

MINUTES
STATE OF NEBRASKA
COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND VETERAN AFFAIRS
301 Centennial Mall South, PO Box 95083, Lincoln, NE 68509-5083

Friday, July 24, 2020 - 10:00 a.m.
301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor, NDVA

The Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs (Commission) met on July 24, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. in the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs (NDVA), 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska.

In compliance with the provisions of *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1411*, printed notice of this meeting was posted at NDVA. In addition, the notice was published in the Omaha World Herald on page 7B on July 14, 2020, and posted to the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar (nebraska.gov) on July 1, 2020.

In compliance with the provisions of *Neb. Rev. Stat. §55-602 and §55-603*, a quorum was established with four of six voting members present. A written notice of the time and place of the meeting was mailed to all members in advance of the meeting. The aim of these minutes is to comply with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, specifically *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1413*.

Commissioners present (voting members):

Anthony Goins, Director, Nebraska Department of Economic Development
Major General Daryl Bohac, Adjutant General of the Nebraska National Guard
John Hilgert, Director, Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs
Dan Donovan, 2nd Congressional District
Dave Bloomfield, 3rd Congressional District

Commissioners present (nonvoting, ex officio members):

Mark McDonald, Veterans' Program Coordinator, Nebraska Department of Labor
Nikki Nader, 55th Wing Designee
Major General Bob Stevenson, U.S. Strategic Command Designee
Colonel Steven Vilpors, 557th Weather Wing Designee

Commissioners excused (voting member):

Tami Thompson, 1st Congressional District

Commissioners excused (nonvoting, ex officio members):

Mike Navrkal, Chair, State Committee Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Phil O'Donnell, Military Affairs Liaison.

O'Donnell introduced Commissioner Dan Donovan, Maj Gen Bob Stevenson, Col Steven Vilpors, Mrs. Nikki Nader, and Mr. Mark McDonald.

II. ROLL CALL

Bohac, Hilgert, Donovan, Bloomfield, McDonald, Nader, Stevenson, and Vilpors were present. Goins, Thompson, Navrkal, excused.

III. ENTRY OF PUBLIC NOTICE INTO THE RECORD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT, SPECIFICALLY *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1411*. ADVISE THE PUBLIC THAT THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT APPLIES AND IS PUBLICALLY POSTED PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1412*.

Military Affairs Liaison, Phil O'Donnell, announced the location of the Open Meetings Act on the wall of the NDVA training room. O'Donnell also noted the public notice of the meeting was posted in the Omaha World Herald (page 7B) on July 14, 2020, and posted to the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar (nebraska.gov) on July 1, 2020.

IV. MOTION TO DESIGNATE ENTRY OF PUBLIC NOTICE FOR THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND VETERAN AFFAIRS IN THE OMAHA WORLD HERALD AND ON THE NEBRASKA.GOV CALENDAR PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF *Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1411* – Action/Vote

Moved by Bohac and seconded by Hilgert to designate entry of public notice in the Omaha World Herald and the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar on nebraska.gov. Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Donovan, Bloomfield. Motion carried.

V. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 28, 2019 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – Action/Vote

Moved by Bloomfield and seconded by Bohac to approve the revised October 28, 2019 Commission meeting minutes. Voting Aye: Bohac, Hilgert, Donovan, Bloomfield. Motion carried.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – July 24, 2020

In accordance with provisions of Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-1412, the public shall have the right to attend meetings of the Commission and to speak on matters related to Commission business. Any person may appear before and address the Commission concerning any item on the agenda for that meeting. Further, any person may appear before and address the Commission at an annual or scheduled meeting on any matter concerning the Commission not on the agenda by notifying the Commission Secretary in advance of the meeting at which the person desires to address the Commission. A reasonable time limit [usually five (5) minutes] shall be placed upon each individual appearance before the Board, and no more than thirty (30) minutes shall be allowed for public comment, unless a majority of the quorum present shall extend such time limit. The Chairperson shall have the right to prohibit appearances by persons presenting needlessly repetitious or redundant testimony.

Ron Dupell, co-founder of the Nebraska Veterans Coalition, announced that the Nebraska Veterans Coalition is starting an effort to create a statewide PTSD treatment program. Dupell appreciated the good work the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs and Nebraska Department of Labor

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have been doing in light of the rollout of the Nebraska Veterans Gateway.

Hilgert noted that the website has a behavioral health component. Hilgert described the work conducted by NDVA's Behavioral Health Administrator who analyzed what resources were available by behavioral health region in Nebraska.

O'Donnell asked if there were any additional comments. Commissioner Goins joined the meeting at 11:09.

Dean Kenkel, co-founder of the Nebraska Veterans Coalition, praised the new website and offered that the website is what the Nebraska Veterans Coalition sees as the beginning of a Nebraska home base. Kenkel hoped that NDVA would be the focal point for the home base and stated that the Nebraska Veterans Coalition would like to provide input to the website webmaster. Kenkel also noted that a goal of the Nebraska Veterans Coalition is to bring the VSOs more in contact with NDVA.

