

## **Minutes**

**June 6, 2017**

### **Veterans Policy Advisory Committee Meeting**

A meeting of the Veterans Policy Advisory Committee (VPAC) convened at 10:30 AM in the Palmetto Room at the Department of Commerce, Columbia, SC.

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

#### **The following members were present:**

William L. Bethea, Jr. (Chairman), Col (Ret) Dan Beatty, Major General (Ret) George Goldsmith, Lt General (Ret) Jack Klimp, Col (Ret) Barringer F. Wingard, Jr, Major General Robert E. Livingston, Jr. (SC Adjutant General), Howard Metcalf (Director, SC Veterans Affairs), Cheryl Stanton (SC Dept of Employment and Workforce), Sara Goldsby (Acting Director Dept of Drug, Alcohol, and other Drug Abuse Services), John Magill (Director, SC Dept of Mental Health) , Pat Maley (for Dr. Beverly A. H. Buscemi, Director of SC Dept of Disabilities and Special Needs).

Guests attending were Grey Parks (Department of Employment and Workforce), Todd Humphries (President, SC Association of County Veterans Affairs Officers), Haidee Stith (OnPoint Services, LLC), Phillip Gaillard (Veterans and Community Outreach Coordinator for Congressman Tom Rice), Charlie Farrell (Executive Coordinator SCMBTF) and Sandy Claypoole (Program Manager SCMBTF).

Chairman Bethea called the meeting to order and welcomed VPAC members and guests.

#### **Veterans Policy Advisory Committee (VPAC)**

Chairman Bethea gave an overview and background of VPAC. Legislature allowed the Joint Legislative Committee, which was the predecessor to VPAC, to dissolve. Governor Haley issued an executive order on September 26, 2016, creating VPAC and placing it under the MBTF. Mission of VPAC is to address veterans' issues. What is being done, not being done, and how we can do better. Chairman Bethea has been working with Governor McMaster's office to fill the four vacant positions of two members of the Senate and two members of the House of Representatives for the VPAC.

#### **Economic Impact Study**

Chairman Bethea also introduced the Economic Impact Study and discussed the \$24.1 Billion impact the military has on the state of SC. 417,000 veterans are noted in the study, but that number is understated because there are many veterans that haven't been counted because they haven't used any US Veterans Affairs (USVA) services. The number could be as much as 800,000. How can we identify those not counted? How can we get better news coverage of the economic impact? Ex: Rotary Club presentations.

General Livingston offered help through Public Affairs of the Guard to increase communications.

### **Howard Metcalf (Director of SC Veterans Affairs)**

Gave the history of the SC Veterans Affairs (SCVA) office, which was established in 1927. In 1993 it moved to OEPP, Office of Executive Policy and Programs directly under the Governor. In 2015 it moved under the Department of Administration Director, appointed by the Governor. Offices in all hospitals and the Veterans Benefit Office. Also in charge of state run cemetery in Anderson. Handles denied claims appeals for veterans. Runs free tuition program. Gives financial aid to Reservists and National Guard returning from deployment. Works with VSOs, Veterans Service Organization, to discuss veterans' issues. Gives oversight to nursing home issues. Twenty-two employees. Accredits all 46 County Veterans Affairs Officers. County delegation selects County Veterans Affairs Officers. State Office cannot remove these officers. Does not accredit other VSOs, like VFW, American Legion. State funded, no federal funds. No oversight in SC for VSO's. VSO's are supposed to register with Secretary of State. Lots of VSOs not registered in SC.

DD214 is in the process of going electronic. There is a negative financial impact when underreporting veterans. Ex: money for veterans' nursing homes is based on veteran population.

### **Todd Humphries (President of Association of Veterans Affairs Officers)**

Association meets twice a year to provide training. Association trying to get cohesion across the state. Program called Vetraspec ties in all counties to transfer records.

Counties foot the bill for county veterans officers. \$260,000 from state for all 46 county VA offices. Need twice that to be effective. Need technology. Some Veterans Affairs Officers are not veterans.

Put on best practices leadership training. SCVETS magazine published with partner SCTHRIVES. It is a resource guide. Published 10,000 magazines. USC College of Social Work has established master's level program, part of which deals with veterans.

Some VA offices have vehicles to transport veterans for medical care, drivers have to be certified by the USVA. Need leeway in using vehicles for other veterans' needs besides healthcare.

VetraSpec shows what each county is doing. Howard Metcalf does not have authority to mandate use of VetraSpec, which is posted on a DoD server. At present time DoD is responsible for security of data. VetraSpec sends information to DBMS system. Twenty-seven states use the VetraSpec system. No accountability of County VA offices.

### **Guests**

Charlie Farrell introduced Phillip Gaillard with Congressman Rice's office and Chairman Bethea introduced Grey Parks with Dept of Employment and Workforce.

## **Veterans Groups**

Chairman Bethea said there are many groups that claim to work for veterans that are not accredited. There was an open conversation about the possible ways to get an accurate count of veterans in our state and how that number could impact legislation, as well as the number of nursing homes for veterans.

Chairman Bethea asked the members about monthly meetings and it was decided the next meeting would be July 11, 2017.

There being nothing further to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM.