

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Present Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Chair
Mr. Steve Mendez, Secretary
Mr. Shawn Hanley, Member
Mr. John Kubinec, Member
Mr. Pete Peterson, Member
Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner

Visitors Present: Mr. Kerry Dyer, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Operations Officer, GDVS
Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson, Executive Director, Field Operations & Appeals, GDVS
Mr. Mark Demers, Chief Development Officer, Chief Finance Officer, GDVS
Mr. Russell Feagin, Executive Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS
Ms. Shelley Seinberg, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office
Ms. Amy Sillmon, Attorney General's Office
Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW Service Officer, Appeals Division, GDVS
Ms. Tonjala Moton-Williams, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer
Mr. Bill Miles, Sr. Vice Commander, VFW
Mr. Lou Zayas, Jr. Vice Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Ms. Carolyn Cagle, Georgia American Gold Star Mothers
Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and Vetlanta
Mr. Dennis Darnes, President, Blinded Veterans Association
Mr. Drew Keenan, Veterans Coalition Foundation
Mr. Herman Lenvion, Veterans Coalition Foundation
Ms. Samantha Brown-Parks, Veterans Service Foundation Board
Mr. Joe Higgins, Veterans Service Foundation Board
Ms. Meredith Magnus, Veterans Service Foundation Board
Mr. Destry Rogers, Veterans Service Foundation Board
Ms. Amanda Benjamin, Visitor
Ms. Thomasina Lennon, Visitor
Mr. Norm DeWalt, Visitor
Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director GWVNH, Augusta, GA
Ms. Lily Snyder, Director, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS
Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information and External Affairs, GDVS
Ms. Shareka Monday-Robinson, Director, Human Resources, GDVS
Ms. Ramona Roper, Director, Training Division, GDVS
Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director, Veterans Benefits South Region, GDVS
Mr. Ken Childre, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS
Mr. Edwin Berry, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS
Ms. Raven Holstick, Transition and Employment Coordinator, GDVS
Ms. Jarelle Thompson, Homeless Coordinator, GDVS
Mr. William Wilson, Network Administrator, GDVS
Ms. Camala Ball, Budget Analyst, GDVS
Ms. Irene Mackson, Business Support Analyst, GDVS

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Ms. Yvette Pollard, Admin Support Specialist, GDVS
Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Wednesday, January 15, 2025, the Veterans Service Board meeting was held in person and by video/tele-conference.

Mr. Kopsie called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m. Ms. Simpson gave the invocation. Mr. Dyer led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Mr. Mendez made a motion to approve the January Agenda. Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Peterson made a motion to approve the December minutes, which were previously distributed for members to review. Mr. Mendez seconded the motion. There were no objections. The motion passed.

The following reports were submitted for the Board meeting:

Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW

- The Department Service Officer attended the Monthly VSO/Community Partner PACT Information and Listening virtual meeting hosted by Lauren Ruchin, Atlanta VHA. The virtual meeting was held on December 12, 2024, at 12PM – 1PM.
 - The purpose of the meeting was to share information about the PACT Act and to discuss how our Veterans are being impacted by the PACT Act.
 - We discussed ways to ensure that our Veterans gain access to the healthcare, benefits, and resources they earned and deserve!
 - Provided Veterans' feedback about the PACT Act Outreach initiatives.
 - Discussed upcoming Outreach events in the communities.
- The Department Service Officer attended a Georgia Department of Veteran Service (GDVS) Leadership Institute virtual training, session held on December 13, 2024, at 8AM – 9AM.
 - Topic Obstacle is the Way3. Watched the following video: The Obstacle Is The Way (Summarized by the Author) in 4 Minutes. Discussed about obstacles we faced or are facing. Discussed how our perception, action and perseverance can change obstacles into opportunities and growth experiences.

Ms. Boldoe added to her report that the VFW presented 60 care packages to the hospital, which contained socks, a toothbrush, hand sanitizer, water and snacks.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Ms. Tonjala Moton-Williams, GDVS, American Legion Service Officer

- January 15, 2025 - January 19, 2025, National Commander's Visit
- January 16, 2025, 10:00am - The Commander, National Commander, and delegation will visit Atlanta VA Healthcare System, 1670 Clairmont Road, Decatur, Georgia 30033.

Upcoming events:

- Proposed Visit....February 11 or 12, 2025, 9:00 am The Commander and his delegation will visit Tuskegee Campus/ Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System 2400 Hospital Rd. Tuskegee, AL 36083

Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and Vetlanta

Georgia Military Women continues to be recognized nationally because we do our events at zero cost. We don't even have a bank account, and we don't accept donations. We are able to do this through partnerships

Commissioner Patricia Ross

On Thursday, December 19, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended the NASDVA Logistics Discussion, the Veterans Service Board Meeting, and the Suicide Mortality Review preparation meeting in anticipation of the academy training held 26-31 January. She serves as the project manager for the grant, which is a joint venture between DPH, DBHDD, Coroners, Medical Examiners, and the AMES Research Center. She also facilitated getting a homeless veteran a replacement VA health ID card.

