

Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Present Mr. Shawn Hanley, Chair
 Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Secretary
 Mr. John Kubinec, Member
 Mr. Timothy Paslawski, Member
 Mr. Steve Mendez, Member
 Ms. Patricia Ross, 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
 Mr. Matthew O'Brien, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office
 Mr. Kevin Hammond, State Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US
 Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and Vetlanta
 Mr. Leonard Sobieski, President, Reserve Organization of America
 Mr. Lou Zayas, Jr. Vice Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart
 Mr. Andre Anderson, Veterans' Employment and Training Service
 Mr. Ken Childre, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS
 Ms. Ramona Roper, Director, Training and Professional Development, GDVS
 Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information Division, GDVS
 Ms. Shelly Ann Simpson, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS
 Mr. Ernie Cowart, Director, Glennville Cemetery
 Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS
 Ms. Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, GWVH, Milledgeville, GA
 Ms. Veda Brooks, Director of Women Veterans Office, GDVS
 Mr. Bobby Davis, Director, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS
 Ms. Monica Dorsey, Communications & Outreach Specialist, GDVS
 Mr. Cornelius Scott, Visitor
 Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Wednesday, February 16, 2022, the Veterans Service Board meeting was held in person and by video/tele-conference.

Mr. Hanley called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. Mr. Mendez gave the invocation. Mr. Kopsie led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Mr. Kopsie made a motion to approve the February Agenda. Mr. Paslawski seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to approve the January minutes, which were previously distributed for members to review. Mr. Kopsie seconded the motion. The motion passed.

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Mr. Hanley introduced new board member Steve Mendez and Mr. Mendez gave a short introduction, stating that he is a small business owner, he has three daughters, and he spends time coaching sports in a private school and in the community. He is looking forward to working together with everyone.

The following reports were submitted from the Veteran Service Organizations:

Mr. Mark Shreve, State Commander, The American Legion

1. The American Legion has conducted over 2500 Buddy Checks and will continue to check on members throughout February. The National Vice-Commander visited Macon and participated in the Buddy Check initiative.
2. The American Legion National Auxiliary President conducted a visit to Georgia and recognized 11 women veterans for their service. The President visited 8 Posts and an Equine Rehabilitation Facility. Also included in her itinerary were visits to cemeteries and a homeless facility.
3. The American Legion Department of Georgia Commander and 7 members of the Department Staff attended Governor Kemp's roundtable at the VECTR center in Warner Robbins.
4. American Legion Post level Service Officers assisted over 150 veterans throughout the State.
5. As of February 8th 2022 The American Legion Department of Georgia ranked # 1 for membership growth in the Southeast Region of the United States. The Southeast Region of the American Legion consists of 12 States.
6. The American Legion rolled out the new marketing logo. The new logo is depicted in the heading of this report.
7. The American Legion State Commander continues to visit local Posts throughout the State and has visited 70 Post's since July.
8. The American Legion has sponsored Blood Drives throughout the State and since July over 800 pints have been donated.
9. The majority of American Legion Posts in Georgia remains open and our leaders continue to monitor and engage members to follow CDC guidelines on Covid.
10. The American Legion State Commander and 8 members of the Legion attended the ribbon cutting ceremony at the Charlie Norward VA Hospital. This ceremony opened the remodeled and state of the art 6th floor in-patient treatment facility.

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Mr. Mark Demers, Training Team, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer

The following information is submitted for this month's board meeting:

- The Department Service Officer attended the American Legion Department Adjutant Teleconference on January 22, 2022 at 1930 to discuss Department business. Provided a short briefing on: the 72 hour reporting requirement for urgent care treatment to VA Community Care and VA patient inquiries are taking longer due to facilities being inundated with Omicron variant patients—use My HealtheVet secure messaging to communicate with Primary Care Physician.
- The Assistant Department Service Officer (Ed Kent) assisted 23 veterans with VA benefits related inquiries this month and attended 4 veteran funerals.
- Upcoming events- American Legion Department of Georgia Spring Conference on March 25-27, 2022 at the Sonesta Gwinnett Place, 1775 Pleasant Hill Road, Duluth, Georgia.

Mr. Kevin Hammond, State Commander, VFW

The VFW will be holding its Mid-Winter Conference and Awards Banquet on February 18-20 at the Macon Marriott City Center. Commissioner Ross will be speaking at the banquet.

Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW

The following information is submitted for this month's board meeting:

- The Department Service Officer attending a Meet and Greet meeting with Commissioner Ross on January 26, 2022 at 1:30PM at the Central Office.
- The Department Service Officer attended the VFW Post 12180 Recruiting Drive held on January 31, 2022. The Service Officer provided information to the veterans and their family members on local, state, and federal benefits. In addition, answered question regarding VA health care and VA compensation benefits.
- The Department Service Officer participated with the VFW Post 12180 in a MLK Day parade held on February 05, 2022 at 11AM in McDonough, GA. The parade was hosted by the American Legion Post 516.

