

IDAHO VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

October 9, 2008

Pursuant to agreement, a meeting of the Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission was held in the conference room at the Idaho State Veterans Home – Boise, Thursday, October 9, 2008, for the purpose of reviewing program reports and other items of business.

PRESENT: Commissioner, Donald Riegel, Chairman
Commissioner, Ken Pitcher, Vice Chairman
Commissioner Art Gimpel
Commissioner Mel Napier
David Brasuell, Administrator, IDVS
Susan Lowman-Thomas, Human Resource Officer, IDVS
Debbie Spence, Financial Manager, IDVS
Jim Adams, Administrative Support Manager, IDVS
James Roberts, Administrator, IDVH – Boise
Sarah Yoder, Administrative Support Manager, IDVH-Boise
Clark Graebel, Administrator, IDVH – Lewiston
Tom Ressler, Supervisor, Office of Veterans Advocacy
Zach Rodriguez, Director, Veterans Cemetery
Tammy Hebdon, Administrative Assistant 2, IDVS
Brent Schneider, Administrator, IDVH - Pocatello

Chairman Don Riegel called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS:

There were no guests to introduce.

APPROVAL OF THE JULY 2008 IDAHO VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES:

Commissioner Pitcher made a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes.
Commissioner Napier seconded; vote was taken and motion passed.

IDAHO DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES HUMAN RESOURCES:

Susan Lowman-Thomas, Senior Human Resource Specialist for the Division provided the Commission with the Human Resources update.

Turnover of classified (not temporary) employees continues. Over the past quarter, nursing turnover rate in the open market averaged 65-70%, while IDVS was able to hold the nursing turnover rate at 12.9%. The Division has also begun doing a much better job of capturing the data that helps explain why employees leave. Instead of a high percentage of “other/personal”,

we are now seeing reasons such as money, which helps provide better information to use during the Divisions budget presentation to JFAC. As has been said in the past, knowing why employees leaves provides better justification for pay increase and helps the legislature understand why the increases are necessary.

Over the last few months there have been several changes mandated by the Division of Human Resources, and because these changes are temporary and proposed rules, they became effective immediately. Susan provided the Commission with an update on those changes:

- Elimination of the two hour medical appointment leave for wellness type visits
- Decrease in the length of time an agency has to vacate position due to short term disability

Although there has been some negative response from employee, most of the Division employees have been okay with the changes and have adjusted. The Legislature, however, is not real happy about all of this, and they have to approve the rule changes, so we will see what happens during the upcoming session.

Governor Otter has implemented a Reduction in Work Sites Travel program to help with fuel costs, emissions and traffic. Over the past four months, employees kept track of their trips to work, reporting the method (car, bus, bike, carpool, etc.), the number of miles traveled roundtrip and the number of trips each month. During the four months that were recorded (June – September 2008) the state cites a 14% reduction in driving alone trips. Another added bonus to this program has been the adjusted work schedules, which have provided longer work hour days, thus allowing extended customer service hours for our clients. The more flexibility given to employees, the happier they will be; consequently, the Division is doing everything possible to allow for flex-time schedules, 4/10 hr days, or other feasible work schedules.

Commissioner Riegel wanted to know if there has been any indication of burn out by the end of the fourth 10 hour day. Susan responded that there does not but of course it will depend on the individual. Tom Ressler commented that he is working the 4/10 schedule and has not experienced the burn out feeling, but he also points out that that it is important to exercise as well.

Commission Pitcher wanted to know how the drop in gas prices might impact the number of cars on the roads—did we anticipate that number to rise again? Susan speculated that an increase was more likely to be because of weather given that the Boise Valley does not have a very usable public transportation system.

IDAHO DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES FINANCIAL REPORT:

Debbie Spence began her discussion with an update on the FY09 residential cost per day. Currently the average total cost per day is \$245.16. In comparison, this number was \$233.13 at the end of the FY08 fiscal year. However, the increase is to be expected as the Division pays several “one time” fees (i.e. insurance, attorney general fees, etc) at the beginning of the year, which increases the cost per day, but which will also even out over the year and cause this amount to decrease. The Division is not concerned about the increase at this time.

