



**West Virginia Veterans Council**  
Meeting Minutes  
*May 3, 2017*

- The meeting was held in the Green Room at the West Virginia State Capitol's Culture Center.
- Meeting called to order by Vice-Chairman Randall Bare.
- Six members were present, enough to establish a quorum.
- Members present were: Randall Bare, James DeCarlo, Jack Gerrard, Ken Boggs, Cedric Greene, Woody Williams.
- Also attending: WVDVA Cabinet Secretary Dennis Davis; Deputy Cabinet Secretary Billy Wayne Bailey, WVDVA Chief of Staff Randy Coleman, WVDVA Operations Assistant Elizabeth Cruikshank, Kim Good (U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin), Pauline Gerrard, John Hancock, D.J. Martin.
- Following approval of the January 26, 2017 meeting minutes, the Council welcomed new member Kenneth Boggs.

**NEW AND REGULAR BUSINESS**

- Randall Bare asked for an update on the Spencer office, saying that WVDVA Veterans Service Offices in Spencer and Ripley are getting especially busy. Mr. Bare asked specifically about veterans service officer Amy Eden's status and was told that Ms. Edens has sent in a letter of resignation.

**CABINET SECRETARY'S REPORT**

- WVDVA Cabinet Secretary Dennis Davis informed the Council that the Legislature intends to fold the veterans' retirement bill in with the regular budget bill. Mr. Davis stated that he could offer no guarantees – only what he was told by the officials in the governor's office.
- Deputy Secretary Billy Wayne Bailey offered a brief report on the status of money received from the passage of fireworks legislation. Mr. Bailey stated that the account

is maintaining a balance of about \$550,000. He stated that he expected an additional \$750,000 during the coming fireworks season.

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- Secretary Davis said there was an excellent Vietnam Veterans Day ceremony on the Capitol grounds. The Secretary said the attendance was smaller than hoped for, but Gov. Jim Justice attended the ceremony. Cecil Roberts delivered an exceptional keynote address.
- Deputy Secretary Bailey reported that the WVDVA is helping coordinate regional training sessions of benefits coordinators with the American Legion, VFW and Vietnam Veterans of America. Mr. Bailey stated that veterans and the WVDVA are helped when service organizations are able to also help take claims.
- Secretary Davis offered a report on recent hydrology challenges at the Donel C. Kinnard State Veterans Memorial Cemetery. Mr. Davis stated that the cemetery is beautiful and is in excellent shape. He said that one section, Area 2, received backfill material in the past and could be susceptible to water. The area is receiving extra water because of American Electric Power clear-cutting on a hill above the cemetery. The WVDVA has been working with State Division of Highways engineers to develop plans to divert water from the area. Secretary Davis and Deputy Secretary Bailey stated that the WVDVA would even entertain the idea (if – but only absolutely if – necessary) of moving bodies from Area 2 to another location on the grounds.
- During the cemetery discussion, Council member Woody Williams suggested that the cemetery should have a chapel. ... Deputy Secretary Bailey stated that ceremonies should be held at churches or synagogues, etc. Mr. Bailey reminded the Council that the WVDVA should be cautious about objections from federal and state guidelines. ... Mr. Williams further said he's not asking for a chapel as much as a shelter. He wants to protect people from inclement weather.
- Council member Williams also expressed concern about the Honor Guard and his concern that in the future there will not be enough volunteers. Secretary Davis said that the Honor Guard is involved in an active recruiting campaign. ... Mr. Williams expressed that he would like to see an honorary Honor guard supplied, when needed, by the West Virginia National Guard. ... Secretary Davis said, on a similar note, the WVDVA plans to outfit Honor Guard members in the future. The Secretary stated that some veterans have wanted to volunteer but could not afford to purchase all the apparel necessary.
- Secretary Davis announced that he is chairing the West Virginia World War 1 Centennial Commission. A meeting is planned later in the month. Some initial ideas for the Commission include a World War I statewide Historic Trail and an essay contest for students. ... The Secretary also announced the Governor's Office is reinstituting a Holocaust Education Commission. Deputy Secretary Bailey will serve on this commission.

- Secretary Davis gave a brief report on the city of Nitro's search for a World War 1 tank that was squirreled away (stolen) from Nitro. The city is searching official and unofficial channels in order to find and reacquire the tank.
- Secretary Davis suggested that there is occasional confusion regarding the name Department of Veterans Assistance. The Department is looking into the sensibility of changing the Department's name – primarily because of confusion the public has differentiating between the State office and the federal Department of Veterans Affairs.

### **REMARKS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Mr. Bare questioned the future of the WVDVA's van transportation program. He questioned whether the program is being properly managed by the VA hospitals. Secretary Davis responded that he has concerns about the future of the program. The WVDVA is looking into the feasibility and management of the program, including whether money for drivers, which is supposed to be a stipend offered to volunteers, is being appropriately spent. Mr. Bare stated that vans are being seen apparently on personal business. Secretary Davis stated that the WVDVA is receiving the same reports.

### **REMARKS BY ATTENDEES**

- Former Council member James McCormick said he has been frustrated by previous inactivity from Council members and WVDVA leadership. He complimented Secretary Davis for his willingness to act on potential water issues at the cemetery and criticized previous WVDVA leadership for lack of activity.
- Deputy Secretary Bailey stated that he and staff, acting on complaints from veterans, will examine dates other than a holiday for holding Veterans Visibility Day at the Capitol. Mr. Bailey suggested a Wednesday, which is Minor Committee Day – a day in which legislators are highly accessible.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

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