Mr. Bill LeCount, Adjunct to Commander Pete Mecca, Atlanta WWII Roundtable

The Atlanta World War II Roundtable has again started its Monthly meetings after a long Covid related Hiatus.

Our December and January meetings were highly successful with an average of 55 members and guests in attendance at the Dunwoody United Methodist Church. We anticipate the same attendance at our February Meeting (2/17/2022).

Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and VETLANTA

Ms. Stevens thanked Ms. Takosha Swan for being the anthem singer at Vetlanta. The second quarter summit will be on May 3 at Mercedes Benz Stadium. Normally around 2,000 people attend this networking event.

Georgia Military Women continued with many activities this past month including in person and online sharing of resources, education, and smiles across the state. In person included restaurants, hiking, The Atlanta Ballet and Hawks basketball games. We expanded with a new meet up group in the NW part of Georgia meeting in Calhoun this past month. We also visited members in the hospital and encouraged those with COVID and other health concerns. Service projects included helping with Soldiers Angels food distribution, The Atlanta VA Baby Shower, delivering warm winter hats to women veterans at Mary Hall Freedom House and delivering hand-made Valentines to the Volunteer Service Office at the Atlanta VA. Service Officer referrals have been made regularly. A recent theme has been the need to educate veterans about all the caregiver resources available and helping them sign up for those. I had a virtual meeting this past month with Lourdes Tiglaio, the new Director of the VA Women Veterans Center in Washington, DC. We are now considered to be a national partner with the VA. I am looking forward to see how this new relationship develops.

For VETLANTA, we are expanding our role as veteran advocates in our Community Veteran Engagement Board (CVEB) role for the State of Georgia. In this role, the idea is to facilitate networking and support for the VA which has experienced many extra challenges these past 2 years due to the pandemic. It is hoped that we will be able to help create a positive culture at the Atlanta VA where both administration and patients feel equally supported and heard. I will be doing a one on one with Ann Brown, the Atlanta VA Director later this week. I ask that veterans support VETLANTA in our efforts by coming to our Q1 Summit on Military Families on Feb 10th at the 12 Hotel in Atlanta. Register at www.vetlanta.org.

Commissioner Patricia Ross

Commissioner Ross added that she had budget meetings with the House and Senate subcommittees. The \$5K cost of living adjustment is still tracking. We will still try to raise the pay of our lowest paid employees with the FY23 budget. The department continues to streamline and restructure. She will be going to Washington, D.C. next week for the NASDVA conference, and will be able to meet the directors from all other states and territories.

The Senate bill for a study committee of skilled nursing homes is on track. House Bill 1064 regarding military retirement tax exclusion is also on track, as is the bill regarding the law enforcement training center being offered at no cost for veterans. She met with Rep. Sandra Scott today and they will be working together for legislation to benefit veterans.

A family in Tampa wanted to give a car to a veteran. Commissioner Ross worked with Henry Torres of the Wounded Warrior Project and someone has been found to give the car to.

On Friday, January 21, 2022, Commissioner Ross continued her one-on-one meetings with employees at the Central Office. Today's meetings were with Jerry Lahr and Monica Dorsey. The Commissioner also met with Senator Mike Dugan.

On Monday, January 24, 2022, Commissioner Ross had a weekly Director's Meeting. She then attended the swearing in of new board member, Steve Mendez, along with several members of the board and staff. The Commissioner's next meeting was with Tim Craig, the Director of the Veterans Business Outreach Center, and she finished the day on a call with Scott Johnson from The Warrior Alliance.

On Tuesday, January 25, 2022, Commissioner Ross continued one-on-one meetings with Frank Kollig, Camala Ball and Lily Snyder. She also attended a TeamWorks Demo on Performance Management.

On Wednesday, January 26, 2022, Commissioner Ross continued one-on-one meetings with Mark Demers, Barbara Beedles and Debbie Gregory. She had an afternoon meeting with Kevin Hammond, the VFW State Commander. Also in attendance from the VFW were former State Commander Joel Willis and State Service Officer Belinda Boldoe.

On Thursday, January 27, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended Governor Kemp's Military Roundtable at the Georgia VECTR Center in Warner Robins. In the afternoon she had a budget meeting and in the evening she had a dinner meeting with Senator Kay Kirkpatrick.

On Friday, January 28, 2022, Commissioner Ross continued one-on-one meetings with Steven Fay, Linda Williams, Barry Goode and Robert Norman. She also attended a TeamWorks Demo on Time and Labor Reporting.

