

Tuesday, June 28, 2022 at 12:30 p.m.  
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting  
Atlanta, Georgia

Present        Mr. Shawn Hanley, Chair  
                 Ms. Takosha Swan, Vice-Chair  
                 Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Secretary  
                 Mr. John Kubinec, Member  
                 Mr. Tim Paslawski, Member  
                 Mr. Steve Mendez, Member  
                 Mr. Pete Peterson, Member  
                 Ms. Patricia Ross, Commissioner

Visitors:      Mr. George Canavaggio, Executive Director, Field Operations & Appeals, GDVS  
Present        Mr. Mark Bannister, Executive Dir., Health, Memorials, Finance & Development, GDVS  
                 Mr. Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer, GDVS  
                 Mr. Doug Middleton, Chair, Veterans Service Foundation Board  
                 Mr. Dan Zachman, Vice Chair, Veterans Service Foundation Board  
                 Ms. Carmen Streit-Smith, Veterans Service Foundation Board Member  
                 Mr. Marvin Thomas, Veterans Service Foundation Board Member  
                 Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW Service Officer, Appeals Division, GDVS  
                 Mr. Dan Holtz, Secretary, GMOAA  
                 Mr. Lou Zayas, Jr. Vice Commander, Military Order of the Purple Heart  
                 Mr. Don Layne, Chief Operating Officer, Georgia VECTR Center  
                 Ms. Reanata Morris, Visitor  
                 Mr. Ken Childre, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS  
                 Ms. Ramona Roper, Director, Training and Professional Development, GDVS  
                 Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information and External Affairs, GDVS  
                 Ms. Shelly Ann Simpson, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS  
                 Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS  
                 Ms. Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, GWVH, Milledgeville, GA  
                 Mr. William Wilson, Network Administrator, GDVS  
                 Ms. Shareka Monday-Robinson, Director, Human Resources, GDVS  
                 Ms. Lily Snyder, Senior Coordinator, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS  
                 Mr. Steven Fay, Assistant Director, Training & Professional Development, GDVS  
                 Ms. Monica Dorsey, Communications & Outreach Specialist, GDVS  
                 Ms. Ava Redd, Administrative Assistant, Appeals Division, GDVS  
                 Ms. Julie Hammond, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, GDVS

On Tuesday, June 28, 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. Kopsie gave the invocation. Mr. Mendez led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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Mr. Kopsie made a motion to approve the June Agenda. Ms. Swan seconded the motion. The motion passed.

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

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

- The Department Service Officer attended the American Legion Department Adjutant Teleconference on May 26, 2022, from 1930 and provided a short briefing on VA changes.
- The Department Service Officer participated in the Stockbridge Memorial March from the Merle Davis Conference Center to the City Cemetery on May 30, 2022, from 0730-1200. The Mayor of Stockbridge spoke and several veteran's organizations and the Stockbridge High School Navy JROTC were in attendance.
- Raven Holstick (Marietta Office) has been selected as the new American Legion Department Service Officer and Tonjala Moton-William was selected as the Assistant Department Service Officer effective July 1, 2022.
- The Department Service Officer w/future Assistant Department Service Officer (Tonjala Moton-Williams) conducted American Legion Post Service Officer Training for PSO's in the South Region at American Legion Post 168, 1121 W Oglethorpe Hwy, Hinesville, GA 31313 on June 4, 2022, from 1000-1500. The subject matter discussed was Post Service Officer Responsibilities, VA Compensation, Appeals, Veterans Pension, DIC and Survivors Pension, and Benefits Update.
- The Department Service Officer w/future Department Service Officer (Raven Holstick) conducted American Legion Post Service Officer Training for PSO's in the North Region at American Legion Post 294, 3282 Florence Rd., Powder Springs, GA 30127 on June 11, 2022, from 1000-1500. The subject matter discussed was Post Service Officer Responsibilities, VA Compensation, Appeals, Veterans Pension, DIC and Survivors Pension, and Benefits Update.
- The Assistant Department Service Officer (Ed Kent) assisted 27 veterans with VA benefits related inquiries this month.
- The Department Service Officer attended the virtual observance of Juneteenth sponsored by the VA Office of Human Capital Services (HCS) on June 15, 2022, from 1300-1330 via Zoom. Dr. Dorothea Williams, PhD, Director, National Museum of African American History and Culture was the guest speaker.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Atlanta VA Healthcare System VSO Stakeholders Meeting on June 15, 2022, at 1600 with Director Ann Brown. The subject was a physical altercation



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that happened on April 28, 2022, between a 73-year-old veteran and a VA employee in the Veterans Experience Office at the Fort McPherson CBOC. An investigation by Fulton County Police and the VA is still in progress.

