

The Minutes of the Meeting

STATE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

October 30, 2018

9:00 A.M.

An official meeting of the State Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) convened on Tuesday, October 30, 2018 at the VFW State Headquarters, Raleigh, NC. Attendance as noted:

Commission Members

Jimmy G. (Tony) Braswell, Chairman
Elree T. Smith, Vice-Chairman
Etteinne (E.T.) Mitchell (Absent)
William Shillito
Leonard (Mike) Scruggs
Carol Phelps
Terry T. Hales
Joseph (Joe) W. Adamczyk
Gregory R. Woodard
Rev. Lenwood V. Long, Sr. (Absent)
Michael Worley
John C. Boesch
Larry Townsend

Advisory Committee Members

Jeffrey D. Jones (Absent)
Marine Corps League
Jacob Roth, Commander (Absent)
American Ex-Prisoners of War
Evan Thompson, Commander (Absent)
The American Legion
Buddy Waller (Absent)
AMVETS
Dr. Michael Graham, Adjutant (Absent)
Disabled American Veterans
Greg Stafford, Commander (Absent)
Veterans of Foreign Wars
James Hicks
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Rossie M. Nance, Jr. (Absent)
Vietnam Veterans of America
David Lee, President (Absent)
North Carolina Council of MOAA

Assistant Secretary for Veteran Affairs
NCDVA Facilities Manager
NCDVA Architect
NCDVA Field Director
Administrative Assistant
Administrative Assistant
Administrative Secretary
Administrative Specialist

Martin Falls
James (Jimmy) Woodard
Cecil Holt
Crystal Anderson
Diane Norris
Ken Castille
Angela Heilig
Nicol Jones

Guests:

Terry Blackwell
Andy Zinkievich

North Carolina State Construction Office
Adjutant, VFW North Carolina

Chairman Braswell opened the meeting at 9:25 a.m. with the Veterans Affairs Commission and asked Assistant Secretary Falls to conduct a roll call to determine if there was a quorum of the Commission present. After determining a quorum was present, Chairman Braswell called the attention of the Commission regarding any conflicts of interest and if any should arise the affected Commission members would recuse themselves from any discussion and deliberations. Chairman Braswell then called for a motion of the Commission to enter into Closed Session to begin a review of State scholarships. A motion was made by Commissioner Townsend and seconded by Commissioner Woodard. After a unanimous vote, the Commission entered into Closed Session at 9:30 a.m.

After Scholarship discussions, a motion was made by Vice-Chairman Smith and seconded by Commissioner Hales to exit from Closed Session. The motion was approved and the Commission exited Closed Session at 9:38a.m. The Commission recessed until 10:00a.m.

At 10:00a.m., Chairman Braswell called the meeting back into Open Session then called on and asked Assistant Secretary Falls to give the invocation and Commissioner Woodard to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Braswell acknowledged Mr. Terry Blackwell from State Construction as a special guest and asked Assistant Secretary Falls to conduct a roll call of the Veterans Affairs Commission Advisory Board. After the roll was taken, Chairman Braswell called for on Mr. James Hicks for a report from the NC Military Order of the Purple Heart. Mr. Hicks had nothing to report. Chairman Braswell called on Adjutant Zinkievich for a report on the NC VFW. Adjutant Zinkievich reported that the VFW was active in providing relief and support for the recent hurricanes and the State VFW had dispensed \$30,000 in aid and truckloads of supplies that came in from across the state and across the Nation assisting the victims of the hurricanes in North Carolina and Florida. Commissioner Hales asked where the money had come from and Adjutant Zinkievich said \$50,000 had come in from the National VFW organizations and donations.

Commissioner Adamczyk asked about a link on the State VFW website and a link for donations to hurricane victims and Adjutant Zinkievich reported there was a link on vfwnc.com for donations through PayPal and donations could be accepted by check sent to the State Headquarters earmarked for disaster relief. Commissioner Adamczyk asked about disbursement and Adjutant Zinkievich said money and supplies would be given only to veterans and immediate family members of veterans throughout southeast North Carolina.

Commissioner Hales reported that 4-5 students had approached him recently who have submitted the writing requirements for the Voice of Democracy (VOD) competition. Adjutant Zinkievich proceeded to explain the procedures and scholarship award levels starting at the local VFW Post level up through District on to the State level then to the National Competition. He also explained that if a local VFW Post did not sponsor a competition, the student could submit directly to the State Headquarters so they could be considered in the District competitions.

