

**Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.**  
**Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**

Present Ms. Patricia Ross, Chairman  
By Phone: Ms. Takosha Swan, Vice Chair  
Mr. Shawn Hanley, Secretary  
Mr. John Kubinec, Member  
Mr. Joshua Kopsie, Member  
Mr. Mike Roby, Commissioner

Visitors: Mr. George Canavaggio, Assistant Commissioner, Field Operations & Appeals, GDVS  
Present by Mr. Mark Bannister, Assistant Commissioner, Administration, Health & Memorials  
Phone: Mr. Kerry Dyer, Director, Operations Division, GDVS  
Ms. Catherine Graeber, Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Office  
Mr. Vince Pritchett, Director, Veterans Benefits South Region, GDVS  
Mr. Dale Bell, Director, Veterans Benefits North Region, GDVS  
Mr. Doug Middleton, Chair of the Veterans Service Foundation, Inc.  
Ms. Ramona Roper, Director, Training and Professional Development, GDVS  
Mr. Bob Norman, Training and Professional Development, GDVS  
Ms. Shelly Ann Simpson, Director, Appeals Division, GDVS  
Mr. Eddie Asberry, American Legion, Department of Georgia  
Mr. Mark Shreve, State Commander, American Legion, Department of Georgia  
Ms. Belinda Beldoe, VFW Service Officer, Appeals Division, GDVS  
Mr. Analo Rao, VFW Post Commander  
Mr. Carlton Deese, Executive Director Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home  
Mr. Ernie Cowart, Director, Glennville Cemetery  
Ms. Linda Lavender, Director, Georgia Memorial Veterans Cemetery, Milledgeville, GA  
Ms. Tonya Jarrett, Clinical Director, GWVH, Milledgeville, GA  
Mr. Russell Feagin, Director, Health & Memorials Division, GDVS  
Mr. William Wilson, Network Administrator  
Mr. Michael McClendon, Guest  
Mr. Dan Holtz, Secretary, GMOAA  
Ms. Charlotte May, Director, Public Information Division, GDVS  
Ms. Veda Brooks, Director of Women Veterans Office, GDVS  
Mr. Bobby Davis, Director, Veterans Education & Training, GDVS  
Ms. Dawn Thomas, GDVS, Appeals Division, American Legion Service Officer  
Mr. Steven Fay, Training & Professional Development Division, GDVS  
Ms. Debbie Gregory, Administrative Specialist  
Ms. Mary Aukerman, Confidential Secretary to Commissioner Mike Roby, GDVS  
Ms. Julie Hammond, Confidential Secretary to Commissioner Mike Roby, GDVS

On Tuesday, May 25, 2021, the Veterans Service Board meeting was held by video/tele-conference.

Ms. Ross called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

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Ms. Ross gave the invocation. Ms. Ross led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Ms. Ross welcomed the guests and performed a "roll call" of people listed above.

Mr. Hanley made a motion to approve the May Agenda. Ms. Swan seconded the motion. The motion passed by roll call vote.

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

**The following reports were submitted from the Veteran Service Organizations:**

**Ms. Amy Stevens, Georgia Military Women and VetLanta:**

Re reports, Georgia Military Women and VETLANTA continue to provide very active services to the residents of Georgia. GA Military Women now has 9 meetup groups across the state. We are planning a Spring Fling event in June. VETLANTA had a great virtual summit last month and is looking forward to an in-person large scale event at Mercedes Benz Stadium in either August or September. Watch for details.

On a personal note, some of you may be aware I am moving to Japan for most of a year as a Military Family Life Consultant. I will be working with Marines on Okinawa. I will still be available virtually. Fly over will be around July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Commander Eddie Asberry, American Legion:**

Commander Asberry stated the American Legion Convention will be held from June 24-27, 2021 at the Sonesta in Duluth, Georgia. He said his term will end at that convention and Mr. Mark Shreve will probably be elected.

As COVID restriction has been lifted. Approximately 80 percent of our Post has resume operations, following CDC guidelines.

