

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Present Ms. Patricia Ross, Chair
 Ms. Takosha Swan, Vice-Chair
 Mr. Shawn Hanley, Secretary
 Mr. John Kubinec, Member
 Mr. Eddie Whitted, Member
 Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Member
 Mr. Timothy Paslawski, Member
 Mr. Mike Roby, Commissioner

Visitors: Mr. George Canavaggio, Assistant Commissioner, Field Operations & Appeals, GDVS
Present Mr. Mark Bannister, Assistant Commissioner, Administration, Health & Memorials
 Mr. Kerry Dyer, Director, Operations Division, GDVS
 Ms. Catherine Graeber, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office
 Ms. Shelley Seinberg, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office
 Mr. Vince Pritchett, Director, Veterans Benefits South Region, GDVS
 Mr. Dale Bell, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS
 Mr. Doug Middleton, Chair of the Veterans Service Foundation, Inc.
 Ms. Ramona Roper, Director, Training and Professional Development, GDVS
 Mr. Bob Norman, Training and Professional Development, GDVS
 Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information Division, GDVS
 Mr. Chris Hambright, Director, Accounting, GDVS
 Ms. Shelly Ann Simpson, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS
 Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW Service Officer, Appeals Division, GDVS
 Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home
 Ms. Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, GWVH, Milledgeville, GA
 Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS
 Mr. William Wilson, Network Administrator
 Mr. Jerry Lahr, Network Administrator
 Mr. Mark Shreve, State Commander, American Legion, Department of Georgia
 Ms. Susan Hall, State Auxiliary President, American Legion, Department of Georgia
 Mr. Willie Atkinson, Alt State Commander, DAV, Department of Georgia
 Mr. Rick White, Director, Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame
 Mr. Dan Holtz, Secretary, GMOAA
 Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and Vetlanta
 Mr. Kevin Hammond, State Commander, VFW, Department of Georgia
 Ms. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS
 Ms. Veda Brooks, Director of Women Veterans Office, GDVS
 Mr. Bobby Davis, Director, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS
 Ms. Shareka Monday-Robinson, HR Generalist, GDVS
 Ms. Dawn Thomas, Appeals Division, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer
 Mr. Steven Fay, Training & Professional Development Division, GDVS
 Ms. Monica Dorsey, Communications & Outreach Specialist, GDVS

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Ms. Anelia Moore, OPB
Ms. Vanessa Cardwell, Visitor
Ms. Amber Mack, Visitor
Ms. Debbie Gregory, Administrative Specialist
Ms. Julie Hammond, Confidential Secretary to Commissioner Mike Roby, GDVS

On Wednesday, August 25, 2021, the Veterans Service Board meeting was held in person and by video/tele-conference.

Ms. Ross called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. Mr. Whitted gave the invocation. Mr. Paslawski led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Ms. Ross welcomed the guests and performed a "roll call" of people listed above.

Mr. Whitted made a motion to approve the August Agenda. Mr. Kopsie seconded the motion. The motion passed by roll call vote.

Ms. Swan made a motion to approve the June minutes, which were previously distributed for members to review. Mr. Whitted seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The following reports were submitted from the Veteran Service Organizations:

Mr. Doug Middleton, Chair of the Veterans Service Foundation Board and MOPH Representative

MOPH has raised its lifetime membership fee from \$50 to \$200 effective 1 September. The Foundation now has a bank account and a PO Box. The address is PO Box 72444, Marietta, GA 30007. Donations can be made payable to Georgia Veterans Service Foundation. He has accrued the costs of ordering checks and opening the PO Box. He went on to thank Charlotte May for her work on three possible logos for the Foundation. He showed them to the room and said there is an even split with the Board members on which to choose. Mr. Middleton shared that he has almost completed form 1023 and is working on obtaining bios from the Board members. He would like to schedule an in person meeting here at GDVS in September.

Mr. Willie Atkinson, Alt State Commander, DAV

Mr. Atkinson informed us that the DAV has a new commander – Emil Kemp, who took the place of Commander Smalls.

Mr. Kevin Hammond, State Commander, VFW

Mr. Hammond is the new representative for the VFW. He discussed a motorcycle ride this weekend and also an upcoming concert in Atlanta.

Mr. Dan Holtz, GMOAA

Mr. Holtz stated that they are planning on having their annual convention on October 7-10 at the Marriott in Columbus, Georgia. It will be in person, Covid permitting. The awards banquet will be on October 9th and the national president will be attending a memorial service on October 10th to close out the convention.

Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and Vetlanta

Ms. Stevens has not yet relocated to Japan. Georgia Military Women continues to grow, having small meetings – most meetings are virtual. Many members have come down with Covid and they are encouraging the vaccines. Vetlanta has had to postpone their summit on September 8, with no new date yet chosen.

Mr. Rick White, Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame

Governor Kemp has decided to relocate the Georgia Hall of Fame from the Floyd Veterans Memorial Building to the Capitol. There are 131 veterans currently in the Georgia Hall of Fame and the deadline for the next class is the last Friday in August. They are looking to have more women nominated and the website to nominate someone is www.gmvhof.org. The public is invited on the first Saturday in November to the inductees' banquet in Columbus, Georgia at 12:00 pm.

Commander Mark Shreve, American Legion:

Ms. Ross asked Commander Shreve if he had anything to add to his report. They recently had their officer transition and he took over for Mr. Asberry. He added that their officers are in Phoenix, Arizona for their National Convention. He will be headed there today. They are excited to be having in-person meetings again.

Georgia Posts: 223

Georgia Membership: 40,000+

American Legion Events (August)

- Department Officer Transition
- American Legion Committee Chairperson Meeting
- Post Officer Installations throughout Georgia
- Finalize Department Committees

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Department Officer Organizational Meeting
- Communicate Established Goals

Covid Defense

- Posts are recovering and resuming normal operations within local, state and federal guidelines.
- American Legion Department of Georgia is assisting Posts and providing input on decisions concerning Covid Threats and Covid Exposure.
- American Legion District Officers located throughout the 12 Districts are monitoring local outbreaks and providing input to Posts and the Department.

GOAL FOCUS		
Goal	Accountable Officer	Status
Visit 100 Posts	Commander Shreve	On-Track
Membership	Sr. Vice Commander Simmons	On-Track
VAVS Hospital	Legionnaire Martin	On-Track
VA&R Rehab	Alt NEC Youngblood	On-Track
Fundraising	Adjutant Debro	On-Track
Post Attendance	Department Jr. Vices	On-Track

Headwinds (Challenges)

- Hesitation for Post Commanders on full recovery plans due to recent and new Covid strains.
- New American Legion software (personifymylegion.org) implementation is slower than expected.

Tailwinds (Opportunities)

- The American Legion Officer Corps for 2021-2022 has a nice blend of new and seasoned officers for the year.
- Social Media engagements have increased 400% in the first six weeks.
- The Department is seeing a shift from an oversight organization to a service and assistance organization.

Ms. Dawn Thomas, Appeals Division, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer:

- The Department Service Officer attended the American Legion 9th District Member's Meeting. Share Upcoming Plans to conduct training for the District Service Officers and Post Service Officers
- The Department Service Officer Attended the Quarterly VSO/CMA Meeting with Mr. Brian Morgan. We couldn't remain connected due to technical issues.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- The Department Service Office will attend a VSO/CMA Meeting on the 26th of Aug with the New Director Tony Milons
- The Assistant Department Service Officer (Ed Kent) assisted 12 veterans with VA benefits related inquires this month.
- Upcoming events- American Legion National Convention on August 27, 2021 – September 2, 2021 in Phoenix AZ.

Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW:

- The Department Service Officer attended the Department of Georgia VFW and Auxiliary State Convention on June 16 - 20, 2021 held at the Macon Marriott City Center, 240 Coliseum Dr., Macon, GA 31217.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Inaugural Women Veteran's Day Luncheon Event Program hosted by Kaiser Permanente on June 21, 2021 at 1130AM – 1PM at the Georgia Aquarium 225 Baker St NW, Atlanta GA 30313. During the luncheon women were awarded and recognized for their outstanding service in the veteran community.
- The Department Service Officer attended a Webinar hosted by the FDIC – Bridge to Economic Inclusion The speakers presented information on the benefit to having a bank account. The presenters indicate that many of their financial institutions are participating in the Veterans Benefits Banking Program (VBBP). The webinar meeting was held June 29, 2021 from 1-3PM.
- The Department Service Officer participated in a VFW GA Post 12180 Recruiting Drive/Independence Day Meet and Greet at the Walmart in Hampton GA on July 04, 2021 from 10AM – 2PM. I provided information to veterans and their family members on federal and state benefits.
- The Department Service Officer attended a Veteran of Foreign Wars NVS Update Forum via Zoom meeting held on July 07, 2021 at 3PM. During the meeting we were provided update information on the changes within the VA Benefit system.
- The Department Service Officer attended GDVS monthly training class via the state training website. The GDVS training held on July 16, 2021 provided updated information on Proposed Reductions.
- The Department Service Officer attended the VFW 122nd National Convention held on July 31 – August 03, 2021 in Kansas City, Missouri. I was appointed as a delegate for the Veterans Service Resolution Committee. We reviewed, discussed, and then voted on resolutions to present to Congress regarding VA benefits.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- The Department Service Officer attended the Veteran of Foreign Wars GA District #3 training session for commanders and staff member held on July 24, 2010 from 9AM – 2PM. I provided information on the duties and responsibilities of the Post and District Service Officers.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Monthly VSO/CMA meeting with Brian Morgan, CMA on August 12, 2021 at 10AM. CMA announced the upcoming Quarterly VSO meeting and the introduction of the new Atlanta Regional Officer Director, scheduled for August 26, 2021.

Ms. Ross asked Commissioner Roby if he had anything to add to his report. He started by introducing a new employee with GDVS – Ms. Monica Dorsey, the new Communication and Outreach Specialist in the Public Information Division. He stated that he had recently been on the road to visit 12 field offices in South Georgia. Commissioner Roby named the Employee of the Quarter – Mr. Rico Johnson. He then told everyone that he and Director of Operations Kerry Dyer would be attending a C & P Ceremony in Thomaston, Georgia on Saturday, August 28th, where they will present 70 certificates and pins.

Commissioner Roby then announced that he would be retiring effective January 1, 2022. This decision was a result of conversations he had with his family. He thanked everyone for the opportunity he had been given to serve as Commissioner for the past 6 years.

Commissioner Mike Roby, Georgia Department of Veterans Service:

On Wednesday, June 23, 2021, Commissioner Roby hosted a meeting at 11:00 a.m., along with Senator Kay Kirkpatrick, for representatives of Cobb County in order to discuss ways for their county to assist veterans. Also in attendance were Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio and Women's Veterans Office Director Veda Brooks.

On Saturday, June 26, 2021, Commissioner Roby was the keynote speaker at the American Legion Convention in Duluth, Georgia. Also in attendance were Director of Operations Kerry Dyer, Women's Veterans Office Director Veda Brooks, Mark Demers from the Training and Development Division, Dawn Thomas from the Appeals Division, and Belinda Boldoe from the Appeals Division.

On Monday, June 28, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a staff meeting at 8:30 a.m.

On Thursday, July 1, 2021, Commissioner Roby and Veterans Service Board Chair Trish Ross had a Zoom meeting at 10:00 a.m. to discuss the budget.

On Friday, July 2, 2021, Commissioner Roby spoke at the Veteran Anthem Concert Live with Takosha M. Swan and the Alpharetta Symphony Orchestra. Other employees of GDVS also attended.

On Tuesday, July 6, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a staff meeting at 8:30 a.m.

On Tuesday, July 6, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a Director's Meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Wednesday, July 14, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a staff meeting at 8:30 a.m.

On Wednesday, July 14, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a Finance meeting at 10:30 a.m.

On Monday, July 26, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended the swearing in ceremony of new Board member Timothy Paslawski. Also in attendance from the department were Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, Assistant Commissioner Mark Bannister, and Director of Operations Kerry Dyer. Mr. Paslawski and his family were also given a tour of the GDVS offices.

On Monday, July 26, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a leadership team meeting at 1:00 p.m. with Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, Assistant Commissioner Mark Bannister, and Director of Operations Kerry Dyer.

On Tuesday, July 27, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a staff meeting at 8:30 a.m.

On Tuesday, July 27, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a meeting with the War Homes regarding Covid-19 vaccines.

On Wednesday, July 28, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a Director's Meeting at 10:00 a.m.

On Thursday, July 29, 2021, Commissioner Roby called each of the field offices to encourage the employees and let them know how appreciated each of them are.

On Tuesday, August 3, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a staff meeting 8:30 a.m.

On Wednesday, August 4, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended a meeting with Drew Craig at 2:00 p.m. regarding a possible VEAC here in Georgia.

On Thursday, August 5, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended a conference call with Senator Warnock at 11:00 a.m. to give him an update on the services we provide to veterans in Georgia. Also in attendance were Assistant Commissioner Mark Bannister and Director of Operations Kerry Dyer.

On Thursday, August 5, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended a Zoom meeting with NASDVA's Southeast District at 3:00 p.m.

On Sunday, August 8, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended the Change of Command Ceremony with the Georgia National Guard. Also in attendance was Director of Operations Kerry Dyer.

On Monday, August 9, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a staff meeting 8:30 a.m.

On Friday, August 13, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended a meeting at the Milledgeville War Home at 10:00 a.m. Also in attendance were Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, Assistant Commissioner Mark Bannister and Director of Operations Kerry Dyer.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Monday, August 16, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a staff meeting at 8:30 a.m.

On Tuesday, August 17, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended the Governor's State Proclamation for ESGR Week at the Capitol at 1:40 p.m.

On Thursday, August 19, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended the Work Force Development Board Zoom Meeting at 9:00 a.m.

On Monday, August 23, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a staff meeting at GDVS at 8:30 a.m.

On Monday, August 23, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended a Zoom meeting with NASDVA's Southeast District at 11:00 a.m.

Ms. Ross asked Mr. Canavaggio if he had anything to add. Mr. Canavaggio went over the Department of Veterans Affairs COVID-19 Vaccination policy located near the end of this document. Those who are unvaccinated, for any reason, will be required to be masked the entire time they are on the VA's property.

Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, Field Operations and Appeals:

GENERAL

- On July 20, 2021, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, Operations Director Kerry Dyer, IT and Network Administrator William Wilson went to Columbus Georgia to inspect the new office at 2100 Comer Ave. We spoke with the landlord about some minor changes and State Properties gave us approval to move in. The new office will be open by August 15, 2021.
- On July 22, 2021, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, attended the Governor's Challenge Task Force Meeting at the GDVS Central Office. We discussed Suicide Prevention Policies, updating action plans.
- On July 26, 2021, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, attended the swearing in ceremony of GDVS Board Member Tim Paslawski.
- On August 11, 2021, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended a zoom meeting with the Cobb Collaborative Veterans Strategy Team. They discussed how they can work with us on helping veterans in Cobb County.
- On August 13, 2021, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, Commissioner Roby, Assistant Commissioner Mark Bannister, and Director of Operations Kerry Dyer met with Tommy Bryan (Luke Bryan's father). We discussed the department's mission and the department's non-profit foundation.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Welcome Home Letters:
 - 5 Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in July.
- Department Electronic Claim's Assistance Processing System (Vetra Spec) currently 307,568 entries, this is an increase of 1,422 from June 23, 2021.

PROJECTED POSITIONS

- Current openings in Waycross, Columbus, LaGrange, Statesboro, Thomasville

Ms. Ross asked Ms. Brooks if she had anything to add to her report. Ms. Brooks stated that they are offering more classes for the Suicide Prevention Task Force. They are also doing more social media ads. They have plans to do some classes in person at various police departments, offering evening classes and online courses during daytime hours. The Red Cross is offering classes to cope with stress. The Georgia National Guard family department is reaching out to youth. There is a planned October event on reducing stress at a Coweta County park, which will hopefully be held, as planned, outside. Ms. Brooks is working on placing families evicted due to the end of the moratorium. Some women's shelters are converting to family shelters. Supportive Services for Veterans Families is offering temporary shelter to qualifying veterans. There is an in-person women veterans event planned with Cobb County.

Mr. Whitted asked Ms. Brooks about the suicides. Ms. Brooks stated that there has been a decrease in suicides, which has resulted in more people coming in for assistance.

Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)

- June 22, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in Women Veteran Meeting and Meet with Women Veterans from American Legion.
- June 23, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in the Domestic Violence Training, and the Georgia's Opioid Crisis: Health Disparities in Underrepresented Populations.
- June 24, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in The National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), conference call.
- June 29, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in an Informal Hearing, and the Challenges faced by LGBTQ.
- June 30, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated on a panel for PTSD Discussion on Stream Yard App.
- July 1, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in Veteran Court, Newnan.
- July 7, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in the Georgia Governor's Task Force TA Meeting.
- July 8, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in two VA Hearings and VA Homeless Team meeting.
- July 21, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in SMVF TA meeting.
- July 22, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in The Governor's Challenge VA/SAMHSA Governor's Task Force Meeting.
- August 4, 2021, Ms. Brooks visited 6 Gun Shops and made presentations for support of Gun Safety.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- August 5, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in the Lethal Means Safety Community of Practice Call.
- August 6, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in UPDATE: Briefing about Resources for Veterans Experiencing Housing Instability Amid the Expiration of the Federal Eviction Moratorium.
- August 10, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in the Tornado Response Meeting Coweta County.
- August 11, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated Women Veterans Health Committee Monthly Meeting and Women Veteran's Event Meeting Cobb County
- August 17, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in the Coweta County Family Connection.
- August 18, 2021, Ms. Brooks participated in a BVA Hearing.
- August 23 to 24, 2021
- 1 Ms. Brooks participated in SMVF Georgia Governor's Challenge Post Site Visit.

Current committees

- Women's Veterans Health Committee (monthly meetings and joint outreach events)
- Georgia State VFW Homeless Committee
- VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Georgia Team
- Atlanta Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
- The Birdwell Foundation Board Member
- Coweta County Race, Equity, and Justice Committee

Ramona Roper, Training and Professional Development Division:

- July 13, 2021, Steven Fay, and Ramona Roper made site visits to deliver Code of Federal Regulations manuals to the Macon VFSO and Warner Robins/VECTR
- July 15, 2021, Steven Fay, and Ramona Roper made site visits to deliver Code of Federal Regulations manuals to the Arcadia VFSO
- July 16, 2021, Steven Fay, and Ramona Roper made site visits to deliver Code of Federal Regulations manuals to the Canton VFSO, Cartersville
- July 20, 2021, Steven Fay, and Ramona Roper made site visits to deliver Code of Federal Regulations manuals to the Dalton and Lafayette VFSO
- July 21, 2021, Steven Fay, and Ramona Roper made site visits to deliver Code of Federal Regulations manuals to the Augusta VAMC VFSO, Augusta GWVH, Grovetown VFSO and Washington VFSO
- August 3, 2021, Ramona Roper, and Steven Fay attended the Unite Us briefing at the GDVS Central Office
- August 4, 2021, Steven Fay, and Ramona Roper made a site visit to Demorest VFSO and a visit to the Blairsville VFSO to deliver Code of Federal Regulations manuals
- August 5, 2021, Steven Fay, and Ramona Roper made a site visit to deliver Code of Federal Regulations manuals to the Hartwell VFSO

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- August 6, 2021, Steven Fay, and Ramona Roper made a site visit to deliver Code of Federal Regulations manuals to the Griffin VFSO

Upcoming Events:

- Continued ongoing support and monthly trainings to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices.
- Preparations for Annual Training (in-person and possibly virtually)

Ms. Ross asked Ms. Simpson if she had any additions to her report. Ms. Simpson wanted to thank Dale Bell and Vince Pritchett for allowing the field offices to be used as hearing rooms. This helps the veterans in that they do not have to travel to Atlanta for hearings. Appeals are picking up.

Shelly-Ann Simpson, Director of Appeals

- The total number of actual hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for June 2021 was 55 while the number for July 2021 was 87.
- The total number of pre-hearing actions for June 2021 was 236 while the numbers for July 2021 was 253. Post-hearing actions was 83 and 95 respectively.
- The total number of correspondence conducted by the Appeals Division (with veterans, BVA/VA employees, and VSO field offices) was 1794 for June and 1874 for July.
- As of August 1, 2021, the Atlanta VA Regional Office completed the following claims for the Service Organizations represented by GDVS:

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid out
Compensation	99,431	\$168,205,435
DIC	2,868	\$4,125,532
Survivor Pension	903	\$671,655
Veteran Pension	1,884	\$1,971,365
Grand Total	105,086	\$174,973,988

Ms. Ross asked Mr. Bell if he had any changes to his report. There are no changes, but he wanted to highlight that everyone is working hard and bringing money into Georgia. In July 1.4 million in claims were rewarded.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

NORTH GA, Dale Bell, North Area Director

- On June 27th, John McKenzie of Augusta represented GDVS and gave remarks at a street naming in honor of CPT Hattie Elam, USN (Ret).
- On July 9th, Emily Waters of Cartersville represented GDVS at a Retirement Briefing at Clay National Guard Center in Marietta.
- On July 13th, James Hood of Marietta gave a Benefits Briefing to veterans at the Senior Center in Smyrna.
- On July 14th, Kyle Hungarter of Marietta gave a Benefits Briefing to veterans at the Senior Center in Marietta.
- On July 27th, Mark Churning of Washington and Ron Cason of Athens gave a Benefits Briefing to residents of Savannah Courts Senior Living at Lake Oconee (Greensboro).
- On August 3rd, Bill Smith of Lafayette gave a Benefits Briefing to members of the Rotary Club in Lafayette.
- On August 5th and August 7th, Marie Lundquist of Oakwood gave Benefits Briefings to veteran employees at Williams Sonoma Distribution Center in Braselton.
- On August 9th, Winslow Hill of Grovetown was recognized and introduced at their monthly City Council Meeting in Grovetown.
- On August 10th, Christine Collins of Blairsville gave a Benefits Briefing at the monthly Vet-to-Vet Café at the Civic Center in Clayton.
- June 2021 total retro awards reported by North Georgia Offices: \$1,191,112.00. Included in that amount is a single award of \$147,443.00 reported by Glenn Massey of Gainesville.
- July 2021 total retro awards reported by North Georgia Offices: \$1,401,454.00. Included in that amount is a single award of \$136,189.00 reported by Dawn Perry of Athens and a single award of \$110,752.00 reported by Rita Barnhart of Canton.
- Director Site Visits / Inspections: Athens, Cartersville, Decatur CBOC, Decatur VAMC
- North Region Gains/Losses:
 - Kasena Carter started at Decatur VAMC July 16, 2021.
 - Rose Henry started at Lawrenceville July 16, 2021.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Rose Henry resigned from Lawrenceville August 1, 2021.
- North Georgia Region Veteran Population: 443,313
- Office Visits

