



Present: Mr. Joe Higgins, Chair
Mr. Wyatt Batchelor, Vice Chair
Mr. Alan Danzig, Member
Ms. Vivian Greentree, Member
Mr. Kevin Loncher, Member
Mr. Destry Rogers, Member
Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner
Mr. Bryan Webb, Attorney General's Office
Ms. Shelley Seinberg, Attorney General's Office
Ms. Amy Sillmon, Attorney General's Office
Mr. Pete Peterson, Veterans Service Board
Ms. Raven Holstick, Foundation COO, Transition and Employment Coordinator, GDVS
Ms. Julie Hammond, Foundation CFO, Commissioner's Executive Assistant, GDVS
Mr. Kerry Dyer, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Operations Officer, GDVS
Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information and External Affairs, GDVS
Ms. Irene Mackson, Business Support Analyst, GDVS
Ms. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS
Mr. Robert Magnus, Visitor

On Thursday, March 5, 2026, the Veterans Service Foundation Board meeting was held by video/tele-conference. The members and visitors listed above were present.

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

Mr. Batchelor made a motion to approve the minutes of the February meeting, which were previously distributed to members to review. Mr. Loncher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OFFICER REPORTS

Ms. Thompson was not present at the meeting.

Ms. Holstick did not have anything to report.

Ms. Hammond stated that she had sent out the report below for members to review before the meeting. There were no questions.

The funds in the accounts are allocated as follows:

General Funds	\$43,930.26
Annual Training	\$ 171.42
Homelessness	\$ 106.21
New Homes	\$ 1,025.00
State Benefit Book Ads	\$ 59.23
Suicide Prevention Hardware	\$ 1,383.06
Suicide Prevention Summit	\$ 3,299.47
<u>Women & Diversity</u>	<u>\$ 314.53</u>
TOTAL	\$50,289.18

DIRECTOR ACTIVITY REPORTS

Mr. Danzig reported that he is in the process of contacting someone about the possibility of putting together a fundraiser for the Foundation. More to follow.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Rogers requested an update on the revision of the bylaws. Mr. Higgins stated that he is working through the bylaws to become more familiar with them and to see if any updates are needed. He is taking into consideration the discussion at the February meeting as well as the email suggestions that were made. He will then send out an email to the Board Members so that they can begin working on potential updates. Once the process is complete and the new bylaws have been accepted by the Board, the Attorney General's Office will review them.

Mr. Rogers asked if Commissioner Ross had a conversation with the group in Kentucky about building nursing homes. She did. They have many medical facilities, and he was going to get with his team about all they discussed to see if they could build a skilled nursing home. We are waiting for his response.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Loncher announced that there are some good initiatives in Columbus with the approval of the Colonel Puckett VET Center for Education and the homeless initiative and movement is still going strongly. Keep them in your prayers and think of them if you have a chance to direct any funding their way.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Ross discussed the AFY 2026 budget, which includes \$5 million to end veteran homelessness. The funds were carved out from the Department of Community Affairs and will allow us to operate potentially a couple of different programs. There will be a meeting this afternoon with the Office of Planning and Budget and we will have more information on how to move forward with these funds. We don't yet know if the funds are one-time or enduring, and this will help determine what we can do moving forward.

Mr. Destry questioned whether funds had been moved from the Home to the Augusta Cemetery and what the impact was on the Homes. Commissioner Ross explained that there had been no impact to the Homes. The Augusta Cemetery has been in the works for 27 years. The State had appropriated \$1 million for this cemetery. We were told at the time that we would never get VA funding for this cemetery, even though there was a portion of the population just south of Fort Gordon that wasn't covered. We found out in December that we were on the VA's priority list for a new cemetery, but the State had removed the funding. They are giving back \$800,000 of the funding in the AFY 2026 budget that had been previously taken away from the Department. The funds were not taken from the Georgia War Veterans Home. That was the initial recommendation from the Governor, but then that did not occur.

Commissioner Ross also discussed the \$1 million given for the War Veterans Home to bolster staffing. Funds totaling \$250,000 were given to the Shepherd Center to provide rehabilitation services for veterans and service members with TBI's and mental health issues. This will pass through GDVS. Funds totaling \$500,000 were given to the Cohen Clinic in Hinesville for their SHARE initiative. This will pass through GDVS.

There was a discussion on whether the Home is overstaffed. By our contract, we must have a 3.5 staffing level. Most skilled nursing homes in the State have between 3.0 and 3.5. We have just over 5, but we also must staff per the acuity level of our patients. The primary qualification to get into our Home is to have a VA doctor sign off on the need for skilled nursing. We must look at the medical diagnosis and needs to make sure we have the staff and clinical capability to care for the patient. We have funding for 16 additional patients at Milledgeville. We added three last week and then had two pass away. They have just had a hiring fair, and 32 people are in the process of being hired.

Mr. Rogers discussed the difficulty of getting homeless veterans approved through the VA for the Home. Mr. Loncher agreed with this. He said that veterans they bring in often don't have an ID card so the ability to get them care through the VA is non-existent. He asked if we could reach out to the VA about the need for critical care for homeless veterans.

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Minutes - Veterans Service Foundation Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Mr. Higgins discussed the upcoming meeting today with Kumho Tires. He sent out an email previously with their proposal. Once he and Commissioner Ross have the meeting to figure out the details, he will bring that back to the Board. It would be great to get a large company on board and have that partnership, which will help in getting other companies on board.

Mr. Higgins announced that the next meeting will be on April 2 at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Higgins adjourned the meeting at 10:41 a.m.

SIGNED:



Joe Higgins, Chair

ATTEST:



Bob McMahon, Secretary