On Friday, December 20, 2024, Commissioner Ross, Kerry Dyer and Mark Demers toured the AMC Hospital in East Point as a potential location for a state veteran home. More discussion needs to be held as to the viability and cost of the large facility.

On Monday, December 23, 2024, Commissioner Ross had a budget meeting with her team. She later attended the World Asian Law Enforcement Council Proclamation Ceremony at the Capitol.

On Friday, December 27, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended the Veterans Service Foundation Board Meeting and worked with a veteran on an initial claim.

On Monday, December 30, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended the Unite Us Bi-Weekly meeting. She also worked with a member of the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association to garner their support for the Georgia War Veterans Homes. Additionally, she appointed Mr. Kerry Dyer as Deputy Commissioner for GDVS.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Tuesday, December 31, 2024, Commissioner Ross attended the SMRC Weekly Meeting. She then met with Shelley Seinberg from the Attorney General's Office regarding confidentiality agreements.

On Thursday, January 2, 2025, Commissioner Ross met with MaryLea Boatwright-Quinn from DHS to discuss programs for aging veterans. Ms. Boatwright-Quinn's team is planning training sessions for GDVS personnel on the elderly legal assistance program and helping older veterans navigate their healthcare needs.

On Friday, January 3, 2025, Commissioner Ross met with Neal VanMarter from Senator Ossoff's office to discuss programs for veterans.

On Monday, January 6, 2025, Commissioner Ross held a Director's Meeting. She and Kerry Dyer then met with Commissioner Kevin Tanner from the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities and his staff regarding the Milledgeville home and potential synergies/pipeline of veterans requiring care. She later met with Matt Scherer regarding a software that assists transitioning military members and provides a comprehensive calendar for events in Texas. She then met with PLAD Homes to follow up on land in Georgia that can possibly be used for homeless veterans. She also attended the Fox Grant Update Meeting.

On Tuesday, January 7, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the SMRC Weekly Meeting. She also attended the VBA Briefing to VSO Community regarding the Rudisell decision. She later met with Budget Analyst Camala Ball, Russell Feagin and Kerry Dyer to discuss the finances for the Milledgeville Home. She also observed the Joint Appropriations Public Safety subcommittee meeting.

On Thursday, January 9, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the Second Quarter Close Meeting with the State Accounting Office. She also met with her Outreach Team and Veterans Collaborative.

On Friday, January 10, 2025, Commissioner Ross began collecting information from the team to present the last year's accomplishments during committee testimony for the next legislative session.

On Monday, January 13, 2025, Commissioner Ross held a Director's Meeting. She then attended the Unite Us Bi-Weekly Meeting. She later had a meeting regarding the Fox Grant.

On Tuesday, January 14, 2025, Commissioner Ross attended the SMRC Weekly Meeting and the Grant Manager Meeting.

Ms. Shelly-Ann Simpson, Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals

GENERAL

- **DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters: 741** Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in December 2024.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Projected Positions: Two openings in Appeals and 1 opening in Decatur VAMC

Ms. Ramona Roper, Director of Training Division:

- January 14, 2025, the Training Division had a collaboration meeting for annual training, which will be in June 2025. Also, discussed future projects, the mentoring program, office visits, and implementing new ideas to broaden the learning and training processes.

Upcoming Events:

- Daily continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices
- Continuation of performing duties as VSO's
- DROP classes will resume, January 21, 2025

Mr. Edwin Berry, Director of Appeals Division

- The total number of hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for **December 2024** was **45**. During the calendar year 2024, the Appeals Team assisted with **670** hearings, and filed nearly **150** claims and **49** Notices of Disagreement (NOD).
- **\$173,688** awarded in December for Appeal decision grants.
- As of **December 31, 2024**, the Atlanta VA Regional Office processed benefits as follows for GDVS and the Service Organizations represented by GDVS during the month of November 2024:

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid
Compensation	109,465	\$257,342,337
DIC	4,375	\$7,698,539
Survivor Pension	666	\$657,320
<u>Veteran Pension</u>	<u>1,298</u>	<u>\$1,542,191</u>
<u>Grand Total</u>	<u>115,804</u>	<u>\$267,240,387</u>

YTD through 12/31/2024 Total Compensation, Pension and other benefits paid: **\$3,031,709,247** for the veterans that we represent who receive VA benefits.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Mr. Kenneth Childre, Director Veterans Benefits North Region

Retro Awards: \$1,844,356.49

Of Note: 3 Veterans received Debt Waivers: \$214,637.00

Director Site Visits/Inspections: 0

Community Involvement:

12/2/2024-Tanya Rogers (Gainesville) arranged a meeting between a homeless veteran in the Gainesville community and StreetExit

12/4/2024-Tanya Rogers (Gainesville) donated items including sleeping bags to support an event held by StreetExit

12/9-12/11/2024-Rico Johnson (Gainesville) attended and completed the Mental Health and Spirituality Training

12/14/2024-Tanya Rogers (Gainesville) volunteered to place wreaths in support of Wreaths Across America

