

The Minutes of the Meeting

STATE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

February 7, 2018

10:00 A.M.

An official meeting of the State Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) convened on Wednesday, February 7, 2018 at the State Veterans Home, Kinston, NC. Attendance as noted:

Commission Members

Jimmy G. (Tony) Braswell, Chairman
Elree T. Smith, Vice-Chairman
Etteinne (E.T.) Mitchell
William Shillito (Absent)
Leonard (Mike) Scruggs
Carol Phelps
Terry T. Hales
Joseph (Joe) W. Adamczyk
Gregory R. Woodard
Rev. Lenwood V. Long, Sr. (Absent)
Michael Worley (Absent)
John C. Boesch
Larry Townsend

Advisory Committee Members

Jeffrey D. Jones (Absent)
Marine Corps League
Jacob Roth, Commander (Absent)
American Ex-Prisoners of War
Carol Barker, Commander (Absent)
The American Legion
Buddy Waller (Absent)
AMVETS
Jeremy Roberts, Adjutant
Disabled American Veterans
Greg Stafford, Commander
Veterans of Foreign Wars
James Hicks
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Rossie M. Nance, Jr. (Absent)
Vietnam Veterans of America
David Lee, President (Absent)
North Carolina Council of MOAA

Assistant Secretary for Veteran Affairs
Deputy Director, NC Division of Veteran Affairs
Facilities Manager
Administrative Assistant
Administrative Assistant
Administrative Secretary

James (Jim) Prosser
Martin Falls
James (Jimmy) Woodard
Diane Norris
Ken Castille
Angela Heilig

Guests

Craig Armstrong, Junior Vice-Commander, NC Veterans of Foreign Wars
Mr. Hany Botros, State Construction
Mr. Robert (Bob) Talley, State Construction
Mr. Melvin Davis, Accountant for Nursing Home
Mr. Bill Graham, Wayne County Veterans Coalition
Mr. Jim Brewer, Wayne County Veterans Coalition
Mr. Ron Medus, American Legion, North Carolina
Ms. Melissa Watkins, Wayne County Veterans Council
Chaplain Bill Boyd, Marine Corps League

Chairman Tony Braswell called the meeting to order, thanked everyone for attending and for their patience in rescheduling the meeting from January. Vice-Chairman Elree Smith led reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and Mr. Greg Woodard gave the invocation.

Chairman Braswell asked Assistant Secretary Prosser to conduct a roll-call of attendees to determine if a quorum is present. Assistant Secretary Prosser completed the roll-call and announced a quorum of the Veterans Affairs Commission was present. Assistant Secretary Prosser additionally called roll of the Veterans Affairs Commission Advisory Board to assess attendees.

Chairman Braswell called the attention of the Commission regarding any conflicts of interest and if any should arise, the affected Commission members would recuse themselves from any discussion and deliberations.

Secretary Prosser welcomed members of the Wayne County Veterans Coalition in attendance. Mr. Jim Brewer expressed appreciation for being here today and offered any input if needed.

Chairman Braswell called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Commission meeting minutes from October 27, 2017 and asked for any additions or corrections. A motion was made by Commissioner Woodard and seconded by Commissioner Mitchell. A vote was taken and all approved.

Chairman Braswell called on members of the Advisory Committee for updates on their organizations. Mr. Ron Medus, the local Commander of the American Legion Post, said they are doing what they can to support. Chaplain Bill Byrd, Marine Corps League, expressed appreciation for what is going on in Eastern North Carolina and suggested the VA work with and train at the Greenville facility since they are a quality facility in addition to expressing pride in the State Cemetery in Goldsboro.

Commander Stafford, VFW, stated they are working on their own VFW scholarship program and said the VFW has encountered numerous veterans over the winter months that have been unable to pay their bills so they have instituted a program to screen false claims. He expressed concerns to the Commission for resolution of the issue of the State Cemetery in Goldsboro not having to repay the Federal government \$8M and if there would be cost increases for burials to fund maintenance costs. Commander Stafford also asked about the meeting dates of the NC General Assembly for the opportunity to visit and voice concerns of veterans. Chairman Braswell stated that discussions later in the meeting will likely answer some of Commander Stafford's questions. Commander Stafford also asked about getting State and County Veterans Service Officers accredited with the VFW to allow visibility of claims for better service.