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On Monday, January 31, 2022, Commissioner Ross continued one-on-one meetings with Neil Slay and Dairelle Shropshire. She also had a weekly Director's Meeting, which has now been opened to all employees in the Central Office.

On Tuesday, February 1, 2022, Commissioner Ross met with Stephen Jahng and Kim Yangho of SK Battery American, Inc. located in Commerce, Georgia to discuss their desire to hire veterans. She made virtual introductions to the FT Stewart G1, Work4Warriors, and the VECTR Center.

On Wednesday, February 2, 2022, Commissioner Ross met with the Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) regarding GDVS. In the evening, she attended the Lowndes County Bird Supper at the Georgia Railroad Depot.

On Thursday, February 3, 2022, Commissioner Ross met with Jennifer Hardaway from Serendipity Recovery, an organization seeking to assist with veteran housing. She completed her one-on-one meetings with Julie Hammond.

On Monday, February 7, 2022, Commissioner Ross had a weekly Director's Meeting.

On Tuesday, February 8, 2022, Commissioner Ross held 5 interviews for the position of District Manager.

On Wednesday, February 9, 2022, Commissioner Ross held 5 interviews for the position of District Manager.

On Thursday, February 10, 2022, Commissioner Ross received her PIV card for access to the VA Benefits Management System, attended the VETLANTA Q1 Summit, Focus on Family, in Atlanta and met Ms. Ann Brown, Director of the Atlanta VAMC.

On Friday, February 11, 2022, Commissioner Ross held 6 interviews for the position of District Manager.

On Monday, February 14, 2022, Commissioner Ross had a weekly Director's Meeting.

On Tuesday, February 15, 2022, Commissioner Ross met with Rep Sandra Scott about proposed legislation and attended the Georgia Suicide Prevention Task Force monthly meeting.

Highlights:

- Budget Meeting with the House Subcommittee on Health and Human Services went well. Questions were concerning the daily census in the homes and the state, versus VA's contribution to the Sub-acute therapy unit

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- Internal updates: Will transition from manual processes to the state's time and labor system on 1 May, and to the performance management system on 1 July.
- Elimination of the DS-516 and the need for VSOs to certify veteran status for "veteran" driver's licenses.
- Senate Bill 358 – Georgia Public Safety Training Center; reimbursement of certain costs incurred by active duty, retired, or honorably discharged members of the US armed forces to are attending basic law enforcement training. Unanimously approved by the Senate, to be considered by the House
- HB 1064 exclusion from Georgia taxable net income certain retirement income received from certain military service was favorably received by the tax subcommittee
- Changes the website definition of veteran to be the same as the VA uses (we previously excluded NOAA and USPH officers)

On the horizon:

- NASDVA 20 -23 Feb, Alexandria, VA. Opportunity to hear from VA and national leaders plus gain best practices from other states.

Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, Field Operations and Appeals

GENERAL

- January 24, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended the swearing in ceremony of Board member Steve Mendez.
- January 27, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended a We Care Veterans Resource Fair breakfast meeting in Cobb County. They discussed the different resources that will be available and how they can help veterans. The Fair will be held May 13, 14 2022 at the Cobb County Civic Center.
- January 27, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio along with Commissioner Trish Ross, Assistant Commissioner Mark Bannister and Director of Operations Kerry Dyer attended the Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee. Commissioner Ross briefed the committee on our budget request.
- February 07, 2022, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio conducted interviews for the South Georgia Appeals position.
- February 08 thru 11, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio along with Commissioner Trish Ross, Area Directors Ken Childre, Vince Pritchett, and Director of Training Ramona Roper, Director of Operations Kerry Dyer conducted Interviews for the District Manager positions.
- DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters:
 - 8 Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in January 2022.

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- Department Electronic Claim's Assistance Processing System (Vetra Spec) currently 310,396 entries, this is an increase of 447 from January 16, 2022.

PROJECTED POSITIONS

- Current openings in Appeals, Waycross, Decatur CBOC, Columbus, Rome, Augusta GWVNH.

Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)

- January 18, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in the Georgia Suicide Prevention Task Force Monthly Meeting.
- January 26, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in Mental Health Day at the Capital, virtual event.
- February 1, 2022, Ms. Brooks attended a meeting with Kyla Miller, Legislative Correspondent, Rep. Carolyn Bourdeaux (GA_&)
- February 2, 2022, Ms. Brooks attended the Center for Women Veterans February National Partners Virtual Meeting.
- February 7, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in the Georgia Military Women State/VA Collaboration.
- February 8, 2022, Ms. Brooks attended a meeting with Kaiser Permanente and Emory Veteran Program to align calendars.
- February 9, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in the Women Veteran's Health Committee WVHC Monthly Meeting
- February 10, 2022, Ms. Brooks attended VETLANTA 1Q22 Summit at the Twelve Hotel in Atlantic Station, 361 17th St. NW.
- February 15, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in the Georgia Suicide Prevention Task Force Monthly Meeting.