North Area Gains/Losses: 1

Rita Barnhart-Canton-Retired 31 Dec 24 after 40+ years with GDVS

Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		December-24					
A	B	C	D / E			G	G / E
			D	E	F		H
			Total	Work	Average	Total	Average
	Veterans' Field		Monthly	Days	Office	Claims	Claims
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Office	In	Visits	Submitted	Submitted
Office Name	Last Name	#	Visits	Month	Per	To	By VFSOS
					Day	VA	To VA
						Monthly	Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	52	5,316	20	265.80	1,826	91.30
Number of Offices:	29	Average Visits/Office:		183.31	Average Claims/Office: 62.9655172		

*Total monthly office visits include: 1,819 In-Person and 3,497 phone calls/emails.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Ms. Sherri Whitfield, Director Veterans Benefits South Region

- On December 21, 2024, Melissa Ingle in our Americus office gave out Christmas dinner baskets to ten veterans whom she identified with needs. These veterans were also honored with certificates of appreciation for their service. Mrs. Ingle is the Service Officer for the American Legion Post 2 in Americus, GA.
- Scott Weaver in the St. Mary's office will be participating in a TAPS briefing on January 22nd at the King's Bay Naval Station.
- Sherri Whitfield in the Albany office will be participating in a TAPS briefing on January 29th at Moody AFB.
- Since the last board meeting, South region offices reported total lump sum payments of \$903,158.33, with the Albany Field Office having the highest single lump sum of \$154,118.44 for a surviving spouse.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 239,553.

Ms. Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)

- December 12, 2024, Ms. Brooks attended the Returning Veterans Task Force (RVTF) meeting.
- December 16, 2024, Ms. Brooks participated in the 2025 Let's Connect Summit Planning Meeting.
- December 17-18, 2024, Ms. Brooks attended the SMRC meeting. Ms. Brooks attended the Women Veteran Advisory Council Meeting.
- December 18, 2024, Ms. Brooks participated in a meeting with Brian and Neal VanMarter about how to best market the Compact Act across Georgia.
- December 31, 2024, Ms. Brooks participated in a meeting to target Women Veterans and Military Family members find employment.
- January 2, 2025, Ms. Brooks attended the Army Reserve "Together We Can" planning meeting.
- December 16, 2025, Ms. Brooks participated in the 2025 Let's Connect Summit Planning meeting.

Current committees:

- Violence Prevention Task Force

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Georgia Team
- The Birdwell Foundation Board Member
- Coweta County Race, Equity, and Justice Committee Unite Georgia Community Advisory Committee
- Farmer Street Cemetery Commission

Ms. Calandra Ferguson, Suicide Prevention and Outreach Coordinator

- December 19 - Ms. Ferguson attended Operation Targeted Recovery meeting to plan January's Event for Transitioning Veterans.
- December 31 - Ms. Ferguson attended the Suicide Mortality Review Committee (SMRC).
- January 2 - Ms. Ferguson attended the "Together We Can" Joint state meeting for the event in January with Florida.
- January 6 - Ms. Ferguson attended the monthly Director's meeting for GDVS.
- January 6 - Ms. Ferguson attended the 2025 Suicide Prevention Summit planning meeting.
- January 6 - Ms. Ferguson attended the Fox Grant meeting with KSU.
- January 7 - Ms. Ferguson attended the SMRC meeting.
- January 7 - Ms. Ferguson attended OTR planning meeting.

Ms. Raven Holstick, Transition and Employment Coordinator

- December 4, 2024, Transition and Employment Coordinator attended the VETLANTA Q4 Summit held at the Home Depot Headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. The focus was on Veteran Employment. Assistant Secretary James D. Rodriguez from the U.S. Department of Labor was the Guest Speaker.
- December 5, 2024, Transition and Employment Coordinator held a meeting with Operation Targeted Recovery to discuss the upcoming event for January 17, 2025.
- December 11, 2024, Transition and Employment Coordinator attended a meeting with Alabama Veterans Services to discuss ideas and brief what we are doing in Georgia. Commissioner Ross and the Outreach team also attended.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Upcoming events:

- January 11 - Dobbins Lunch and Learn
- January 17 - Douglasville Transition service member roundtable
- February - National Association of State Approving Agencies FY25 Mid-Winter Business and Training Conference

Ms. Jarelle Thompson, Homelessness Coordinator

- January 6, 2025 - Held a meeting with PLAD HOMES. They have found land in Barnesville, and they will be able to house about 20 2bdrms 1 bath or 60 1bdrm/bath. They are also able to provide job training for veterans assisting with the building process.
- January 7, 2025 - Meeting with HUDVASH Supervisor to get a brief training course and find out more information regarding the HUDVASH program.
- Jan 8, 2025 - Meeting with Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) to learn more about their program and what they have to offer. I also want to find out if there is a possible partnership.
- January 14, 2025 - Will attend COA to complete our monthly engagement with their homeless population and provide services.

Upcoming events:

- A community day to pass out hygiene packets to the homeless during winter.
- Setting up meetings with recipients of Dekalb County's housing grant to assist with evictions and housing needs.

