



Present: Mr. Joe Higgins, Chair
Mr. Wyatt Batchelor, Vice Chair
Ms. Samantha Brown-Parks, Secretary
Mr. Alan Danzig, Member
Ms. Vivian Greentree, Member
Mr. Andy Hilmes, Member
Mr. Kevin Loncher, Member
Ms. Meredith Magnus, Member
Mr. John Phillips, Member
Mr. Destry Rogers, Member
Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner
Mr. Pete Peterson, Veterans Service Board, Liaison to Foundation Board
Ms. Shelley Seinberg, Attorney General's Office
Ms. Amy Sillmon, Attorney General's Office
Mr. Mark Demers, Foundation CEO, Chief Development Officer and CFO, GDVS
Mr. Kerry Dyer, Foundation COO, Deputy Commissioner and COO, GDVS
Ms. Julie Hammond, Foundation CFO, Commissioner's Executive Assistant, GDVS
Ms. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS
Donor who wishes not to be identified
904-710-8528 caller who wishes not to be identified

On Thursday, February 6, 2025, the Veterans Service Foundation Board meeting was held by video/tele-conference.

The members listed above were present.

Mr. Higgins called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Before approval of the December minutes, Mr. Higgins asked Ms. Seinberg to clarify what is required to be included in the minutes. Ms. Seinberg explained that according to the Georgia Open Meetings Act, it is not required that minutes be verbatim. At a minimum they should include the names of members present, a description of each motion or proposal and the identity of those making the motions and seconding them, and a record of all votes.

Mr. Higgins asked if everyone had been able to review the changes Ms. Magnus sent regarding the Dec. 6 and Dec. 27 minutes. He asked for a motion to approve the December 6 minutes with the corrections that Ms. Magnus submitted via email. Ms. Greentree made a motion to approve the

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minutes with the corrections. Mr. Rogers seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Higgins asked for a motion to approve the December 27 minutes with the corrections that Ms. Magnus submitted via email. Mr. Rogers made a motion to approve the minutes with the corrections. Ms. Greentree seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Higgins made a motion to approve the minutes from the September meeting, which were previously distributed to members to review. Mr. Roberts seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OFFICER REPORTS

Mr. Demers reported that he would be responding to an additional email from Ms. Magnus today. He also requested that, due to the contention regarding IRS Form 990 from Ms. Magnus, that the Board pay an external person to prepare the tax paperwork. Commissioner Ross stated that according to the Foundation's Bylaws, the Board should be preparing the tax paperwork. They did it in the first year funds were received. We took care of it last year in coordination with the State Accounting Office, who is our internal control that gets audited.

Mr. Loncher stated that unless there is some substantiated evidence of misrepresentation, inaccuracies or fraud, there is no reason for a non-profit to go and add additional expense by getting an outside agency involved. Mr. Rogers said there is a bigger discussion that needs to take place regarding our Charity Navigator status and thinks we should validate and verify through external sources that we are doing the prudent thing. Ms. Greentree pulled up the current IRS Form 990 for the Foundation and mentioned that there are too little funds coming in to pay for a company to file the form, as it seems like a waste of funds since you would have to pay an outside company upwards to \$500,000 to take care of it for us. Mr. Rogers stated that he would like to have an outside company come sometime in the next year to make sure we are on the right track, while allowing GDVS to continue doing it for now. Ms. Magnus stated that it is inaccurate that the Board would have to complete the form. Their responsibility is only to make certain it is done properly. She also questioned if it is the correct form to fill out. Mr. Loncher stated that enough members are involved in charities to know that the correct form is the 990.

Mr. Higgins asked for a motion to have an external firm paid to complete the IRS Form 990. Ms. Magnus moved for it to be so. Mr. Rogers stated he thinks this is something that should be worked through for the next year by the Board. Mr. Higgins suggested that a proposal be put together to be discussed at the May meeting. Mr. Loncher suggested the members think of accounting firms they know and work with to see if any would be willing to help us out for free. Ms. Greentree agreed with Mr. Loncher. Mr. Higgins asked everyone to reach out to their contacts. Ms. Magnus asked if everyone could go ahead and contact firms so they can address the form for this year. Mr. Demers stated that the tax deadline for the 990 is May 15. Mr. Higgins changed the deadline for the proposal to be the April meeting instead of the May meeting. Mr. Phillips asked Commissioner Ross if there are any restrictions on engaging third parties for this. She stated that she hasn't read in the law or bylaws

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anything that would prohibit a third party from completing the 990 and doing a financial audit. Ms. Seinerberg also stated that she is not aware of any restrictions on doing this.