Chairman Braswell thanked Adjutant Zinkievich for his report and support to the Veterans across the State the called attention to the new North Carolina VFW logo on display in the building. Adjutant Zinkievich announced the logo would become official across the State on November 5th and was adapted from the National logo and would be available for use by Posts for official use,

Chairman Braswell again thanked Adjutant Zinkievich for the State VFW's generosity in allowing the Commission to use the facilities.

Chairman Braswell asked Ms. Diane Norris to introduce her guests in attendance and she introduced Mr. Cliff Holt from State Construction who is a paid-employee of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to assist with design and construction and Mr. Terry Blackwell from State Construction who would give a report on the State Veterans Home in Fayetteville later.

Commissioner Hales asked Mr. Holt if he was the point of contact for future construction and Mr. Holt replied that he was along with Mr. Jimmy Woodard. Commissioner Hales expressed that the Commission was glad to have him onboard to provide professional help.

Chairman Braswell called on Adjutant Zinkievich who proceeded to announce a fundraising effort from Oct. 28th to Nov. 11th at Walgreens pharmacies across North Carolina to allow donations to the Veterans

Foundation of the VFW for money to be used for the \$24,000 in scholarship awards for the Voice of Democracy competition. Last year \$100,000 was raised to fund the VOD program.

Chairman Braswell called attention to the minutes of the Veterans Affairs Commission meeting of July 18, 2018 and asked if there were any corrections then called for a motion to approved. A motion was made by Commissioner Woodard and seconded by Commissioner Townsend then a vote was taken and the minutes were accepted.

Chairman Braswell asked for the Agenda be changed to add an administrative update by Mr. Castille and a discussion for the location of the next Commission meeting then asked for a motion to approve. Vice-Chairman Smith made the motion to approve the agenda change and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Shillito. A vote was taken and the motion was approved.

Chairman Braswell then called on Mr. Castille to brief on a few administrative issues regarding the Commission with respect to emails, voice recording, sign-in sheets, travel claims and briefing folders.

Chairman Braswell called on Ms. Norris to give an update on the State Veterans Homes and State Veterans Cemeteries.

Ms. Norris began her report announcing the Fayetteville State Nursing Home census is at 138 and the Home is rated a 5-Star home by the government Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) organization which is a big compliment to the Staff and those involved with the facility. She went on to address the emergency HVAC system project that is ongoing. There are no issues and scheduled completion in January 2019. The next emergency project to be addressed was the sprinkler system. She called on Mr. Terry Blackwell to brief the commission on the issues and repairs needed.

Mr. Blackwell reported to the Commission he works with the State Construction Office as an Engineering Technician with a background in fire alarms and sprinkler systems and he also works as a Code Official for the State of North Carolina. He stated back in January 2018 some sprinkler leaks were detected in the dry-system located in the attic at the Fayetteville State Nursing Home. The Home is approximately 80,000 sq. ft. and first occupied in 1999. He stated there is a micro-biological influence corrosion and age of the sprinkler pipe. Mr. Blackwell referred to photos that were taken during the investigation and stated National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) requires an inspection when a sprinkler system shows signs of impairment. The investigation was started in May 2018 and due to the heat in the attic, the investigation was rescheduled for October 2018. In the photos, Mr. Blackwell pointed out the corrosion and explained how this could be a problem delivering water to the sprinkler heads. Additionally, he stated a dry-system is meant for loading docks or overhangs and not for entire systems.

Mr. Blackwell proposes a system similar to the State Home in Kinston by installing a nitrogen generator to the system to help control the corrosion. He further stated that NFPA requires the sprinkler piping be cleaned or replaced when obstructions are discovered. In order to do a destructive cleaning of this system with the types of piping installed, the pipes would fall apart and the system would be best served with replacement piping.

Chairman Braswell asked if today's construction technology has evolved to move out the obstructions. Mr. Blackwell said studies done with a nitrogen generator show system life of 99 years. Chairman Braswell went on to comment that with two new State Homes being slated for construction, we need to make sure this nitrogen generator be included in construction and Mr. Blackwell said this system has been recommended to the design group to be included.

Commissioner Hales asked what the cost of installing this system. Mr. Blackwell stated in order to replace the piping in the dry-system, including the nitrogen generator, would be around \$1M and referred to the system installed at the State Home in Kinston.