Post 201 Alpharetta and Post 264 Mableton hosted a Vaccination event at their posts.

Blood Drive Donations continues, in the 12 District, Post 335 collected 36 pints.

Honor Guard Activities: There were 19 military honors at funeral.

**Ms. Dawn Thomas, Department Service Officer, American Legion:**

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



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- The Assistant Department Service Officer (Ed Kent) assisted 24 veterans with VA benefits related inquiries this month.
- On April 30, 2021, the outgoing Department Service Officer Mark Demers handed off the duties and responsibilities, the office key and cell phone to incoming Department Service Officer Dawn M. Thomas.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Memorial Day Virtual Program "Remembering our Veterans Sacrifices and Caring for our Veterans During the Pandemic." on May 11, 2021@ 11:00AM. The Event was hosted by Dr. Tincie M. Lynch; President/Chair; VAAB. The Key-note speaker was Mrs. Jill Hinds, Georgia AARP, State District Outreach Coordinator, Veterans Service. We also heard from CEO, Michael Thurmond and Dr. Connie Hampton, Nurse Executive, Atlanta VA Health Care System.
- Upcoming events- American Legion Department of Georgia 102nd Convention on June 25-27, 2021 at the Sonesta Hotel in Duluth, GA.

**Dan Holtz, Secretary of the GMOAA:**

Mr. Dan Holtz stated the National MOAA had their meeting last weekend and approved the \$2,500 grants to the families of patients coming into the new unit under construction.

**Mr. Doug Middleton, Chair, Veterans Service Foundation, Inc.**

At the MOPH Convention last month, Mr. Matthew Bridges was voted the new State Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Mr. Middleton stated he and Mr. Zachman are going to establish a bank account for the Veterans Service Foundation, Inc. They are working on the 1023 IRS forms and hopefully completed in June.

**Tony Dobbins, State Commander, VFW Report submitted:**

The Veterans of Foreign Wars completed its Scout of the Year competition on April 1, 2021. The Scout of the Year program is open to recipients of the Eagle Scout Award, Girl Scout Gold Award, Venture Summit Award, or Sea Scout Quartermaster Award. This year's state winner was Jacob S Lewis from Kingsland, Georgia sponsored by VFW Post 8385 Kings Bay. Jacob will receive a \$1,000 check and a state citation. Jacob's entry has been sent to VFW National competition. The first-place winner will receive a \$5,000 scholarship. The state's second-place winner was Nolan Hartley from Brunswick, Georgia sponsored by VFW Post 5080 Lake City and the third-place winner was Benjamin Montequin from Senoia, Georgia sponsored by VFW Post 2667 Newnan. The second-place will receive a \$750 check and the third-place winner a \$500 check.

VFW State Headquarters are starting talks with Atlanta VA Medical Center to give COVID-19 vaccine shots at selected posts and at the state convention in June in Macon. More to come on this subject.

**Ms. Belinda Beldoe, VFW:**

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

- The Department Service Officer attended a Zoom meeting for the Governor's Challenge Implementation Academy for Suicide Prevention on April 07, 2021 from 1PM – 3PM. The program provided and share information regarding suicides and suicide prevention programs.
- The Department Service Officer attended a Zoom meeting for the Veterans Resource Collaborative on April 08, 2021 from 12PM – 1PM. The attendees provided an overview of the resources they are offering veterans in their community.
- The Department Service Officer attended a Zoom the VA/SAMHA Governor's Challenge Implementation for Suicide Prevention on April 13-14, 2021 at 10AM. The program provided and share information regarding suicides and suicide prevention programs.
- The Department Service Officer attended the Governor's Challenge Implementation Academy for Suicide Prevention on April 07, 2021 at 1PM. The program provided and share information regarding suicides and suicide prevention programs.
- The Department Service Officer attended a Webinar hosted by the FDIC (second class of a three-part series) – Using Bank Accounts to make Finance Easy. The speakers presented information on how to manage a bank account. The presenters indicate that many of their financial institutions are participating in the Veterans Benefits Banking Program (VBBP). The webinar meeting was held April 16, 2021 from 11AM – 12PM.
- The Department Service Officer attended the GA Veteran of Foreign Wars Department Zoom meeting held on April 20, 2021 at 6PM. During the meeting we discussed the projects the Department is sponsoring that helps veterans and their family.
- The Department Service Officer attended a reception for the VFW Commander and Chief Harold Roesch held on April 24, 2021. The event was hosted by GA VFW Post 6330 held at 732 Veterans Parkway, Jonesboro, GA 30238.
- The Department Service Officer attended a Webinar hosted by the FDIC (third class of a three-part series) – Protecting and Maintaining Bank Accounts. The speakers presented information on how to manage a bank account. The presenters indicate that many of their



