



Present: Mr. Joe Higgins, Chair
Ms. Samantha Brown-Parks, Secretary
Mr. Kevin Loncher, Member
Mr. John Phillips, Member
Mr. Destry Rogers, Member
Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner
Mr. Pete Peterson, Veterans Service Board, Liaison to Foundation Board
Ms. Amy Sillmon, Attorney General's Office
Mr. Mark Demers, Foundation CEO, Chief Development Officer and CFO, GDVS
Mr. Kerry Dyer, Foundation COO, Deputy Commissioner and COO, GDVS
Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information and External Affairs, GDVS
Ms. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS
Ms. Jarelle Thompson, Homeless Coordinator, GDVS
Ms. Irene Mackson, Business Support Analyst, GDVS
Ms. Raven Holstick, Transition and Employment Coordinator, GDVS

On Thursday, April 3, 2025, the Veterans Service Foundation Board meeting was held by video/tele-conference.

Pre-meeting, Mr. Rogers asked Ms. Thompson to contact Sparrow's Nest in Athens.

The members listed above were present.

Mr. Higgins called the meeting to order at 10:20 a.m. and acknowledged the lack of a quorum. He decided to have everyone share information that doesn't require a quorum.

OFFICER REPORTS

Mr. Demers reported that he started IRS Form 990 for the 2024 taxes. It should be finished next week and then reviewed by the State Accounting Office. Once they sign off on it, Mr. Demers will send it to the board members and then submit it to the IRS.

Mr. Dyer had nothing to report.

Ms. Hammond wasn't present but had sent out the report below for members to review before the meeting.

The funds in the account are allocated as follows:

General Funds	\$40,321.15
Homelessness	\$ 106.21
New Homes	\$ 1,025.00
State Benefit Book Ads	\$ 59.23
Suicide Prevention Hardware	\$ 1,700.00
Suicide Prevention Summit	\$ 0.00
Women & Diversity	\$ 254.33
TOTAL	\$43,466.12

Commissioner Ross explained the decrease in funds. The new resource guide is in all GDVS offices and has been shared with our state legislators who are very impressed and supportive of the publication. The Suicide Prevention Summit funds were used to pay the deposit for the event coming up in Savannah in June. The Women Veterans Luncheon was held last week, and next year's will be held somewhere in the Atlanta area.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Loncher stated that the gifting committee needs to have a meeting. Gen. Hilmes has contacts at United Way who may be able to help with some donations.

DIRECTOR ACTIVITY REPORTS

Mr. Loncher stated that the Veterans Action Committee of Columbus met with Kim Scofi for a We Care Fair discussion and planning session. As they approach the date, Mr. Loncher will share flyers with the Foundation Board. Also, he is on the leadership team of the Plummer Home for Homeless Veterans and Fort Benning sent some people in to build a laundry room for a 100 year old home. Mr. Loncher announced the 3rd Annual Crawfish Boil on May 17 to raise funds and awareness. Commissioner Ross and First Lady Kemp will both be celebrity chefs.

Mr. Rogers sent Mr. Higgins an article about Louisiana opening up the homes to the guard and reserves. Asked if Georgia plans to do this. He also sent an article about the Veteran Buddy Link, which is trying to connect veterans together so people know who is nearby and so they know who they can reach out to for help. He is still waiting for the AG's Office to let him know about the legality of building nursing homes with the intent of a re-purchase from the state. Ms. Sillmon from the AG's Office stated that they are still researching the legality of that scenario.

Thursday, April 3, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.
Minutes - Veterans Service Foundation Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Mr. Higgins stated that he did receive the two articles and will include them in the email he is putting together for the Board members. He has seen many posts about the Women Veterans Luncheon, and they are all great reviews. He plans to attend the Suicide Prevention Summit in Savannah in June. He has been working on HB 108 and sharing information with veterans on where they can receive resources and assistance. He has referred many to the Savannah GDVS Office and encouraged the Board members to share information on the free resources available for help.

Mr. Phillips is working on HB 108 as well. He wants to have a conversation with the Senate and House to get the right language and put teeth into some of the bills to help protect our veterans. Mr. Higgins stated that it is difficult to get in touch with State legislators. Mr. Phillips wants to figure out a way to meet with state legislators more easily. Mr. Rogers questioned whether or not Board members can reach out to elected officials. Foundation Board members were reminded they can talk to legislators as concerned citizens, but not as Foundation Board members, especially if it's a monetary concern. The Veterans Service Board represents GDVS on funding issues.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Ross gave legislative updates. HB 53 Burial Equity Act – allows a reserve or guardsman who has fulfilled their initial tour of duty to be buried at a cost in a state veterans cemetery. They are still prohibited in the national cemetery here. We would charge what the VA will reimburse for this service. HB 266 Military Retirement Tax Exemption for a \$65,000 flat exemption has been approved and is now subject to the Governor's approval. HB 108 has been tabled but it could come up attached to another bill.

Commissioner Ross announced that we received the \$2 million in funds to open the sub-acute unit, for people who need skilled nursing home care for mental and behavioral health support. That's an additional 73 beds we will be able to open in Milledgeville. Milledgeville and Augusta received a \$1.5 million increase due to healthcare costs. In the FY26 budget, both the House and Senate are recommending a 40 bed increase. We are looking to open the sub-acute therapy unit by September 1.

Commissioner Ross spoke with the Executive Director of Health and Memorials and from the perspective of the VA and VA funding, if we purchase a home that has already been constructed the challenge would be making sure that between the State and the VA grant program, we have the operational funds available. It looks doable from a VA funding perspective. They will allow us to purchase a pre-existing structure. We then have to have state funds to operate.

NASDVA will be held in Savannah in August 2026. We will be reaching out to the Foundation for help and support (gift bags, etc.).

Thursday, April 3, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.
Minutes - Veterans Service Foundation Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Dr. Greentree and Fiserv helped sponsor a Legislative Breakfast last year with Senator Payne and Representative Bonner, the chairs of our veterans' committees. She is willing to host another one this year. All the Board members were on board with moving forward with this event. Mr. Loncher suggested using the National Infantry Museum in Columbus and thinks we could possibly get Gov. Kemp to attend. It may be sometime in May.

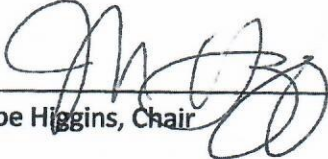
NEW BUSINESS

No business was conducted due to the lack of a quorum.

Mr. Higgins announced that the next meeting will be on May 1st at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Higgins adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:03 a.m.

SIGNED:



Joe Higgins, Chair

ATTEST:



Samantha Brown-Parks, Secretary