In answer to the mandated 1% General Fund Hold Back, Debbie and her staff put together a plan for the \$18,000 that the Division will be holding back. Here is where the funding will come from:

- \$700.00 from the Office of Veterans Advocacy travel funding
- \$13,000.00 from the Wheelchair Transportation program
- \$4,300.00 from the Boise Home, which is the only Home with Gen Funds (Domiciliary). Due to the lower census at the Pocatello Home, federal funds were transferred from their funding to the Boise Home funding to help with the cut in General Funds. If the holdback does not have to happen, these funds will be transferred back to the Pocatello Home.

Should the Holdback increase to 1.5%, the additional money would come from:

- \$15,700 from the Boise Home, which again would be covered with federal funds from the Pocatello Home
- \$2,300 from vacant position in Boise Home

Everyone at the three Homes are carefully watching their spending and budgets and cutting back where they can.

Preparations are well underway for the FY10 Budget Request. The Division will be asking for \$37,439,500, which is a 1.9% increase over FY09. This increase is attributed to the \$250,000 general funds being requested for the environmental study for the proposed new Veterans Cemetery. However, the Governor has been informed that if the land for the cemetery is not obtained, this increase will be removed.

Debbie commented that this year DFM has added a fourth step to the budget process, which allows you to see a "pencil version" of the budget changes before they happen. Dave will be meeting the DFM in November to review and discuss the FY10 Budget and will get to see these changes at that time.

Commissioner Riegel wondered how the proposed current budget holdback was going to affect the FY10 budget. Debbie explained that since the Division receives very little General Funds, the impact will not be that significant, and will be something that can be dealt with.

Since our funding is based on the 90% Occupancy Rate rule, Tom Ressler wanted to know why, and also wondered how often the Division has not been able to maintain that 90% Occupancy Rate. Debbie explained that the Legislative Services Office (LSO) dictates that percentage, therefore, the Division really does not have an option. Historically, overall, there has not been a problem maintaining the 90% Occupancy Rate: Pocatello may have low census, but the Boise and Lewiston Homes both maintain above average census, which keeps the Division within the 90% rate.

Dave explained that the 1% Holdback at this time is much better as it gives us a longer time to absorb and even out the holdback. Also, in preparation for the 1.5% additional holdback, Division has already identified where it will come from, thus allowing for pre-planning, so the Division will be fine.

Jim added that currently there is legislation pending in Washington, DC that will increase the plot allowance to \$435.00. Once this is passed, the cemetery will finally be able to meet their expenses, get in the black, and be self-sustaining.

QUESTION/ANSWER PERIOD ON THE VETERANS HOMES, THE OFFICE OF VETERANS ADVOCACY AND THE STATE VETERANS CEMETERY FY07 THIRD QUARTER OPERATIONS REPORTS:

POCATELLO VETERANS HOME OPERATIONS REPORT:

Brent Schneider, Pocatello Home Administrator provided the Commission with an update on activities taking place at the Pocatello Home.

The Pocatello Home began accepting Medicare residents in April, and to date have collected \$35,000 in July and \$30,000 in August. In addition, the new therapy contractor is in place and is doing very well. The Pocatello Home is very pleased with this provider and all they have been doing to help the residents.

Census continues to be an issue, with the average running at about 75% occupancy. Brent and his staff continue to work on this and have begun a marketing campaign that targets doctors in Pocatello, Rexburg, Blackfoot, and other local areas, outlining the services provided at the Pocatello Home, including the implementation of Medicare and the new Physical Therapy program.

The new Care Tracker system is up and running in Pocatello. Since implementation on September 1, 2008, the staff has been familiarizing themselves with the program and how it works, and currently the Pocatello Home is at 98% compliance. At the onset of the new system there was much trepidation and fear, but as the staff has begun using the system they have realized how easy it is to use and the benefits it provides and are pleased to have it available.