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financial institutions are participating in the Veterans Benefits Banking Program (VBBP). The webinar meeting was held April 30, 2021 from 11AM – 12PM.

- The Department Service Officer attended VFW Annual Proficiency Training Conference (PTC) via Zoom. The VFW annual recertification training provided updated information on VBA matters. The training was held from May 03 – 11, 2021 between 2PM – 430PM.
- The Department Service Officer attended the VFW Annual Proficiency Training Conference (PTC) End of Conference Test via VFW Online Learning Portal. The EOC test was held on May 17, 2021.
- The Department Service Officer attended the GA Veteran of Foreign Wars Department via Zoom meeting held on May 18, 2021 at 7PM. During the meeting we discussed the projects the Department is sponsoring that helps veterans and their family.

Chairman Ross asked Commissioner Roby if he had any additions for his report. Commissioner Roby stated he was invited to have lunch with the Commanding General of Ft. Benning. The Commissioner of the Alabama Veterans Service will be attending also.

We are opening a second field office in Ft. Benning Transition Center.

**Commissioner Mike Roby, Georgia Department of Veterans Service:**

On Wednesday, April 21, 2021, Commissioner Roby and Mr. Kerry Dyer had lunch with the Korean Consulate at noon.

On Tuesday, May 4, 2021, Commissioner Roby had a Town Hall meeting at 9:00 a.m.

On Wednesday, May 5, 2021, Commissioner Roby met with Senator Kay Kirkpatrick at 10:00 a.m. on renaming of the Sloppy Floyd Building.

On Thursday, May 6, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a Town Hall Meeting at 9:00 a.m.

On Friday, May 7, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a Director's Meeting at 9:00 a.m.

On Friday May 7, 2021, Commissioner Roby met with State Properties representatives regarding a possible cemetery in Augusta at 10:00 a.m.

On Monday, May 10, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a Town Hall Meeting at 9:00 a.m.

On Tuesday, May 11, 2021, Commissioner Roby was the Guest Speaker at the Georgia National Guard Retirees Day in Marietta, Georgia.

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On Wednesday, May 12, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a meeting with the President of the Women's Memorial at 11:00 a.m.

On Thursday, May 13, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a Town Hall Meeting at 9:00 a.m.

On Saturday, May 15, 2021, Commissioner Roby, Assistant Commissioners George Canavaggio and Mark Bannister, and Director of Operations Kerry Dyer flew with General Carden to Savannah, Georgia for the Georgia National Guard Retirees Day.

On Tuesday, May 18, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a Town Hall Meeting at 9:00 a.m.

On Tuesday, May 18, 2021 Commissioner Roby hosted a special retirement luncheon for Ms. Mary Aukerman.

On Wednesday, May 19, 2021 Commissioner Roby, Assistant Commissioners George Canavaggio and Mark Bannister, and Director of Operations Kerry Dyer met with Pruitt Health in Milledgeville.

On Thursday, May 20, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended a Work Force Board Development Meeting at 10:00 a.m.

On Friday, May 21, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a Town Hall Meeting at 9:00 a.m.