Chairman Braswell said the State Home in Salisbury is of similar age and asked Mr. Blackwell if he foresaw these same emergency problems there. Mr. Blackwell stated that with periodic inspection and preventive maintenance should identify any issues then went on to explain the NFPA inspection procedures.

Commissioner Townsend asked if plastic piping could be used instead of the metal piping. Mr. Blackwell said there is a type of plastic pipe to withstand fire/heat that has been tested and rated but because of glue connections and aging, water pressure could blow out the piping.

Commissioner Shillito asked if there was any special training on the nitrogen system for the State Home maintenance personnel and Mr. Blackwell said the system works on a purging system that analyzes the nitrogen levels in the system so if a drop in nitrogen level is detected the generator pumps more nitrogen into the system. He further stated that maintenance is minimal with only compressor repairs that would be included in a system maintenance program contract.

Chairman Braswell wanted to make sure the Commission was aware the budget for this emergency repair project compared to a wet system repair and Mr. Blackwell said the estimate for a wet-system would be about \$500,000.

Ms. Norris announced this sprinkler repair project has been declared an emergency by Secretary Larry Hall of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and stated the Home is currently on a fire watch. She stated Mr. Jimmy Woodard, DMVA Facilities Manager, has already contacted a designer to submit a proposal. She asked the Commission to vote on a proposed budget of \$1.5M on this project to move on repairs as soon as possible. Commissioner Adamczyk asked if there is a stipulation in the contracting language to contract a single source rather than waiting for multiple proposals to which Mr. Blackwell said that because of the emergency nature, a single source could be selected.

Commissioner Adamczyk questioned the \$1.5M asked for if a project designer needed to be selected then another group for the project repairs. Ms. Norris stated that in the previous emergency repair in Kinston, a designer group and a repair contractor were selected simultaneously.

Commissioner Boesch asked what was included in the \$1.5M budget request and Mr. Blackwell said installation and design are included. Chairman Braswell reminded the Commission if funds are not available and more money is needed, he and Secretary Falls could request a conference call for funding within 48 hours if funds are needed. Commissioner Hales stated that in times past, the Commission has approved the total estimated cost but rarely exceeded the projections.

At this point, Chairman Braswell asked if there was any further discussion regarding the emergency sprinkler system project for Fayetteville. There was none and he then called for a motion for funding. Vice-Chairman Smith made a motion to approve \$1.5M for emergency repairs to the sprinkler system in Fayetteville. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hales. A vote was taken and the Commission voted unanimously in favor to approve.

Ms. Norris continued her report with the Salisbury State Nursing Home and reported a census of 95. The elevator project moving forward and still in the design phase with plans being reviewed by the State Construction Office. The generator project has been completed and the grant will be closed out. Regarding the renovation and activity room addition project. Ms. Norris called Mr. Cecil Holt to give an update.

Mr. Holt began by stating he had attended a construction progress meeting and we're trying to reach a closing point with the contractor, KMD, and RMD as the architect of record. He stated they're looking to bring Phase I of the project that was expected to be done to a close then settle up and figure out what was

owed to the general contractor and assess the scope of work that has been completed. From there, a re-bid process will start to bid for work to be restarted. Some of the subcontractors who were working on the project will try to be retained. Commissioner Hales recalled the original contractor, KMD, performed unsatisfactorily and asked what the timeline would be to restart with a new contractor. Mr. Holt replied we are attempting to close Phase I and develop a punch list and inspect work completed. From there, once acceptable, we will determine any money owed then move to a new contractor. Chairman Braswell recalled this has been declared an emergency project and Mr. Holt replied yes, because of the fire sprinkler system aspect of the project.

Chairman Braswell stated this was discussed during the Conference Call on September 20, 2018 and we were trying to come to an amicable resolution with the original contractor.

Commissioner Adamczyk asked Mr. Holt if a general contractor is closed out under these circumstances, would they be put on to an excluded parties list preventing them from working for the State or DMVA again. Mr. Holt stated this may have been the case if the dispute had gone to litigation but because State Construction is trying to bring to a clean close and allow them to complete work in good faith to our satisfaction. Mr. Holt added he saw the main problem was the subcontractors weren't showing up to do the work and there was no progress toward completion. He further stated that the remaining work would be packaged into a bid for the remaining work in addition to the fire alarm system.

Commissioner Shillito asked once Phase I has been completed, how much of the total project will that encompass. Mr. Holt replied that a smaller percentage but the numbers will be worked. Since furniture was ordered anticipating work being completed, the unfinished Phase I required furniture to be placed into storage and those costs may be charged to KMD. Commissioner Shillito asked how much physical work would be completed for Phase I and Mr. Holt replied 15-20%.