The DPW projects continue to take place at the Pocatello Home. Currently the 975 square feet chapel expansion is underway, with plans to hold an open house for the new area in January or February. Brent commented that the staff at the Pocatello Home never realized how small the chapel was, until the expansion began. The added space will be appreciated by all who use the chapel. In addition, the new nurses call system is being installed. Brent informed the Commission that in the FY10 budget he has asked for funding to replace the major components of the heating/cooling system (motor, brain, etc.) and roof. However, due to funding limitations, these projects may not receive funding, and will have to be held until the economy improves.

There were several activities over the past quarter, but there is one that Brent wanted to point out. In August, the local POW/MIA group held a rally in Pocatello. As part of this activity, the group holds a Fun Run that concludes at the Pocatello Home. This year 175 bikers with POW members came and had breakfast with veterans, and then presented the Home with an \$8000 check from them to use as they see fit. These funds will be used to benefit the Pocatello Home veterans and purchase items they need and ask for. Also in August was a trip to the Eastern Idaho Fair, thanks to the generosity of the Blackfoot Elks. This group pays for the veterans to go

to the fair and provides them each with extra money for food and for spending. Without the kindness of this group the Pocatello veterans might not be able to attend the fair.

The Pocatello Home underwent both their VA and State Survey in June and had a few issues they needed to correct. A corrective plan of action was submitted and approved, and the Pocatello Home is conducting business as usual.

Overall the Pocatello home is doing well. Brent admits that the implementation of Medicare and Care Tracker, and the ongoing issue of a low census have been challenging, but the staff have all pulled together and ~~are~~ worked through it all.

Commissioner Riegel wanted to know the status of Mr. Fast, the resident who was to be discharged and who has filed an appeal to his hearing ruling. Brent informed the Commission that Mr. Fast is still at the Pocatello Home and that Dave Brasuell is working with the Deputy Attorney General to try and get final resolution. Commissioner Pitcher wanted to know how expensive the conference call was. Tammy and Jim explained that the call itself is not that expensive, only about \$24; the expense comes when participants have to be brought in from other areas.

LEWISTON VETERANS HOME OPERATIONS REPORT:

Clark Graebel began his report on the Lewiston Home with information concerning the problem with receiving VA Per Diem in a timely manner. For the past several quarters, the Lewiston Home has noticed that it has been taking almost twice as long to receive payments from the VA as it does for the Boise and Pocatello Home. Frustrated and confused, Clark decided to call the VISN20 Director and find out what the problem was. The Director informed Clark he would look into it and see what he could find out. Within a week, the Lewiston Home received all past due amounts and was promised no more than a 28 day turn around from now on. In order to make sure that happens, Clark and Sharon Helman will be meeting with the VISN20 Director to identify what the problems were and make the necessary corrections. This meeting should help assure that this never happens again.

The census at the Lewiston Home is holding strong. However, Clark reported that the Lewiston Home has lost about 12 WWII veterans over the past quarter.

Nursing hours are improving, and are on the rise. Over the past three months the Lewiston Home has been experiencing a challenge in acquiring the nursing staff needed. This challenge is a direct result of the Lewiston area economy and the lack of nursing staff to pull from. However, the good news is the Lewiston Home has been able to recruit some nurses and C.N.A.'s over the past month, thus reducing the Homes Agency hours significantly. Dan Claar, HR Specialist for the Division is working with the Lewiston area Department of Labor to try and find some solutions to the nursing problem.

Over the past quarter Clark had noticed a significant amount of water pooling on the new asphalt parking area. When the issue was researched it was discovered that when the lot was created the developers only installed a 4" drain tube, which was not sufficient for the drainage needs. Realizing that standing water on asphalt results in the rotting of the asphalt from the bottom up, Clark replaced the drain pipe with a 6" drain pipe and new filter system, which has resulted in a

dramatic change in the amount of water that is pooling on the asphalt, and saved the Lewiston Home from having to expend money to replace the asphalt.

Like the Pocatello Home, the Lewiston Home residents also attend the County Fair and Rodeo, which they all enjoyed.