Ms. Hammond stated that she had sent out the report below for members to review before the meeting.

The funds in the account are allocated as follows:

General Funds	\$40,374.15
Homelessness	\$ 106.21
New Homes	\$ 1,025.00
State Benefit Book Ads	\$12,259.25
Suicide Prevention Hardware	\$ 1,700.00
Suicide Prevention Summit	\$11,380.00
Women & Diversity	\$ 1,124.72
TOTAL	\$67,969.33

Ms. Magnus had a question regarding the funds indicated for the state benefit book ads. She asked if those funds are available to the Board to utilize for whatever purpose. Ms. Hammond stated that the funds have to be spent as designated, the book is being printed, and the funds will be used for that book. Ms. Magnus wanted to know in which meeting the books were discussed. Ms. Hammond stated that she would send those minutes to Ms. Magnus after the meeting.

Mr. Dyer had nothing to report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Danzig from the Gift Committee gave an update on the charity cruise. He has been in contact with Mr. Farmer from the cruise line, who is willing to create a flyer for a raffle. He needs our EIN number and logo. We would get \$100 profit from every state room sold with a minimum of five state rooms. We need a raffle license from the county that the Foundation is incorporated in. Mr. Higgins stated that it is Fulton County. Mr. Greentree asked if there is a fee for the raffle license. Ms. Brown-Parks stated that it is \$100 for Fulton County. Mr. Danzig continued that the flyers would be printed out and put in places of business and websites. There is no cost to the Foundation. Mr. Higgins agreed to check on the best way to do the tickets themselves. Mr. Danzig asked if this is something we want to move forward with. Mr. Loncher agreed that we could raise funds this way and that each Board Member should sell a certain number of tickets. We also need to pursue corporate sponsors. Mr. Danzig was given the EIN number for the Foundation and send it, along with the Foundation logo, to Mr. Farmer.

DIRECTOR ACTIVITY REPORTS

Mr. Loncher stated that he will be putting together a flyer to share with the Board at the next meeting for approval to seek corporate sponsorships. He also asked that everyone follow our LinkedIn page. If you have news to post there, you can send it to him, and he will add it to the page.

Mr. Rogers mentioned an email he had sent to everyone after the meeting of the Veterans Service Board. He asked if he could get a read ahead of the reports provided to the VSB and a copy of the agenda. Ms. Hammond stated that the minutes are posted on the website. Commissioner Ross stated that the Chairman of the VSB was going to answer the email from Mr. Rogers. The reports are included in the minutes, which everyone can review once approved by the VSB. Mr. Rogers was impressed with the number of people at the VSB meeting and everything they are involved in. He mentioned that he knows a company that builds retirement communities and homes and at some point turns them over to the State. It usually takes 4-5 years to build, staff, and get things up and running. He asked if it would be legal to sell it back to the State. Commissioner Ross stated that we will have to see if that is legal. Typically, commercially constructed homes like ours are at a cost of 65% from the federal government and 35% from the State of Georgia. Mr. Rogers asked about the budget for GDVS. Commissioner Ross stated that we are retaining the \$250,000 in funds for nurse retention. We have a 50% attrition rate for LPN's and RN's and an 88.6% attrition rate for CNA's. This money will help us with that. The House has approved the additional \$1 million in start up costs for the Sub-Acute Unit and the \$1.5 million we need to cover the cost of increased healthcare.

Ms. Brown-Parks had nothing to report.

Ms. Greentree had nothing to report.

Ms. Magnus pointed out that Mr. McMahon had given a report at the December 6 meeting regarding soliciting software suites that would allow us to go after major contributions and in that discussion he suggested we pump the brakes on that until we get more clarity on our existing veterans' homes and how they are funded. She asked that when the current legislative session is over the Commissioner give a briefing to the Board so they can get a better understanding.

Mr. Phillips had nothing to report.

Mr. Danzig had nothing additional to report.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Higgins stated that Mr. Kopsie, Chairman of the VSB, sent him the priorities list and what the VSB wants the Foundation's focus to be. He will go over that list more fully and send it to all the Board members and he asked for everyone to confirm when they receive it and when they have read it.

Ms. Magnus made a motion to request that Mark Demers identify and apply for grants to support the Foundation specifically for seed money. Commissioner Ross stated that based on his job description for the Foundation, that is not one of his responsibilities. She is the only one on our team with the expertise in searching for grants. Ms. Magnus stated that she believes the Senate bill reconstituting the Foundation stated that a staff member would pursue grants on behalf of the Foundation. She also asked Commissioner Ross if she had sought any grants for the Foundation. Commissioner Ross stated that she had looked at quite a few grants from various sources, and none appeared to fit the mission of the Foundation. Mr. Higgins stated that he receives information from Sen. Ossoff's office regarding available grants and he will forward that information.