Ms. Norris continued her report with the State Nursing Home in Black Mountain, NC. She reported a current census of 98 and the Security Project has been completed. Ms. Norris reported electrical/grounding issues at the home are currently under study.

In Kinston, Ms. Norris reported the State Veterans Home census is at 96 and federal survey team has reported onsite to evaluate the operation of the facility. The current emergency sprinkler system replacement project is completed and the security project is completed with the roof repair project and geothermal project in design phase under review by State Construction.

Regarding the construction of two new State Veterans Homes scheduled for Wake and Guilford counties, Ms. Norris reports both are progressing at the same pace with building plans still in the design phase at State Construction, Contract Management Review (CMR) At Risk has been hired for both and projects are working on bids.

Ms. Norris presented and briefed a financial report for the NC State Veterans Homes Program.

Moving on to the State Veterans Cemetery Program, Ms. Norris began with Sandhills State Veterans Cemetery where the current expansion project for \$5,966,200.00 is still in the construction phase with an expected completion date in August 2019. This expansion will increase casket sites by 2,240 and once completed there will be 880 spaces and urn sites will increase to 362 additional sites. The current Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Project Grant of \$351,292.00 to clean, raise, align and install a grid marker system was awarded by the National Cemetery Program and has been bided and a purchase order released.

In Black Mountain at the Western Carolina Veterans Cemetery, Ms. Norris reported the grant of \$3,028,225.00 for the expansion project there was in the construction phase as well with an expected completion date in June 2019. This project will increase casket sites by 1,300, columbarium sites by

1360 and add 564 urn sites. There were some Repair and Replacement (R&R) funds in the amount of \$241,500.00 received to fix a roof, replace siding and replace exterior doors.

In Jacksonville, the Coastal Carolina State Veterans Cemetery received an O&M Grant for \$504,533.00 to clean, raise, and align headstones in addition to installing a grid marker system and laying sod. This project has also been bid and a purchase order released to start work. Additionally, R&R funds were awarded in September for \$85,000 for bay doors and security lights.

Ms. Norris reported the current receipts balance (BD-701) and Chairman Braswell stressed the need and importance for moving cemetery employee salaries from receipts funding to appropriated funds. Ms. Norris then presented and briefed the financial report for the State Veterans Cemetery Program. Secretary Falls advised that without appropriated funds for cemetery salaries, receipts alone cannot sustain operating the program. Discussions were held on the current realities and strategies needed to effect change.

Vice-Chairman Smith proceeded to give insight into General Assembly operations and discussed the future of the State Veterans Cemetery Program.

Chairman Braswell charged Secretary Falls with providing a list of cemetery program talking points to Commission members at the January meeting so members of the General Assembly can be better informed on the current and future state of operations.

Commissioner Boesch commented that there will be new people and new changes with upcoming elections so it would be especially important to talk to people running for office so they can be informed before they take office in Raleigh. Chairman Braswell reiterated how important it is to meet with Legislators to inform them on who we are, what we do and what we need for the Veterans across our State.

Commissioner Shillito added how important our job is to influence Legislators by approaching them with the numbers of Veterans in the State since those numbers will get their attention as constituents and voters

Mr. James Hicks reported that NC Veterans Council has talking points they have given to Legislators each year. These talking points were representative from the service organizations across the State (American Legion, VFW, Military Order of the Purple Heart, etc.) and talking points from the Commission need to be in line with all veterans' issues. Chairman Braswell acknowledged the agenda of the NC Veterans Council and the Commission's role informing the Council on the cemetery, nursing home and scholarship programs.

Adjutant Zinkievich attended the anniversary celebration of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs recently and spoke to other groups of veterans (Team Rubicon, Team RWB, etc.) that were in attendance. He commented these groups are active in the State and have attracted a large and younger veteran population and while these groups are not federally chartered, the NC Veterans Council and Veterans Affairs Commission need to consider these groups. Chairman Braswell reminded everyone that the Commission is made up of political appointees who are not lobbyists and are governed by a code of ethics but the Commission can present to these organizations what needs to be done to further our agenda.

After a delay, Ms. Norris continued her report then presented and briefed a financial report on the NC State Veterans Cemetery Program further explaining grants received, upfronted cash for grants from the State and equipment needs. Secretary Falls called attention to the receipts vs. operations/salaries figures and the inability to sustain operations.

