

Virginia Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees
Virginia War Memorial
621 S Belvidere St
Richmond, VA 23219
Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2024
10:00AM – 2:00PM

A meeting of the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees was held on Thursday, September 12, 2024 at the Virginia War Memorial, 621 S Belvidere St, Richmond, Virginia. The meeting was called to order at 10:03a.m.

Trustees Present

- Brad Williamson (*Veterans Services Foundation Chairman*)
- Marc Andersen (*virtual*)
- Allan C. Burke
- Tim Pillion
- Jarris L. Taylor, Jr.
- Craig Colucci
- Shannon Spencer-Watson (*virtual*)
- James R. Poplar
- Joel Griffin
- Brandy Jones
- Danny Vargas

Trustees Absent

- Mike Coleman
- Omari Faulkner
- Jack O. Lanier
- Kathleen Murphy

VSF Advisors Present

- Chuck Zingler (*Commissioner of Department of Veterans Services*)
- Craig Crenshaw (*Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs*)
- Jordan Stewart (*Assistant Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs*)

VSF Staff Present

- Kayla Arestivo (*Executive Director*)
- Darius McKenney (*Business Manager*)

Commonwealth of Virginia Office of the Attorney General

- James Flaherty (*OAG, Assistant Attorney General*)

Board of Veterans Services Members Present

- Carl Bedell (*Chairman*)

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Services Organization Members Present

- Bill Aramony (*Chairman*)

DVS Representatives Present

- Kim Barton
- Tramaine Carroll-Payne
- Brandi Jancaitis

- Guy Dinkins
- Kendra Ellison
- Tiffany Woody-Wiggins

Materials Distributed and Attached

- VSF Agenda (*Attachment 1*)
- VSF June 13th Board Meeting Minutes (*Attachment 2*)
- VSF Finance Committee Report (*Attachment 3*)
- Schedule of Receipts, Expenditures and Budget, by Activity For the Month Ended June 30, 2024 (FM12) (*Attachment 4*)
- Schedule of Receipts, Expenditures and Budget, by Activity For the Month Ended July 31, 2024 (FM01) (*Attachment 5*)
- Statement of Assets For Month Ended July 31, 2024 (FM01) (*Attachment 6*)
- VSF Sept 2024 Development Committee Update (*Attachment 7*)
- VSF Procedures and Policies Committee Report (*Attachment 8*)

1. Call to Order

a. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

VSF Chair Williamson welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:03a.m. Chair Williamson led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

b. Roll Call of Trustees and Quorum Determination

With 10 of 15- trustees present, VSF Chair Williamson advised a quorum was determined.

Introductions were made for the newly appointed staff in attendance – Danny Vargas.

Introductions were conducted by DVS staff and members of the public in attendance.

c. Approval of Agenda

The meeting agenda was previously sent to the Trustees electronically, and a printed copy was included in the Board Agenda Packets.

Chair Williamson asked if everyone had the opportunity to review the meeting agenda, to which there were no objections. James Poplar **moved** to approve the meeting agenda and Tim Pillion **seconded** the motion.

2. Review and Approval of June 13, 2024 VSF Meeting Minutes

VSF Chair Williamson asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Tim Pillion **moved** to approve the minutes as presented and James Poplar **seconded** the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. REPORTS

A. Secretary's Report: Craig Crenshaw, Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs

Secretary Crenshaw provided an update on the preparations for the upcoming general assembly scheduled for January. He emphasized the importance of addressing key issues that have gained significant visibility in recent months, particularly those related to veterans' education.

The team is committed to being proactive in its approach to upcoming legislation and budget planning for the next year. Crenshaw highlighted the need for collaboration among all members to ensure that the proposed measures align with the organization's core values and effectively support the mission.

Additionally, he expressed his appreciation for the leadership within the team, specifically acknowledging Chairman Williamson and others for their contributions. The Secretary urged everyone to engage early with relevant stakeholders to strengthen their efforts.