Hilgert stated that Holden Armstrong, NDVA's Communication Director, is the point of contact for the website. Hilgert asked Kenkel to clarify that VSO meant veteran service organization (instead of veteran service officer).

Kenkel responded that the Nebraska Veterans Coalition's goal is for the veteran service organizations to have a more active role in advocating for the needs of our veterans regarding employment and behavioral health. Kenkel believes the Nebraska Veterans Coalition can lead more veterans to NDVA's new, remodeled website.

O'Donnell introduced Gary Wooten, State Commander of the Nebraska American Legion.

Wooten described the American Legion's work to rename Highway 20 as the Medal of Honor Highway. Wooten also noted the American Legion's letter to Governor Ricketts in support of law and order in the State of Nebraska. Wooten offered support from the 355 posts and 27,000 American Legion members to Nebraska's law enforcement agencies, National Guard, and Reserve.

Bloomfield noted that South Sioux City will be the center point of the national Medal of Honor highway and that Nebraskans should visit Freedom Park in South Sioux City.

VII. DELIBERATION – COMMISSION REPORT, RECOMMENDATIONS, COURSES OF ACTION

Neb. Rev. Stat. §55-606. Report; contents.

The Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs shall prepare an annual report summarizing the military assets of Nebraska, including installations and missions, and the economic impact of the military assets in Nebraska. The report shall also include recommendations for preserving and sustaining military assets and missions existing in Nebraska and recommendations for actions which the state can take to encourage expanding such assets and missions. The commission shall submit the report electronically to the Legislature, the Governor, and the commanding officer of every military base in Nebraska on or before November 15 of each year.

O'Donnell briefly described a proposal from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Bureau of Research to help the Commission assess the economic impact of military assets in Nebraska. O'Donnell reminded the Commission that it is authorized to contract with outside experts pursuant to *Neb. Rev. Stat. §55-605 and §55-606*. O'Donnell confirmed that Dr. Eric Thompson and Dr. Mitch Herian will be the primary investigators and that the Nebraska Department of Economic Development's Research Director, Dr. Dave Dearmont, has provided an independent review of this proposal. O'Donnell reported that Dearmont noted there is potential collaboration opportunity on the special study of supply chain analysis. Thompson and Herian intend to reach out to all the Commissioners.

Bohac asked that the scope of military construction associated with the Offutt runway repair and military construction occurring at Camp Ashland be addressed and included in the economic impact assessment.

O'Donnell confirmed that we want to be sure that that we capture the economic impact of the runway repairs and the repairs at Camp Ashland.

Stevenson noted that there may be additional military construction to account for given the rebuilding associated with the flood damage from 2019. Stevenson described how military construction as a category is something that needs to be included.

Nader described how the 55th Wing is in the process of rebuilding eight different campuses and how the 55th Wing is in the process right now of planning to renovate the old Building 500 at USSTRATCOM.

O'Donnell thanked the Commissioners for their feedback and indicated that UNL-BBR should be able to capture military construction as a sub-category given that USDVA construction has been captured as a sub-category in previous studies.

Goins expressed his interest in special study number three focused on best practices for hiring veterans. Goins made the case for aggressively recruiting veterans from military installations outside the State of Nebraska and asked how do we articulate the value proposition of working in Nebraska? Goins noted a number of reasons why a veteran should want to live in Nebraska.

O'Donnell confirmed that UNL-BBR should be able to bring these thoughts into the special study and that the research team would follow up with Commissioner Goins on this issue.

Hilgert discussed the results of the 2019 survey of County Veteran Service Officers in which the technical capabilities of the various CVSOs were assessed. Hilgert offered that it may be useful to revisit the CVSOs and see how they were able to deliver service through the COVID19 challenge. Hilgert thought it might be interesting to learn where they may need help, if there is a role for the state, and see if there is any way to evaluate how the CVSOs were able to respond to COVID19.

Bohac offered that the research team could look at the four stimulus bills passed by Congress and the money that is flowing to the states to promote technologies or the \$100 million for local government support. Specifically, the team could examine how the stimulus impacted veterans and the military across the state.

Hilgert noted that this effort would expand the scope of work.

Bohac suggested that the Commission take the concept back to UNL-BBR and give them an opportunity to respond in terms of cost and time.

O'Donnell noted that UNL-BBR should be able to generate a CVSO follow on survey proposal by the fall meeting of the Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs.

