



July 24, 2014 Minutes

North Carolina National Guard Headquarters

Present: Archie Barrow, Glenn Batten, Susan Bennett, Ronald Bogle, Johnny Borunda, Monica Brody, Joshua Cain, Stewart Canter, Jennifer Chauncey, Hank Debnam, Lisa Delgado, Barbara Dorsett, Ed.D., Lane Dyer, Dan Eddinger, Wei Li Fang, Ph.D., Sandra Farmer-Jova, Bob Goodale, Jeri Graham, James Hicks, Jack Holtzman, Robert Immormino, Charlene Irvin, Mary Irvine, Andy Jackson, Victoria Johanningsmeier, Chris Keyon, Barry King, Jennifer Lechner, Wilson Lester, Enrique McClymont, Rick Mosden, Barry Murphy, Stephanie Nissen, Sheryl Pacelli, Ilario Pantano, MAJ Frank Poovey, Jason Pikler, Brenda Ploss, Mike Quirk, Joe Rapley, Cheryl Rawls, Jean Reaves, Michael Reich, J.P. Sakey, Steve Sedahl, Robert Sherwood, COL Vernon Simpson, Tony Sowards, Flo Stein, Annette Stevenson, Doug Taggart, Rebekah Torres, Bethany Venditti, Kathleen Volandt, James Wall, Robert Webster, Barry West, Matthew Wilcut, Brandon Wilson, GEN Cornell Wilson, and Kyle Winder

After self introductions by all attendees, GEN Wilson welcomed everyone to the meeting. He emphasized that the Governor was interested in developing jobs to keep veterans in the State. Veterans represent 10% of the State's economy, second to agriculture. The State would like to minimize the impact of sequestration. He then reviewed the top ten priorities of the NC Military Affairs Commission (<https://www.nccommerce.com/about-our-department/boards-commissions/nc-military-affairs-commission/commission-members>):

1. Provide in state tuition for Military Veterans and Dependents.
2. Reduce risk for NC Military Installations from downsizing or closures.
3. Improve High Structures/Wind turbine farm legislation that affect Military Installations, Training, or Operations.
4. Retain Hoffman Forest as a training area.
5. Obtain funding for Access Control Points / failing road infrastructure on Installations.
6. Integrate Veterans, Guard, Reserve, and military dependents into NC workforce.
7. Assist NC Working Lands Group with efforts to preserve land near military installations.
8. Leverage Federal, State, and Local funds for National Guard Infrastructure Improvement and Veteran / Service Member Programs.
9. Coordinate for state funding and support for 911 Call Centers on military installations and establish Joint 911 Call Centers with local communities where appropriate.
10. Prepare NCMAC report for Governor and NC General Assembly.

The National Governors Association (NGA) is working with the 50 governors on veterans initiatives such as housing and jobs (<http://www.nga.org/cms/home/federal-relations/nga-testimony/hsp-testimony/col2-content/main-content-list/june-12-2013-hearing-statement-.html#1>). For a copy of these initiatives, scroll to the end of the webpage to click on the NGA Report on States Veterans' Initiatives.

Ms. Stevenson promoted the inclusion of small business and disabled veterans in hiring. A gap currently exists between the VA and DOC and historically underutilized businesses (HUB). She noted that the NC Veteran's Business Association will be sponsoring its annual Procurement Summit on

September 16-17 at the Embassy Suites in Cary. Power networking will occur the evening of September 15, with educational sessions and business matchmaking on the 17th.