- The Department Service Officer conducted training with the future DSO/ADSO (Raven Holstick and Tonjala Moton-Williams) at the American Legion Department of Georgia Headquarters, 3035 Mt Zion Rd, Stockbridge, GA 30281 on June 16, 2022. A meet and greet with leadership and training was provided to assume the role and DSO files and extensive continuity notes were discussed and provided.
- The Department Service Officer along with future DSO/ADSO (Raven Holstick and Tonjala Moton-Williams) attended the American Legion Department of Georgia Convention on June 24-26, 2022, at the Sonesta Gwinnett Place, 1775 Pleasant Hill Road, Duluth, Georgia. Assisted with introduction of Veterans Administration speakers and presentation of awards.

**Ms. Carmen Streit-Smith, American Legion**

We had our Department Convention and elected new officers for 2022-23. We look forward to working together with the GDVS. The Recruiter of the Year on a national level was from Columbus, Georgia. She recruited over 500 new members. We use the buddy system to contact members and check on their welfare.

**Ms. Belinda Boldoe, VFW**

We had our annual conference this past Thursday through Sunday. New leadership was installed.

- The Department Service Officer attended an Atlanta VBA Regional Office Directors/VSO Quarterly Zoom meeting with Director Tony Milons, Assistant Directors Angela Seelhammer, Patrick Zondervan, and Staff on the changes within the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) to include compensation, veteran readiness and employment, loan guaranty and education held on May 26, 2022, at 1PM.
- The Department Service Officer participated in a VFW Post 12180 Recruiting Drive at the McDonough Geranium Festival – Downtown McDonough held on May 28, 2022. The Department Service Officer provided information to veterans and their family members on federal and state benefits.
- The Department Service Officer attended an Atlanta VBA Regional Office meeting with the Al Bocchicchio, SED Director and VSOs held on June 01, 2022, at 10:30AM. Discussed VSOs concerns with the VBA system.

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- The Department Service Officer attended an unscheduled Atlanta VAMC Stakeholders with Director Ann Brown and VAMC Staff on June 16, 2022, at 4PM. The Director informed the Stakeholders of the FOIO request from the local TV station(s) regarding a physical altercation incident between a 73-year-old veteran and a VAMC Patient Advocate employee. The incident occurred at the Fort McPherson CBOC on April 28, 2022.

**Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and VETLANTA**

Georgia Military Women (GMW) continues to grow and connect with other organizations to provide opportunities for women veterans across Georgia. Now that the pandemic has eased, we have been able to offer more in-person activities and to participate in other veteran organization activities. Currently we have about 4,525 members. Our new branding kits with new marketing materials have been a real hit. We have kits now available at various locations so if anyone would like a GMW representative to do a table display, just let us know.

Big events last month in May included events throughout the state from Lafayette to Savannah. What is great is that members are posting about unique GMW events as well as those events being sponsored by other veteran organizations so the ladies will know about them. The top event for May was the 2 day WE CARE Resource Fair attended by thousands of veterans and about 100 veteran organizations in Cobb County. This was fabulous and organized by United Military Care. We were delighted to be a part of it and would love to see similar opportunities in other locations.

Upcoming events include Alliance Theatre tickets co-sponsored by Home Depot until June 28<sup>th</sup> for the production of Trading Places. Any veteran could get 2 tickets. Other events last month or coming up in June by the GMW group include Fly Fishing, Axe Throwing, Escape Room, Paint and Sip, Music in the Park, Hiking, Atlanta Opera, and restaurant meetings just to relax, eat good food and chat.

June 12<sup>th</sup> is Women Veterans Day now in the majority of states including Georgia.

Key events we supported include:

June 11<sup>th</sup> Johns Creek Veteran Association Women Veterans Day Wreath Laying

June 12<sup>th</sup> AARP Women Veterans Day Luncheon in Peachtree City, GA

June 13<sup>th</sup> GA Legislative Day Women Veterans Recognition at the Capital

For VETLANTA Updates, the Q2 Summit in Atlanta was fabulous on May 10<sup>th</sup> at the Georgia College Football Hall of Fame. We had a great turnout including Takosha Swan as Anthem Singer and Commissioner Trish Ross as one of the keynote speakers. The next VETLANTA Summit will be in September at Clay National Guard Headquarters. Meanwhile VETLANTA is offering on-line podcasts for growing veteran businesses. We are also growing our relationship with the Atlanta VA as their Community Veterans Engagement Board (CVEB) to help expand communications and quality of services.