On Monday, May 24, 2021, Commissioner Roby attended the Governor's Memorial Day Ceremony, where Commissioner Roby presented the Welcome Remarks and Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio led the Pledge of Allegiance.

On Tuesday, May 25, 2021, Commissioner Roby held a Town Hall Meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Ms. Ross asked Mr. Canavaggio if he had anything to add to his report and he replied, "No." Ms. Ross then asked him about the Kimberly Williams family meeting. Mr. Canavaggio said her family was presented with the "Employee of the Quarter Award." Commissioner Roby stated Ms. Williams passed away from Covid in February, 2021.

**Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio, Field Operations and Appeals:**

**GENERAL**

- April 27, 2021, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended the Employee of the Quarter ceremony honoring Mrs. Kimberly Williams. Mr. Williams accepted the award on behalf of his late wife Kimberly Williams. The ceremony was held at the Central Office.



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- April 29, 2021, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended a demonstration of the Unite Us. Program. The Unite Us program can help build and scale a coordinated care network, track outcomes, identify service gaps for at-risk populations (homeless veterans).
- May 15, 2021, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio attended the Georgia Army National Guard Retiree Day in Savannah. Our Savannah Office set up a table to answer questions about their benefits and they also filed claims for those who wanted to file a claim.
- May 24, 2021, Assistant Commissioner George Canavaggio participated in the Governor's Memorial Day program at the State Capitol. I did the Pledge of Allegiance.
- May 24, 2021, Assistance Commissioner George Canavaggio attended a wreath laying ceremony for the Korean War Veterans. The wreath ceremony was held at the Korean War Memorial in front of the Floyd Memorial Building.
- **Welcome Home Letters:**
  - 2 Welcome Home Letters were mailed out in the month of April 2021.
- Department Electronic Claim's Assistance Processing System (Vetra Spec) currently 305,518 entries, this is an increase of 895 from April 20, 2021.

**PROJECTED POSITIONS**

- Current openings in Dublin VAMC, Appeals, Waycross, Decatur CBOC, Lagrange

**Veda Brooks, Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC)**

- April 13 to 15, 2021 Ms. Brooks participated in *The Governor's Challenge VA/SAMHSA Governor's Challenge Implementation Academy*.
- April 16, 2021 Ms. Brooks spoke with 17 veterans.
- April 19, 2021 Ms. Brooks spoke with 10 veterans.
- April 21, 2021 Ms. Brooks participated in the Birdwell Women's Program and *Suicide and Domestic Violence*. "What You Need to Know" training. Ms. Brooks spoke with 9 veterans.
- April 22 to 23, 2021 Ms. Brooks participated in the Coweta Giving to Heroes food sorting and packing. Ms. Brooks spoke with 5 veterans.
- April 24, 2021 Ms. Brooks participated in the Coweta Giving to Heroes Food Distribution. Ms. Brooks facilitated 360 boxes of food being delivered to Veterans, Law Enforcement, EMS, Fire and 911 operators across Coweta County.
- April 26, 2021 Ms. Brooks spoke with 17 veterans.
- April 27, 2021 Ms. Brooks spoke with 8 veterans.

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- April 28, 2021 Ms. Brooks participated in the Commissioner's Town Hall Meeting and spoke with 11 veterans.
- April 29, 2021 Ms. Brooks spoke with 9 veterans.
- April 30, 2021 Ms. Brooks participated in the Commissioner's Town Hall Meeting and spoke with 5 veterans.
- May 1, 2021 Ms. Brooks participated in *Meeting Needs and Saving Lives Part II: Youth Mental Health Matters*
- May 3, 2021 Ms. Brooks spoke with 10 veterans.
- May 4, 2021 Ms. Brooks participated in Commissioner's Town Hall and spoke with 9 veterans.
- May 11, 2021 Ms. Brooks spoke with 10 veterans.
- May 12, 2021 Ms. Brooks participated in VBA Social Workers Training, Zoom conference with the Women Memorial President, and Birdwell Women's Program Meeting. Ms. Brooks spoke with 6 veterans.
- March 29, 2021 Ms. Brooks participated in Commissioner's Town Hall, online Homeless Strategy Team meeting, and spoke with the Red Cross Veteran Mental Health Resource Director. Ms. Brooks spoke with 8 veterans.