VIII. MOTION TO CONTRACT WITH UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA BUREAU OF BUSINESS RESEARCH FOR Economic Impact of Nebraska Military Assets: Update for FY 2019 PROPOSAL DATED JUNE 25, 2020 PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF *Neb. Rev. Stat. §55-605 and §55-606* – Action/Vote

Moved by Hilgert and seconded by Bohac to contract with the University Of Nebraska Bureau Of Business Research for Economic Impact of Nebraska Military Assets: Update for FY2019 Proposal dated June 25, 2020. Voting Aye: Goins, Bohac, Hilgert, Donovan, Bloomfield. Motion carried.

IX. U.S. SPACE COMMAND BASING NOMINATION – Military Affairs Liaison

Phil O'Donnell, Military Affairs Liaison for the Commission on Military and Veteran Affairs, will provide an update regarding the City of Bellevue's self-nomination to host the permanent headquarters of the United States Space Command.

O'Donnell described the recent history regarding the siting of a permanent headquarters for the U.S. Space Command. The U.S. Space Command headquarters is expected to host an estimated 1,400 military and civilian personnel in a 400,000 to 450,000-square-foot building. The City of Bellevue meets all three minimum eligibility requirements. Specifically, the City of Bellevue is within one of the 150 largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in the United States. The Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA MSA was ranked as the 57th largest MSA based on U.S. Census Bureau 2019 population estimates. Additionally, the City of Bellevue is within 25 miles or less of a military base, most notably Offutt Air Force Base. Finally, the City of Bellevue has a "Livability Index" score of 60 out of 100 as determined by the American Association of Retired Persons Public Policy Institute. This "Livability Index" score exceeds the minimum eligibility score of 50 out of 100 to be considered for further evaluation.

O'Donnell noted that this is an opportunity to confirm and identify strengths and shore up any weaknesses of Offutt Air Force Base, Bellevue, the greater Omaha area, and the State of Nebraska.

O'Donnell articulated some concerns that the USSPACECOM permanent basing effort could potentially distract from Offutt AFB runway repairs or other priorities. O'Donnell articulated the opportunity to learn more about the strategic basing process and correct any data discrepancies or measures associated with Offutt AFB or Nebraska.

Bloomfield suggested that a Legislative Resolution could be helpful to the effort.

O'Donnell agreed and said he would look into a potential draft Legislative Resolution.

X. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Col Vilpors – 557th Weather Wing Designee

Vilpors thanked the Commission for the opportunity to contribute on behalf of Col Williams and described the global reach of the 557th Weather Wing. Vilpors noted the importance of strategic communication in appealing to active duty service members and veterans. Vilpors thanked all of the groups that support Nebraska's veterans.

Maj Gen Stevenson – U.S. Strategic Command Designee

Stevenson, on behalf of Admiral Richard, expressed thanks for the support USSTRATCOM receives from the State of Nebraska and City of Bellevue. USSTRATCOM enjoys its strong relationships with the University of Nebraska system, National Strategic Research Institute, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Attracting and retaining veterans with experience and security clearances is critical to the mission of USSTRATCOM.

Mrs. Nicki Nader – 55th Wing Designee

Nader, on behalf of Colonel Marks and Colonel Dayton, expressed thanks for the support the 55th Wing receives from the State of Nebraska. Nader noted that although the 2019 flood was very tragic, the opportunity to rebuild is leading to increased operational capability and capacity.

Mark McDonald – Veterans Program Coordinator - Nebraska Department of Labor

McDonald introduced himself and noted that he would deliver his report during the fall meeting. McDonald described how his team has been focused on unemployment claims due to COVID19; however, he was excited about the prospect to do more engagement with veterans.

O'Donnell noted that *Neb. Rev. Stat. §48-203* guides the reporting by the Veterans Program Coordinator.

Dan Donovan – 2nd Congressional District

Donovan introduced himself to the Commission and described his career in the Air Force and business community in Omaha. Donovan described his service as President of the Military Officers Association Heartland of America Chapter which covers all of Nebraska. Donovan has been pleased with the work of the Commission and the value of the Commission's research.

Maj Gen Bohac – Adjutant General Nebraska National Guard

Bohac described the consolidation of three transition related positions within the Nebraska National Guard. Bohac sees value in participating in the Air Force's strategic basing process especially in examining the fidelity of information and data specific to Nebraska.

Anthony Goins – Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Goins described some of the challenges with recruiting and hiring veterans. Goins sees ample opportunity for veterans to lead businesses especially through the COVID19 economic recovery. Goins described the importance of programs focused on retraining.

Dave Bloomfield – 3rd Congressional District

Bloomfield thanked the public for their participation.

John Hilgert, Director, Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs

Hilgert anticipated the passage of LB 153 and LB 911. Hilgert described recent innovations in the State Service Office to include the “virtual chat” features. Hilgert acknowledged the support of Ron Dupell and Dean Kenkel as advocates for change.

XI. MOTION TO ADJOURN – Action/Vote

Moved by Donovan and seconded by Hilgert to adjourn. Voting Aye: Goins, Bohac, Hilgert, Donovan, Bloomfield. Motion carried.