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
- Unite Georgia Community Advisory Committee

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Ramona Roper, Training and Professional Development Division:

- February 1-4, 2022, Steven Fay conducted in-person training in the Newnan Field Service Office with new employee, Jarrett Hunter.
- February 1, 2022, Ramona Roper assisted Ken Childre, North Region Director, with interviews at the Decatur VAMC Veterans Field Service Office.
- February 2 & 3rd, 2022, Mark Demers conducted in-person training in the Warner Robin Veterans Field Service Office with 2 new hires, Kristen Jones and Vershawn Moses.
- February 4, 2022, Ramona Roper assisted Ken Childre, North Region Director, with interviews at the Georgia War Veterans Home in Augusta, Georgia.
- February 8-10th, 2022, Steven Fay conducted in-person training in the Canton Veterans Field Service Office with new hire, Kenneth Stearns.
- February 8-9th, 2022, Mark Demers conducted in-person training in the Marietta Veterans Field Service Office with new hire, Raven Holstick.
- February 8-10th, Ramona Roper assisted with interviews for the District Managers positions.
- February 10 & 11th, 2022, Mark Demers returned to the Warner Robins and Marietta Veterans Field Service Offices for continued in-person training with the new hires.
- February 17, 2022, Ramona Roper conducted in-person training at the Decatur VAMC Veterans Field Service Office with new hire, Bernice Key.

Upcoming Events:

- February 17-16, 2022, Steven Fay to conduct in-person training at the Lawrenceville Veterans Field Service Office
- Monthly "Drop Classes" to resume March 2022
- Daily continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices.
- Planning of the 2022 Annual Training event
- New hire training "virtually"

Shelly-Ann Simpson, Director of Appeals Division

- The total number of actual hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for January 2022 was **105**.
- The total number of pre-hearing actions for January 2022 was **292**. Post-hearing actions was **64**.
- The total number of correspondence conducted by the Appeals Division (with veterans, BVA/VA employees, and VSO field offices) for the month of January was **1,817**.

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- As of January 1, 2022, 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	100,142	\$182,312,447
DIC	3079	\$4,700,210
Survivor Pension	856	\$710,638
Veteran Pension	1,809	\$1,990,366
Grand Total	105,885	\$189,173.660

NORTH GA, Ken Childre, North Georgia Regional Director

Mr. Childre added that he is holding interviews and working on hiring to fill the vacancies in the North Region.

January 14th-Ian Ketterer and Tamika Nicholas conducted a Veterans briefing at the Amazon warehouse outside of Augusta. They briefed 5 employees about the state and federal benefits they may be entitled to. They hope for a bigger turnout at the next briefing.

January 2022 total retro awards by North Georgia offices: \$2,142,748. Included in that amount are single awards of \$86,105 reported by Steven Hungarter of Cartersville, \$250,452 reported by Rita Barnhart of Canton, \$108,095 reported by Rico Johnson of Gainesville and 2 single awards of \$123,377 and \$149,188 reported by Barry Hunter of Rome.

Director Site Visits/Inspections: 12

Conducted interviews at Decatur VAMC (4 of 6 candidates) and Augusta GWVNH (4 of 6 candidates)

Gains/Losses:

Canton-Ken Stearns (1 Feb)
Marietta-Raven Holstick (1 Feb)

Newnan-Jarrett Hunter (1 Feb)
Decatur VAMC-Daniel Osei Resigned (18 Jan)

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Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		January-22					
A	B	C	D	E	D / E F	G	G / E H
					Average	Total	Average
			Total	Work	Office	Claims	Claims
	Veterans' Field		Monthly	Days	Visits	Submitted	Submitted
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Office	In	Per	To	By VFSOS
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	VA	To VA
	Number of VFSOs:	50	13,097	724	18.09	2,113	2.92
Number of Offices:	27	Average Visits/Office:			485.07	Average Claims/Office: 78.2592593	

*Total Monthly Office Visits include: 2,382 In-Person Visits and 10,715 phone calls/emails.