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**Mr. Dan Holtz, Secretary, GMOAA**

We have established a Foundation and are working on obtaining 501(c)3 status. We are partnering Georgia State Council and Chapters, working on community activities for the Georgia War Veterans Homes and looking to assist families when the sub-acute unit opens.

**Commissioner Patricia Ross**

We are working with OPB on the \$6.1 million grant for Unite Us. This is a reimbursable grant. We are working on onboarding organizations. Unite Us will be attending our annual training in July to train our veteran service officers.

We submitted the request for the suicide prevention grant, which could be up to \$750,000. The Governor's Challenge offered no funds. The grant is targeted to states that are a part of the Governor's Challenge, but are open to everyone working with suicide prevention. Our new Suicide Prevention Coordinator will begin 5 July.

We have been getting more calls asking us to assist aging veterans and homeless veterans. We are working to establish crisis action teams to come up with steps to follow to meet these needs. We currently are following up manually to determine the success of these calls, but Unite Us will help us track success once it is up and running. Mr. Peterson praised the team's working in placing an aging vet into the Milledgeville home in record time.

We are moving our accounting functions to SAO. We are working on our Strategic Plan, revising our mission and vision statement.

On Monday, May 23, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. She also attended a meeting regarding the migration plans from VetraSpec to the new Veterans' Benefits program (estimated transition August 22).

On Tuesday, May 24, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended a certificate ceremony at the Newnan Field office to honor Korean and Vietnam veteran Ms. Helen Pope.

On Wednesday, May 25, 2022, Commissioner Ross was the keynote speaker for the Joes to Pros Veteran HR Symposium at the Dobbins Air Reserve Base. The event was hosted by Work for Warriors Georgia and SHRM Georgia. The goal of the event was to "empower and educate the National Guard's HR professionals, support staff, and leaders by providing HR education, transition advice, real world experience, and guidance." Later in the day, Commissioner Ross toured the Hosea Feed the Hungry facility on Forrest Hills Drive in Atlanta.

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On Thursday, May 26, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended a meeting regarding the Georgia Veterans War Home RFP. She also attended the farewell luncheon for Bob Norman of the Appeals Division.

On Friday, May 27, 2022, Commissioner Ross conducted five interviews for the position of Suicide Prevention & Outreach Coordinator. Ms. Calandra Ferguson will start with the Department on 5 July. She built the GA Guard's suicide prevention program and has extensive experience. Commissioner Ross then met with the team from Kennesaw State regarding the SSG Fox suicide prevention grant application.

On Monday, May 30, 2022, Commissioner Ross was the keynote speaker for the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Milledgeville.

On Tuesday, May 31, 2022, Commissioner Ross met with Veda Brooks, Coordinator, Women and Minority Veterans. She then held a weekly Director's Meeting. She finished the day in a meeting regarding the Sub Acute Program Development.

On Wednesday, June 1, 2022, Commissioner Ross had a meeting about the SSG Fox Grant. She also spent time working on Strategic Planning.

On Thursday, June 2, 2022, Commissioner Ross toured America's Warrior Partnership in Augusta. GDVS is now a state partner helping to connect Veterans to national resources.

On Friday, June 3, 2022, Commissioner Ross had a meeting regarding Negative Economic Impact grant (Unite Us) with Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer, and Mark Bannister, Executive Director, Health, Memorials, Finance and Development. She then attended a meeting with the TCSG Office of Workforce Development to discuss ways in which GDVS could work more closely with the 19 workforce boards.

On Monday, June 6, 2022, Commissioner Ross held a weekly Director's Meeting. She then had a meeting regarding the Negative Economic Impact Grant.

On Tuesday, June 7, 2022, and Wednesday, June 8, 2022, Commissioner Ross met with the Kennesaw State team to finalize the SSG Fox Grant application. She also attended the funeral of Astrid Roley (Roger Roley, CSM Ret, Four-block) on Tuesday.

On Thursday, June 8, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended a Zoom meeting with the Miner Agency and the GDVS Public Information and External Affairs Division to get an update on the rebranding progress. She then attended the Floyd County Quilt of Valor ceremony in Rome, where she was the guest speaker. Also in attendance were Ken Childre, North Georgia Director, and Bill Smith, Office Manager of the LaFayette Field Office. She also attended a virtual meeting with the Department of Veterans Affairs on ending Veteran homelessness.



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On Friday, July 10, 2022, Commissioner Ross held an Open Forum with the field offices.