With the large trust funds and financial actions performed by the NCDVA, Chairman Braswell commented on current personnel staffing and the need for additional personnel. Secretary Falls informed

the Commission that a request for additional positions has been requested since the last Commission meeting and this is a priority since we'll soon have six State Veterans Nursing Homes and we currently have the same staffing level when we had only one. He further stated NCDVA is working with HR to add three positions.

Chairman Braswell asked Secretary Falls for his NC Division of Veterans Affairs report.

Secretary Falls began by discussing the recent cancellation of our rescheduled Fall Conference. He stated the hotel had originally looked to be back in operation in November but was told it would be the early part of 2019 before the hotel could be ready for occupancy. With the cancellation of the conference and essential training for the State and County Veterans Service Officers, CEUs (Continuing Education Units) needed to maintain VSO accreditation created a need for NCDVA to setup regional training opportunities across the state. Secretary Falls addressed the \$500,000 the General Assembly voted to take from the State Nursing Home Trust Fund for the Veterans Life Center in Butner. He stated this is an issue that is unresolved and is being looked at. He further advised the Commission he would get talking points on the issues facing NCDVA out to members. Secretary Falls stated he had information from the Governor's Office on updating the State Boards and Commissions and will follow up on that noting the General Assembly will return to Raleigh after the elections.

Regarding hurricane damage to our facilities, Secretary Falls reported damage at the State Veterans Cemetery in Jacksonville in the amount of \$125,000 for repairs where emergency funds have been requested from Federal and State authorities. He stated that during the hurricanes, NCDVA had VSOs visiting shelters to assist Veterans providing counseling and offering information to obtain local, State and Federal assistance. Secretary Falls reported that two of our State VSOs had personally sustained hurricane damage. He then deferred to Ms. Crystal Anderson, Field Operations Manager for NCDVA to complete the report.

Ms. Anderson began by discussing vacancies in the Department. She stated six of the positions being filled are VSO positions and as an Agency, VSOs are tasked with training County VSOs across the State and is really an important so much that there needs to be better pay to attract and keep personnel in these positions rather than lose them to the Counties or the VA. She went on to address the new hires and positions soon to be filled. Additionally, she spoke of the current vacancies within the Department. Ms. Anderson expressed her support for the VSOs and how important they are to our Veterans.

Ms. Anderson reported there are 13 VSOs in training in counties across the State and NCDVA has accredited three since the last report in July with a total of 16 VSOs attaining accreditation in 2018 with greater numbers expected in 2019. She stated there are currently 31 State VSOs (four in the State Nursing Homes), 15 State VSTs and 168 County/Tribal VSOs.

There are currently only two County VSO positions vacant and five have been filled in the past month. Two of those were with VSOs already with NCDVA accreditation.

Regarding training across the State, Ms. Anderson reported there were 220 VSOs/VSTs in attendance at District schools in the first quarter of 2018 and 163 in attendance at Regional schools this past summer and there are two schools planned per Region beginning Nov. 15th and ending Dec. 19th to offer six CEUs to VSOs toward maintaining NCDVA accreditation.

Ms. Anderson reported that Regions III and IV played a vital role in getting to shelters to identify Veterans and that VSOs Jerry Robertson and Fred Brock, while suffering storm damage on their own, were in providing assistance in shelters and attending Stand Downs to take care of Veterans. Assistance was provided in shelters in Lenoir, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Wayne and Wilson counties and two Stand Downs were held in Wayne and Pitt counties. Additionally, there was a Veterans breakfast in Elizabeth

City on Sept. 25th supported by our State VSOs in conjunction with North Carolina's Hometown Strong program.

Veterans Support Specialist (VSS) training was held in two locations with the support of the NC Department of Health and Human Services and Duke EPIC (Evidence-based Practice Implementation Center) where 60 State/County VSOs graduated from training. This course gives VSOs greater tools to help Veterans with their mental health needs.

Ms. Anderson stated she attended a mental health initiative in Carteret County that was sponsored by Rocky Mountain MIRECC (Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center) and VISN 19 (Rocky Mountain VA Network) for Veteran Suicide Prevention. Carteret County was chosen as a Pilot site for a program for suicide prevention that is going very well. Ms. Anderson reports she will be invited to Colorado to visit another of their sites and when the program is complete in 2020, this will be a model for communities to follow and hope suicides rates go down.