Vincent Pritchett, South Georgia Regional Director

- On January 22, 2022, Miguel Rivera (Savannah Field Office) supported the National Guard Transition Seminar at the Air Dominance Center in Savannah. Miguel set up a display table and briefed approximately 25 guard members and their families about their benefits.
- On January 27, 2022, Vincent Pritchett attended Governor Kemp's military/veteran roundtable at the Georgia Veterans Education Career Transition Resource Center. The roundtable consisted of state legislative leaders discussing military and veteran initiatives for Georgia. Many active- duty service members and service organizations were in attendance. Commissioner Ross was on the panel and did a great presentation.
- On January 27, 2022, Sandra Bennett (Columbus Field Office) was invited to a meeting of the Military Officer's Association of America. Sandra told the 30 or so attendees about the benefits available to them and explained why it is important to get the help of a field officer when filing a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- South Region offices reported retroactive payments since the last board meeting totaling \$565,416.68 with the highest single payment of \$175,534.01 reported by our Tifton field office.
- South Region Gains/Losses: Effective February 1, 2022, Vershawn Moses and Christine Jones joined our Warner Robins Field Office and Amber Haire joined our Lagrange Field Office. Effective February 15, 2022, Reggie Lewis left the Savannah Field Office.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 242,136

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	Average Visits Per VFSO						
	Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO						
	Region:		South Region				
	Month:		January-22				
A	B	C	D	E	D / E F	G	G / E H
					Average	Total Claims Submitted	Average Claims Submitted
	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO)		Total Monthly Office	Work Days In Month	Office Visits Per Day	To VA Monthly	By VFSSOs To VA Daily
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Day	Monthly	Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	37	2,457	700	3.51	1,654	2.36
Number of Offices:	24		Average Visits/Office:		102.38	Average Claims/Office: 68.92	

*Office Visits for December: South Georgia offices handled 5,983 phone calls and emails.

Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information Division

Ms. May added that the change that Commissioner Ross and Commissioner Moore (DDS) made is going over very well. Veterans no longer need form DS516 to obtain a free driver's license, though the spouse still does. They are currently working on a way to simplify the process for spouses as well.

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])

INFORMATION OUTREACH

News Releases

1. State Agencies Simplify Process for Free Veterans Licenses & IDs – following a conversation between Commissioner Ross and Commissioner Spencer Moore, PID collaborated with representatives at the Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS) to release a joint press release announcing a change to the DS-516 process. Veterans may now apply for and receive a veteran driver's license without needing to visit a GDVS office for a DS-516. Spouses seeking

an honorary license still require verification, but the DDS is working to update their process as well.

Social Media Highlights

1. Job/career postings –
 - a. Shared information on Facebook promoting career opportunities with the GDVS. PID cross-posted a job opening on LinkedIn to promote traffic to the Team Georgia listing.
 - b. Shared information on the Vets2Set program. Vets2Sets connects veterans with job opportunities in the film industry as consultants, videographers, and more.
2. Mental health resources – provided information on programs and events for veterans and their caregivers. Veterans and families are eligible for a broad range of mental wellness programs and many have expanded eligibility due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Memorials and cemeteries –
 - a. Shared information on the Veterans Legacy Program as provided by Ernie Cowart. The program creates a digital memorial page for every veteran interred in a state, tribal, or national veterans cemetery. Families can share personal photos and remembrances.
 - b. Shared an infographic with information on burial eligibility and what is provided to veterans interred at a GDVS veterans memorial cemetery.
4. Military roundtable – shared a selection of photos from Commissioner Ross's support of Governor Kemp's military and veterans roundtable at the VECTR Center.
5. UGA Veterans Legal Clinic Expansion – shared a news release from UGA's School of Law with details on new veterans legal clinic capabilities. Veterans in rural Georgia will now be able to participate in virtual outreach programs for legal assistance and the clinic has expanded self-advocacy resource webinars to educate and empower veterans in need of assistance.

Public Information Division Contacts *(Since December 10, 2021)*

- Replies to VA eBenefits Messages = 170
- Replies to General Questions = approximately 175
- Individual Request for the State Certificate of Honor = approximately 10

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

- The latest and most accurate totals (since March 2015) –

State Certificates of Honor issued via GDVS – An estimated **29,245**
(Honors Ceremonies and Central Office Mail Outs)

DoD Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins presented via GDVS – An estimated **23,265**

Honors Ceremonies supported/coordinated by GDVS – **350**

Defense Department's Vietnam Veteran Surviving Spouse CoH – **285**

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

Mr. Davis added that Congress is working on legislation to extend the age for Tricare dependents to 26, with no additional cost.

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 1,790 educational institutions and training establishments where Georgia veterans may attend school or job training and utilize their GI Bill® educational benefits.
- Extension of COVID-19 protocols for schools was signed into law on December 21, 2021 extending protocols until June 1, 2022.
- Attending NASAA Mid-Winter Conference, Washington DC, February 4-10, 2022

Item *	Number
Approved Educational Institutions	393
Approved Training Establishments	1,397
Veteran Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions	8,684

* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, January 2022.

Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division

Mr. Feagin emphasized that Covid precautions are still in place. The staff and veterans are tested twice weekly and masks and face shields are worn. Visitation is open, and all visitors must also wear masks and face shields. They have an isolation unit for veterans who test positive. All are vaccinated.

Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM) Program

The Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM) is the nation's first digital platform dedicated entirely to the memory of more than 4.3 million Veterans interred in VA's national cemeteries. In time for Veterans Day 2021, nearly 500,000 additional Veteran records from VA grant-funded cemeteries (State, Tribal, and territory) were added to VLM.

Launched in 2019, individual Veteran profile pages are populated with military service and cemetery information. Publicly available information gathered from VA records includes service branch with logo, dates of birth and death, rank, war period, decorations, emblem of belief, and cemetery information.

Interactive features allow family, friends, and others to preserve their Veteran's legacy by posting tributes (comments), upload images, share their Veteran's military service timeline and achievements, biographical information, historical documents and more. The site allows visitors to share Veteran profile pages by email and post them to Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, VLM users can also "Follow a Veteran" to receive email alerts when new content is added to that Veteran's page.

Veterans interred in our State cemeteries are included in this population. Their pages can be reached by going to <https://www.vlm.cem.va.gov> and entering the veteran's name and location.

Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, Health & Memorials Division

There is currently only one patient positive for Covid-19.

Georgia War Veterans Home - Milledgeville, GA										
Monday, January 31, 2022										
Category	Population	Positive Cases	Positives % of Population	Deaths	Deaths % of Positives	Deaths % of Population	Recovered	Recovered % of Positives	Currently In Isolation	Positive for current month
Patients	318	124	38.99%	27	21.77%	8.49%	92	74.19%	5	13
Staff	516	156	30.23%	0	0.00%	0.00%	154	98.72%	2	43

Cumulative figures since March 1, 2020.

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Recovered category includes patients/staff who tested positive and subsequently tested negative twice.

In December 2021, the CDC changed their time-based criteria again. Patients with no symptoms after 10 days are presumed to have recovered from the virus.

In Isolation category includes either self-quarantined, hospital, or COVID-19 unit at GWVH.

Positive for current month includes the number of veterans/staff who have tested COVID positive for the current month.

Mr. Kerry Dyer, Director of Operations, GDVS

Mr. Dyer has been busy doing interviews. He stated that we are down to 4 vacancies in the department.

Mr. Dyer attended the veterans round table on homelessness, where Unite Us was discussed. Everyone was excited to hear about the program and how it will benefit veterans.

Mr. Mark Bannister, Administration, Health, and Memorials

BUDGET

AFY 2021 Budget Senate Appropriations Hearing

On Thursday, January 27, 2022, Commissioner Ross presented the Governor's Recommended Budget for Amended FY 2022 to the members of the Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee.

Under the Amended AFY2022, the Governor's recommend budget is:

Departmental Administration (DVS)

Budget	State Funds	Total Funds
Total Funds	\$2,008,454	\$2,008,454

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery

Budget	State Funds	Total Funds
Total Funds	\$1,836,808	\$2,164,704

Georgia War Veterans Nursing Homes

Budget	State Funds	Total Funds
Total Funds	\$13,318,240	\$39,662,155

Veterans Benefits

Recommended change: None	State Funds	Total Funds
Total Funds	\$7,850,096	\$8,604,022

AFY 2022 Budget

Agency Net	State Funds: \$2,060,123	Total Funds: \$2,060,123
Total Funds	\$25,013,598	\$52,439,335

FINANCE

Accounting

Routine operations are continuing.

HEALTH AND MEMORIALS

State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (through February 4, 2022)+

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	94	119	213
Service Connected *	23	38	61
Total Patients	117	157	274
Last Month			
Regular Patients	95	125	220
Service Connected *	22	39	61
Total Patients	117	164	281

* 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 January 7, 2022, through February 4, 2022.

Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home – Augusta

On January 13, 2022, the Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home earned the Pinnacle Quality Insight for “Best in Class” honors in 15 of 16 categories this year and by scoring in the top 15% nationwide. Pinnacle Quality Insight is a nationally recognized customer and employee insight company for post-acute care and assisted living providers.
<https://pinnacleqi.com>

Georgia War Veterans Home – Milledgeville

Routine operations are continuing.

State Veterans Cemeteries

Burial Statistics (through February 4, 2022)+

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	2,011	2,033	22
Milledgeville	4,641	4,668	27
Total	6,652	6,701	49

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from January 7, 2022, through February 4, 2022.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Routine COVID-19 contingency operations are continuing.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Routine COVID-19 contingency operations are continuing.

OPERATIONS

Human Resources

Routine operations are continuing.