The report concluded with a strong call to action, encouraging team members to share their ideas and work together to advance the group's objectives as they move forward. The commitment to an aggressive and deliberate engagement strategy was reaffirmed, setting a positive tone for the upcoming initiatives.

B. Department of Veterans Services

No report. Commissioner thanked everyone for being in attendance.

C. Chairman's Report

Chairman Williamson led the report by providing updates regarding the board of trustees, which now has 15 out of 16 positions filled. This development is crucial for fully staffing committees and allowing the chair and vice chairs to take on more responsibilities, especially given the geographic distribution of board members.

He reported on recent outreach efforts to discuss committee assignments with each member. At the end of the meeting, a complete list of assignments will be shared with the board chair. Emphasis was placed on the importance of the development committee, highlighting that all board members are involved in supporting this initiative.

Chairman Williamson also warmly welcomed new trustee Mr. Danny Vargas, who joins from Fairfax, Virginia, adding valuable representation to the board.

Additionally, he recapped recent events, notably a donation of four vans to the care center, valued at approximately \$280,000. These vans will significantly enhance transportation for individuals using the center's services.

Looking ahead, Chairman Williamson mentioned upcoming meetings, including the JLC and BVS quarterly meetings, as well as a hit-a-thon event scheduled for November. Overall, there is a strong appreciation for the engagement and commitment shown by all members, recognizing the importance of connecting with the community through various initiatives.

D. Board of Veterans Services

Carl Bedell delivered his report introducing himself as the new chair for the Board of Veterans Services, having been elected at the last meeting in June. Since then, he has been actively reaching out to engage all board members, especially the new additions.

Chairman Bedell announced that the next board meeting is scheduled for two weeks from now, where various task forces will be discussed to enhance the operations of the Department of Veterans Services (DVS). He has also attended several veterans-related events in recent months, emphasizing the board's commitment to increased visibility and engagement within the community.

He noted that he has had productive discussions with Kayla and Bill from the JLC to improve coordination and support for veterans at the state level. Chairman Bedell expressed his enthusiasm for connecting with everyone and contributing to the mission of the board.

He concluded by thanking the group for the opportunity to share his update and looks forward to future collaboration.

E. Joint Leadership Council

Bill Aramony, Chairman of the Joint Legislative Committee (JLC), provided his report, highlighting that an objectives meeting took place on August 11th, specifically for the VMSDEP initiative. He emphasized the importance of this priority and urged members to engage with the community by asking pertinent questions and gathering feedback.

Chairman Aramony announced that the next JLC meeting is scheduled for September 19, where proposals will be reviewed, approved, and prioritized. He noted ongoing efforts to secure sponsorship for various initiatives and advance legislative goals.

Looking ahead, he mentioned the importance of preparation for the government budget to be released in December, aiming to wrap up discussions and present a cohesive agenda. Chairman Aramony expressed a commitment to staying proactive and adapting as needed to better serve the public.

He concluded by thanking the group for their support and specifically acknowledged Carl and Kayla for their outreach and contributions.

F. Foundation Report

Executive Director Arestivo began her report by expressing enthusiasm about the new brochures, which align with the upgraded website. She emphasized the importance of these materials for networking events and encouraged attendees to utilize them.

Executive Director Arestivo reiterated the mission of their organization: to support Virginia's 700,000 veterans. She highlighted the impact of their initiatives on medical care, behavioral health, and rehabilitation services, noting the compassionate care provided at long-term Veteran Care Centers across the Commonwealth.

She introduced a new section on their website dedicated to impact stories, showcasing how funds have directly assisted veterans in need. Executive Director Arestivo shared testimonials that illustrated the difference these funds make in veterans' lives, such as helping secure housing for those transitioning out of the criminal justice system.

As of August 22, the organization has raised approximately \$464,452 this fiscal year, with a goal of reaching \$900,000. Executive Director Arestivo discussed the importance of increasing engagement with foundation donors, noting that there are currently 1,042 donors in their CRM, with 301 being active.

She outlined her priorities moving forward, including a project focused on aiding the transition from active duty to civilian employment, which will be presented at the Virginia Military Affairs Executive Forum on October 3. Executive Director Arestivo also mentioned ongoing efforts to revamp fundraising strategies for VSF.

She provided updates on trademarking their logo and the potential for hosting an event after the V3 awards to capitalize on executive presence in the area.

During a discussion with Secretary Crenshaw, Executive Director Arestivo shared insights about VSF's presence at events. For the first time, VSF has created promotional materials that allow for better visibility, even in settings where it's challenging to set up a table. Arestivo emphasized that her role often involves direct engagement—shaking hands, initiating conversations, and introducing the VSF's mission. While not every interaction leads to tangible support, the visibility of the VSF and its mission is crucial. She expressed a desire for the VSF name to be more prominent and relevant, underscoring the importance of being present at events to foster recognition and connection.

Chairman Williamson added that at these events, both he and Kayla make a point to say a few words, informing attendees about the foundation and how the funds raised support DVS and its programming.

In her next update, it was highlighted that Commissioner Zingler facilitated a connection with Ms. Ann Hand, an artisan in Washington, D.C., who has been recognized as a leader at the White House. Ms. Hand, known for her kindness and artistic talents, has agreed to create and sell a special veteran pin for Veterans Day, with proceeds benefiting the Foundation. This initiative was acknowledged as a significant contribution to the foundation's efforts in supporting veterans.

She goes on to mention that four vans were donated to the each of the Care Centers, marking a positive

contribution this year. Darius represented the organization at the Dublin Cemetery Ceremony in August, supporting the DVS event.

Looking ahead, excitement was expressed for the 2024 Virginia Veteran Military Fair and Executive Forum on October 3rd, where the pipeline project will be showcased. This event provides an excellent opportunity for the Foundation to increase visibility and connect with attendees.

Additionally, the Birdies for Charity fundraiser, ongoing since May, will conclude at the end of October. There is also a golf fundraiser hosted by George C. Marshall MOAA, which will take place September 13th. The Frieden Agency & Wealth Management Veteran's Hit-a-Thon hosted by trustee Craig Colucci will be happening in November in Virginia Beach.

Mr. Colucci reported that the current fundraising goal is \$45,000 for the Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center, with \$25,000 raised so far. The initiative aims to raise awareness about veterans' mental health issues, specifically targeting the alarming statistic of 6,400 veterans who commit suicide each year.

Executive Director Arestivo shared the final upcoming fundraising event will be held at the Kendra Scott store in Charlottesville on November 10.

After opening the report up to questions, trustee Shannon Spencer-Watson asked if the Foundation had any intention to start exploring social media to spread awareness. Executive Director Arestivo ensured that it is on the radar and will be something to focus on in the future.

G. Finance Report

Kim Barton presented the finance report. As of June 30, 2024, the total income for the FY2024 4th Quarter reached \$382,679.81. Total expenditures during the same period amounted to \$839,013.21, resulting in an excess of income over expenditures of (\$456,333.40).

The beginning fund balance was \$3,400,794.08, leading to a total FY2024 4th Quarter ending fund balance of \$2,944,460.68.

H. VSF Finance Committee Report

Tim Pillion gave the VSF Finance Committee report and highlighted key points regarding the final FY2024 expenditures versus budget, noting an execution rate of approximately 91.4%. The FY25 Board-approved budget has been transmitted to the Commissioner and DVS directors, with approved appropriations totaling \$850,000. Additionally, a request for an extra \$663,500 was made to cover new beds for the Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center.

Looking ahead, the focus will be on closely monitoring the foundation's expenditures and reviewing the foundation's policies to recommend changes as needed.

I. Development Committee Report

Mr. Marc Andersen provided a brief report from the Development Committee, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to join the meeting virtually. He reflected on his year with the committee, noting significant progress and improvements under Brad's leadership and commending Kayla for her exceptional contributions.

Mr. Andersen emphasized the importance of forming a more engaged committee to support development efforts, including networking and promoting events. He mentioned the need to organize committee members and set up a meeting to outline goals for the upcoming years.

