

Minutes

October 17, 2017

Veterans Policy Advisory Committee

A meeting of the Veterans Policy Advisory Committee (VPAC) convened at 11:00 AM in the 3rd floor conference room of the BB&T Building, Columbia, SC.

A notice of the meeting was posted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

The following members were present:

William L. (Bill) Bethea, Jr. (Chairman), Col (Ret) Dan Beatty, Major General (Ret) George Goldsmith, Lt General (Ret) Jack Klimp, Col (Ret) Barringer F. Wingard, Jr., Senator Thomas McElveen, Major General Van McCarty (for Major General Robert E. Livingston, Jr., SC Adjutant General), John Magill (Director, SC Dept of Mental Health), Dr. Beverly A. H. Buscemi (Director SC Dept of Disabilities and Special Needs), and Todd Humphries (Ex Officio, President, SC Association of County Veterans Affairs Officers).

Guests attending were Phillip Gaillard (Veterans and Community Outreach Coordinator for Congressman Tom Rice), Tom Robillard (Military Officers Association of America, VP for SC Legislative Affairs), LTC Marion Bullwinkle (Director, Service Member & Family Care), Fred Pasley (Program Manager, Service Member & Family Care), Grey Parks (Designee for SC Dept of Employment and Workforce), Elisabeth Kovacs (Deputy Director SC Commerce Workforce Development), Charlie Farrell (Executive Coordinator SC Military Base Task Force), Haidee Stith (SC Military Base Task Force), and Sandy Claypoole (Program Manager SC Military Base Task Force).

Bill Bethea called the meeting to order. No members of the press were in attendance.

The minutes from the August 15th meeting were approved.

Major General McCarty stated that the Soldier Family Care programs advocate for and provide services to all service members. They are a one-stop shop for employment, behavioral health, wellness initiatives, and lifestyle changes...a holistic approach. Within the program, they analyze military skills that transition into civilian occupations. Those separating from the military offer the soft skills employers are looking for. Operation Palmetto Employment (OPE) helps service members in the job search – how to dress, resume writing, and interviewing skills.

LTC Marion Bulwinkle-SCNG Service Member and Family Care:

What We Are: A statewide initiative of the Governor's Office

- Launched as a statewide initiative on February 26, 2014
- Serves ALL military branches including active, retired, spouses, and immediate family members
- Serves ALL South Carolina employers
- Creates a high-quality, robust and reliable talent pipeline
- Reduces unemployment for South Carolina's military community

Effective Partnerships: To be successful, we want to build effective community partnerships with:

- The Faith-Based Community
- Military Installations
- Education and Training Programs
- Nonprofits
- Government Agencies
- Military Service Representatives
- Employers and Hiring Managers

Who We Are:

The OPE leadership team is a collaboration between several state agencies, military service organizations and community partners.

What We Want To Do: Vision

To be the model state for military employment by educating employers on the value of hiring and retaining service members and veterans.

Why We Want To Do It: The current model is broken!

- No streamlined way to find resources and opportunities in South Carolina
- Resources have difficulty finding and communicating with members they can serve
- Lack of connectivity and impact on the local level

How We Plan To Do It:

A business-driven, community supported effort to:

- Implement a holistic approach

- Build a strong Military Employment Network
- Leverage technology and best practices
- Provide support to Palmetto Military Employers

GOAL: Unite all military employment entities under one platform, with a unified message to military job seekers **and** employers.

South Carolina is a unique military-friendly state. We are home to 8 military installations – 10,000 National Guard service members, 19,000 reservists, and a military retiree community of 58,000.

Building A Business-Driven Approach

- We can host our own OPE military job fairs and hiring events – community wide, or exclusive to individual employers or industries
- We can provide employers access to our military installations for recruiting events
- Market your openings on the OPE website and social media channels and get it out to our military community

Become A Certified Palmetto Military Employer

- Apply online
- Submit a PME letter of intent on company letterhead
- Sign an ESGR statement of support (SOS)
- Attend a PME training event
- Ongoing communication is crucial for the long-term success of military job seekers and the civilian employers who hire them

Contacts:

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- Marlin Bodison, SCDEW 803-737-9936
- OperationPalmettoEmployment@gmail.com

Col (Ret) Fred Pasley, Program Manager SC National Guard Veteran Advisors

How We Can Assist:

- Connect veterans, service members, and family members with needed support and resources
- Link members with county VSOs for disability claims

- Inform members and families about the military retirement process and benefits
- Inform about education and survivors benefits
- Educate members on the process of transitioning from active duty, National Guard, and reserve to civilian life including re-employment rights (ESGR)
- Assist members with medical and service records request
- Provide assistance about VA home loans, substance abuse, and unemployed/underemployed
- Coordinate financial, legal, and health and wellness assistance
- Assist with military funeral honors and entitlements
- Coordinate behavior health intervention
- Relay information about local veteran events

How Do We Conduct Business

- Communicate with SMFC programs
- Conduct briefings and speaking engagements to Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs)
- Attend meetings with government, state, and non-profit VSOs
- Maintain a close working relationship with county VSOs
- Coordinate with local and state partners for support and resources
- Inform unit leadership about the Veteran Advisor Program
- Attend monthly drills to provide briefings to service members
- Access to National Guard systems
- Use expiration term of service and discharge roster to contact specific service members regarding benefits
- Conduct outreach to VA representatives for universities and colleges
- Inform retirees about the Veteran Advisor and SMFC programs
- Communicate with other states on best practice programs
- Attend and participate in veteran related events
- Social media and marketing materials

Grey Parks - Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW)

- Federal contractors are required to hire a certain percentage of veterans. DEW makes sure this is done.
- Actively working to put veterans to work through federally funded programs and skills training
- SC has a labor market information department that puts out unemployment rates per industry
- There are limitations on what can be done with federal funding. Not much flexibility.
- There are benefits to companies at state and federal levels that hire veterans.

Elisabeth Kovacs – SC Commerce Workforce Development

- Our job is to recruit for industry
- 4400 individuals separating from military each year
- 35% of those are undecided about whether or not they will stay in SC
- Beaufort has lots of service members transitioning, but there is little industry to support them.
- STEM Premier, a unique software program with a portion dedicated to help military members and their spouses in transition, connect with potential employers
- We need to figure out what the National Guard and VSOs are doing and better integrate their efforts so nothing falls through the cracks.

Haidee Stith announced the Military Base Task Force is now on Facebook and Twitter

Todd Humphries told us that car registration fees are waived for active duty military but not for veterans. Suggested discharged veterans should be given 30 – 45 days for fees to be waived when they return home. He also discussed that there is a tax exemption for the spouse of a service member with 100% service-connected permanent disability or active duty death, but if the service member dies from a service-connected disability the tax exemption does not exist.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15.

The next meeting will be November 21, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Claypoole