Personnel Actions (Gains / Losses) (February 1, 2022 – February 15, 2022)

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Warner Robins	VFSO 1	New Hire	<i>Vershawn Moses</i>	02/01/2022
Warner Robins	VFSO 1	New Hire	<i>Christine Jones</i>	02/01/2022
LaGrange	VFSO 1	New Hire	<i>Amber Haire</i>	02/01/2022
Canton	VFSO 1	New Hire	<i>Kenneth Sterns</i>	02/01/2022
Marietta	VFSO 1	New Hire	<i>Raven Holstick</i>	02/01/2022
Newnan	VFSO 1	New Hire	<i>Jarrett Hunter</i>	02/01/2022
Decatur VAMC	VCAO 1	Resignation	<i>Daniel Osei</i>	02/01/2022

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Augusta Home	Econ Support Spec	Resignation	<i>Dawn Thomas</i>	02/01/2022
Carrollton	VFSO 1	New Hire	<i>Veronica Dailey</i>	02/15/2022
Atlanta	VFSO 1	New Hire	<i>Maxine Brock</i>	02/15/2022
Cartersville	VFSO 1	New Hire	<i>Chandreas Barkley</i>	02/15/2022
Savannah	Office Manager	Resignation	<i>Reggie Lewis</i>	02/15/2022

Properties

Routine operations are continuing.

Information Technology

Routine operations are continuing.

Records Management

Routine operations are continuing.

Vehicle Management

Routine service and maintenance are performed as required.

Veterans Service Foundation Board

Mr. Doug Middleton, Chairman of the Veterans Service Foundation Board will provide an update.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

COMMITTEE/COUNCIL MINUTES
Women's Veterans Health Committee
Submitted by Veda Brooks

Date: January 12, 2022

Time: 1:00pm to 2:00pm

Location: Via Microsoft Teams

Recorder: Sydney Owens

1. **Attendees:** See attached attendance roster
2. **Approval of Committee Minutes:** December 2021
3. **Announcements:**

WHISE:

- WHISE 2.0 is currently pending onboarding process of two additional staffing positions.

National Updates:

- January is Women Veteran Healthy Living Campaign- Heavily involved with whole health (healthy movement, diet/nutrition)
 - Candice Kent sent out information on monthly campaign hospital wide
- February is Heart Health month. Go RED event will be postponed until May to eliminate large crowds to lower the spread of new Omicron variant of Covid-19. Health Information will still be disseminated.
- Virtual Women's Health Mini Residency will take place in April (25th -27th) - Open to Primary Care providers and nurse teams. Women's Health is only to promote one team from Atlanta hospital
- Reproductive health: Mental Health Reproductive health consult is a resource available to VA providers who treat veterans that have concerns and challenges with reproductive health, it is easy to use and readily available to staff
- GYN grand rounds: Will focus on early pregnancy needs for women veterans; OB issues: women veterans that are newly pregnant trying to connect with OB in community lag time, will be offering more training and education

4. **New Business**

- Pharmacy Updates: Dr. Maltese
 - Women's Health Order Menu: Working on updating the order menu to include Contraceptives, Maternity Care items, Menopause Items, Incontinence products, etc. to be searched by generic name also to assist with ease of ordering
 - Goal is to have updates by the next P&T meeting - Monday, February 7, 2022
- OIG Chip review of Teratogenic Medication Prescribing Practices: Ensuring that patients who have been prescribed teratogenic medications have been properly counseled

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- o Teratogenic medications are medications that are or have been known to be harmful to a developing fetus, causing birth defects or congenital abnormalities
 - o OIG will be ensuring that women that have childbearing potentials have been counseled on their benefits vs. risks
 - o The goal is to ensure that compliance with the directive is met with the current list of patients that are receiving teratogenic medications
 - o Dr. Maltese will be offering PCSL education on this topic during upcoming PC meeting 1/21/22
- IFV disciplinary team: Jana Payan and Dr. Cullen
 - o Creating a work group that would contain urology, GYN, mental health, pharmacology, women's health, spinal cord injury and eligibility office.
 - o Is working to update new components of IVF consult process and include specialties, such as hematology oncology.
 - o The goal is to have this team by second quarter
 - Nicole Manjin has onboarded as a suicide prevention casemanager
 - o Discussed assessing for gun lock safety as well as suicidal thoughts
 - o 49.8% of women veterans committing suicide do so by firearms. Women veteran must be screened for firearms like their male counterparts.
 - o Discussed making firearms and how to store them apart of routine conversations with veterans. This could be a life saving measure
 - o Each clinic should have gun locks available for Veterans. If your clinic does not have gun locks, contact Lauren Ruchin to ensure veterans have access to them when doing a face-to-face visit. If you are doing a telephone or VVC visit, there is a slot to place address to have gun locks mailed to veterans
 - o The Suicide Prevention team has created a gun lock note in CPRS. Fill out note, and it will notify the Suicide Prevention team.