A local food convoy came to the Lewiston Home this past quarter and provided food and cash. These types of donations are much appreciated, and even more so with the constant increase in food costs. Without this generosity, the special meals provided for outings and special events would possibly not be available.

BOISE VETERANS HOME OPERATIONS REPORT:

To begin his report, James Roberts announced that Sarah Yoder has completed her AIT training, and will be taking her state and national tests in the next couple of months. Sarah will continue working at the Boise Home and assisting James.

Sarah & James have spent the last few months working on the Pharmacy Part D payment issues. In order to try and recoup some of this money, James and Sarah have pulled all the charts for the past three (3) years and re-entered all of the information. Although time consuming, their efforts have begun to pay off as the Boise Home has finally begun receiving these funds. Sarah commented that the Boise Home is negotiating with the providers and are trying to receive payment for charges dating back to 2006.

The Boise Home Census has been holding steady at about 90%, with several pending admissions. With the upcoming renovations, there will be a need to put a temporary hold on admissions, which will allow temporary moving of residents so the floors in their rooms can be replaced. Once all of the floors have been replaced, admissions will go back to normal.

As with the Pocatello Home, Medicare is in place and active at the Boise Home. Currently there are six (6) Part A and nine (9) Part B Medicare residents. The average has been right around six/seven. In order to assure proper care is provided for each of our residents, the decision has been made to try and keep the Medicare residents at ten (10) or less, understanding that if a current resident has to go to the hospital and his returning would put that number over ten, he would still be accepted.

The Therapy program is settled in to their new area (the old Division space) and is doing well. They have hired a new Therapy Manager and she is working to assure she has all the training necessary, helps with nursing and billing and is doing an awesome job. The Restorative Program at the Boise Home is one of the best that our current therapy provider has seen nationwide, and they are very appreciative of having the opportunity to work with this program.

The Boise Home office staff has been working on collecting money owed by residents, and has had some significant success. One resident owed over \$40,000, was incapacitated and had no family. Sarah worked with Julie Weaver, DAG, was able to get conservatorship and discovered this resident had a pension from DFAS that had never been accessed. This pension has now been received, and was enough to pay the total debt owed; in addition, Sarah was able to get the

resident Medicaid approved and payment of his account will no longer be an issue. There is another resident who owed over \$20,000, but thanks to the work of Jan Bagby, Boise Financial Specialist, this amount is now down to about \$3,000.

As is being seen everywhere, the Boise Home is noticing an increase in meal costs. This trend seems to be nationwide, and a recent report indicated that Idaho has seen a 10.1% increase in food costs over the past year. Dan Chandler, the Boise Home Dietary Services Manager, is keeping an eye on costs and trying to keep them down as much as possible. Also, during the month of September, a group from the Nevada Veterans Home paid a visit to the Boise Home to tour the dining operations. The group was very impressed with the Boise Home and the dining operations, and the wonderful, friendly atmosphere, and commented that they wished the Nevada Home had that same feel.

Thanks to a downpour of rain, for only the second time in 21 years, the Boise Home Veterans Olympics had to be canceled. However, several of the Olympic activities had taken place prior to the actual scheduled day, so those awards were able to be given out, as were the participation awards. Thanks to the donation of a Wii system, the veterans were able to enjoy some inside activities as well. Even without having the outdoor activities and awards ceremony, the day was a lot of fun and the Boise Home residents enjoyed themselves.

In anticipation of the pending State Survey's, the Boise Home nursing hours are a bit above the normal 3.5 at 3.8. Last year at this time the Boise Home had 12 vacant C.N.A. position, but thanks to the hard work of Scott Houde (scheduling) this number has dropped considerably. Scott's hard work is very important, especially during lean budget years when cuts are being mandated because if these positions stay open too long they are viewed as "unnecessary" and the legislature could take them away. Everything is being done to avoid that, but it reiterates the importance of keeping all funded positions filled.

The Boise Home just completed a Complaint survey that was generated when a resident became upset over the moving of a television set from a common area. The Survey crew found the complaint to be unsubstantiated and no action was taken.