Mr. Mark Demers, Chief Development Officer/Chief Financial Officer

Accounting/Procurement/Compliance:

- Routine operations are continuing. We are continuously working to improve all accounts payable processing, to apply proper coding, accountability, organization of purchase orders, and on time payments.
- We are continuing to work with the SAO Shared Services to prepare the procurement and accounting data in Team Works for migration to GA@Work.
- Kirsten Dennis continues to monitor Staples and Moore Business invoices, receipting out invoices for payment and tracking purchase orders. She closed 7 POs this month.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- Kirsten Dennis is preparing for the bi-annual bulk supply order to all the field offices and appeals. The letter of instruction was sent out January 9, 2025.
- Camala Ball assisted with the War Home audits and reviewed budgets with Russell to confirm expenditures and budget projections.
- Irene Mackson set-up P-Card refresher training for self-enrollment this month, P-card Administrators, card holders, and approvers must enroll in Purchase Card Principles (6600W) and complete the exam at the end of the course. 5 out of 6 have completed the training with the last set to complete training on January 10, 2025.
- The P-Card policy was submitted to DOAS was reviewed and revisions are underway. Expected completion by January 24, 2025.

Budget/Travel:

- We are currently waiting for the Governor's Budget to be released for AFY 2025 and FY 2026.
- The overall budget at the program level is well within spending limits. Currently we have spent 42.83% of the total budget as of January 3, 2025 (Based on the average expected monthly budget percentage of 8.33%, calculated at 24.99% for the 1st quarter, and expected to be 49.98% by the 2nd quarter's end). Third quarter expenditures will be a bit higher due to the Balcony Office renovation and the Department of Audits & Accounts (DOAA) audit will cost \$47,565 for the war home audits, so cost savings in the second quarter will help to balance it.
- Budget review with SAO was conducted on January 9, 2025.

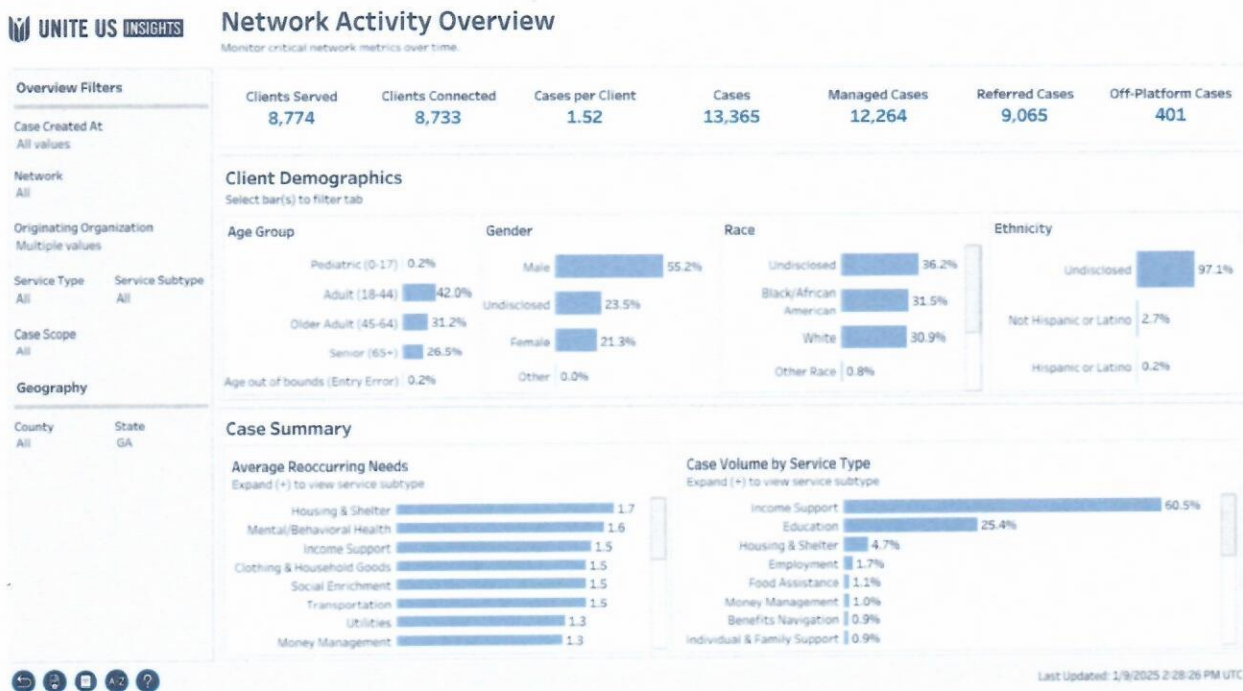
Grant Program:

- SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program- (\$747,464 year 2 and **\$722,747 year 3**)
 - We submitted draw-down #13 for \$9,846.42 on January 8, 2025. All funds have been expended for year 2 of the grant.
 - The SSG Fox Grant Mid-Year Report was submitted on October 18, 2024; the next report will be in January 2025.
 - Year 3 funds will be released in the Payment Management System on the week of January 17, 2025.
- Unite-Us Grant- (American Rescue Plan-Negative Impact Grant)- \$6.1m per year (\$18.3m) over the course of 3 years starting July 1, 2022:
 - Data ingestion and secure data transfer for the platform and social connector are moving forward. As of December 17, 2024, we have **276,021** veterans in the system. The next SFTP

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

transfer will be on January 17, 2025. We have submitted **1,092** community partners and **313** healthcare partners for inclusion to the platform since August 2022.

- We received the advance payment request for the entire year on September 16, 2024, for \$6,088,640.28. We continue to pay invoices from this advance until June 2025.
- Since the Public Resource Directory has gone live on 3/22/2024 there have been 1,987 site visits, 1,565 visitors with 247 distinct programs viewed.
- The Quarterly Report for the second quarter was submitted via Survey Monkey on January 8, 2025.
- Below is an activity snapshot from Unite Us Insights:



• **Veterans Mental Health Services Program Grant (HB 414)-**

- AFY2023- The grant was awarded to two vendors: \$750,000
 - Aspire (Cohen Veterans Network) for \$650,000.
 - Emory Healthcare for \$100,000.
 - The end of year report for Cohen was received on July 31, 2024, and the report from Emory was received on September 13, 2024.
- AFY2024- The grant was awarded to two vendors: \$1,000,000
 - Aspire (Cohen Veterans Network) for \$776,132
 - Emory Healthcare for \$212,500
 - GDVS indirect rate awarded by Senate and House \$11,368
 - All monies have been distributed to awardees in May 2024.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

- First quarter reporting will be due on October 31, 2024.
- Second quarter reporting due January 31, 2025.
- FY2025- \$1,000,000 (competitive grant)
 - The grant was awarded to 3 vendors:
 - Cohen Veterans Network - \$776,132
 - KSU-AMES - \$173,868
 - About Face USA - \$40,000
- VA Suicide Mortality Review Cooperative Agreement - (\$502,124.68)
 - We submitted draw #2 for \$16,650.72 on 1/2/2025.
 - The agreement with DBHDD is currently in legal review with the agency.
 - The Suicide Mortality Grant subcontractors are KSU, DPHDD and Dr. Lynn Tison.
 - The first quarterly report is due on January 30, 2025; the report is in progress.

Veterans Service Foundation:

- The next board meeting is on February 6, 2025 at 10:00am. There is no meeting scheduled for January 2025.
- The GASCCP application process will start again in early 2025.

Events/Other:

- Next Leadership Institute session will be held on January 17, 2025.

Mr. Russell Feagin, Executive Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS

State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (Through January 3, 2025) +

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	91	102	193
Service Connected *	32	40	72
Total Patients	123	142	265

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Last Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	94	102	196
Service Connected *	29	37	66
Total Patients	123	139	262

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

+ The numbers reported to the VSB are the total numbers from Dec. 7, 2024 through Jan. 3, 2025.

Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home

Normal operations continue.

A request has been submitted for a bid to upgrade all elevators. This will include:

- 1) Install elevator modernization package for the elevator car based on manufacturer's standards
- 2) New car top inspection station
- 3) New Smartview 2-way video phone
- 4) LED Upgrades on car operating panel stations
- 5) Interior finish upgrades
- 6) Install new door operator with 3D door safety edge
- 7) New cabling

Georgia War Veterans Home

Normal operations continue.

A contract has been awarded for additional paving of driveways and parking lots.

A request for a bid to upgrade some of the elevators in Milledgeville will be submitted by the end of January. There will be the same modifications/renovations as identified for Augusta.

State Veterans Cemeteries

Burial Statistics (through January 3, 2025)+

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	2,639	2,659	20
Milledgeville	5,668	5,693	25
Total	8,307	8,352	45

+ The report to the VSB is the total numbers from Dec. 7, 2024 through Jan. 3, 2025.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Cemetery operations continue as normal.

Phase 4b expansion of the cemetery is underway.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Cemetery operations continue as normal.

Phase 2 expansion of the cemetery is underway.

Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer

On Monday, December 30, 2024, Kerry Dyer attended the bi-weekly UniteUs meeting along with Commissioner Ross and Mark Demers. He also disseminated the monthly Alpha Roster to the Senior Leadership. Later that day, he contacted Larry Price to discuss office space on Kings Bay.

On Tuesday, December 31, 2024, Kerry Dyer contacted Marlon Benjamin to discuss the Balcony Field Office renovation. He also contacted Surplus Property to renew the Agency Property designee form. Later that day he spoke with Ryan Petty, Access Corp Manager to discuss the shred project.

On Monday, January 6, 2025, Kerry Dyer attended the monthly Director's meeting. He also processed 1 new hire packet. Later that day he and Commissioner Ross spoke to Commissioner Tanner, DBHDD regarding the Subacute Transition Unit.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

On Tuesday, January 7, 2025, Kerry Dyer contacted LaTonya Stewart, Continuing Education Director, Central Georgia Technical College to confirm the reservation dates for FY25 Annual Training. He also attended a budget meeting with Commissioner Ross, Mark Demers, Russell Feagin and Camala Ball. Later that day he processed 1 resignation packet.

On Wednesday, January 8, 2025, Kerry Dyer submitted a Space Action Form, Organizational Chart and Space Utilization Questionnaire to State Properties for the Marietta Field Office. He also posted the Marietta Field Office vacancy externally. Later that day he confirmed the renovation timeline with Marlon Benjamin, GBA Project Manager.