On Monday, June 13, 2022, Commissioner Ross was the guest speaker for the Women Veterans Day in Georgia at the Capitol. She also held a weekly Director's Meeting.

On Tuesday, June 14, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Georgia Suicide Prevention Task Force monthly meeting. She then attended the We CARE Event Luncheon and After Action meeting. She finished the day meeting with the Sub Acute Program Development Workgroup.

On Wednesday, June 15, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Cobb County Collaborative at Johnson's Ferry Baptist Church. The Cobb Collaborative will be on the Unite Us platform and a representative from the company gave an overview on the referral process.

On Thursday, June 16, 2022, Commissioner Ross met with Anthony Love, Senior Advisor and Director of Community Engagement, VHA Homeless Programs from the Department of Veterans Affairs. She also worked on the department's Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Ross was on annual leave from June 17–23, 2022.

On Wednesday, June 22, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Georgia Military Interstate Compact Commission Council annual meeting where she continues to serve as the military family liaison. The council is looking to standardize legislation in regard to K-12 military students and potentially including Reserve and Guard.

On Thursday, June 23, 2022, Commissioner Ross attended the Veteran Engagement Team meeting with the National Center for PTSD.

On Friday, June 24, 2022, Commissioner Ross was the keynote speaker at the VFW Annual Convention in Macon.

On Saturday, June 25, 2022, Commissioner Ross was a keynote speaker and attended the Georgia Women's Veterans Conference at the Sandy Springs Conference Center.

**Highlights:**

- Unite Us grant with TCSG/VECTR
- SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant
- Creation of Crisis Action Teams

**On the horizon:**

- Accounting Shared Services (SAO), 1 July
- Strategic Plan due July 11

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**Executive Director George Canavaggio, Field Operations and Appeals**

Annual Training will be July 18-21 at the Peachtree City Hilton Conference Center.

The American Legion has installed Raven Holstick from the Marietta field office as the new service officer, beginning 1 July. The assistant service officer will be Tonjala Moton-Williams from the Macon field office. Mark Demers is stepping down as service officer.

**GENERAL**

- May 29, 2022, Executive Director George Canavaggio gave a VA Benefits briefing at the First Baptist Church in Barnesville, Georgia. There were thirty people in attendance.
- May 29, 2022, Executive Director George Canavaggio attended a Memorial Day BBQ at Rock Springs Church in Milner, Georgia. He gave a briefing on VA benefits to the veterans in attendance.
- May 30, 2022, Executive Director George Canavaggio attended a wreath laying ceremony in Barnesville, Georgia.
- May 30, 2022, Executive Director George Canavaggio attended a wreath laying ceremony at the Oak Hill Cemetery in Griffin, Georgia.
- May 30, 2022, Executive Director George Canavaggio gave a VA briefing to the Marine Corp League in Griffin, Georgia.
- June 14, 2022, Executive Director George Canavaggio attended a luncheon and after action luncheon on the We Care Resource Fair held May 12, 13, 2022.
- June 16, 2022, Executive Director George Canavaggio went to the Hilton Peachtree City Conference Center to finalize the details on our upcoming Annual Training.
- DD 214's and Welcome Home Letters:
  - 843 Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in May 2022.
- Department Electronic Claim's Assistance Processing System (Vetra Spec) currently 313,190 entries. This is an increase of 2,104 from May 25, 2022.



## PROJECTED POSITIONS

- Current openings in Appeals, Statesboro, Waycross, Decatur CBOC and Balcony

## Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)

- May 26, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in a Veteran Health & Wellness Fair sponsored by Kaiser Permanente Southwood Comprehensive Medical Center.
- June 3, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated the DAV Women Conference.
- June 6, 2022, Ms. Brooks met with women veterans in Warner Robins.
- June 7-8, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in FOX Grant preparation.
- June 9, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in Kaiser Permanente Henry Towne Park Health Fair for women veterans. Ms. Brooks participated in the 9-8-8 partnership meeting.
- June 10, 2022, Ms. Brooks participated in Kaiser Permanente Towne Park Health and Wellness Fair.
- June 14, 2022, Ms. Brooks led the Suicide Prevention Task Force Meeting. We are finalizing our toolkits. Cobb County, American Legion in Savannah, and the City of Morrow have asked to partner with the Suicide Prevention efforts. 988 Update was given; Georgia is on track to roll out the 988 Crisis Line.
- June 25, 2022, Women Veteran Office hosted a Women's Conference sponsored by Kaiser Permanente.