Mr. James Hicks, NC Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), stated his Department asks if veteran-related items should come before the Veterans Affairs Commission or the NC Veterans Council. Secretary Prosser responded that issues should be brought before both organizations so NC MOPH's legislative agenda is presented uniformly with other veteran organization agendas.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts, NC Disabled American Veterans (DAV), apologized for his organization's past absence from the Commission meetings but vowed to faithfully attend future meetings. Mr. Roberts announced his organization visited the Fayetteville State Veterans Home and learned of a program called "Music and Memory" where veterans or their families can select music that has been found to reduce medication requirements, falls and behavioral outbursts. After researching, the NC DAV donated additional equipment to the program and a \$500 iTunes gift card. Mr. Roberts stated the NC DAV intends to duplicate this gift to the other three State Veterans Homes. Later in February, Mr. Roberts said his organization will be traveling to Washington, DC to meet with members of Congress about DAV priorities and will look to meet with the NC General Assembly.

Commissioner Mitchell announced American Legion Post 539 in New Bern, NC is very involved with the State Veterans Home in Kinston through their generous donations of packages, blankets, cards and gifts over the past Christmas holiday season for residents who didn't have families of their own. Also, Commissioner Mitchell stated the Craven County Veterans Council will be more active in the future on state-wide veteran affairs and she will meet with them in early March to brief on current veteran initiatives around the State.

Chairman Braswell announced to the visitors in attendance the Veterans Affairs Commission was formed and operated under North Carolina General Statute. There are 13 members that coincide with the 13 Congressional Districts. Each district has one appointment that is made by the Governor's office with the Chairman appointed by the Governor. The Commission is non-partisan and strives to serve the veterans. With that, input is requested throughout North Carolina in regards to every Congressional district. There are Commission members vacant in positions and current Commission members will continue to serve until re-districting is complete and more members will be appointed. The Commission is also mandated by General Statute regarding duties and functions that will be evident throughout the meeting

Chairman Braswell called on Secretary Prosser for a report and he began with Commissioner appointments. Secretary Prosser stated that he has been in discussions with the Governor's office and they would be looking to make new appointments based on the Congressional districts but there were challenges over district boundaries. The U.S. Supreme Court decided to take the mapping of NC Congressional Districts under advisement and likely would not rule until next year on the legality of districting. In that, no changes would be made to the Veterans Affairs Commission until the Federal or State governments decide on districts.

Secretary Prosser gave an update on the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. He announced that Assistant Secretary for Military Affairs, Joseph Kelly, has left to accept a job in Virginia. There is no appointment to that position currently in sight so many of the responsibilities of that position are now with him. Additionally, an advertisement for the Field Operations Manager position has been made to hire someone to assist Mr. Martin Falls and an advertisement for Cemetery Manager has been published. The Cemetery Manager duties will allow Mr. Jimmy Woodard to concentrate on the State Veterans Nursing Homes.

Secretary Prosser stated the Department is working on the budget for 2018-2019 request to the General Assembly. We will request what we asked for last year with additions. The biggest concern for capital is in the escheats funds. The escheats provide the funds for the competitive categories, Classes II & III. Last year we requested \$1.2m be RESTORED to this account. We did not receive funds in this account; however, we did receive \$536k in appropriations. The commission applauded the General Assembly for this increase. The Commission then voted to use the funds to increase private universities in North Carolina. There had not been an increase in private universities since 1983. We are requesting \$2.4m in escheats funding be restored to NCDMVA this year. This will fund the room and board back to a standard rate as outlined in the NCGS 143B-1227.

Secretary Prosser said that five Veterans Service Officers (VSO) positions asked for last year are still needed for this year and in cemetery funding, DMVA is asking that all funding for staffing to be placed on appropriations. This will cost an additional \$773K. Staff salaries need to come from appropriations since receipts funding will not adequately pay for salaries along with maintenance, upkeep and contract services.

Another item being looked at in the DMVA budget request is funding leases of service offices across the state. Saving money on a new lease often doesn't consider additional expenses that may be incurred with telephones, internet, new equipment, etc. Additionally, moving an office that had been in the same locations for years and known to veterans would result in confusion, advertising, changes in signage, etc.

