

Montana Board of Veteran Affairs

Meeting Minutes

May 2020 Board Meeting

Date	May 21, 2020
Time	2:00 p.m.
Location	HAFRC G6 Conference Room, Tele-Conference
Call-In Number	406-324-5997, ID 1144

Attendance

Members	Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman Peter Olson Vice-Chairman Clancy Sivertsen Ronald Milam Gary Swartz Mitch Godfrey Dr. Dan Edelman Mike Stone Ryan Beston Paul Little Light 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kelly Ackerman, Administrator Taryn Phillips, Administrative Support Casey McInerney, Budget Analyst Curt Aasved, Cemetery Program Manager
Non-Voting Members	Guest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jason Smith Thomas Finch Tova Reddick Joren Underdahl Mike Waters Denny Lenoir 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gary White, Adjutant, American Legion Col. Lee Hyslop, Special Forces Association Kurt Nelson Todd Dunlap, VHA
	Absent
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voting Member Brenda York Non-Voting Member MG Matthew Quinn Non-Voting Member Marvin Weatherwax Jr. Non-Voting Member Anson Nygaard

Meeting Minutes

Discussion Topic	Speaker	Time
Pledge of Allegiance, roll call, introductions, and welcome	Chairman Pete Olson	14:02
Approval of Minutes	Chairman Pete Olson	14:05
<p>One change to the previous meeting minutes; present guest name is spelt Kurt Nelson. Mike Stone moved to approve the minutes of the January 23rd, 2020 meeting; motion was seconded. Motion carried by unanimous consent.</p>		
Remembering the passing of a Board member	Chairman Olson	14:07
<p>Chairman Olson held a moment of silence for the recent passing of Board member, Dick Juvik.</p>		

Meeting Minutes

Discussion Topic	Speaker	Time
VHA Updates	Tova Reddick	14:08
<p>Tova Reddick presented the update for the VHA procedures for COVID-19. These procedures include pre-screening patients, providing masks and gloves, postponing non-urgent procedures and appointments, not allowing visitors, and following both State and Federal guidance. Montana will be moving into Phase 2 on June 1st allowing some of these restrictions to be lifted. Information about the reopening has been blasted through My Health Vet and emails for veterans to reschedule cancelled appointments and procedures. Patient advocates and Care in the Community has been in contact with patients to provide assistance and information.</p>		
Virtual Memorial Day Ceremony	Administrator Kelly Ackerman	14:16
<p>Administrator Ackerman decided to conduct a virtual Memorial Day Ceremony this year to follow the state's guidance for COVID-19. The ceremony was recorded on May 7th and includes a firing canon, flags rising, wreath ceremony, firing detail, TAPS, National Anthem played on the violin, and speeches from MG Quinn, Casey McInerney, and Chaplain Daum. Lewis and Clark Veterans Council and the 89th Montana Calvary volunteered to perform the ceremony. Montana National Guard Public Affairs recorded and edited the video, and the video will be available to the public via news stations, news papers and social media the weekend of May 23rd and aired on May 25th. The length of the original video is around 17 minutes.</p>		
Cemetery COVID-19 procedures according to NCA guidelines	Curt Aasved	14:30
<p>On March 29th, MVAD was given the guidance from NCA to postpone all committal services until further notice. Burials were able to continue but family members had to view the interment from a distance or in their vehicle. Veterans who were buried without a committal service will be eligible to have a service at the cemetery at a later date.</p> <p>On May 19th, MVAD received guidance from the Governor's office stating on June 1st, Montana will be moving into Phase 2 for reopening. MVAD made the decision to reopening the cemeteries for committal services. Attached is the Funeral Honors Policy providing information on committal services.</p> <p>MSVC will be able to schedule volunteers for Military Honors and the Montana National Guards new chaplain, Chaplain Daum, starting June 1st.</p>		
VSO procedures due to COVID-19 Governor's guidance	Administrator Kelly Ackerman	14:32
<p>All Veteran Service Officers started working remotely on March 23rd. Some Veteran Service Officers began working in the office on April 27th and the Administrative Office began working full time in the office on April 27th. Before COVID-19, all the employees received laptops and the equipment to work out of the office so the transition to working remotely went very smoothly.</p> <p>Some offices were not able to reopen because of the location of the office. MVAD is reopening and slowly lifting restrictions starting June 1st. All MVAD employees were provided masks, hand sanitizer and disinfectant.</p>		
Staffing postponements due to state budget concerns	Administrator Ackerman	14:35
<p>The governor's office contacted MVAD to give guidance regarding hiring new staff. Due to budget concerns, any positions that are not currently being filled will be postponed. For MVAD, the positions being postponed are a Veteran Service Officer in Helena and Great Falls, and a part-time groundskeeper in Helena.</p> <p>Administrator Ackerman then reviewed the statistics for the veteran service offices and the cemeteries.</p>		

Meeting Minutes

Discussion Topic	Speaker	Time
MVAD budget overview	Casey McInerney	14:39
<p>The funding information provided is current to the end of April 2020. MVAD is on track to end the fiscal year without any deficiencies. Due to COVID-19, MVAD had an excess amount of money from vacancy savings and cancellation of outreach. The governor's staff requested any excess amount of money to be returned to general funds, and MVAD was able to return \$20,000. Although MVAD is on track for fiscal year 2020, there is only \$90,000 available for the cemeteries and the cemeteries do not get a lumpsum of cash at the beginning of each year. MVAD is working on bringing more revenue to the cemetery budgets such as increasing spousal interment fees.</p>		

Issues / Comments / Questions

Joren Underdahl - Both MVH and EMVH are working hard to remain free of COVID-19. Visitation remains restricted, screening, and preventative measures are in place, testing is ongoing, and contingency plans are ready in the event we have a positive case.

The Southwest Montana Veterans Home (SWMVH) construction is coming along. There are detailed updates and pictures at www.SWMVH.mt.gov

A request for proposal for operations of the home closes Friday, May 22nd. Grand Opening is planned for November 11th, 2020.

Clancy Sivertsen – The Little Shell Tribe will be obtaining a van to transport veterans.

Great Falls will also be providing free COVID-19 testing on May 29th and 30th at 1529 Stuckey Rd via drive thru. Testing will be conducted from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. each day.

Chairman Olson – Elections for Chairman will be held at the next Board meeting in September.

Administrator Ackerman will send the information for board members to apply for Chairman.

Public Comment

Lee Hyslop with the Special Forces Association made comments about how members in his chapter struggle to find resources because they are not Montana residents. Lee is trying to find contact information, events, and general information to add to his monthly newsletter.

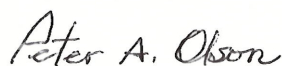
Administrator Ackerman suggested for Lee to send MVAD the next newsletter, and MVAD can blast it to all board members. This way MVAD and Special Forces Association can start to initiate communication.

Next Meeting

September 24th, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. in Fort Harrison. Traveling Voting Board members can contact Casey McInerney to arrange travel reimbursement.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.



Peter Olson, Chairman



Taryn Phillips, Recorder

1

2

3