The annual VA survey has also been completed, with no major findings indicated. The official report has not yet been received.

IDAHO STATE VETERANS CEMETERY OPERATIONS REPORT:

Zach Rodriguez informed the Commission that interments at the Veterans Cemetery have dropped off a bit this quarter, which may be the result of the change in weather. Zach also told the Commission that the most common type of interment at the Veterans Cemetery is the interment of cremains either into the Columbarium Wall or the Scatter Gardens. On a sad note, Zach announced that Ed Freeman, Medal of Honor recipient, was interred in the upper section (12) by the flag pole. Mr. Freeman's headstone has been placed, and is inlaid with Gold – an honor only given to those who have received the Medal of Honor.

Pre-registrations continue to come in on a consistent basis. The cemetery staff is in the process of reviewing and revamping these forms so as to assure that all the necessary information is

obtained. This process will also assure that all necessary paperwork (DD214, marriage licenses, etc.) is on file prior to the veterans/spouses death, thus once again alleviating any delays or problems.

The Cemetery staff is holding steady, with the only turnover being the one temporary summer employee. Overtime hours have been kept to minimum. Employees are given the opportunity to use flex time (work less hours the beginning of the week to make up for longer hours at the end of the week) to adjust for upcoming events without having to work overtime. Training opportunities are also afforded each Cemetery employee, giving them the chance to grow and advance.

One of the reasons that the Cemetery Staff can hold so steady is the wonderful volunteers that help out. This point was driven home by a recent Idaho Statesman article that highlighted one of the volunteers and all he does at the cemetery. Volunteer hours hold steady, but Zach mentioned that the group he currently has is aging, and it will be very important to get new volunteers on board, which the Cemetery is working on.

Commissioner Riegel wanted to know where the DD214's come from: family or Dept of Defense? Zach told the Commission that whenever possible they try to get them from the family, but if that is not possible, the Cemetery staff will contact OVA and Dept of Defense to get a copy. Commissioner Riegel followed up by expressing a concern of legitimacy, and wanted to know if fraudulent forms ever show up. Zach assured the Commission that the Cemetery does check as far as possible, and that the VA checks even more when plot allowance is filed for, so it is highly unlikely that fraud would go undetected. However, the bigger question might be, what happens if it is found that a veteran is not entitled to be interred--do we pull the person and have the negative press impact? The general consensus is Yes, because we are maintaining an honorable sight for our veterans, and that must be upheld. The key will be to disinter at a time that will minimize negative press.

OFFICE OF VETERANS ADVOCACY OPERATIONS REPORT:

Tom Ressler updated the Commission on the number and types of hearings that the staff at the OVA has been holding. During the month of July there were 11 hearing, which is a bit high. These hearings are not just local decision hearings but are also Video Hearings that are held here in Boise, and involve the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, D.C. The nice thing about the video hearings is the ability for the Service Officer who has worked with the veteran to be with him/her during the hearing, providing additional support. This is very important to the veteran, and helps reduce the stress associated with the hearing.

As an indication of the current economy, the OVA has seen an increase in the number of Emergency Grants applications. Unfortunately, many of these have been denied, but the flip side to that is the fact that OVA has already issued over \$12,000 in Emergency Grant money this fiscal year. As a note of interest, this grant is a \$1000 lifetime grant, which is issued at one time. However, in the past veterans were allowed partial grants, which were hard to track. Recently a grant application came in where the applicant had previously (under the old system) received \$800 in the past, and wanted the \$200 balance. The Division staff noticed this and made sure that only the balance of \$200 was granted.

The annual Service Officer Training School was held in Boise in August. The turnout and feedback was all very positive. This years festivities included a field trip to the ground breaking ceremony for the new Regional Veterans Affairs Offices, which the Boise IVAL group funded. Tom thanked all of the service organizations for their help and support.

The Boise OVA Service Officers have all been going to annual training, both in Indianapolis for the American Legion training and Orlando for the Veterans of Foreign Wars training. Once again this year Steve Teague tied with one person from the National Staff and achieved a score of 93% on the required national testing for service officers. This is confirmation that our service officers are learning their jobs and taking pride in what they do, which reflects back on the service they give our Veterans.

There have been a few changes that Tom informed the Commission about:

- If a POW died as a POW, they are now receiving Purple Heart Medals, and this will go back to WWII;
- ALS is now being recognized as a presumptive disease, regardless of conflict, as long as the veteran served in the military. The VA is not going to go looking for those who may qualify, so everyone needs to help get the word out,
- Traumatic brain injury and burn scars have been rated too low, so anyone who has received a rating for these injuries needs to come in and have the rating increased. Again, the VA will not go look for them, they must come in.

Recently Tom went to Pocatello and Idaho Falls to do a presentation about Veterans Preference, which was very well received. However, since doing this it has been brought to the Divisions attention that Tom is not the person to do this so he will not be doing it again. The justification for this was that Tom is not a lawyer, so he cannot provide that advice. Jim Adams tried to explain that this is not law, but statute, but so far they don't see it our way.

The 2009 Women's Veterans Conference planning has begun. Tentative plans are to have the conference follow the Service Officer School, in the same facility. As plans develop information will be provided.

DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES OPERATIONS REPORT:

DAVE BRASUELL, Administrator:

Dave began his presentation by informing the Commission that the current focus at IDVS is the upcoming Budget presentation, and the 1% General Fund hold back mandated by the Governor. With help from Debbie, Susan & Jim, the Division has been able to come up with a plan which has been forwarded to the Governor. Fortunately, since IDVS does not have a large amount of General Funds, this hold back will not have a huge impact.

Dave and Jim have met with the architect working on the Divisions new building, and things are beginning to take shape. Originally plans were to put the new building in the back of the Boise Veterans Home, where the Rose Garden is. However, the architect suggested the area that is directly across from the Lincoln Statue, on the right of the road by the stone wall. Dave indicated that he and Jim had looked at this location, but didn't think it would be large enough. The architect assures there is more than enough room, so plans are to use this area. The biggest

issue will be parking, but with the Public Works projects the Boise Home will be adding 12 new spaces, and there is a possibility of an additional one or two after the building is completed, so it should all work out. If all goes as anticipated, the contract should go out to bid in March, be awarded in April, break ground in May and move in sometime around November 2009. Jim met with Tim Mason at DPW and requested for a waiver on construction design, which was granted, so we are able to provide hard wall offices for those who need them. Plans are to also install a locker room and showers for employees, thus allowing them to pursue their individual fitness options.

As discussed in the past, the Division is actively pursuing Centralized billing and is moving forward in implementing this process, especially with the start-up of Medicare. Debbie is working on the RFP for this process, which is very difficult and detailed, and is taking some time. It is possible that the person hired to do the centralized billing will be located in the new Division Headquarters.

Dave recently attended the National Association of State Division of Veterans Affairs Conference. At this conference there was discussion on how the VA will implement 9/11 GI Bill and the contracting out of services, both of which are major concerns. It appears that the contracting out of services is moving forward, but nothing is finalized yet so we will have to wait and see what happens.

There is still a problem in Lewiston with obtaining Physical Therapists, even with the significant sign-on bonuses being offered. Dan Clarr, HR Specialist for IDVS, is working with the Lewiston Dept. of Labor to try and get some applicants, and he will also be traveling to Lewiston the end of October to hold a Job Fair.