		Average Visits Per VFSO					
		Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO					
Region:		North					
Month:		June-21					
A	B	C	D / E		G / E		
			D	E	F	H	
					Total	Average	
					Average	Claims	
			Total	Work	Office	Submitted	
	Veterans' Field		Monthly	Days	Visits	To	
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Office	In	Per	By VFSOS	
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	To VA	
					Monthly	Daily	
	Number of VFSOs:	59	13,465	940	14.32	2,655	
Number of Offices:	34		Average Visits/Office:		396.03	Average Claims/Office:	
					78.0882353		

*Total Monthly Office Visits includes Remote Work: 2,420 In-person Office Visits and 11,045 phone calls and emails

	Average Visits Per VFSO					
	Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO					
	Region:		North			
	Month:		July-21			

*Total Monthly Office Visits includes Remote Work: 2,562 In-person Office Visits and 10,773 phone calls and emails

Ms. Ross asked Mr. Pritchett if he had any changes to his report. Mr. Pritchett stated that the new Fort Benning office opened early. The number of visits for that office is increasing since opening full time.

South GA, Vincent Pritchett, South Area Director

- On June 28, 2021, Melissa Ingle (Americus field office) attended a quilt presentation ceremony sponsored by Grateful Threads in Americus. Grateful Threads makes quilts for veterans. They presented 33 quilts to veterans at the event.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- On July 18, 2021, Courtney Cleare (Macon field office) participated in a Vietnam Veteran Certificate and Pin ceremony for SGT James Battle at Union Baptist Church in Macon. SGT Battle had already received his certificate and Courtney was asked to present him with his lapel pin during this special ceremony.
- On July 20, 2021, Sandra Bennett (Columbus field office) along with members of the GDVS leadership team did a walk-thru of the new Columbus field office suite. The building also houses the Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic.
- On August 2, 2021, Vincent Pritchett set up an information table in support of the Veterans Education Career Transition Resource Center's 5th birthday celebration and Information Fair.
- On August 16, 2021, Sandra Bennett, and her team (Columbus field office) completed the transition from their 3rd Avenue address to their new field office space at 2100 Comer Avenue. With both the clinic and our office in the same building, veterans can take care both their health and claim issues in one stop.
- On August 20, 2021, Robert Ehrhart (Brunswick field office) and Vincent Pritchett conducted interviews for the open Veterans Field Service Officer 1 position in Brunswick.
- South Region offices reported retroactive payments totaling \$410,554.83 with the highest single payment of \$83,698.20 reported by the Milledgeville field service office.
- South Region Gains/Losses: Effective July 6, 2021, Shannon Daniels joined our Savannah field office and Denoris Lane joined our Valdosta field office.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 244,963
- Office Visits for June: South Georgia offices handled 6,404 phone calls and emails.

**Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

		Average Visits Per VFSO						
		Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO						
Region:		South Region						
Month:		June-21						
A	B	C	D	E	D / E F	G	G / E H	
Office Name	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO)		Total Monthly Office Visits	Work Days In Month	Average Office Visits Per Day	Total Claims Submitted To VA Monthly	Average Claims Submitted By VFSOS To VA Daily	
	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	Monthly	Daily	
	Number of VFSOs:	37	2,395	712	3.36	1,913	2.69	
	Number of Offices:	30	Average Visits/Office:		79.83	Average Claims/Office:		63.77

▪ Office Visits for July: South Georgia offices handled 6,195 phone calls and emails.

		Average Visits Per VFSO						
		Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO						
Region:		South Region						
Month:		July-21						
A	B	C	D	E	D / E F	G	G / E H	
Office Name	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO) Last Name	#	Total Monthly Office Visits	Work Days In Month	Average Office Visits Per Day	Total Claims Submitted To VA Monthly	Average Claims Submitted By VFSOS To VA Daily	
			2,476	720	3.44	1,889	2.62	
			Number of Offices: 30		Average Visits/Office: 82.53		Average Claims/Office: 62.97	

Ms. Ross asked Ms. May if she had any changes to her report. Ms. May mentioned the upcoming ceremonies in Thomaston, the Vietnam ceremony and a ceremony in October in Kingsland.

Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information Division

GENERAL

Personnel

- Charlotte May, Director (Speeches, Major News Release Announcements, Digital Media, Websites [External & Internal])
- Monica Dorsey, Communications Specialist (Administrative support in all aspects of the GDVS Public Information mission/function [External & Internal])

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Note – Melodii Peoples resigned and departed the agency on July 15, 2021.

INFORMATION OUTREACH

News Releases –

1. Fort Benning GDVS Field Offices Open for Appointments - news release sent to media in the Columbus and Fort Benning area announcing the opening of the new office.
2. Toccoa Satellite Office Ready to Assist - news release sent to local media and city officials to remind veterans around the Toccoa area availability of the office once a week.
3. Columbus GDVS Field Office in New Location – news release sent to media and state and local officials to announce the Columbus office’s new address and reminding veterans to call or email to schedule an appointment.
4. Cemetery Roll of Honor - the Public Information Division continues to update the online Roll of Honor for veterans interred at the Veterans Memorial Cemeteries in Milledgeville and Glennville throughout the COVID-19 outbreak in Georgia.

Facebook Post Highlights –

1. Atlanta VAMC Virtual Claims Clinic – VA Regional Office employees will virtually assist veterans with questions about their claims
2. Georgia Veteran Suicide Prevention and Red Cross Virtual Coping Skills Groups – worked with Veda Brooks to produce and share a flyer for several upcoming programs aimed to assist veterans in finding positive solutions and coping mechanisms for life’s difficulties.
3. Melissa Ingle and the Grateful Threads Quilting Guild – shared photos from Americus office manager Melissa Ingle of a recent quilt presentation to 33 veterans in the Americus area.
4. Job fairs and hiring initiatives – shared several items of interest, including a GVMC Milledgeville hiring notice, for veterans in search of a new career or continuing education.

Public Information Division Contacts *(Since January 1, 2020)*

- Replies to VA eBenefits Messages = 2,925
 - Service paused as of May 1, 2021, resumed in July.
- Replies to General Questions = approximately 1,265
- Individual Request for the State Certificate of Honor = approximately 225

GOVERNOR'S (VIETNAM VETERAN) CERTIFICATE of HONOR PROGRAM-

- Since March 2015 –

State Certificates of Honor issued via GDVS – An estimated 28,820
(Honors Ceremonies and Central Office Mail Outs)

DoD Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins presented via GDVS – An estimated 23,105

Honors Ceremonies supported/coordinated by GDVS – 345

Defense Department's Vietnam Veteran Surviving Spouse CoH – 268

UPCOMING EVENTS-

- Daughters of the American Revolution Honor Vietnam Veterans in Thomaston – August 28
- Camden County Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1137 Honors Vietnam Veterans – October 16

Ms. Ross asked Mr. Davis if he had any changes to his report. Mr. Davis stated that they have had full implementation of 1015's and 1018's. The waiver request has been extended to September 1. FY 22 funding in the amount of \$819,000 has come in.