## 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

## Ramona Roper, Training and Professional Development Division:

Ms. Roper explained that annual certification is mandated by the VA. We use drop classes through Absorb twice a month and annual training to meet the number of hours required for training. These all count toward accreditation. This year an additional tier has been added to training. We still have beginner, intermediate and advanced, but will now have a intermediate beginner class.

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- May 27, 2022, Ramona Roper attended a meeting for the Cobb County Veterans Memorial project.
- June 4, 2022, Mark Demers participated in the American Legion training in Hinesville, Georgia.
- June 10, 2022, Steven Fay, and Ramona Roper attended the Empowered Sisterhood of Veterans event at the State Capitol.
- June 13, 2022, Steven Fay attended the Georgia Military Women's event at the State Capitol.
- June 11, 2022, Mark Demers participated in the American Legion's training in Powder Springs, Georgia.
- June 14, 2022, Ramona Roper and Steven Fay attended the WE Care Resource luncheon (GDVS tied with another organization for Best Decorations).
- June 15, 2022, Ramona Roper attended the Veterans Strategy Team - Cobb Collaborative meeting with Commissioner Ross.

**Upcoming Events:**

- Daily continued ongoing support to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices.
- Planning and final preparations for the 2022 Annual Training event
- Next Drop Class to be available July 1, 2022 (Code Sheets)

**Shelly-Ann Simpson, Director of Appeals Division**

We have 184 BVA hearings coming up next quarter. All will be resolved. On July 5 we have 2 additional virtual appeals officers starting. The veterans appreciate not having to travel to Atlanta for hearings. There are no more travel boards and no judges in person. It is now all virtual.

- The total number of actual hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for May 2022 was 77.
- The total number of pre-hearing actions for May 2022 was 295. Post-hearing actions was 77.
- The total number of correspondence conducted by the Appeals Division (with veterans, BVA/VA employees, and VSO field offices) for the month of May was 1,482.
- As of June 1, 2022, the Atlanta VA Regional Office completed the following claims for the Service Organizations represented by GDVS:



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Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid out
Compensation	100,780	\$186,216,441
DIC	3,214	\$4,913,480
Survivor Pension	828	695,782
Veteran Pension	1,736	\$1,913,704
Grand Total	106,558	\$193,739,406

**Ken Childers, Director Veterans Benefits North Region**

Mr. Childre added the following to his report: Retro pay award of \$175,905 reported from the Demorest field office and \$148,529 reported from the Griffin office.

May 2022 total retro awards reported by the North Georgia offices: \$2,053,653.00

Included in that amount are single awards reported by:

Rico Johnson (Gainesville)  
\$175,150.68 (Muzquiz-9960)  
\$145,439.22 (Todd-4697)  
\$102,883.19 (Smith-7538)

Director Site Visits/Inspections: 3  
Carrollton  
Newnan  
Conyers

June 7-Marie Lundquist (Jasper)

Pickens County American Legion-34 people in attendance. VSO discussed Compensation and Pension and answered a few questions about DIC benefits. Made 9 appointments for a couple of weeks after meeting.

June 9-Rob Johnson/Randy Brown (Griffin)

Senior Symposium at the Spalding County Senior Center in Griffin. Approximately 60 attendees. Spoke with about 12 individuals about Aid & Attendance issues and Death Benefit questions.

June 9-Ken Childre (North Area Director)/Bill Smith (Lafayette)

Attended Quilt of Valor Ceremony at the Rome Country Club. Guest Speaker was Commissioner Ross, and the Quilt of Valor was presented to Retired CSM Eric Haney.

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June 10-Ken Childre (North Area Director)

Met with Andrea Wiggins-Outreach Representative for Senator Warnock. Discussed happenings in the North Area. Talked about some programs that the Senator is working on in order to help Veterans with funding such as Grants and Congressional Direct Spending. Andrea is the Northwest quadrant of the state's representative and she told me that Shelia Robinson is Northeast quadrant of the state's representative. She did say that the Senator's office has divided the state in 4 quadrants for the representatives to cover.

June 11-Raven Holstick (Marietta)

Raven was selected as the GDVS Service Officer for American Legion. Attended American Legion training for the State of Georgia. Shadowed Mark Demers (Training) and learned how to conduct training with other American Legion post service officers. Talked about Veterans benefits, to include compensation and pension (Veterans/Survivors).

June 15-Rob Johnson (Griffin)

Vietnam Veterans of America, Forsyth, GA. There were 16 Veterans and their spouses and Rob was asked to brief on the local happenings. Rob talked about the Pike County CBOC, claims process, Compensation/Pension/Aid & Attendance/Death benefits.