Dave asked Sarah Yoder to give the Commission an update on the changes taking place in the Boise Home. Sarah reported:

- **Caretracker** – there have been a few bugs to work out, but overall the acceptance of the system has been very positive. The Boise and Pocatello Homes are both reporting a 98% compliance rate. The Lewiston Home is scheduled to be up and running by November 1, 2008.
- **ChargeTracker** - this is the second phase of the new system, and it will be used to track ancillary charges. This system will provide better tracking of supplies and inventory, thus allowing for increased revenues. Plans are to have this in place and operating by late November.
- **Admissions Packet** - the Admissions Packets have been redone and are more pertinent to Medicare, are more professional/streamlined, and are available on-line. One of the best changes is that the forms will now be the same for all three homes, and there are check-off sheets for all Admissions Directors which will help assure everything needed is obtained prior to admission. There has been very positive feedback from all three Homes on the new forms.
- **Fiduciary Agreement** - a meeting was held with Julie Weaver, Deputy Attorney General, Dave, Jim and the Boise Home Staff concerning the role of Fiduciary. The Boise Home alone was Fiduciary for 24 residents, which is not good. Fiduciaries should be family members, not Home staff. As a result of this meeting, the Fiduciary Policy has been updated and now reflects that the Boise Home should be a last choice. Sarah is currently working with the Social Workers to try and establish a volunteer pool of

veterans who are willing to serve as fiduciary for residents who do not have family members. This is a service offered by the VA, but the fiduciary would be assigned out of Salt Lake City, would be unknown to the resident and would come with a cost of \$90 an hour. The cost alone makes this option unreasonable as residents only get \$98 a month for personal items. Clark expressed a concern about getting timely payments and the possible increase in A/R. Sarah commented that with early communication and establishing good working relationships, this should be kept to a minimum and should not have a negative impact on the income to the Homes.

TRENT HANSEN, I.T. COORDINATOR:

Trent Hansen, I. T. Coordinator, provided the Commission with an update on the changes taking place in the IT department at the Division.

To begin with, Trent updated the Commissioners on the status of the IDVS Web page. As everyone knows, the current webpage is less than desirable. Larry Budd, one of the IT staff, with some input from Patti Murphy, Public Information Office, has been working on the new website and it is much, much better! The new page is almost ready to be unveiled, and will feature changes in colors from Branch to Branch reflecting the colors of each Branch.

The other new change in the Division is the implementation of the Care Tracker system. This is the computerized system that will better track the care each resident is receiving as it will be documented as it happens, not at the end of a shift. The implementation is completed at the Boise and Pocatello homes, and will soon be done at the Lewiston Home. To date, everything is going very well, and the system is allowing management staff to track each individual user for compliance and identify areas needing improvement. As soon as the Lewiston Home is up and running the implementation of Charge Tracker, which will track the ancillary charges per resident, will begin. This addition will result in increased revenue as it will better track all of the charges and help assure more accurate billing.

Trent also apprised the Commission that the State of Idaho, Dept. of Administration, is in the process of consolidating the email systems of 60 agencies (approximately 40000 users), which will result in the loss of group calendars and distribution lists currently in place. In addition, this consolidation will require that all servers be changed and that every users system must be reinstalled/reconfigured/redeployed. Due to the complexity of our system, and the fact that we tie into the BOSS system at the Cemetery and the federal VIMS system at OVA, IDVS will be asking for an exception from this consolidation.

In conclusion, Trent updated the Commission on the status of the 3-5 year Workstation Replacement. This is an active program, and the order for the last section of computers to be updated has been made and they should be received any time. In the past, the IT equipment was covered under a third-party warranty, which was costing \$64,000 a year. By purchasing new systems with manufacturer warranties, and replacing them before the warranty expires, there is no longer a need for extended warranty use.

JIM ADAMS, Administrative Support Manager:

Jim began his report to the Commission with an update on the much anticipated Plot Allowance increase. Currently this legislation is in Conference, and its probability of making it out is slim. What that means is, this legislation must start anew next session and work its way through the process again. We will have to wait and see what happens.

There are two pieces of legislation that the Division is sponsoring this year: the Veterans Controlled Hunting Trip and the Gold Star Licenses Plates.