Mr. Bobby Davis, Director, Veterans Education and Training Division (State Approving Agency):

VETERANS STATE APPROVING AGENCY

- The approval and compliance surveys of educational institutions, training establishments and training programs approved for veterans training is continuing with no significant problems in any area being noted.
- Approval of new veteran's On-The-Job training sites (OJT) continues to increase. As of this date the State Approving Agency (SAA) has granted approval to 1,783 educational institutions and training establishments where Georgia veterans may attend school or job training and utilize their GI Bill educational benefits.

Item *	Number
Approved Educational Institutions	395
Approved Training Establishments	1388
Veteran Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions	10,857

* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, July 2021.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Ms. Ross asked Mr. Feagin if he had anything to add to his report. Mr. Feagin reported that construction continues and should be completed 1-1-2022. Funds have been received for Covid prevention strategies. They are limiting access by taking temperatures. Burials have increased. The expansion project in Milledgeville is in Phase IV.

Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division

The Health and Memorials Division submitted pre-applications for:

- 1) The Phase 4 expansion of the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Milledgeville. This expansion has been moved forward due to increased burials in the cemetery during the past year. The expansion will include additional pre-placed burial vaults, additional space for above ground cremated remains, a new section for in ground cremated remains, and additional conventional burial spaces. Existing spaces are projected to be filled as early as FY 2025. This expansion will require approximately \$500,000 of State matching funds.
- 2) A new State cemetery in Augusta, Georgia. If approved, this will be the third State cemetery and its design will be consistent with the two existing cemeteries. One proposed change will be to have an open committal shelter instead of the enclosed one currently used. The need for this open shelter is being considered due to restrictions created due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as limited access for people in attendance at a funeral. One time funding of \$1,000,000 was approved for FY 2022 during the past legislative session.
- 3) We do not expect to have any additional information on these projects until after October 1, 2021.

Requests for bids were sent out for improvements for both Veterans Nursing Homes:

- 1) Project involving increased infection control as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. This will include automatic temperature scanning devices at entrances to buildings, plexiglass barriers, UV lights in ventilation systems, and improved access controls to buildings. Funding for this project is from the VA and does not require State matching funds. Contractors have been selected and we are waiting for the release of VA funds.
- 2) Improved IT systems and networking. This will increase communication assets within the buildings to allow for improved internet access and establishment of electronic medical records. Again, contractors have been and selected and we are waiting for the release of VA funds.

Construction continues for improvements within the existing buildings on the Milledgeville campus. The 4th floor of the Wood building is almost complete and the contractor will be moving to the 3rd floor next. All patients are moved from the floor during the renovation process. A new chiller unit has been installed at the Vinson building. Also in the Vinson Building, work is underway to replace existing light fixtures with LED

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

lights, replace flooring, and upgrade HVAC room controls for improved comfort of the patients. IT improvements are taking place in the Russell Building. Full building generators have been installed for the Wood and Russell buildings. Full building generators are on order for the Vinson and Wheeler buildings and the boiler plant. Work is under way for renovation of the 3rd Floor of the Wheeler Building for the therapy wings of the SubAcute Treatment Unit.

Construction continues on the two new buildings, 14 bed pod and Food Production facility. Construction of these buildings is on schedule.

Both cemeteries remain very busy with higher than normal burial rates. Annual reports for the cemeteries were submitted to the National Cemetery Administration in July. These reports show that the burial rates in each cemetery continue to increase every year. Based on these reports, we will be needing to submit a request for expansion of the Glennville cemetery and appropriate funding for FY 2024.

Capital Outlay Budget Submissions (COBS) are being prepared for FY 2023. These will include the Phase 4 development of the Milledgeville cemetery, Wood Building ADA Compliance (involves renovation of toilet rooms and resident rooms), GWVH 14 bed addition to Skilled Nursing Cottage among others. Information concerning status of COVID-19 cases and precautions being taken at the GWVH is being submitted separately.

Ms. Ross asked Mr. Bannister if he had any changes to his report. Mr. Bannister stated that FY21 closeout has been completed and there was no overspending. He continued to summarize his submitted report, highlighting the FY22 requests. He recognized Anelia Moore from OPB and thanked her for her assistance. Mr. Whitted questioned how much of the funds are actually for the field office workers, and that section of the budget request was pointed out. Mr. Kopsie questioned if the \$3,000 amount requested was for the number of current employees or the number of positions. Positions was the answer. A discussion ensued on the Phase II for cemeteries and it was concluded that this would not be on the request documentation.

Mr. Kerry Dyer mentioned the Unite Us meeting he had this morning. We are getting logins and usernames for 5 licenses. Ms. Ross explained to all the new people that Unite Us is a referral platform to connect offices, anywhere a veteran might visit. The program will link the entire state.

Ms. Tonya Jarrett gave an update on Covid positive patients and staff, as well as vaccinated and unvaccinated statuses. All employees who are not vaccinated by October 1 will no longer be employed. Ms. Jarrett also gave an update on Covid protocols and testing procedures.

Mr. Carlton Deese gave an update on Covid positive staff and Covid protocols. There is not yet a vaccine mandate for employees.

Mr. Mark Bannister, Administration, Health, and Memorials:

Accounting

The Accounting, Finance and HR staff successfully completed the FY 2021 fiscal closeout. The fiscal year officially closed on June 30, 2021; however, the accounting systems took an additional two weeks to completely closeout the fiscal year documentation. All four of the fiscal programs in the GDVS (Administration, Cemeteries, Veterans Benefits and Nursing Homes) closed within the scope of the budget.

As part of the closeout process, the new FY 2022 officially opened doors for business on Monday, July 19, 2021.

Budget and General

The GDVS closed-out FY 2021 within budget in accordance with state law. As is the case with all departments of state government, the GDVS was able to make year-end purchases of supplies and equipment items for the benefit of departmental operations using *regular operating moneys* that had not been expensed prior to the closeout process. During the fiscal year, we were able to use existing funds in the veteran's benefits program to increase the minimum starting salaries of all entry level and newly hired Veteran Field Service Officer – 1 (VFSO-1) from \$26,520.00 dollars to \$27,000.00.

Additionally, several employees who were eligible for promotions and/or salary adjustments received promotions and/or salary adjustments, which are paid out of *personal services moneys* made available from resignations and retirements of other employees who are no longer with the GDVS. Please recall, regular operating moneys and personal services moneys are contained in separate *object classes* in the several fiscal programs and in the case of personal services moneys pay adjustments must be sustainable into future time periods.

Capital Outlay requests for projects at both War Veterans Nursing Homes are currently being discussed, planned, and prioritized with 2KM and will be presented in this year's budget request.

GDVS FY2022 --Annual Operating Budget (AOB) as of July 1, 2021

Total State General Funds	\$22,953,475
Total Federal Funds	\$24,210,246
Total Other Agency Funds: GSFIC and Fees	\$3,215,491
Initial Funds for the proposed Augusta Cemetery	\$1,000,000*
Total Funds	\$50,379,212

*One time funding of \$1,000,000 was approved for FY 2022 during the past legislative session.