Secretary Prosser then asked Ms. Angela Heilig to give an update on the new software for the scholarship program. Ms. Heilig said this is the first year using the software with a submission deadline coming up on February 14th. She stated there are still a few "bugs" in the software the office is struggling through and the problems will be overcome over the next few months. She called attention to the information provided in the handouts showing the number of applicants that have submitted with submissions occurring every day. Ms. Heilig will assist with any questions. Secretary Prosser stated that if applicants

attempt to apply after the deadline they will be notified to apply after the web link is activated again. This is done to prevent applications coming in while processing those applications that made the deadline. Commissioner Hales asked if there were software issues to which Mr. Prosser replied there were approximately 400+ applications shown as pending that may be missing a form so we need to determine and adjust. Secretary Prosser said one of the conflicts we ran in to was the new CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software for tracking service data for veterans in the field. We were assured there were two separate databases but if there was a conflict with a veteran's address in Hickory when a claim was filed and the child in Wilmington logs in and puts information in that conflicts, an error would result. Now, there are two separate systems again. Ms. Heilig added that pending applications would receive a letter stating their application is still in process and issues need to be resolved before the February 14th deadline.

Chairman Braswell asked if the system creating the these errors, is there a possibility of extending the deadline? Secretary Prosser said if the applicant has logged in prior to the 14th to setup the account, we'll still take it. Additionally, Secretary Prosser said that "by law" notification of the scholarship award must be made by May 1st and strong efforts will be made to process all applications submitted by the deadline.

Chairman Braswell called on Mr. Martin Falls to give his report. He stated that since the last meeting, DMVA has hired 8 new positions and there are currently 9 vacancies (7 in DVA and 2 in Military Affairs). Mr. Falls reiterated funding for cemetery salaries mentioned earlier by Secretary Prosser and the shortfall in escheats funding for scholarships.

Mr. Falls addressed VSO/VST training with 17 service officers currently in training. In 2018, DVA will return to conducting District and Regional Schools along with both conferences (County and State) to train both State and County VSOs. The County conference will be around April and the State conference will be a joint conference in October. Last year, DVA accredited 35 service officers (11 at the County conference and 24 at the joint State conference) compared to 2016 where we accredited 28 service officers. It should be noted that we currently have 63 VSOs/VSTs with less than two years' experience in the field.

Last year, there were four Regional schools conducted awarding 6 CEUs each and there were 194 in attendance and nine District schools attended by 178 service officers that awarded 4 CEUs each. Within DVA, there are 29 VSOs in the field with 4 in the State nursing homes with 18 VSTs in the Service Centers and State Service Office. At present, there are 176 County Veteran Service Officers.

Mr. Falls announced DVA will continue to work with Duke Epic providing Veteran Service Specialist training in coordination with NC DHHS and Duke University that will be conducted in the April/May/June timeframe. This will be another "tool in the toolbox" to teach VSOs. Last year, there were 36 graduates and 31 of those were from the counties. This training is funded from DHHS and not from DVA.

The State Service Office in Winston Salem reports there were 102 Appeals hearings scheduled last quarter where 62 were conducted (12 in the regional office and 50 through travel/video Boards).

Mr. Falls addressed the Scholarship Program where there were many people involved working to process applications and award scholarships. While there are some current issues with the software, long hours and hard work will make it work. The system isn't a hard system to work but has many complexities.

Commissioner Townsend added a comment that in his discussions with the Chancellor at UNC-Pemboke, the 2019 school year, tuition will be \$500/semester with great things to happen in the Fall. Vice-Chairman Smith mentioned that additional schools (Western Carolina, Winston-Salem State, Elizabeth City State) will be charging the same for tuition.

Commander Stafford asked for information regarding salaries of VSOs. He stated that for instance, a VSO in Allegany County might make \$20K/yr. and a VSO in Wake County might make \$60K/yr. because of the County supplement and with mountain communities, there is a large turnover in service officers because they're making about \$20K and move to Bristol, VA and triple their salaries after they get accredited. He asked if there was a way to bring up the salaries to keep the people. Secretary Prosser responded the State has no control or supervisory responsibility of the County VSOs. DVA is only responsible for training and each County sets their own salaries.

The General Assembly provides DVA grant money each year to supplement their veteran programs. The General Assembly first cut the amount then eliminated the funds and needed lobbying efforts to reinstate this funding especially since some of the smaller counties counted on this money for their veteran services. Commissioner Townsend stated VSOs gain trust and confidence of their County and local veterans to justify their position and funding. With funding restored and new rules in place, Secretary Prosser went on to explain how counties are now apportioned these funds and DVA rules for accountability.

After a short break, Chairman Braswell called on Mr. Jimmy Woodard for a report on Facilities.

Mr. Woodard started by thanking the Veterans Affairs Commission for their support of the cemetery and nursing home programs. He introduced Mr. Melvin Davis, Mr. Robert Talley and Mr. Hany Botros to entertain any questions from the Commission.