Mr. Sherwood presented on the NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund, whose goal is to keep families in their homes by making mortgage payments for both civilian and military applicants. Since its establishment in 2010, they have saved 17,000 families from foreclosure in State. Veterans' assistance has only been in place since last year when the NC FPF learned that veterans were being turned away from the program due to deployment-associated hardships. They offer both short- and long-term mortgage payment assistance and one-time reinstatement. The NC FPF recently expanded their program to encourage student veterans to apply. For more information, contact <http://ncforeclosureprevention.gov> or 888-623-8631. They currently have enough money to save another 2000 homes. What they don't know is whether there will be additional funding in the future. NC is one of 18 states have the program and is the only State with a veteran-specific program. Mr. Sherwood is the only person responsible for outreach. Mr. Taggart noted that he emailed information about the program to his listserv, and dozens responded. It is linked on the GWG website.

Ms. Lechner is the Executive Director of the NC Equal Access to Justice Commission, a commission of the NC Supreme Court. They recently launched their website, <http://ncvetslegal.org> and requested GWG's assistance in getting the word out and for making it useful to SMVFs. Their website has a portal for attorneys interested in providing pro bono services and includes a legal library for veterans and other resources, including a calendar of scheduled Stand Downs across the State. One of their initiatives is the NC Pro Bono Veterans Network, which provides a forum for discussion of issues of common interest to the 17,000 member network; coordinates legal representation at Stand Downs; and identifies and meets civil legal needs of veterans, including disability appeals claims. In addition, new businesses can request free legal assistance at <http://NCbar.org> as well as legal assistance for \$25 for 30 minutes.

Mr. Wall represented Legal Aid of NC and said that they provide legal services to those who have low income. They have addressed public benefits, housing, employment, and other consumer problems. He has helped veterans get their discharges upgraded, obtain medical assistance, and receive housing. What he needs is \$6M to put a sufficient number of attorneys and paralegals in every major NC city and funds to pay neuropsychologists and psychologists so that they can establish the clinical diagnosis and whether the condition or injury was service connected. He noted that many attorneys don't know how to interpret psychological reports, and this training needs to be provided to them. Perhaps the - NC Neuropsychological Association would be interested in collaborating by offering pro bono services or working for a reduced fee.

Mr. Taggart suggested that state agencies hire grant writers on staff so that they can apply for federal funding opportunities since current staff don't have time to do write grant applications. Mr. Wall agreed that it would be ideal to have a grant writer on staff and to hire people to support the grants. Mr. Pantano said that the NC DVA has hired a grant writer and hopes to get some funding from federal agencies.

Mr. Holtzman represented the NC Justice Center. They currently have a grant from the NC Attorney General to do training for student veterans. They want student veterans to choose the right school and know what to do to avoid scams while enrolling in school. The project also provides legal assistance when student veterans have been a victim. They caution student veterans to look at costs, default rates on student loans, graduation rates, job placement rates, and marketing practices of propriety schools. He emphasized that students must do research on each of the schools that they are interested in prior to applying and suggested that they look at the websites of the Department of Defense, the VA, and the Department of Education. For example, the VA has information on choosing a school (http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/choosing_a_school.asp) and on comparing schools (<http://department-of-veterans-affairs.github.io/gi-bill-comparison-tool/>). Student veterans can also file complaints against schools for scamming practices (<http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/Feedback.asp>).

Ms. Rawls announced that the VA will be doing limited hiring of 21 temporary mid-level positions (i.e., Veteran Service Representatives) for at least one year, maybe 2 at the regional office in Winston-Salem. They are looking for veterans with bachelor's degrees, but the timeline is short—applications need to be in by July 28.

Mr. Eddinger said that he hired 25 veterans recently. He has a total of 45 first time jobs in four sites. He asked attendees to send him veterans to hire (deddinger@fdh-inc.com). Applicants need to be able to climb towers—they will be trained and certified (they will get paid while they receive training).

Employers are encouraged to post job openings at www.ncworks.gov, a website that matches jobs to applicants. Veterans can register and upload their resumes. There are staff at workforce centers around the State who can help them if they have questions.

The next meeting of the Governor's Working Group will be on Thursday, August 28, from 2 to 4 pm in the NC National Guard Command Conference Room 3100. To register, go to www.ncgwg.eventzilla.net.