On Thursday, January 9, 2025, Kerry Dyer along with Commissioner Ross, Mark Demers, Julie Hammond, and Camala Ball attended the 2nd Quarter close out meeting with SAO. He also posted the Decatur VAMC vacancy externally and internally. Later that day he spoke with Mr. Satterfield, Dalton Field Office Landlord regarding the cleaning of the carpet.

Below are the Personnel Actions Kerry Dyer and Shareka Monday-Robinson processed from December 16, 2024 – January 15, 2025.

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Central Office	Admin Support 1	New Hire	Anna Mitchell	01/16/2025
Milledgeville	Cemetery Tech 1	New Hire	Jonothan Massey	01/16/2025

Ms. Lily Snyder, Director, Veterans Education and Training Division (State Approving Agency)

- The approval, risk-based surveys, and supervisory visits 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 2,208 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	499
Approved Training Establishments	1,709

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

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

*Source for Veterans Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions has been discontinued due to VA system migration.
Will work to find another source.

Ms. Charlotte May, Director, External Affairs & Communications

INFORMATION OUTREACH

Division Updates

1. GDVS Newsletter – The department’s monthly e-newsletter features top stories from the month at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/newsletter>.
 - a. The December edition bid a fond farewell to longtime GDVS staff member, Rita Barnhart, with the front page dedicated to sharing her story and success with Georgia’s veterans over the 40 plus years she spent serving veterans and their families across the state. The newsletter also celebrated another year of successful Wreaths Across America ceremonies at GVMC Milledgeville and GVMC-Glenngrove, where all those interred were honored with a graveside wreath. Additional stories covered the renaming of the Hinesville VA CBOC to recognize four local Vietnam War veterans who were killed in action and Commissioner Ross’s visit with a 100 year old WWII veteran who served in the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps.
2. Benefits outreach – External Affairs and Communications continues to work with GDVS staff and partners to educate Georgia’s veterans and families on the availability of benefits and resources.
 - a. Holiday loneliness – targeted messages for before and after Christmas and New Years shared tips and resources on navigating holiday emotions, whether positive or negative. A notable post shared information on being stronger together from the Military Health System.
 - b. Women Veteran of the Year Applications – shared information on how to nominate a notable Georgian woman veteran for calendar year 2024. GDVS Women and Diverse Veterans Coordinator plans to honor selected veterans in March.
 - c. Remembering President Jimmy Carter – shared information from Governor Kemp and a message from the GDVS after the passing of Georgia’s Navy veteran and former President Jimmy Carter. Information was also shared on the National Day of Mourning for veterans who had care scheduled at a VA facility and may be impacted by the federal holiday.
 - d. Winter Weather Awareness – shared tips and information on preparing for the winter storm on January 10, 2025, as well as information on GDVS office closures.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Kopsie asked Ms. Snyder when reporting data will be available for her department. She is going to train in D.C. in February to learn to read the new data reporting system.

Ms. Whitfield reported that the Dublin transportation office provides transportation from Brunswick to Dublin on a weekly basis, on Thursdays between 5:00am-6:00am. Mr. Mendez thanked her for finding and reporting the information.

Mr. Kopsie asked Ms. May about the timeline for the benefits booklets we are printing. Ms. May is waiting for one photo and then we will be able to do a quick print of about 200 booklets. That should happen within the next two weeks.

Ms. Thompson provided a list of homeless shelters throughout Georgia to Mr. Kopsie.

Mr. Mendez asked about Wreaths Across America and the funding for the wreaths in December 2024. Commissioner Ross answered that we didn't have to request additional donations this year because enough came in, and earlier than normal.

Ms. Cagle and Mr. Zayas were connected regarding older WWII veterans. Mr. Zayas would like to award them a Ruptured Duck Pin.

Mr. Kopsie is going to contact Mr. Higgins, Chair of the Veterans Service Foundation Board, to discuss the directives for the Foundation Board that were approved at last month's meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Commissioner Ross announced that the Legislative Session has begun. There are two pieces of legislation that could impact veterans. One is the Burial Equity Act, which will allow reserve and guardsmen who have fulfilled a full tour of duty and have retired to be buried in one of our cemeteries. The second bill deals with the homestead tax exemption going to military spouses or minor children. Also, we submitted the paperwork to the Department of Revenue to change the War Veterans Home license plate to a more generic plate, and the proceeds will benefit the Georgia Veterans Service Foundation. Sen. Kirkpatrick is partnering with us on this legislation.

Commissioner Ross announced that the Governor's budget should be available tomorrow. Our priorities are funding for the current homes, funding for the sub-acute unit, and funding for additional homes.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia

Commissioner Ross announced that Augusta is seeking \$1 million for a veteran's cemetery. They are planning to fund the remainder of the cost through SPLOST.

Commissioner Ross announced the Suicide Mortality Review Academy, which several members of our team will be attending. We were able to get 11 years of data through the Violent Death Reporting System and we will be able to learn how to analyze the historical data and we will be able to pinpoint the areas where we have the highest number of veteran suicides. We will be working with KSU on this project.

Commissioner Ross announced that she has named Kerry Dyer as the Deputy Commissioner.