Mr. Woodard began discussing the State Cemetery Program. At Sandhills, a grant was applied for (\$5,966,200.00) and will likely be awarded in July 2018. A design contract has been awarded and work has started. The firm is talking to Washington and all design work must be completed for bid around June 1st. At Western Carolina, an expansion grant was also applied for (\$2,774,321.00) and will possibly be awarded in July 2018. A design contract has been awarded and work has started. With both expansion projects, Mr. Woodard stated that along with Ms. Diane Norris, both design firms and Washington, conference call discussions are made twice a month to inform and update on both projects.

Mr. Woodard pointed out the financials showing the amount of appropriations received from the State for payment of seven employee salaries and operations.

Mr. Woodard provided a 2½ year progress report on each of the State cemeteries along with expected expansion capabilities. He also drew attention to the total number of burial sites maintained by DVA with two cemeteries exceeding 5,000 sites and another just below 5,000 along with 371 sites in Goldsboro. These numbers reflect the amount of work and staff needed to maintain the site. Additionally, Mr. Woodard showed the expected expansion numbers for Sandhills and Western Carolina.

Mr. Woodard then discussed the financial report for the cemetery program that showed the anticipated balances and expenditure of funds for the period December 31, 2017 ending June 30, 2018. The report shows receipts that come in, funds obligated and an anticipated balance on June 30, 2018. Chairman Braswell asked about the anticipated fund balance of \$48,566.38. Mr. Woodard explained that some grants may occur next year but this report shows what we have requested and what is expected to come in later.

Chairman Braswell asked about payment of cemetery employee salaries. Mr. Woodard stated that 15 salaries are paid out of receipts and 7 are paid from appropriations then proceeded to say that there is discussion in the General Assembly to pay all cemetery employee salaries from receipts. Also, Mr. Woodard said all salaries should be paid from appropriations and receipt money would be used to pay for operations. Further discussion was made regarding receipts funding used for salaries and current budget requests.

Commissioner Mitchell asked if all the cemetery employees fall under the State employee personnel system and what is the standard for other State agencies and their personnel if they are funded by appropriations or receipts. Mr. Woodard explained that certain departments pay employees from receipts specifically, those departments that bring in money to the State. Secretary Prosser said it differs from State to State but depends on how the funding was set up but most are from appropriations. Commissioner Mitchell pointed to historical sites and parks if their personnel are paid from receipts. Mr. Prosser said that all salaries were paid from appropriations at one time but after the budget crisis in 2010-2011, the General Assembly looked at cutting positions but rather than lose personnel, departments looked to fund salaries from receipts to keep the numbers of positions. Secretary Prosser again stated that the goal is to pay all cemetery employees from appropriations funding.

Mr. Woodard went on to say that two newer cemetery employees paid from appropriations got a small bump in salary from the General Assembly but other employees paid from receipts did not get any increase. Secretary Prosser said the process is if a person is a state-appropriated fund employee and the State begins to lose money, the State moves forward at a loss but if a receipts-employee is considered for a raise, a 3-year projection must be done showing how much receipts will increase to cover the pay raise.

Mr. Woodard began discussion of the State Veterans Home program. In Fayetteville, Mr. Woodard said there was a State survey conducted last week with three minor tags and none were clinical. The Fayetteville nursing home is in the process of HVAC replacement with an R&R funding amount of \$2,101,453. However, the quote for the replacement has been received and reflects \$3.4M that may have to be paid from the NC State Veterans Home Trust Fund. Additionally, Mr. Woodard stated the emergency fire alarm panel replacement/repair funding of \$45,764.35 will need additional approval due to an increase in costs of about \$3,000.00.

Commissioner Woodard introduced a motion to the Commission to increase the spending authority of the Veterans Affairs Commission Chairman and Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs up to \$50,000.00 each. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Townsend. A vote was taken of Commission members which was approved with no objections.

Also, a motion was made by Vice-Chairman Smith to authorize funding of \$45,764.35 for the Fayetteville fire alarm panel/system repairs and \$3,000.00 for the associated printer. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Townsend. Chairman Braswell took a vote of the Commission where all members approved the motion with no objections.

In Salisbury, Mr. Woodard stated that there was an inspection by the Federal VA last week where they noted a deficiency-free survey in both clinical and lifesaving operations. Mr. Woodard mentioned the Salisbury State Veterans Home was mentioned in a U.S. News & World Report listing of 5-Star rated facilities.

Mr. Woodard said the elevator replacement project for \$843,910.00 in Salisbury has received funding and awaiting contract. The renovation and activity room addition project for \$1.2M has been signed and is progressing. The generator replacement project for two generators at \$1,398,461.43 is approximately 65-75% complete.