Mr. Andersen concluded by expressing enthusiasm for collaborating with the team to achieve their objectives.

J. Policies and Procedures Report

Mr. Jarris Taylor presented the policies and procedures report, noting that the committee's status includes the approval of amendments to enhance operational efficiency, submitted by Chair Bruce Waxman, on June 13, 2024. No meetings were held this quarter, but the committee plans to schedule a meeting for October 2024. The current focus is to support the board in conducting business and guiding the operational direction of the VSF organization, while continuing to review operational procedures and policies for alignment with DVS. Engagement from committee members is encouraged to support these efforts.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of Development Committee Recommendations

No approvals needed at this time.

B. Approval of Finance Committee Recommendations

Approval was needed for Davis & McDaniel Care Center to spend the \$663,500 for new beds. James Poplar **moved** to approve the motion. Craig Colucci **seconded** the motion.

C. Approval of Procedures and Policies Committee Recommendations

No approvals needed at this time.

D. Approval of 2nd Quarter Financial Report

Craig Colucci **moved** to approve the motion. Brandy Jones **seconded** the motion.

E. Other New Business

1. Board Chair

Board Committee Assignments:

Chairman Williamson stated that, along with the vice chairs, the committees will be finalized within the next week. He emphasized that all trustees will participate in committees, even if they are not formally assigned to them.

Demographic Information

Chairman Williamson announced that Kayla will be reaching out to request demographic information from the board members. He clarified that providing this information is not mandatory; however, it is frequently requested when applying for grants. He emphasized that having a diverse board is beneficial and that any information shared would be helpful in supporting the foundation's efforts.

Networking Events

Chairman Williamson discussed the foundation's efforts to host networking events, emphasizing the importance of engaging potential donors. He acknowledged that sometimes it takes an investment to generate returns and highlighted the need to strategize effectively. He mentioned that Kayla would ensure all activities comply with legal guidelines and receive necessary approvals from DVS. He expressed enthusiasm for an upcoming event on October 3, where key potential donors will gather. Williamson encouraged board members to independently host discussions about the foundation's work, while clarifying that foundation-sponsored events must be carefully planned. He applauded members for their proactive efforts and reaffirmed the commitment to raise funds to support veterans, emphasizing the importance of working within legal parameters.

2. Executive Director

LOGO Update

Logo has been approved for trademark.

Website Rollout

New VSF website is up and running.

Ann Hand Pin Donation

More information will be shared about this event in the future.

Mr. James Poplar asked if there was a way to monitor activity on the new website. Executive Director Arestivo goes on to mention that we are planning for a marketing budget in FY26, that will enable the Foundation to utilize resources to track that type of data.

Mr. Craig Colucci raised a question regarding active donors, suggesting the need to categorize them based on their donation amounts (e.g., \$5,000, \$10,000) and the recency of their contributions. He emphasized the importance of identifying donors who have given in the past year or two, particularly those located in the Southeast region, to determine outreach opportunities for re-engagement. Mr. Colucci expressed his willingness to assist in reaching out to these donors.

Executive Director Arestivo responded to Mr. Colucci's inquiry about donor engagement, noting that most contacts in the CRM primarily include mailing addresses as they typically send checks. She highlighted that about 80% of the CRM is utilized for direct mail outreach, which has a low response rate. Arestivo mentioned that she shares a spreadsheet on the first of each month containing information about recent active donors, including details organized by region, to facilitate outreach efforts. She emphasized the importance of attracting younger donors by improving accessibility to information.

Ms. Shannon Spencer-Watson inquired whether the organization plans to recruit a celebrity ambassador who can leverage their platform to promote awareness of the foundation. She emphasized the importance of selecting someone who is a Virginia resident and has strong community ties to effectively advocate for the organization. She expressed her belief that this could significantly enhance visibility and support. Conversations pertaining to that will continue in the future.

5. **Public Comment**

N/A

6. **Adjournment**

The next Board of Trustees Meeting will be held on December 5th, 2024 at the Virginia War Memorial. The meeting was adjourned at 11:09am.