**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

**Ramona Roper, Training and Professional Development Division:**

- April 19 - present, 2021, continued Mentoring Program weekly
- May 1, 2021, Ramona Roper participated in the Georgia Blinded Veterans Association Regional Meeting via Zoom about Specially Adapted Housing grants
- May 3, 2021, Mark Demers joined the Training and Professional Development Division
- May 14, 2021, Ramona Roper participated in an MS Team meeting with the Georgia Department of Revenue discussing veteran's exemptions in preparation for an upcoming briefing.
- May 19, 2021, Ramona Roper participated in a webinar training briefing with the Georgia Department of Revenue to discuss veteran's exemptions and Summary of Benefits letters.

**Upcoming Events:**

- Continued ongoing support and monthly trainings to the Regional Directors and Veteran Field Service Offices.



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- Ramona Roper requested to participate in the CDC's veteran employee benefits conference in June 2021 via Zoom.

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

Ms. Simpson states the Appeals Division is transitioning into the VARO building that has been closed due to Covid and will be doing "in-person" hearings in August.

- The total number of actual hearings conducted by the Appeals Division for April 2021 was 76.
- The total number of pre-hearing actions for April 2021 was 337, while post-hearing actions was 159.
- The total number of correspondence conducted by the Appeals Division was 2658 (with veterans, BVA/VA employees, and VSO field offices) during the month of April.
- As of April 1, 2021, the Atlanta VA Regional Office completed the following claims for the Service Organizations represented by GDVS:

Types of Claims	Number of Awards	Benefits paid out
Compensation	99,088	\$166,342,299
DIC	2,744	\$3,943,820
Survivor Pension	906	\$669,209
Veteran Pension	1,895	\$1,977,273
Grand Total	104,633	\$172,932,601

**NORTH GA, Dale Bell, North Area Director**

- On May 11<sup>th</sup>, Emily Waters/Steve Hungarter of Cartersville and Kyle Hungarter of Marietta represented GDVS at the Georgia National Guard Retiree Day at Clay National Guard Center in Marietta. They assisted retiring veterans with various VA Benefits to include filing compensation claims on site.
- On May 12<sup>th</sup>, Marie Lundquist of Oakwood attended a lunch meeting of the Veterans Group at Cresswinds Retirement Community in Gainesville. She answered a wide range of questions primarily focused on VA Healthcare and Compensation.
- On May 12<sup>th</sup>, Chris Kicklighter of Lawrenceville participated in a Zoom call with residents of Magnolia Place Assisted Living in Roswell. He gave a brief overview of GDVS and answered specific questions asked about VA Healthcare, Compensation, Pension, Burial and Survivors benefits.

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- On May 15<sup>th</sup>, John McKenzie represented GDVS and delivered remarks at the Thunder Over Evans Armed Forces Celebration in Evans.
- February 2021 total retro awards reported by North Georgia Offices: \$1,214,617.00. Included in that total is a single award of \$161,712.00 reported by Dawn Perry of Athens.
- Director Site Visits / Inspections: Athens, Augusta, Blairsville, Canton, Cartersville, Gainesville, Grovetown, Newnan
- North Region Gains/Losses:
  - Sakinah Allah started in the Decatur VAMC Office May 3, 2021.
  - Demario Rucker transferred from Ft McPherson to Appeals May 3, 2021.
  - Will Greene transferred from Newnan (North) to Columbus (South) May 3, 2021.
  - James Hood transferred from Grovetown to Lawrenceville May 3, 2021.
  - Winslow Hill transferred from Statesboro (South) to Grovetown (North) May 3, 2021.
- North Georgia Region Veteran Population: 443,313
- Office Visits

\*Total Monthly Office Visits includes Remote Work: 2097 In-person Office Visits and 11,388 phone calls and emails.