Budget Instructions: Amended FY 2022 and FY 2023

The last two fiscal years have brought exceptional challenges to our state and to the Georgia Department of Veterans Service. Our employees have been on the frontlines combating the COVID-19 pandemic all the while finding ways to continue servicing our veteran citizens and their families. Their

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

exceptional bravery, flexibility, and sacrifices during these uncertain times demonstrates their commitment to excellence and above all, taking care of the veteran!

We are encouraged by the increasing economic activity, solid growth and consumer demand in our state that will not require budget reductions in the Amended FY2022 and FY2023 budgets. Therefore, Governor Kemp is instructing agencies to submit operational budgets equivalent to their current FY 2022 appropriation for Amended FY 2022 and FY2023.

To meet this requirement, we plan to submit "off-line" requests for several items we feel we need to operate our department in providing more and better services to Georgia's veterans.

Some items being developed for inclusion in our **AFY 2022** off-line request include:

- Funds to support an increased need for an Outreach Coordinator – Director for Veterans' Suicide Prevention and Substance Abuse Prevention.
- Funds to support job reclassification and realignment of Cemetery Directors and Assistant Directors.
- Funds to support an Office Manager (VFSO-2) position to support veterans and families visiting the Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Jasper (Pickens County).
- Funds to support increased cost per user of the electronic claims processing system related to a rate increase per user (rate increases have steadily increased since 2017.) Approval of appropriated funds will offset operational costs.

Budget items being developed for inclusion in our FY 2023 budget request include:

- Request funds to increase salaries of GDVS personnel earning \$50,000.00 dollars or less.
- Funding to support an additional Cemetery Worker (Grounds Maintenance Technician 1) at the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville.
- Request funds to support mandatory annual training and certification for Veterans Field Service Officers (VFSOs) and Veterans Claims and Appeals Officers (VCAOs).
- Request funds to support increasing costs of (annual fees) for electronic claims (VetraSpec).

Amended FY 2022 and FY 2023

Preparations are now underway to develop the Department's FY 2023 Budget Request, which will be officially submitted to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) on September 1, 2021. *For your review, I have attached a summary of the AFY 2022 and FY 2023 GDVS budget requests.*

We will provide a detailed briefing about our budget requests submitted to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) during the September 2021 Veterans Service Board meeting.

Our initiative is to meet Governor Kemp's challenge to all agencies:

- ✓ Plan on doing more with less.
- ✓ Use of technology to streamline business practices and processes.
- ✓ Making cyber security a top priority.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- ✓ Seek out best practices and implement them.
- ✓ Focus on providing high quality customer service.
- ✓ Focus on strategic planning for developing and implementing agency goals and objectives.

HEALTH AND MEMORIALS

State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (Through August 13, 2021) +

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	101	128	229
Service Connected *	19	44	63
Total Patients	120	172	292
Last Month			
Regular Patients	99	133	232
Service Connected *	19	45	64
Total Patients	118	178	296

* One-hundred percent of the cost of these services is paid by the VA. No state funds are involved.

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from July 16, 2021, through August 13, 2021.

State Veterans Cemeteries

Burial Statistics (Through August 13, 2021) +

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	1,895	1,915	20
Milledgeville	4,450	4,479	29
Total	6,345	6,394	49

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from July 16, 2021, through August 13, 2021.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Routine COVID-19 contingency operations are continuing.

**Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Routine COVID-19 contingency operations are continuing.

Current and Future Construction Projects

Augusta: Future - Augusta University will submit their Capital Outlay Plan during the upcoming FY2023 budget process this fall.

A new State cemetery in Augusta, Georgia. If approved, this will be the third State cemetery and its design will be consistent with the two existing cemeteries. One time funding of \$1,000,000 was approved for FY 2022 during the past legislative session.

Milledgeville: The Phase 4 expansion of the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Milledgeville

Construction of the Sub Acute Therapy Unit continues as technology infrastructure upgrades for communications, electronic health records, and patient connectivity are in progress.

OPERATIONS

Human Resources

Routine operations are continuing through teleworking.

Personnel Actions (Gains / Losses) (July 6, 2021 – August 16, 2021)

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Savannah	VFSO-1	New Hire	<i>Shannon Daniels</i>	07/06/2021
Valdosta	VFSO-1	New Hire	<i>Denoris Lane</i>	07/06/2021
Decatur VAMC	VFSO-1	New Hire	<i>Kasena Carter</i>	07/16/2021
Central Office	Comm Spec 2	New Hire	<i>Monica Dorsey</i>	08/16/2021

Properties

The new Fort Benning facility will open on a regular, full-time basis beginning by the end of this week or not later than next Monday, August 23, 2021, to better serve the Fort Benning and Columbus communities.

Relocation of the Columbus Field Service Office from 1512 3rd Avenue to the new Columbus Downtown VA Clinic located at 2100 Comer Avenue, Plaza G, is complete. GDVS personnel are seeing

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

veteran clients and their families and are located on the first floor of the facility. Hours are daily 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

Information Technology

Routine operations are continuing.

Records Management

Routine operations are continuing as needed.

Vehicle Management

Routine service and maintenance are performed as required.

Veterans Service Foundation Board

The Foundation Board Chairman, Mr. Doug Middleton, has secured a financial institution to begin accepting donations.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE THE SUBMISSION FROM MR. BANNISTER

AFY 2022 and FY 2023 GDVS Budget Requests

Amended Fiscal Year 2022

Program: All Fiscal Programs

1. **Request funds to increase salaries of GDVS personnel earning \$50,000.00 dollars or less.** Total requested funds must be properly allocated by fiscal program.

Fiscal Program	Number of employees eligible for increase	Amount
Administration	8	\$38,174.46
Milledgeville Cemetery	9	\$43,027.38
Glennville Cemetery	6	\$28,839.42
Field Operations	96	\$457,815.42
Appeals	14	\$66,828.48
Augusta Home	1	\$4,806.57
Milledgeville Home	1	\$4,806.57
Total	135	\$644,298.30

Funding for this request will bridge across two fiscal years: The first phase is to request funds in the amount of \$644,298.30 for employees earning \$50,000.00 and below as requested in AFY 2022 and FY 2023.

Phase 2 will involve requesting funds in AFY 2023 and FY 2024 for GDVS employees earning salaries of \$51,000.00 and above to target mid-career and senior vested employees. Mr. Bannister agreed to remove this sentence based on board input.

Program: Veterans Benefits

2. **Director, Veterans' Suicide Prevention and Substance Abuse Prevention** - The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined there are three major issues confronting the veterans in our country today: (1) Veteran suicides, (2) Veteran substance abuse and (3) Veteran's homelessness. The USDVA in partnership with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has invited the State of Georgia to participate in the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service members, Veterans, and their families (SMVF). Therefore, to fully comply with the challenge, GDVS will submit a funding request in the both the AFY 2022 and FY 2023 budget to support adding the position to the field operations program.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Estimated Salary	Benefits Factor	Salary Range + Benefits
\$65,000.00-\$68,000	1.678	\$109,070.00-\$114,500.00

Program: Cemeteries

3. **Job Reclassification & Realignment of Cemetery Directors and Assistant Directors** – The purpose is to properly align the positions to reflect current job responsibilities as managers and not “glorified” Grounds Maintenance Technicians. The Cemetery Directors are managing the facilities and operations and should be classified as such.