Ms. Roper announced that Annual Training will be held on June 2-5, 2025 in Warner Robins.

Mr. Childre made an announcement to the service organizations that they should announce to veterans that they need to report any changes in income to the VA immediately if they are receiving pension or disability. Changes can include social security income, marital status income changes, change of care like moving back home from a care facility, or moving from one facility to another.

Mr. Feagin announced that there are 17 COVID cases in the Milledgeville Home and 2 flu cases. The cases are mild in nature. Mr. Deese doesn't see any COVID cases with patients, only a couple with staff members.

Mr. Feagin expressed thanks to the Golden Isles Republican Women's Club for the donations to both homes. They provided a significant number of packages over the holidays to the Milledgeville and Augusta homes.

Mr. Keenan announced that they are working with legislators on 2 pieces of legislation. One is in regard to an inflation component to the tax credit on military retirement and the other is in regard to military retirees not being able to participate in the State's civil service pension program. He also asked about the possibility of a new home in North Georgia. Commissioner Ross is going to send him the study we have on where new homes could be placed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Kospie asked if any Metro-Atlanta counties have expressed interest in a new home. Commissioner Ross answered that we did look at an old hospital in East Point with a 400 bed capacity. We would need to bring the building up to code.

**Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 12:30 p.m.
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia**

The Board members were provided a financial report (see attached). We are looking great financially and are tracking right at 50% of our budget for the first 6 months. Our projections also look good. Ms. Ball added that we have been able to offset some costs with other funding sources like grants.

Mr. Mendez asked about the homeless interest in South Georgia. Commissioner Ross answered that the potential opportunities for land/buildings are in Central Georgia and Metro-Atlanta. Mr. Mendez talked about two tiny home villages that have been built in Brunswick but aren't fully functional yet. He will speak with his representative to find out more information about these homes.

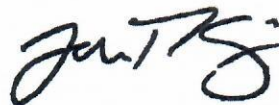
Mr. Kopsie asked about the number of veterans and partners on the Unite Us platform and how much those numbers are increasing year to year. Mr. Demers is going to provide that information. The numbers are increasing and using the platform is paying off for our veterans.

Mr. Mendez spoke about the positive aspects of having a veteran's home in Brunswick and asked about next steps to get the request in. They have a college with a nursing program. The college has plenty of acreage and is one block from the local hospital. They are close to the bases in Jacksonville and Savannah. Commissioner Ross explained that he should speak to someone at the college to see if they are willing to donate land, and then State Properties would get involved. After that, an architect would walk the site.

The next Board meeting was scheduled for February 20 at 12:30pm. It will be a combination virtual and in-person meeting, set up at the GDVS.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:29 p.m.

SIGNED:



Joshua Kopsie, Chair

ATTEST:



Steve Mendez, Secretary

Fiscal Year 2025 through December 31, 2024						
Program Description	Class Description	Budget	Encumbrances	Expenditures	Available	% Expended
Departmental Administration 4310101	300 Personal Services	\$1,932,442.00		\$897,051.12	\$1,035,390.88	46.42%
	301 Regular Operating Expenses	\$52,552.00		\$56,070.46	-\$3,518.46	106.70%
	305 Computer Charges	\$39,034.00		\$0.00	\$39,034.00	0.00%
	306 Real Estate Rentals	\$77,758.00		\$48,790.11	\$28,967.89	62.75%
	307 Telecommunications	\$135,717.00		\$73,435.15	\$62,281.85	54.11%
	312 Contracts	\$1,013,131.00		\$8,355.59	\$1,004,775.41	0.82%
	319 Other (Grant Sal/Ind Cost Offset)	\$0.00		-\$23,135.04	\$23,135.04	#DIV/0!
Departmental Administration Total		\$3,250,634.00	\$0.00	\$1,060,567.39	\$2,190,066.61	32.63%
Program Description	Class Description	Budget	Encumbrances	Expenditures	Available	% Expended
Milledgeville Cemetery 4310201	300 Personal Services	\$542,088.00		\$287,946.14	\$254,141.86	53.12%
	301 Regular Operating Expenses	\$248,478.00		\$70,452.91	\$178,025.09	28.35%
	303 Computer Charges	\$0.00		\$2,395.79	-\$2,395.79	#DIV/0!
	307 Telecommunications	\$7,468.00		\$1,890.71	\$5,577.29	25.32%
	309 Capital Outlay	\$15,592.00		\$90,046.01	-\$74,454.01	577.51%
	312 Contracts	\$23,712.00		\$3,945.45	\$19,766.55	16.64%
	Milledgeville Total	\$837,338.00	\$0.00	\$456,677.01	\$380,660.99	54.54%
Glennville Cemetery 4310202	300 Personal Services	\$489,841.00		\$274,064.34	\$215,776.66	55.95%
	301 Regular Operating Expenses	\$129,689.00		\$66,471.12	\$63,217.88	51.25%
	304 Equipment	\$16,132.00		\$0.00	\$16,132.00	0.00%
	305 Computer Charges	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!
	307 Telecommunications	\$7,960.00		\$1,033.65	\$6,926.35	12.99%
	309 Capital Outlay	\$15,057.00		\$59,353.69	-\$44,296.69	394.19%
	312 Contracts	\$1,800.00		\$2,956.20	-\$1,156.20	164.23%
Glennville Total		\$660,479.00	\$0.00	\$403,879.00	\$256,600.00	61.15%
Program Total		\$1,497,817.00	\$0.00	\$860,556.01	\$637,260.99	57.45%
Program Description	Class Description	Budget	Encumbrances	Expenditures	Available	% Expended
Field Operations 4310501	300 Personal Services	\$7,320,865.00		\$3,865,869.81	\$3,454,995.19	52.81%
	301 Regular Operating Expenses	\$558,381.00		\$281,935.36	\$276,445.64	50.49%
	304 Equipment	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!
	305 Computer Charges	\$6,165,140.00		\$4,034,264.69	\$2,130,875.31	65.44%
	306 Real Estate Rentals	\$271,107.00		\$158,501.82	\$112,605.18	58.46%
	307 Telecommunications	\$117,821.00		\$73,597.74	\$44,223.26	62.47%
	309 Capital Outlay	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!
	312 Contracts	\$569,830.00		\$410,437.42	\$159,392.58	72.03%
	319 Other	\$0.00		\$23,135.04	-\$23,135.04	#DIV/0!
	920 ROE For Projects & Insurance	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!
Field Operations Total		\$15,003,144.00	\$0.00	\$8,847,741.88	\$6,155,402.12	58.97%