June 17-Ken Childre (North Area Director)/Glenn Massey (Gainesville), Ian Ketterer (Augusta VAMC)/Barbara Serrano (Newnan). Conducted interviews for Newnan opening. 7 candidates were called for interviews. (3-Interviewed, 2-No-Shows, 2-Withdrew-Salary)

North Georgia Gains/Losses:

Newnan-Jarrett Hunter resigned effective 31 May

Decatur VAMC-Marlin Brown-New Hire effective 1 June

Conyers-Horace Campbell transferred to Atlanta Balcony effective 16 June

Conyers-Terrance Leggon promoted to Office Manager effective 16 June

Conyers-Maxine Brock transferred from Atlanta Balcony effective 16 June



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Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		North					
Month:		May-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
						Monthly	Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	49	12,612	931	13.55	2,441	2.62
Number of Offices:	26	Average Visits/Office:			485.08	Average Claims/Office: 93.8846154	

\* Total Monthly Office Visits include: 2,871 In-Person Visits and 9,741 phone calls/emails.

**Vincent M. Pritchett, Director Veterans Benefits South Region**

- On May 26, 2022, Chris McKan (Fort Benning field office) participated in the Transition Assistance Program workshop at the Columbus Goodwill Career Center.
- On May 30, 2022, Debbie O'Neal (Lyons field office) attended the Jeff Davis County Memorial Day service. Debbie used the event to introduce herself as the field service officer for that county. Jeff Davis had fallen under the Douglas office before it was closed.
- On June 6, 2022, Shannon Daniels was transferred to the Hinesville field office to take over as manager effective June 16, 2022. Mr. Robert Jones was hired to replace Shannon in our Savannah field office.
- On June 9, 2022, Sandra Bennett, (Columbus field office), Sherri Whitfield (Albany field office), and Vincent Pritchett conducted interviews to replace Veterans Service Officer 1 position in Columbus. New hire will come on board on August 1, after annual training.
- On June 22, 2022, Kevin Gibbs (Statesboro field office) conducted a Veterans Benefits class for 3 corrections officers and 10 transitioning inmates at the Bulloch County Correctional Facility.
- South Region offices reported retroactive payments since the last board meeting totaling \$344,601 with the highest single payment of \$312,235 reported by our Macon field office.
- South Region Gains/Losses: Dennis Boothe, joined the Hinesville field office effective June 1, 2022. Joi Smith-Antoine resigned from the Hinesville field office effective June 15, 2022. Robert Jones joined our Savannah field office effective June 15, 2022.

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- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 242,136
- Office Visits for May: South Georgia offices handled 5,966 phone calls and emails.

		Average Visits Per VFSO					
		Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO					
Region:		South Region					
Month:		May-22					
A	B	C	D / E		G / E		
			D	E	F	H	
					Average	Total	
			Total	Work	Office	Claims	
			Monthly	Days	Visits	Submitted	
	Veterans' Field		Office	In	Per	To	
	Service Officer (VFSO)		Visits	Month	Day	VA	
Office Name	Last Name	#				Monthly	
	Number of VFSOs:	39	2,698	786	3.43	1,922	
Number of Offices:	23		Average Visits/Office:		117.30	Average Claims/Office:	
						83.57	

**Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information & External Affairs**

We have been getting positive feedback from the presentation we did on women veterans. We would like to do a similar presentation for Veterans Day.

**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**

**Division Updates**

1. June GDVS Newsletter – PID published the second monthly GDVS newsletter on Friday, June 3. The newsletter featured stories on Memorial Day remembrance ceremonies, the Cobb County *We Care Veterans Fair*, and information on the upcoming women veterans



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conference. The newsletter is available online at <https://veterans.georgia.gov/press-releases/newsletter>.

2. Veterans Benefits Outreach –

- a. PTSD Awareness Month – shared information on PTSD and the services available to veterans in need of assistance, as well as information on the Veterans Crisis Line.
- b. Free Entrance to National Parks – shared information on free admissions to national parks for veterans, dependents, and Gold Star families as families prepare for the summer months and patriotic holidays.
- c. Middle Georgia Spotlight on Veteran's Benefits – shared a video interview featuring South Regional Director Vince Pritchett sharing information on benefits available to veterans and their families, as well as how the GDVS can help obtain them.

3. Memorial Day –

- a. PID featured a story on GVMC Milledgeville and Glennville's annual Memorial Day ceremonies on May 30, 2022 in the department newsletter and on social media. We also shared photos from GVMC Milledgeville of volunteers helping to place and remove flags from the grounds.
- b. The Commissioner's Memorial Day message for servicemembers, veterans, and their families was posted on the department's website and social media.
- c. PID shared a video message from Governor and First Lady Kemp commemorating Memorial Day using footage from the Governor's remembrance ceremony earlier in the month.