This request will bridge across two fiscal years: The first phase is to reclassify and realign Cemetery Directors and Assistant Directors as requested in AFY 2022 and FY 2023.

Phase 2 will involve the reclassification of Groundskeeper Supervisor (FES 033) Supervisors and Grounds Maintenance Tech Supervisors (FET 073).

Their duties include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Schedules interment ceremonies. This involves verifying eligibility of veterans or spouses for interment at the facilities.
- Ensures VA shrine standards are attained and maintained.
- Works with VA Veterans Cemetery Grant Service staff, supervisor and architecture / engineering professionals on the designing and constructing cemetery expansion projects.
- Ensures grave markers and columbaria niche covers are ordered from the VA and installed in a timely manner for each interment.
- Supervises and participates in special ceremonies honoring veterans, such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day and other similar events.
- Supervises cemetery staff in the performance of their duties.
- The Assistant Cemetery Directors perform similar duties as the directors and assume the director roles in the absence of or at the direction of the director.

Recommended Changes:

- Change job code FET073 (Grounds Maintenance Technician Supervisor), to FEM020 (Director, Facilities) and salary grade “I” to salary grade “M” to properly align position.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Change job code FET073 (Grounds Maintenance Technician Supervisor) to GSM010 (Mgr, Business Operations and salary grade "I" to salary grade "L" to properly align position.
- Change job code GST051 (Admin Assistant 2), to GSM010 (Mgr, Business Operations) and salary grade "I" to "L" to properly align position.

Current Salary job code and recommend change.

Ernie Cowart	FET073	I	Change to	FEM020	M
Linda Lavender	FET073	I	Change to	FEM020	M
Stacy Howard	FET073	I	Change to	GSM010	L
Cassie Mickler	GST051	I	Change to	GSM010	L

2016 JCCP SWD Pay Structure

Grade	Minimum	Market Avg	Maximum
I	\$29,973.63	\$42,819.47	\$52,453.85
L	\$40,982.94	\$58,547.06	\$71,720.15
M	\$46,310.72	\$66,158.17	\$81,043.76

Current Classification

Name	Grade	Salary	
Ernie Cowart	I	\$47,817.84	
Stacy Howard	I	\$41,596.80	
Linda Lavender	I	\$45,550.08	
Cassie Mickler	I	\$36,000.00	

Recommended Reclassification & Realignment

Name	Grade	Adjusted Salary	Change
Ernie Cowart	M	\$49,817.84	+\$2,000.00
Stacy Howard	L	\$43,596.80	+\$2,000.00

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Linda Lavender	M	\$47,550.08	+\$2,000.00
Cassie Mickler	L	\$40,982.94	+\$4,982.94
Total			+\$10,982.94

On a separate budget request line item, request a one-time salary adjustment to bring up the Directors and Assistant Directors to the "Minimum" salary requirement according to the change in salary code would be necessary to align the salaries with the correct job code.

Estimated Increase + Benefits	Increase \$10,982.94	Benefits \$11,717.38	Total \$22,700.00*
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*Rounded up to the nearest dollar amount.

Program: Veterans Benefits

4. **Office Manager (VFSO-2) to support veterans and families visiting the Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Jasper, GA (Pickens County)** - The purpose of having GDVS benefits counselors located in VA medical facilities is to provide a "one-stop shopping" experience for veterans who receive treatment/healthcare at VA medical facilities and to be able to obtain VA benefits information and to possibly file a claim at the same location. Particularly, when a veteran has been presented with new diagnosis at the CBOC, the veteran is able to immediately seek advice, counseling, and assistance from our VFSO's imbedded in VA facilities with filing claims for earned benefits based on their service-connected disabilities.

The Jasper CBOC is part of the Atlanta VA Health Care System (VAHCS) and is located at 934 East Church Street, Jasper, GA. It is estimated 1,400+ veterans reside in Pickens County, located just above Canton. This clinic is approved to offer patient care space and an office for a GDVS Field Office Manager (VFSO -2). There is no leasing space cost to GDVS which in turn saves us money for desired leasing space. Below is the estimated amount of salary and supplies required to fill the position.

Estimated Salary	Benefits Factor	Salary + Benefits
\$29,000.00	1.678	\$48,662.00

Program: Veterans Benefits

5. **VetraSpec - Funds to support increasing costs of (annual fees) electronic claims (VetraSpec).** Each year, the cost of providing electronic claim services increases or decreases slightly based on the number of users at the rate \$449.00 per user. In FY 2021 there were approximately 131 total users. At the beginning of each FY, monies are taken from the veterans' benefits program and not appropriated dollars specifically to pay for VetraSpec.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Fiscal Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Cost	\$50,673.00	\$60,215.00	\$62,860.00	\$60,615.00	58,819.00

Program: Veterans Benefits

6. Annual Training - The Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) conducts annual off-site training for all Veterans Field Service Officers (VFSOs), Veterans Claims and Appeals Officers (VCAOs), Women Program Office and department trainers. The purpose of the training certifies benefits counselors each year to ensure our officers are current on 38 CFR requirements for assisting veterans in applying for benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Average Cost: \$100,000.00 - \$139,000.00 dollars. Training includes cost of travel, lodging and meals.

Funds Requested
\$100,000.00

Program: GA War Home Milledgeville

7. Two (15) Passenger Veterans Transport Buses - Funds to support the purchase of 2 new transport buses for the GWVH to transport veteran patients to appointments at the VAMC and other community medical facilities in the state. Buses will replace an aging 20-year-old bus that has exceeded its life expectancy and will eliminate the high cost of existing, needed repairs and unexpected mechanical malfunctions on the road.

Estimated Cost	\$75,000.00 x 2	Total \$150,000.00
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Program: Glennville Cemetery

8. Funding to support an additional Cemetery Worker (Grounds Maintenance Technician 1) Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Glennville. As of August 28, 2020, the added requirements for documentation are putting a significant burden on the staffs of the cemeteries, as they are in addition to the work already being done to support the 6,370 interments occurring in FY 2021, a number that has been generally increasing since the facilities opened in 2001 and 2007. The total number of interments at the end of FY2021 at the two veterans memorial cemeteries 4,485 were at Milledgeville and 1,885 were at Glennville. Total interments at both cemeteries 6,370.

Current Salary	Benefits Factor	Salary + Benefits
\$26,520.00	1.678	\$44,500.00

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Fiscal Year 2023

Program: All Fiscal Programs

1. Request funds to increase salaries of GDVS personnel earning \$50,000.00 dollars or less. Total requested funds must be properly allocated by fiscal program.

Fiscal Program	Number of employees eligible for increase	Amount
Administration	8	\$38,174.46
Milledgeville Cemetery	9	\$43,027.38
Glennville Cemetery	6	\$28,839.42
Field Operations	96	\$457,815.42
Appeals	14	\$66,828.48
Augusta Home	1	\$4,806.57
Milledgeville Home	1	\$4,806.57
Total	135	\$644,298.30

Program: Veterans Benefits

2. **Director, Veterans' Suicide Prevention and Substance Abuse Prevention** - The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined there are three major issues confronting the veterans in our country today: (1) Veteran suicides, (2) Veteran substance abuse and (3) Veteran's homelessness. The USDVA in partnership with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has invited the State of Georgia to participate in the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service members, Veterans, and their families (SMVF). Therefore, to fully comply with the challenge, GDVS will submit a request funding in the FY 2023 budget to support adding the position to the field operations program.