As discussed in the past, Mr. Williams, an Elmore County resident has approximately 10,000 acres of land that he is opening up to two (2) veterans to come to and hunt. This will be an all expense paid trip, which includes the cutting and wrapping of the meat obtained. The only hold up has been securing the two controlled hunt permits, as they are legislatively mandated. However, Fish and Game currently has a program much like "Make A Wish" wherein they have several controlled hunt tags legislatively delegated. Unfortunately this program is not widely used, so the Fish & Game Commissioners have agreed to have two of the permits removed from this program and given to the Veterans Hunting Program. As there is no opposition, and the Governor has given the Green Light (Approval), this should pass without any problems. The next step is for the Committee to finalize the application and select the participants.

The second piece of legislation, the Gold Star Family Licenses Plates, also appears to be headed for approval. The only potential stumbling block for this legislation was the \$8000 startup costs, but IDVS asked the Idaho Transportation Department to waive this and they agreed to cover it. The only cost to IDVS will be for the design of the plate, which is being done by Correctional Industries and will be simple and not very expensive. The special plate fee will be waived for all parents, step-parents and spouses of those members killed in action; however, they will still have to pay their registration fee. There is a minimum sales regulation which ITD has also agreed to waive. Again, with no opposition to this legislation it is anticipated that it too will be approved.

In September Jim Adams made a trip to Washington, D.C. to meet with the Idaho Delegation and discuss Veterans issues. Jim was able to meet with all four legislators, and discuss many issues, including the confusion about paying for care of veterans who are 70-100% disabled and living in state veterans homes. As of December 2006, a law was passed to cover 100% of the costs associated with veterans in homes, including State veteran's homes, but for some reason this is still not happening in State Veterans Homes. Jim explained that the State homes were losing veterans because of this "glitch", and that having to move veterans out of State homes, away from their friends and comrades, was very disruptive and upsetting for the Veterans. Jim was told by Rep. Sali's office that this will be corrected by October 2008 and will be retroactive to March 2007 (60 days after law being enacted). However, Sen. Craig's office indicated there were some problems and it may be delayed. Jim will keep the Commission updated on the progress.

While meeting with Sen. Craig, Jim also queried him about securing the forty acres of BLM land around the cemetery. Jim explained that obtaining the land would serve two purposes: 1. provide a buffer around the Cemetery, assuring that subdivisions and housing areas would not be built, and 2. provide potential expansion if ever needed. Sen. Craig said he'd have legislation

written and get the land transferred to the State. This does have local support, but we will have to wait and see what happens.

Dave will be meeting with Channel 12 on October 12, 2008, to prepare a Public Service Announcement informing the public of the Tax Return Check Off on the 2008 State Tax Return forms. This PSA will encourage everyone to donate a portion of their refund, or add to their tax liability, for the veterans. This is the Administrative Fund that Dave will have control over, and from which items needed by the veterans could be purchased. In order to keep this option on the forms, it is necessary to generate \$25,000 the first year, but if not, then it must be done by the end of second year. Failure to reach this goal will result in this option being removed from the tax forms. Please spread the word and encourage everyone you know to support the veterans.

Jim informed the Commission that there was a need to move the January Commission meeting from the 8th to the 15th to accommodate the annual Legislative Reception at the Owyhee Plaza. Commissioner Riegel agreed with the move and suggested that since all of the commissioners must be in town for their individual Mid-Winter Conferences that they each take care of their own travel accommodations and expenses, with no reimbursement from IDVS. Commissioner Gimpel made a motion for the Commissioners to cover their own travel accommodations and expenses for the January 2009 Commission meeting, with no reimbursement from IDVS, and Commissioner Pitcher seconded. The motion was voted on and passed. IVAC Meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m., and will be held in the IDVS office.

Dave concluded that the Division will begin the presentation for JFAC and if anyone has input, please contact Dave and let him know.

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no Old Business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS:

January Meeting will be January 15, 2009, not January 8, 2009, to accommodate the Legislative Reception. The meeting will be held at the Division of Veterans Services offices, and the Legislative Reception will be held at the Owyhee Plaza, starting at 5:00 p.m.

As there was no further business, Commissioner Pitcher moved that the meeting be adjourned; Commissioner Gimpel seconded the motion; all agreed.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Don Riegel, Chairman

David Brasuell, Executive Secretary