		Average Visits Per VFSO					
		Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO					
Region:		North					
Month:		April-21					
A	B	C	D	E	D / E F	G Total Average Claims Submitted To VA Monthly	G / E H Average Claims Submitted By VFSOS To VA Daily
Office Name	Veterans' Field Service Officer (VFSO) Last Name	#	Total Monthly Office Visits	Work Days In Month	Office Visits Per Day	Submitted To VA Monthly	Submitted By VFSOS To VA Daily
	Number of VFSOs:	58	13,485	918	14.69	2,297	2.50
Number of Offices:	34		Average Visits/Office:		396.62	Average Claims/Office:	67.5588235

**SOUTH GA. Vincent Pritchett, Director Veterans Benefits South Region**

- On April 30, 2021, Vincent Pritchett attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Tifton Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) and the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)



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partnership. The partnership will co-locate VBA staff in the CBOC providing a single location for veterans to get healthcare as well as updates on their claims and other benefits. Veterans Readiness and Employment will be one part of the partnership, but the other VBA partners had not been named at the time of the ribbon cutting.

- South Region Offices reported retroactive payments totaling \$161,343.91. The payments ranged from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars with the highest single payment totaling \$65,070.84 to a veteran living in the Americus area.
- On May 15, 2021, Reggie Lewis, and Miguel Rivera (Savannah Field Office) joined Commissioner Roby and his leadership team to support the Georgia National Guard Retiree Day held at the Air Dominance Center in Savannah. Approximately 85 retirees and spouses attended the event.
- South Region Gains/Losses: Effective 05/31/2021 Del Parisella will retire from the Douglas Field Office and John Jeffery will retire from the Valdosta field office.
- South Georgia Region Veterans Population: 244,963
- Office Visits for April: South Georgia Offices handled 6,007 phone calls and emails.

Average Visits Per VFSO							
Average Claims Submitted to VA Per VFSO							
Region:		South Region					
Month:		April-21					
A	B	C	D	E	D / E	G	G / 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 VA	By VFSOS
					Day	Monthly	To VA
	Number of VFSOs:	41	2,078	757	2.75	1,553	2.05
Number of Offices:	29	Average Visits/Office:		71.66	Average Claims/Office:		53.55

Ms. May thanked everyone who came out on Monday and supported the Governor's Memorial Day Ceremony and the Korean Wreath Laying Ceremony.

**Public Information Division, Charlotte May Director**

**INFORMATION OUTREACH**

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**News Releases –**

1. GDVS Launches New Employee Appreciation Program – focused on highlighting the new Employee of the Quarter program to recognize and acknowledge the outstanding efforts of GDVS staff serving Georgia's veterans and their families. The press release provided information on the program and information on the first recipient, the late Kimberly Williams.
2. Cemetery Roll of Honor - the Public Information Division continues to update the online Roll of Honor for veterans interred at the Veterans Memorial Cemeteries in Milledgeville and Glennville throughout the COVID-19 outbreak in Georgia.

**Facebook Post Highlights**

1. COVID-19 Vaccination – shared information on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout with Georgia's veterans and their families, as well as sharing information with GDVS staff. PID continues to monitor the vaccine rollout and provide information as it becomes available.
2. Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) – shared information and a link to the application process to veterans looking to reenter the workforce
3. Highlighted the launch of the GDVS Employee of the Quarter program and featured photos of Commissioner Roby presenting the first certificate to the late Ms. Williams' husband
4. Highlighted Cartersville and Marietta GDVS office participation at a Georgia National Guard Retirement Day event

**Public Information Division Contacts (Since January 1, 2020)**

- Replies to VA eBenefits Messages = 2,725
  - Service paused as of May 1, 2021. eBenefits services were moved to VA.gov as part of a transition to a single service website. While migrating data and merging systems, the ability to request information from a state veterans agency or veterans service organization was broken.
- Replies to General Questions = approximately 1,125
- Individual Request for the State Certificate of Honor = approximately 190