Estimated Salary	Benefits Factor	Salary Range + Benefits
\$65,000.00-\$68,000	1.678	\$109,070.00-\$114,500.00

Program: Cemeteries

3. **Job Reclassification & Realignment of Cemetery Directors and Assistant Directors** – the purpose is to properly align the positions to reflect current job responsibilities as managers and not “glorified” Grounds Maintenance Technicians. The Cemetery Directors are managing the facilities and operations and should be classified as such.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Total \$22,700.00*

As described in Cemetery Program (#2) AFY 2022.

Program: Veterans Benefits

4. **Office Manager (VFSO-2) to support veterans and families visiting the Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Jasper, GA (Pickens County)** - The purpose of having GDVS benefits counselors located in VA medical facilities is to provide a "one-stop shopping" experience for veterans who receive treatment/healthcare at VA medical facilities and to be able to obtain VA benefits information and to possibly file a claim at the same location. Particularly, when a veteran has been presented with new diagnosis at the CBOC, the veteran is able to immediately seek advice, counseling, and assistance from our VFSO's imbedded in VA facilities with filing claims for earned benefits based on their service-connected disabilities.

The Jasper CBOC is part of the Atlanta VA Health Care System (VAHCS) and is located at 934 East Church Street, Jasper, GA. It is estimated 1,400+ veterans reside in Pickens County, located just above Canton. This clinic is approved to offer patient care space and an office for a GDVS Field Office Manager (VFSO - 2). There is no leasing space cost to GDVS which in turn saves us money for desired leasing space. Below is the estimated amount of salary and supplies required to fill the position.

Estimated Salary	Benefits Factor	Salary + Benefits
\$32,000.00*	1.678	\$53,696.00

* Estimated salary includes projected (if approved in FY 2023) \$3,000.00 salary increase for GDVS employees earning \$50,000.00 and below.

Program: Glennville Cemetery

5. **Funding to support an additional Cemetery Worker (Grounds Maintenance Technician 1) Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Glennville.** As of August 28, 2020, the added requirements for documentation are putting a significant burden on the staffs of the cemeteries, as they are in addition to the work already being done to support the 6,370 interments occurring in FY 2021, a number that has been generally increasing since the facilities opened in 2001 and 2007. The total number of interments at the end of FY2021 at the two veterans memorial cemeteries 4,485 were at Milledgeville and 1,885 were at Glennville. Total interments at both cemeteries 6,370.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Estimated Salary	Benefits Factor	Salary + Benefits
\$29,520.00*	1.678	\$49,534.56

*Estimated salary includes projected (if approved in FY 2023) \$3,000.00 salary increase for GDVS employees earning \$50,000.00 and below.

Program: Veterans Benefits

- 6. Annual Training** - The Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) conducts annual off-site training for all Veterans Field Service Officers (VFSOs), Veterans Claims and Appeals Officers (VCAOs), Women Program Office and department trainers. The purpose of the training certifies benefits counselors each year to ensure our officers are current on 38 CFR requirements for assisting veterans in applying for benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Cost: \$100,000.00 - \$139,000.00 dollars. Training includes cost of travel, lodging and meals.

Requested Funds
\$100,000.00

Program: Veterans Benefits

- 7. VetraSpec** - Funds to support increasing costs of (annual fees) electronic claims (VetraSpec). Each year, the cost of providing electronic claim services increases or decreases slightly based on the number of users at the rate \$449.00 per user. In FY 2021 there were approximately 131 total users.

Fiscal Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Cost	\$50,673.00	\$60,215.00	\$62,860.00	\$60,615.00	58,819.00

Program: GA War Home Milledgeville

- 8. Two (15) Passenger Veterans Transport Buses** - Funds to support the purchase of 2 new transport buses for the GWVH to transport veteran patients to appointments at the VAMC and other community medical facilities in the state. Buses will replace an aging 20-year-old bus that has exceeded its life expectancy and will eliminate the high cost of existing, needed repairs and unexpected mechanical malfunctions on the road.

Estimated Cost	\$75,000.00 x 2	Total \$150,000.00
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Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Total Budget Submission

AFY 2022	\$1,183,479
FY 2023	\$1,193,548*
Total Requested Funds	\$2,377,027

*Rounded up to the nearest

dollar amount.

The following page is a document from the Department of Veterans Affairs so that you can see the paperwork our employees at the different VA facilities have to complete because of the vaccine mandate for all VA employees.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Department of Veteran Affairs

COVID-19 VACCINATION

DATE (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

I am a VHA: ___ Employee ___ Other - please indicate: _____

CHECK ONE STATEMENT BELOW AND COMPLETE AND SIGN THE LAST SECTION OF THIS FORM PRIOR TO SUBMISSION TO EMPLOYEE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH:

___ I received the full COVID-19 vaccine series (any required documentation is attached).

___ I have been granted a medical exemption from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

I have a contraindication for the COVID-19 vaccine as defined by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The reasons for contraindication must be recognized contraindications and precautions by the CDC, found here: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinicalconsiderations/covid-19-vaccines-us.html> I?CDC AA reNal=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fvaccines%2Fcovid-19%2Finfo-by-product%2Eclinical-considerations.html, located under Interim Clinical Considerations for Use or Vaccine Indications. This has been discussed and acknowledged by my personal physician. I understand that by declining to receive the vaccine within eight weeks of publication of this directive, or within eight weeks of beginning employment, I must wear a face mask according to requirements and guidelines within VHA Directive 1193, COVID-19 Vaccination Program for VHA Employees and Health Care Personnel.

Printed Physician Name and Address

Supervisor Signature

Date (MM/DD/YYYY)

Supervisor Email

___ I notified my immediate supervisor in writing that I have a deeply held religious belief that prevents me from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

I understand that by declining to receive the vaccine within eight weeks of publication of this directive, or within eight weeks of beginning employment, I must wear a face mask according to requirements and guidelines within VHA Directive 1193, COVID-19 Vaccination Program for VHA Employees and Health Care Personnel.

I have read and fully understand the information on this form and have been given the opportunity to have my questions answered. I understand that violation of the directive may result in disciplinary action up to and including removal from Federal service.

Name (print): _____ Last 4 SS#: _____

Dept./Serv: _____ Date (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

VHA Title 38HCP are to provide this form to the VHA facility Employee Occupational Health Office. Secure electronic submission is permissible.

Wednesday, August 28, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS:

The September 29 board meeting was scheduled. It will be a combination virtual and in-person meeting, set up at the GDVS. Mr. Hanley made a motion for this and Mr. Whitted seconded it. The motion passed.

Ms. Ross made a motion to move into Executive Session. It was seconded by Mr. Whitted. The motion carried. The Board went into Executive Session at 1:43 p.m. Commissioner Roby was called into the Executive Session at 2:44 p.m. The Board and Commissioner Roby returned to the conference room at 3:00 p.m.

Ms. Swan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Whitted. The motion passed by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:05 p.m.

SIGNED:

Patricia Ross

Patricia Ross, Chairman

ATTEST:



Shawn Hanley, Secretary

The next Veterans Service Board meeting will be held in person but will also be available via video/telephone conference call on Wednesday, September 29, 2021, at 12:30 p.m. The Webex link is:

<https://georgiadepartmentofveteransservice.webex.com/georgiadepartmentofveteransservice/j.php?MTID=m29ff524ffab2085094da0e4759733ad9>

Meeting password: 3PjPemBxR46

Or you can call: 1-844-621-3956

Access Code: 179 656 2953