motion.

The Advisory Committee voted and unanimously approved Hermiston, OR as the location for the September 2015 meeting.

Oregon Military Museum at Camp Withycombe: **Gerard Lorang** announced that this museum would be initially opened in 2015, with final completion anticipated in 2016. Gerard has been asked to become a member of the Historical Outreach Foundation (HOF) board of directors, the organization responsible for ensuring the building and maintenance of this museum.

Next Advisory Committee Meeting:

Date: Wednesday September 3, 2014

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Location: Veterans Memorial Hall, 25 NW 8th Street, Ontario, OR

Lodging: Holiday Inn Express, 212 SE 10th Street, Ontario, OR

Social Event with Ontario Veteran Community: Tuesday, September 2, 2014

Chair Mary J. Mayer requested that any veteran concerns be submitted to the Advisory Committee by email to vaac@odva.state.or.us a few weeks before the meeting.

Public Comment:

Flying the POW/MIA Flag 24/7 365(6) Days a Year: **Robert Haltiner**, representing the Non-Commissioned Officers Association, presented a request from his organization that a bill be passed by the Oregon Legislature to fly the POW/MIA Flag at the Oregon State Capitol 24/7 365(6) days a year.

Since this was a request from only one veteran's organization, **Chair Mary J. Mayer** asked for support from **Wayne Harvey** to see if the United Veterans' Groups of Oregon (UVGO) would discuss this idea at its July meeting and poll the other veterans' organizations to see if they were supportive of this initiative. Wayne agreed to do so and will report the results to the Advisory Committee at its September 2014 meeting.

Mental Health Teams in the Eugene/Roseburg Area: **Elizabeth Lane** was not present at the meeting, so the Advisory Committee will contact her to see if she wishes to pursue this issue.

Dedication of USO at the Portland International Airport: **Joe Williams** from the USO stated that the facility was going to be dedicated on Tuesday, July 1, 2014 at 3:00 p.m. The USO is located in the Mezzanine by the Clock Tower and above the food court. Priority goes to active duty service members, but veterans may use the facility on a space available basis. The USO will be open from 5:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. 24/7; volunteers are being used to staff the facility—there are 4/4 hour shifts per day. **Kevin Owens** commended the USO program and inquired about the recruitment of volunteers. Joe Williams stated that more volunteers were needed.

Portland VA Medical Center Report: Fredrick White, Executive Assistant to the Director of the Portland VA Medical Center, addressed the issue of access to medical care at the VA Medical Center in Portland and gave an overview of the scheduling process at the facility and all medical centers in Oregon. **Wayne Harvey** raised the issue of the availability of Veteran Identification Cards. **Cameron Smith** acknowledged the challenge the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs has in serving all veterans in providing health care. If any veteran has concerns, Fredrick asked that they let management know.

Announcements:

Ron Morgan, Vietnam Veterans of America, gave an update of the projects in which his organization was involved.

Adjournment:

A motion was unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 12:30 p.m.