4. Women Veterans Recognition Day – shared a variety of resources available to women veterans in the leadup to June 12, the anniversary of the signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948.

- a. Women Veteran's Hotline – shared information on the new call center for women veterans who need assistance with VA services or help finding resources in their area.
- b. The Empowered Sisterhood of Veterans held an event in the State Capitol on June 10 for women veterans. Training and Professional Development Director Ramona Roper, Assistant Director Steven Fay, HR Director Shareka Monday-Robinson, and Procurement Specialist Kirsten Dennis represented the GDVS and supplied women veterans with information and materials. Vice-Chairman of the Board Takosha Swan spoke to the crowd to celebrate Georgia's women veterans.
- c. 100 Women Veterans – created and shared a celebration of a selection of Georgia's women veterans. Veterans were asked to provide a picture and information on their service to a survey provided by PID to create a special presentation highlighting the service of Georgia's women veterans.
- d. Women Veterans Conference – shared invitation to a conference hosted by GDVS and Kaiser Permanente taking place on June 25.

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

- Replies to VA eBenefits Messages = 520

- Replies to General Questions = approximately 405
- Individual Request for the State Certificate of Honor = approximately 80

**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 29,360  
(Honors Ceremonies and Central Office Mail Outs)

DoD Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins presented via GDVS – An estimated 23,380

Honors Ceremonies supported/coordinated by GDVS – 353

Defense Department's Vietnam Veteran Surviving Spouse CoH – 285

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

**VETERANS STATE APPROVING AGENCY**

- The approval and compliance surveys of educational institutions, training establishments and training programs approved for veterans training is continuing with no significant problems in any area being noted.
- Approval of new veteran's On-The-Job training sites (OJT) continues to increase. As of this date the State Approving Agency (SAA) has granted approval to 1,799 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	391
Approved Training Establishments	1,408
Veteran Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions	18,860

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

**Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division**

Pruitt is working on hiring for the sub-acute unit.



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**Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, Health & Memorials Division**

1. Status of staffing by Pruitt Health for Subacute Unit
  - a. Psychiatrist-two candidates interviewed.
  - b. Neuropsychologist- contracted through Integrated Psych Solutions.
  - c. Substance Abuse Coordinator- one candidate interviewed.
  - d. Behavioral Specialists- two candidates interviewed.
  - e. Admissions Director- candidate hired with a start date of 5/31/22.
  - f. Social Services Director- candidate hired with a start date in June 2022.
  - g. LPN/RN- continuing to recruit.
  - h. OT/PT/SLP- continuing to recruit.
2. Biweekly meetings with Pruitt Health
  - a. Subcommittees developed for program development, marketing, evaluation and assessment tools, treatment pathways, and medication management.
  - b. Staff education through trainers, onsite in-services, and computer courses.
3. COVID Update

Georgia War Veterans Home - Milledgeville, GA										
Saturday, April 30, 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	333	128	38.44%	28	21.88%	8.41%	100	78.13%	0	0
Staff	531	160	30.13%	0	0.00%	0.00%	159	99.38%	1	1

Cumulative figures since March 1, 2020.

**Recovered category** was initially 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, Chief Operations Officer**

We signed the leases for the Zebulon and Cobb County clinics. Johns Creek needed a build out of \$45,000 from the Department and we were unable to move forward.

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**Executive Director Mark Bannister, Health, Memorials, Finance & Development**

The budget is closing out this week. SAO will take over accounts payable on 1 July. It should be a smooth transition. Ms. Camala Ball will still be the budget analyst. We should have projections tomorrow on where we are on the budget as of now.

**FINANCE**

**Accounting**

Routine operations are continuing. Effective July 1, 2022, the State Accounting Office will enter into an agreement with the Georgia Department of Veterans Service to provide accounting and payment services. The standard scope of services will provide accounts payable, processing of purchase orders and non-purchase order vouchers, mailing checks/assuring ACH payments are made, process travel vouchers, handle all vendor management requests, manage federal funds, and will maintain files in accordance with the state's records retention policy.

**Budget and the General Assembly**

The Department is currently undergoing the annual fiscal year closeout processes for FY 2022, which ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>. All *systems* are on go status and we will complete the fiscal year within budget. As is the case each fiscal year, we will have some end of year *fallout* moneys that will be spent on purchases of items we need for operational purposes in the various fiscal programs.