5. Standing Agenda Items:

Date First <u>Identified</u>	Topic	Conclusions/ Recommendations	Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Date/ Follow- Up Status	Report to
2013	Strategic Plan	WVHC formed a workgroup and reviewed FY18 - FY20 Strategic plan, working on developing new FY21-FY23 plan.	Work group formed	Kathleen O'Loughlin	December 2020	ongoing	WVHC
Discussion: Workgroup with core member involvement will continue meeting quarterly to monitor FY21-FY22 strategic plan.							

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Date First Identified	Topic	Conclusions/ Recommendations	Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Date/ Follow-Up Status	Report to
12/2020	Primary Care	Discussion	Discussion	Dr. Jones- Taylor	ongoing	ongoing	WVHC

Discussion: Primary care providers and nurses are being detailed to help with Covid-19 testing. Currently converting face-to-face visits to virtual for the next 2 months.

Date First Identified	Topic	Conclusions/ Recommendations	Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Date/ Follow-Up Status	Report to
12/2020	GYN	Discussion	Discussion	Dr. Jana Payan	ongoing	ongoing	WVHC

Discussion: GYN continues working on finding replacement for PA Payan.

Date First Identified	Topic	Conclusions/ Recommendation	Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Date/ Follow-Up Status	Report to
12/2020	Mammography and Cervical Screening	Discussion	Discussion	Dr. Jamya Pittman	ongoing	ongoing	WVHC

Discussion: Cervical Cancer SOP was presented to WVHC but is still having issues with formatting to be presented to CEC. Mobile Mammography initiate in partnership with Quantum Radiology. Will be held in AVC parking lot on January 27th-28th. Mammograms to be performed on 80 women veterans who were scheduled prior via NVCC. The goal is to have more frequent mammograms on multiple sites in the future.

Date First Identified	Topic	Conclusions/ Recommendations	Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Date/ Follow-Up Status	Report to
12/2020	Maternity Services	Discussion	Discussion	Tracey Kinsey and Kimberly Habersham	ongoing	ongoing	WVHC

Discussion: Maternity care is currently covering 205 pregnant veterans – 7 are postpartum. Ongoing quarterly Drive thru baby showers being offered to Veterans. No standing issue or delayed scheduling.

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Date First Identified	Topic	Conclusions/ Recommendations	Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Date/ Follow-Up Status	Report to
12/2020	Mental Health	Discussion	Discussion	Dr. Geisel	ongoing	ongoing	WVHC
Discussion: Focusing on resuming the Pregnancy loss group soon.							

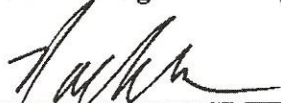
Date First Identified	Topic	Conclusions/ Recommendations	Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Date/ Follow-Up Status	Report to
2020	OIG Update	Program Recommendation	OIG Update	Anita Schmidt	February 2021	January 2021	WVHC
Discussion: See new business.							

Date First Identified	Topic	Conclusions/ Recommendations	Actions	Responsible Person	Target Date	Date/ Follow-Up Status	Report to
12/2020	EOC	Discussion	Discussion	Belen Gutter	ongoing	ongoing	WVHC
Discussion: The EOC committee has been reduced due to staffing issues. Women's health is no longer a part of EOC. If there are any issues, please refer to Candice Kent.							

6. Follow-up Items:

- Town Hall will be rescheduled due to current COVID surge

Next Meeting: February 9, 2022



Kathleen O'Loughlin,
LCSW omen Veteran Program Manager
Committee Co-Chair

1/20/22

Date

Ijeoma Kene-Ewulu, MD
Executive Leadership, Acting COS

Date

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OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Paslawski applauded Tawana Wiley and Ron Cason for the assistance they gave to him and another veteran recently.

Mr. Lou Zayas has Ruptured Duck pins for WWII veterans. He has passed them out to veterans across the country and would like to know if there are any WWII veterans anyone knows of so that he can give them one also. He recently met with one of the last remaining Tuskegee Airmen to give him one of the pins.

Mr. Hanley discussed the Wheelchair Games and trying to get them scheduled in Georgia in the future. Mr. Mendez will be the liaison for this.

The March 15 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 there were no objections. The motion passed.

Mr. Paslawski made a motion to adjourn the meeting. There were no objections. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:10 p.m.

SIGNED:



Shawn Hanley, Chair

ATTEST:


Joshua Kopsie, Secretary

The next Veterans Service Board meeting will be held in person at GDVS but will also be available via video/telephone conference call on Tuesday, March 15, 2022, at 12:30 p.m.

The Webex link is:

<https://georgiadepartmentofveteransservice.webex.com/georgiadepartmentofveteransservice/j.php?MTID=mfcbe7a0e424a0eadb0f8626c19753336>

Meeting password: **VQdjfZQt757**

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

Access Code: **2339 094 2037**