In Black Mountain, Mr. Woodard said the facility security project (\$612,950.00) at the State Veterans Home there is about 85-90% complete.

At the State Veterans Home in Kinston, Mr. Woodard stated the emergency sprinkler system replacement project through R&R funding (\$1,397,940.00) has completed all four wings of the facility. Mr. Woodard mentioned the additional funds authorized by the Veterans Affairs Commission previously to allocate and additional \$388,732.00 from the Trust Fund that was unused from another project. The roof repair project contract (\$600,415.00) has been signed and is awaiting execution with work expected to start in the next

3-4 weeks. The security projects (\$597,689.00) are progressing and 95% complete with 65% Federal grant reimbursement. Mr. Woodard addressed the geothermal study (\$36,000.00) where a company was hired outside the contract to evaluate design and system issues.

Mr. Woodard announced Secretary Hall, NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, has given permission, after agreement of NC Department of Administration (DOA) and NC State Construction, to hire a construction designer. The job was posted to work under DOA and with NC State Construction and DMVA will pay the salary. There is a Memorandum of Understanding in process to have someone who knows construction and can handle change orders.

Mr. Woodard presented the handout reflecting State Veterans Home admissions/discharges for FY16, FY17 and current FY18. Commissioner Mitchell asked about the larger number for Fayetteville and Kinston. Mr. Woodard said the number is due to the larger bed capacity of those facilities as well as outpatient care and rehab of patients in for short-term stays.

Mr. Woodard then directed the Commission to the handout showing the financials for the NC State Veterans Home beginning with the Trust Fund balance on December 31, 2017 of \$57,194,623.85 and with all expenditures for ongoing projects and grants expected reflects and unencumbered amount to date of \$24,892,109.85. Additionally, Mr. Woodard pointed out that there could be unexpected expenses that occur and the amount reflected is strictly for operational information.

Chairman Braswell inquired about the Trust Fund and cash-on-hand to Mr. Melvin Davis. Mr. Davis replied we attempt to keep a 6-month reserve in cash, counting no receipts. Mr. Davis also said if there are changes in a management company and billing processes change, we could go without money for two months so payments of approximately \$4M per month will occur to be paid on our own with only resident reimbursements from private payers. Also, reimbursement from Medicare will be a long process to setup the changes thereby delaying money needed to fund expenses. Mr. Davis mentioned that anticipated costs for two new State Veterans Homes (Wake & Guilford County) would require payments upfront to begin land acquisition and design thereby further depleting the State Veterans Home Trust Fund.

Mr. Davis brought up the concept of regional veteran homes that would be smaller, cheaper, more accessible within the State but will be less profitable.

Mr. Woodard brought to the attention of the Commission changes to the Medicare reimbursement rates that took effect at the end of 2017 that resulted in losses of expected revenue per patient and subsequent payments to the healthcare management company, Pruitt Health. The issue has been addressed with Pruitt Health and a meeting will be held in March to address an equitable solution and contract details.

At 12:05pm, the Commission took a lunch break and Commissioner Mitchell departed. The Commission reconvened at 12:30pm.

Chairman Braswell brought the Commission back to order and called on Mr. Woodard to complete his report.

Mr. Woodard announced to the Commission that the State Office of Management and Budget has advised the Department that, after looking at the State Veterans Home Trust Fund, we will be responsible for 3% of what the State Veterans Homes are insured for which equates to \$2.8M. Mr. Woodard went on to introduce Mr. Bob Talley and Mr. Hany Botros from the NC State Construction Office to brief the Commission on contract, construction, and repair & maintenance issues involving the State Veterans Homes. Mr. Talley and Mr. Botros fielded questions from Commission and Advisory Board members regarding past and current issues.

Chairman Braswell departed at 1:15pm and Vice-Chairman Smith assumed the meeting's leadership duties.

Mr. Woodard and Mr. Talley also gave insight on future construction concepts, designs and considerations to Commission and Advisory Board members.

Vice-Chairman Smith thanked Mr. Woodard, Mr. Talley and Mr. Botros for their presentation.

Vice-Chairman Smith began to discuss the Veterans Affairs Commission Strategic Plan update. Vice-Chairman Smith gave a review of why the Commission was tasked to develop this plan and what the committee comprised of himself, Commissioner Woodard, Commissioner Hales and Deputy Director Falls has accomplished since its formation. Vice-Chairman Smith displayed a copy of the draft plan and said the plan is specifically developed to address the requirements of NC Senate Bill 62 then went on to point out key items in the draft document. After listing the roadmap for further development of the plan, Vice-Chairman Smith announced the deadline of November 1, 2018 for the Commission to adopt this Strategic Plan and on November 1, 2019 present the final report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee.

Commissioner Hales commented on the work of the Commission to further inform the legislators in the General Assembly and through this Strategic Plan, roll all the information together for a detailed view of the work of the Veterans Affairs Commission.

Commissioner Boesch asked the Commission has a Public Affairs Officer or Public Information Officer. Vice-Chairman Smith answered that the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has a Communications Officer to handle those duties.

Commissioner Townsend commented on a presentation he made to a group where he asked for veterans to stand. Of all 86 in attendance, he was the only one to stand as a veteran. He stated it was sad to only recognize veterans on special holidays and Commissioner Hales informed those in attendance of his work with school children to learn and recognize the importance of veterans.

Commissioner Phelps stated that the numbers show the veteran population in North Carolina and are published and discussed.

Commander Stafford mentioned that Legislators don't recognize the numbers of veterans in their district since they don't represent a large enough voting block to warrant attention and they should be educated to show that with the numbers of veterans, there is a large number of family members standing beside them.

With experience in Washington, DC and Raleigh, Commissioner Boesch says legislators are busy and overwhelmed by their constituents and lobbyists. He stated he feels the best way to influence these legislators is to concentrate on influencing the people/organizations that put them in office. Voters carrying the message to their legislators. Commissioner Boesch mentioned veterans councils to get information to pass to their organization on important issues to present on behalf of veterans.

Mr. Hicks asked if the local veterans organizations in each of the 13 districts across the state know who their VAC Commissioner is. Vice-Chairman Smith answered no but Secretary Prosser said more exposure of VAC Commissioners has begun to encourage participation in school/community events.

Commissioner Hales expressed his embarrassment of the content and appearance of the website of our organization and other veterans organizations. He stressed how they need to be attractive and informative to reflect the care and concern we have on our mission.

Commander Stafford wanted to ask that the Strategic Plan be a working document that will continually address and highlight the affairs of the Commission. Commissioner Hales said this can be accomplished successfully with the available technology.

Commander Roberts announced the Disabled American Veterans organization has 36,500 members in North Carolina and asked what he could take to his members on how they can support the Commission or get the awareness out. He stated he has gotten information out regarding the scholarship program but wants to do more to support the Commission. Vice-Chairman Smith stated the cemetery program, burials, nursing homes and resource guides then went on to state that issues raised by the DAV can be brought to the Commission. Secretary Prosser mentioned that most people don't know North Carolina has four nursing homes and four state cemeteries and think these places are Federal VA facilities. So, educating members on the NCDMVA, VAC and VA will be beneficial.

Commissioner Phelps pointed to an organization, Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Association, that has a monthly lunch and speakers that are well attended and popular with local legislators then wondered if we could tap into their website for ideas to generate interest.

Vice-Chairman Smith announced the Commission's move into Closed Session to address and discuss scholarship issues. At that time, Commissioner Hales made a motion to move into Closed Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Woodard. A vote was taken and all approved. The Commission entered into Closed Session at 2:15pm and Advisory Board members and guests in attendance departed.

At 2:40pm, the Commission returned to Open Session with a motion by Commissioner Townsend and seconded by Commissioner Hales.

Vice-Chairman Smith requested a motion to ratify the decisions of the Commission made in Closed Session in regards to scholarships. Commissioner Townsend moved the motion and Commissioner Woodard seconded the motion followed by a vote. All members approved with none opposed.

The next agenda item was confirmation of the proposed date and location for the April meeting of the Veterans Affairs Commission. The meeting will be held at 9:00am on Thursday, April 19th at the State VFW Headquarters on New Bern Avenue in Raleigh.

Vice-Chairman Smith addressed the July meeting of the Veterans Affairs Commission. A suggestion was made to have the meeting in Salisbury at the State Veterans Nursing Home. A date of July 19th was selected. Secretary Prosser mentioned that current construction there may not accommodate us but we could meet at the nearby VA facility. The meeting will begin at 9:00am for Closed Session for scholarship discussion then at 10:00am will start the Open Session for Advisory Board members and guests.

Vice-Chairman Smith thanked everyone for attending and Commissioner Woodard made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Townsend. A unanimous affirmative vote was taken and the meeting was adjourned at 2:50pm