Preliminary reviews of the FY 2022 budget and current spending in each of the four fiscal programs (Administration, Cemeteries, Nursing Homes, and Veterans Benefits) indicate is within budget and on track for a successful closeout.

The FY 2023 Approved Operating Budget (AOB) for the GDVS was submitted to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) this month for approval and entry into the OPB's tracking system, which is used by the OPB and all state agencies for budget and expenditure monitoring and budget compliance. The AOB is based on the FY 2023 appropriation approved by the General Assembly and the Governor.

We will begin the Amended FY 2023 and FY 2024 budget development process during the month of July. The deadline for the department's AFY 2023/FY 2024 budget requests submission is due to OPB on Thursday, September 1, 2022.



HEALTH AND MEMORIALS

State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (Through June 17, 2022) +

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	101	107	208
Service Connected *	23	43	66
Total Patients	124	150	274
Last Month			
Regular Patients	101	113	214
Service Connected *	23	42	65
Total Patients	124	155	279

\* 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 May 20, 2022, through June 17, 2022.

Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home – Augusta

Routine operations are continuing.

Georgia War Veterans Home – Milledgeville

Routine operations are continuing.

State Veterans Cemeteries,

Burial Statistics (Through June 17, 2022) +

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	2,093	2,110	17
Milledgeville	4,761	4,781	20
Total	6,854	6,891	37

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from May 20, 2022, through June 17, 2022.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Routine operations are continuing.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Routine operations are continuing.

OPERATIONS

Human Resources

Routine operations are continuing.

Personnel Actions (Gains/Losses)

(May 20, 2022 – Jun 16, 2022)

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Decatur VAMC	VFSO-1	New Hire	<i>Marlin Brown</i>	06/01/2022
Hinesville Field Office	VFSO-1	New Hire	<i>Dennis Booth</i>	06/01/2022
Central Office	Accountant 3	Terminated	<i>Christopher Hambright</i>	06/02/2022
Hinesville Field Office	VFSO-2 Office Mgr.	Resignation	<i>Joi Smith-Antoine</i>	06/15/2022
Savannah Field Office	VFSO-1	New Hire	<i>Robert Jones</i>	06/16/2022

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**

The Foundation Board Chairman, Mr. Doug Middleton, has scheduled a meeting with current members of the Veterans Service Foundation Board at the conclusion of the monthly board meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

We will move the discussion of the Veterans Service Foundation Board to next month when a representative from the Attorney General's Office is in attendance.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

The Professional Standards Commission's Troops to Teachers program is funded by the State of Georgia, but receives no federal funding. This program helps veterans into the field of education.

Mr. Hanley asked if there are any budget issues or anything hanging for the next legislative session. The Returning Veterans Task Force met earlier today, and they are working on any legislation that needs to be pushed through, determining what other states are doing that Georgia is not, and capturing benefits correctly.

Mr. Denis McDonough, Secretary of the VA, will be visiting Georgia July 21-22 for the opening of the Columbus VA Center. Commissioner Ross will be possibly shadowing him during his visit.

Mr. Dyer announced that the department has moved to a digital Time and Labor system, and will also be moving to a digital Performance Management system on 11 July.

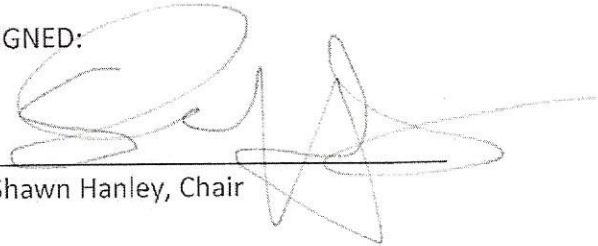
Mr. Hanley asked to add "Announcements" to future agendas.

The July 20 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.

Ms. Swan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Mendez seconded the motion. There were no objections and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30 p.m.

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SIGNED:

  
Shawn Hanley, Chair

ATTEST:

  
Joshua Kopsie, Secretary

The next Veterans Service Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 20, 2022, at 12:30 p.m. in person at the Hilton Peachtree City Atlanta Hotel and Conference Center located at 2443 Hwy 54 W, Peachtree City, GA 30269, but will also be available via video/telephone conference call. The Webex link is:

<https://georgiadepartmentofveteransservice.webex.com/georgiadepartmentofveteransservice/j.php?MTID=m1bcdd0337e2113f1ef961e8022d6c6c5>

Meeting password: UuqFkMpX582 (88735679 from video systems)

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

Access Code: 2333 102 2211