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

- The latest and most accurate End of Year (2019) totals (since March 2015) –

State Certificates of Honor issued via GDVS – An estimated 28,690  
(Honors Ceremonies and Central Office Mail Outs)

DoD Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins presented via GDVS – An estimated 22,975



Honors Ceremonies supported/coordinated by GDVS – 343

Defense Department's Vietnam Veteran Surviving Spouse CoH – 256

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

- Daughters of the American Revolution Honor Vietnam Veterans – June 5
- Villa Rica American Legion Post 70 Honors Vietnam Veterans – June 12

**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 1,769 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	1,378
Veteran Students Enrolled in Educational Institutions	20,374

\* Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Education Division, April 2021.

Ms. Ross asked Mr. Bannister if he had anything to add to his report. Mr. Bannister stated we were at the "end of year close out." We are waiting on any OPB changes coming in June. Mr. Bannister stated we are ready for close out and the new fiscal year.

**Mr. Mark Bannister, Administration, Health, and Memorials:**

## FINANCE

### Accounting

Routine operations are continuing through teleworking.

### Budget and the General Assembly

Governor Kemp signed the FY 2022 appropriations bill into law on Monday, May 10, 2021 as Act 305 of the 2021 – 2022 Biennial Session of the General Assembly. There were no line – item vetoes from the Governor affecting the GDVS. The total funding for the GDVS for FY 2022 of \$49,379,212 is broken out as follows:

Fund Source	Amount (\$\$)
Federal	24,210,246
Other (Daily Fees at war veterans homes and construction funds)	3,215,491
State	21,953,475
Total Funds	49,379,212

## HEALTH AND MEMORIALS

### State Veterans Homes

State Veterans Homes Census (Through April 14, 2021)+

Current Month	Augusta	Milledgeville	Total
Regular Patients	98	119	217
Service Connected *	20	46	66
Total Patients	118	165	283
Last Month			
Regular Patients	97	119	216
Service Connected *	18	43	61
Total Patients	115	162	277

\* 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 April 9, 2021 through May 14, 2021.

### 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 April 14, 2021)+

State Veterans Cemetery	Cumulative Last Month	Cumulative Current Month	Increase
Glennville	1,832	1,862	30
Milledgeville	4,349	4,387	38
Total	6,181	6,249	68

+ The report to the VSB are the total numbers from April 9, 2021 through May 14, 2021.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Glennville

Routine operations are continuing.

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milledgeville

Routine operations are continuing.

Augusta Veterans Cemetery Project

On Friday, May 7, 2021 at 10:00 am, Commissioner Roby and the senior staff attended a virtual meeting with members of Augusta Veterans Cemetery Project. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed State Veterans Cemetery at Augusta. I have provided a copy of the meeting minutes and the attendees list as an attachment to my report for your review.

OPERATIONS

Human Resources

Routine operations are continuing.

Personnel Actions (Gains / Losses)

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(April 9, 2021 – May 14, 2021)

Location	Position	Status	Name	Date
Milledgeville Cemetery	Grounds Maint Tech 1	Resignation	<i>Richard Dotherow</i>	05/03/2021
Decatur VAMC	VFSO-1	New Hire	<i>Allah Sakinah</i>	05/03/2021
Central Office	Confidential Secretary	New Hire	<i>Julie Hammond</i>	05/03/2021

Properties

Routine operations are continuing.

Information Technology

Routine operations are continuing.

Records Management

Routine operations are continuing.

Vehicle Management

Routine service and maintenance are performed as required.

Veterans Service Foundation Board

The Foundation Board Chairman, Mr. Doug Middleton, is currently working to secure a financial institution to establish a bank account to begin accepting donations.