Mr. Phillips talked about a meeting he had in Cherokee County where our Homeless Coordinator gave a presentation. One of the slides was on the Veterans Homes and there was a lot of interest. He wants to get us in contact with some of the heavy hitters there. Commissioner Ross stated that she would be glad to take their phone calls. She mentioned that the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association came to her House testimony and spoke up on behalf of the Veterans Homes. They had been well briefed on the issues and that carried considerable weight with the committee. Mr. Phillips asked if people are allowed to attend and speak, and yes they are.

Ms. Magnus mentioned the grant applications again and asked Mr. Loncher if there is an easy way to navigate and locate grants and how much it would cost. He said it is like navigating a government contract and is not easy. It is called Candid and costs about \$5,000. He goes to the public library to use their subscription for free. Ms. Magnus asked if we should purchase it. Mr. Loncher would not recommend that we purchase it, but for people to go to public libraries to access the software. Ms. Magnus asked Commissioner Ross if she could pursue that on behalf of the Foundation. Commissioner Ross answered that she has access to a couple of systems to search for grants and she will continue to search for grants through those systems.

Mr. Higgins brought up the license plate legislation (see attached). There's no motion regarding this.

Mr. Higgins started a discussion on receiving in kind donations and monetary gifts given for specific purposes, such as a Women Veterans Summit and Suicide Prevention Summit. Mr. Rogers brought up Ms. Amy Stevens from Georgia Military Women, who Commissioner Ross stated has no financial resources for her group, which is mainly a social club. We are working with her on the Women's Summit

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coming up on March 27. We need financial donations mainly to cover the cost of food, which our grant funds are not allowed to pay for. Mr. Higgins suggested that any funds raised specifically for this event be used for this event. Ms. Seinberg mentioned that she would review this to make sure it is in keeping with state law. Ms. Magnus stated that she wants verification that donors are designating their money a certain way. Mr. Higgins tabled the motion awaiting further guidance from the AG's office.

Ms. Magnus requested guidance from the AG's office regarding the funds designated for the State Benefits Book. Her concern is that the funds are going into the Foundation's account and being noted as donations. Ms. Hammond explained to Ms. Magnus that these funds were not received as donations. Commissioner Ross stated that we discussed the books in the October meeting, and we did coordinate this project with the AG's Office. Ms. Magnus wanted to know why the funds are not being put into the checking account for GDVS. Commissioner Ross answered that we cannot add funds to our operational budget. Things like this go through the Foundation's checkbook, which is one reason the Foundation was established from the beginning. Ms. Magnus asked if the advertisers received a document to supply to the IRS saying that they have made a donation to the Foundation. Ms. Hammond answered that they did not receive a document at the end of the year. Ms. Magnus stated that she is still uncomfortable with these funds going into the Foundation. Mr. Higgins stated that we will wait for guidance on this from the AG's Office.

Mr. Higgins announced that the next meeting will be on March 6th at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Higgins made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Rogers seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:20 a.m.

SIGNED:



Joe Higgins, Chair

ATTEST:



Samantha Brown-Parks, Secretary

Senate Bill 76

By: Senators Echols of the 49th, Kirkpatrick of the 32nd, Payne of the 54th, Brass of the 6th,
Summers of the 13th and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1 To amend Code Section 40-2-86 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 license plates promoting or supporting certain agencies, funds, or nonprofit corporations with
3 proceeds disbursed to the general fund and the agency, fund, or nonprofit corporation, so as
4 to establish a specialty license plate benefitting the Georgia Veterans Service Foundation;
5 to provide for related matters; to provide for compliance with constitutional requirements;
6 to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

8 SECTION 1.

9 Code Section 40-2-86 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to license plates
10 promoting or supporting certain agencies, funds, or nonprofit corporations with proceeds
11 disbursed to the general fund and the agency, fund, or nonprofit corporation, is amended by
12 adding a new paragraph to subsection (l) to read as follows:

13 "(71) A special license plate honoring Georgia veterans and their families. The funds
14 raised by the sale of this special license plate shall be disbursed to the Georgia Veterans
15 Service Foundation."

16 SECTION 2.

17 In accordance with the requirements of Article III, Section IX, Paragraph VI(n) of the
18 Constitution of the State of Georgia, this Act shall not become law unless it receives the
19 requisite two-thirds' majority vote in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

20 SECTION 3.

21 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.