Claims & Appeals 4310502	300	Personal Services	\$1,337,419.00			\$417,607.62	\$919,811.38	31.22%
	301	Regular Operating Expenses	\$43,634.00			\$12,280.96	\$31,353.04	28.15%
	304	Real Estate Rentals	\$7,373.00			\$0.00	\$7,373.00	0.00%
	307	Telecommunications	\$19,267.00			\$0.00	\$19,267.00	0.00%
	312	Contracts	\$1,030.00			\$4,446.04	-\$3,416.04	431.65%
			\$1,408,723.00	\$0.00		\$434,334.62	\$974,388.38	30.83%
Claims & Appeals Total								
Program Total			\$16,411,867.00	\$0.00		\$9,282,076.50	\$7,129,790.50	56.56%
Program Description		Class Description	Budget	Encumbrances	Expenditures	Available	% Expended	
Education and Training/SAA 4310503	300	Personal Services	\$631,771.00		\$343,166.04	\$288,604.96	54.32%	
	301	Regular Operating Expenses	\$62,713.00		\$66,816.13	-\$4,103.13	106.54%	
	305	Computer Charges	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!	
	306	Real Estate Rentals	\$107,141.00		\$78,488.46	\$28,652.54	73.26%	
	307	Telecommunications	\$11,989.00		\$2,824.02	\$9,164.98	23.56%	
	309	Capital Outlay	\$1.00		\$0.00	\$1.00	0.00%	
Education and Training is reimbursed through the VA. Reimbursements are not immediate and can take 2-4 weeks.	312	Contracts	\$10,000.00		\$3,038.73	\$6,961.27	30.39%	
			\$823,615.00	\$0.00		\$494,333.38	\$329,281.62	60.02%
Education and Training/SAA Total								

Program Description		Class Description	Budget	Encumbrances	Expenditures	Available	% Expended
Augusta Nursing Home 4310701	300	Personal Services	\$88,794.00		\$0.00	\$88,794.00	0.00%
	301	Regular Operating Expenses	\$50,000.00		\$35.00	\$49,965.00	0.07%
	307	Telecommunications	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!
	309	Capital Outlay	\$166,102.00		\$0.00	\$166,102.00	0.00%
	312	Contracts	\$0.00		\$7,938.14	-\$7,938.14	#DIV/0!
	919	Op Exp/Pay- Med College Of GA	\$18,868,868.00		\$8,550,961.80	\$10,317,906.20	45.32%
Augusta Nursing Home Total			\$19,173,764.00	\$0.00	\$8,558,934.94	\$10,614,829.06	44.64%
Milledgeville Nursing Home 4310702	300	Personal Services	\$208,118.00		\$79,775.94	\$128,342.06	38.33%
	301	Regular Operating Expenses	\$154,533.00		\$308,096.33	-\$153,563.33	199.37%
	305	Equipment	\$0.00		\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!
	306	Computer Charges	\$0.00		\$9,489.85	-\$9,489.85	#DIV/0!
	307	Telecommunications	\$44,452.00		\$32,746.31	\$11,705.69	73.67%
	309	Capital Outlay	\$1,516,259.00		\$132,330.29	\$1,383,928.71	8.73%
312	Contracts	\$25,537,426.00		\$8,571,293.68	\$16,966,132.32	33.56%	
Milledgeville Nursing Home Total			\$27,460,788.00	\$0.00	\$9,133,732.40	\$18,327,055.60	33.26%
Program Total			\$46,634,552.00	\$0.00	\$17,692,667.34	\$28,941,884.66	37.94%
Overall Totals			\$68,618,485.00	\$0.00	\$29,390,200.62	\$39,228,284.38	42.83%