**Ms. Ross asked Mr. Russell Feagin if he had anything to add to his report.**

Mr. Feagin said construction continues for several projects. He said we expect to admit patients in April, 2022 in the sub-acute.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

There was no old business to discuss.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Commissioner Roby discussed the proposed \$3,000 pay increase for employees making \$50,000.00 or less. Commissioner stated there are 135 employees that meet this criteria which would total \$644,298.30. Commissioner also stated the starting salary in the field is \$27,000.00 and the proposed increase would bring the starting salary to \$30,000.00. Georgia Veterans Benefits



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Counselors are the lowest paid in the United States. Commissioner stated the #1 priority are pay raises for the lowest paid employees in the department.

Commissioner Roby also said he needed a Veterans Outreach Coordinator because Ms. Veda Brooks is the Female Veterans Benefits Coordinator but has taken on additional duties for homeless veterans and suicide prevention for veterans. He also said he needed funds to support the addition of an office manager in the CBOC in Jasper, Georgia (\$45,596). Commissioner needed funding for Annual Training (\$100,000.00) and \$25,000.00 to purchase a Ford Cargo/Utility van for Central Office use.

A discussion of the budget ensued and Ms. Ross asked Mr. Chris Hambright, Director of Accounting, to give a brief overview of the budget for the new Board Member.

Mr. Hambright explained there are five different categories/programs within the budget. (1) Administration; (2) two cemeteries- Milledgeville and Glennville; (3) Field Operations and Appeals; (4) Education and Training; and (5) the two nursing homes – Augusta and Milledgeville Skilled Care. It was stated you cannot cross over with monies from one program to another. You could take money from the Milledgeville Cemetery and give it to Glennville Cemetery if it was needed, because it is in the same program or category. Education and Training is federally funded. (VA dollars carry through to the next fiscal year but State dollars do not.) You could also swap money from Field Operations and Appeals if needed. However, you must get approval from Office of Planning and Budget (OPB).

Commissioner Roby suggested the Veteran Service Board's quarterly budget meeting takes place after the end of each quarter. That would be October, January, April and the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter would be July. Commissioner said this would offer a more complete view of where we stand with the budget.

Mr. Kopsie asked if there was a way to get records from the past five to ten years to determine what the unforeseen expenses were at the end of each fiscal year. Commissioner stated he could get him reports for the last seven years and instructed Mr. Hambright to get them for him.

There was discussion about the June board meeting. Mr. Hanley made a motion to have the next Board Meeting on Wednesday, June 23, 2021, at 12:30 p.m. by video conference call. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kopsie. The motion passed.

The Board discussed the July meeting and Mr. Kubinec made a motion to forego the July meeting due to most people go on vacation in July. Ms. Swan seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The Board discussed the August meeting and possibly meeting in person and by video. Mr. Hanley asked Ms. Graeber is that legal to do? Ms. Graeber answered yes according to the Open Meetings Act. Mr. Kubinec made a motion to have the hybrid meeting format. Mr. Kopsie seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 12:30 p.m.  
Minutes of the Veterans Service Board Meeting  
Atlanta, Georgia

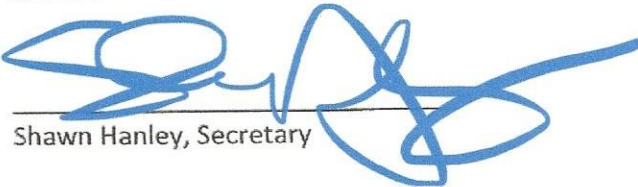
Mr. Hanley made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kopsie. The motion passed by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:05 p.m.

SIGNED:

Patricia Ross  
Patricia Ross, Chairman

ATTEST:

  
Shawn Hanley, Secretary

The next Veterans Service Board meeting will be held via video/telephone conference call on Wednesday, June 23, 2021, at 12:30 p.m. The WEB X link and password is:  
<https://cgtc.webex.com/join/patricia.ross>

Or by calling 1-408-418-9833 Access Code 120 651 8132.