The VA conducted Mental Health Summits this past summer in Salisbury and Fayetteville that was well attended and these summits are instrumental in removing the stigma attached to mental health issues and encourage Veterans to get help. Soon, attendance will become mandatory for local VSOs and Regional Managers.

Ms. Anderson reported that the VEAC held in Charlotte served over 500 veterans and a VEAC held in Dunn assisted over 900 veterans.

Ms. Anderson further reported that all NCDVA Regional Managers attended the Supervisory Foundations class in Raleigh in August and will attend a Leading at all Levels class in December to improve our leadership team through communication training and leadership skills.

The State Service Office continues to assist Veterans and their dependents with scheduled hearings before the Board of Veterans Appeals and the local Regional Office. A combined total of 794 hearings were scheduled with 578 conducted since June 1, 2017.

Chairman Braswell mentioned we sometimes overlook the economic impact of all the money flowing into the State for Veterans that is received and spent and asked if we had a dollar amount number. Ms. Anderson said the VA 2017 GDX statistics were released and Secretary Falls stated that in compensation and pensions received alone is \$3.87 billion and the total economic impact is \$8 billion annually.

Chairman Braswell thanked Ms. Anderson for her report.

Commissioner Townsend commented that people in this country thank Veterans for their service only on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. They fail to recognize the money that comes into the State in addition to the compensation and pension payments. As Veterans, we need to continue to do more than accept thanks for our service, we need to get the word out about how much Veterans contribute to the State. Commissioner Townsend requests a listing of all the service organizations in his district to encourage outreach. Chairman Braswell asked Mr. Hicks to assist with providing this information and Adjutant Zinkievich stated the VFW has already compiled a list of Posts in Congressional Districts. Chairman Braswell reminded everyone of the number of Veteran constituents and total dollars brought into the State has an impact with Congressional leaders. Commissioner Boesch asked how many Counties had a Veteran Councils and Mr. Castille reported 26 counties have Veteran Councils as reported by the NCDVA Regional Managers.

Vice-Chairman Smith referred to the VFW list and explained how the VA GDX lists were used to provide information to State legislators on the financial impact to the counties. This information was used in developing talking points to Congressional and State legislators.

Chairman Braswell commented on the work by Vice-Chairman Smith and Commissioners Hales and Woodard on the work that was done with the Veterans Affairs Commission Strategic Plan. Vice-Chairman gave some background on the extensive work done to develop the Plan in addition to addressing specific issues requested by the NC General Assembly to be included in the Plan.

Chairman Braswell called for a motion to vote on the scholarship review conducted earlier in Closed Session. A motion was made by Commissioner Townsend to revoke the scholarship of the individual and the motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Smith. A vote was taken and approved by all Commission members.

Chairman Braswell called attention to the next meeting of the Veterans Affairs Commission to be held at the State Veterans Home in Kinston and asked the meeting be held at the State Veterans Home in Fayetteville instead since many members had not been to that location before. A motion was made by Commissioner Hales to move the January 2019 meeting from Kinston to Fayetteville and was seconded by Commissioner Shillito. A vote was taken and approved.

Chairman Braswell announced he has withdrawn his intention to resign from the Veterans Affairs Commission on January 1, 2019 that he previously announced in July 2019 and provided reasons for his decision to stay. He discussed appointments and anticipated new members on the Commission then suggested a retreat of old and new members to discuss the work of the Commission and the future of service.

Vice-Chairman Smith asked to choose a date in January for the next Veterans Affairs Commission and after discussion, January 22nd was chosen.

Chairman Braswell departed the meeting at 12:20pm.

Vice-Chairman Smith to continue his report on the Veterans Affairs Commission Strategic Plan. Vice-Chairman Smith recognized the other members of the Committee that was tasked to develop this plan and explained the work that has been done over the past year to collect information, review plans from other states, address all requirements and formulate the Plan. He went on to give information on how the plan was developed and entertained discussion on details of the development and data gathered in preparing the Plan. After numerous changes and revisions over the past year, Vice-Chairman Smith presented a final version and Commissioner Hales introduced a motion to approve and adopt the Strategic Plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Woodard. A vote by a show of hands was called for and the Commission approved the Strategic Plan.

With no further business, Vice-Chairman Smith called for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Commissioner Woodard to adjourn the Commission meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Hales. The motion was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 1:15pm.

Jimmy G. Braswell
Chairman

Martin D. Falls
Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs