

Department Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee Meeting
February 16, 2007

Opening:

Chairman Kenneth Clawson in Ballroom I of the Holiday Inn South, Lansing, Michigan opened the Department VA&R Committee Meeting according to ritual at 1:00 P.M. Chairman Clawson also called for a moment of silence for our military members both deceased and actively serving, followed by a prayer.

Roll Call:

Roll call of VA&R Committee persons was taken by Secretary Ed Rushlow:

Present: Kenneth Clawson, Standing Committee Chairman
Robert Doan, Committee Vice Chairman
Ed Rushlow, Secretary
Anthony Licari
Donald Chmielewski

DVSO Emeritus Present: Richard Morrison and Ed Rushlow

Districts Represented: 11 of 16
1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 16th, and 18th.

Roll Call of VAVS/VHVS Subcommittee was taken by Secretary Ed Rushlow:

Present: Ronald Pearson, Chairman – Marquette Home
Henry Altman – Saginaw VAMC
John Hyatt – Grand Rapids Home
Raymond Lloyd – Detroit VAMC
Absent: Arthur Mitchell – Iron Mountain VAMC
Tim O’Neil – Battle Creek VAMC
Murl Eastman – Ann Arbor VAMC

Secretary Rushlow declared that a quorum was present, with all five zones represented.

Chairman Clawson called upon Mr. John Nelson, Director, VA&R for his report. Mr. Nelson started by introducing DVSO’s in attendance: Ray Moore, Pat Kline, Jim Topps, and Jim Simmons. Mr. Nelson then read his report (copy attached) and made a few explanatory comments. He also informed the Committee they have just hired another Full time DVSO to work in the Detroit office, Mr. Mike Jaquith, a retired adjudicator.

Chairman Clawson called upon VAVS/VHVS Chairman, Ronald Pearson to give his report: Chairman Pearson informed us the committee hasn’t had a meeting since the Fall Conference. He also mentioned the increased post activities in contacting veterans in their local area to help volunteer at the Jacobetti Veterans Home. Chairman Pearson

request that the VAVS/VHVS Committee be excused to conduct their meeting and return later. Chairman Clawson granted permission.

Chairman Clawson introduced guests present; Mr. John Lynch, Member of the National VA&R Commission who offered a few comments, and it was noted Adjutant Pat Lafferty sat in to observe for a few minutes.

Chairman Clawson called on the 19 visitors in attendance to stand and introduce themselves.

Chairman Clawson requested the reading of the minutes of the September 22, 2006 meeting. It was moved by Vice Chairman Robert Doan and supported by Anthony Licari that we accept the minutes of the meeting as printed. Motion carried.

Correspondence/resolutions:

Chairman Clawson informed us of the letter received recognizing DVSO Pat Kline for his help from a claimant, thanking him for his efforts.

Chairman Clawson next read Resolution #02-06-W submitted by Walter W. Cole Post 301, Rapid River regarding VA Cremation Urns. Moved by Vice Chairman Doan, supported by member Licari we support the resolution. Carried and forwarded.

Unfinished business:

Chairman Clawson informed us the new process for Post Service Officer reports is now operational and the report forms will be mailed to the Post Service Officer's homes on March 1st to assure they receive them in a timely manner.

He also informed us that the National Economic Commission is involved in making recommendations for the Department Homeless Veterans Task Force. There is an extensive new outline of structure and responsibilities headed up by the Assistant Director of Economics, Mr. Ron Chamrin.

New Business:

Chairman Clawson expressed his views regarding the use of VA&R funds to provide a hospitality party for those attending the annual Service Officer School at Higgins Lake. Much discussion was held both pro and con. Motion by Secretary Rushlow, supported by Member Licari to continue this event as in the past and consider the possibility of making a change prior to next year.

Chairman Clawson welcomed Jim Topps back from his medical leave.

John Nelson informed us they are presently in process of developing a formula for selecting a new Assistant Director of VA&R.

Chairman Clawson commented on the DVSO Mileage rate previously in effect at 40.5 cents per mile traveled being increased to 44.5 cents, when the IRS allows 48.5 cents. Discussion resulted in a motion by Secretary Rushlow/supported by Vice Chairman Doan that we submit a resolution to the Finance and Personnel Committee to allow the current

IRS rate of 48.5 cents per mile traveled by the Field DVSO's in performance of their required duties, in compliance with the approved Department policy. Carried.

Chairman Clawson commented on the VA&R COMMITTEE RULES OF PROCEDURES, changes that now include the VAVS Sub-Committee.

Chairman Clawson called on Eddie Brown to present his activity with the Heroes To Hometown. Flyers were passed to all present titled "DoD, American Legion Ink Support Agreement" outlining the Legion interaction with the Defense Department in co-management of the Heroes to Hometowns program. Further, he asked for each District to work with their respective posts to provide volunteers to help build ramps, mow lawns, and to help assist needy veterans and dependents in their local community, working in conjunction with the National VA&R Committee.

Committee Secretary had several questions for Mr. Nelson regarding matters of concern with processing of requests submitted to the VARO Detroit, and other concerns about in house material replacement and caseload levels, who responded with favorable answers. Mr. Nelson also responded to Vice Chairman Doan's question about Homeless Vet data, as well as informational comments provided by guests Ray Lloyd and Joe Callahan. Ronald Pearson, Chairman, VAVS/VHVS reported on the meeting just held that it was recommended their committee be allowed to hold their future meetings prior to the scheduled VA&R Committee meetings in order to give a report and attend the full meeting.

Good of the Order:

Lavern Spolarich of Post 212 informed us he provided a supply of hearing aid batteries to the Department Headquarters office, and they were available for the asking.

DVSO Ray Moore informed us of the VA issues being considered by the Legislature in Washington that would terminate certain benefits to some veterans and increase hospital patient travel mileage allowance from the present 11 cents to 48 cents.

DVSO Pat Kline told us of the amazing financial recovery made at the VAMC Saginaw. The meeting agenda distributed to all cited the next meeting will be at the Department Annual Convention, June 14-17 in Dearborn.

Adjournment:

Motion by Anthony Licari, supported by Vice Chairman Doan to adjourn the meeting. Carried.

Chairman Clawson declared the meeting adjourned at 2:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Rushlow
Secretary