

Virginia Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees

Virginia War Memorial

621 S Belvidere St

Richmond, VA 23219

Meeting Minutes

December 11, 2025

10:00AM – 12:00PM

DRAFT

A meeting of the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees was held on Thursday, December 11, 2025 at the Virginia War Memorial, 621 S Belvidere St, Richmond, Virginia. The meeting was called to order at 10:05a.m.

Trustees Present

- Joel Griffin (*Veterans Services Foundation Chairman*)
- James R. Poplar
- Mike Coleman
- Allan C. Burke
- Tim Pillion
- Craig Colucci
- Jarris Taylor, Jr.
- Matt Scalia
- Daniel Cortez
- Brad Williamson (virtual)
- Omari Faulkner (virtual)
- Brandy Jones (virtual)
- Heather Hopkins (virtual)

Trustees Absent

- Kathleen Murphy
- Danny Vargas
- Shannon Spencer-Watson

VSF Advisors Present

- Chuck Zingler (*Commissioner of Department of Veterans Services*)
- Jack Lanier
- Juanita Farrow

VSF Staff Present

- Kayla Arestivo (*Executive Director*)
- Darius McKenney (*Business Manager*)
- Suzanne Armstrong (*Grant Writer*)

Commonwealth of Virginia Office of the Attorney General

- Valentine Southall (*OAG, Assistant Attorney General*)

Board of Veterans Services Members Present

- Matt Miller, Chairman

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Services Organization Members Present

- Bill Aramony, Chairman (*virtual*)

DVS Representatives Present

- Kim Barton
- Brandi Jancaitis

- Steve Combs (virtual)
- Patrice Jones (virtual)
- Andre Logan (virtual)
- Griffin Ramsey

Materials Distributed and Attached

- VSF Agenda (*Attachment 1*)
- VSF September 18th Board Meeting Minutes (*Attachment 2*)
- VSF Board of Trustees Roster (*Attachment 3*)
- VSF Chairman Report (*Attachment 4*)
- BVS Chairman Report (*Attachment 5*)
- JLC Chairman Report (*Attachment 6*)
- VSF Finance Committee Report (*Attachment 7*)
- Quarterly Report to Commissioner as of October 31, 2025 (*Attachment 8*)
- Statement of Assets for the Month Ended October 31, 2025 (FM04) (*Attachment 9*)
- Request for 2026 Foundation Support by DVS Program (*Attachment 10*)
- VSF Financial QUAD Chart as of October 31, 2025 (*Attachment 11*)
- VSF Development Committee Report (*Attachment 12*)
- VSF Procedures and Policies Committee Report (*Attachment 13*)
- VSF Trustee Support Fundraising Flyer (*Attachment 14*)

1. Call to Order

a. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

VSF Chair Griffin welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:05a.m. Chair Griffin led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

b. Roll Call of Trustees and Quorum Determination

With 9 of 16 trustees physically present and 13 of 16 including online participants, VSF Chair Griffin advised a quorum was determined.

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 Griffin asked if everyone had the opportunity to review the meeting agenda, to which there were no objections. Trustee Coleman moved to approve the meeting agenda and Trustee Colucci seconded the motion.

2. Review and Approval of September 18, 2025, VSF Meeting Minutes

VSF Chair Griffin asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Trustee Poplar **moved** the approve the minutes as presented and Trustee Colucci **seconded** the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. REPORTS

A. Chairman's Report

Chairman Griffin reported that all trustee positions are currently filled and formally introduced a new trustee, Daniel Cortez, who has assumed the vacancy created by the departure of Marc Andersen. Trustee Cortez was given a moment to introduce himself. Trustee Cortez is a Marine and Vietnam veteran, being apart of a five generations to have served in the armed forces. He is currently a media operative and chairman for of The National Vet Court Alliance. Trustee Cortez is joining the board with an extensive background in media, philanthropy and public service.

The Chairman's report resumed with the mention of committee assignments have been finalized, and committee chairs are in place: Trustee Mike Coleman as Finance Chair, Trustee Jarris Taylor, Jr. as Procedures and Policies Chair, and Trustee Shannon Spencer-Watson as Development Committee Chair.

Chairman Griffin noted no Foundation-hosted fundraising events are currently scheduled; however, planning is underway for future events in the upcoming year. He emphasized the importance of developing sustainable revenue sources to support the Foundation's mission.

The Chair also introduced a legislative concept under consideration that would create a dedicated revenue stream for the Foundation through military and veteran specialty license plates administered by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Trustee Mike Coleman expanded on the DMV initiative. A proposal was discussed to designate qualifying military and veteran specialty license plates as revenue-sharing plates, generating an additional \$15 annual fee to support the Foundation.

It was clarified that the proposal would apply only to license plates that already carry an annual fee and would not affect POW plates or license plates issued to veterans rated 100 percent disabled by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The initiative was described as voluntary and not punitive, as participation would be tied to the elective purchase of specialty plates.

Trustees discussed concerns regarding public perception and emphasized the importance of framing the initiative as an optional contribution rather than a fee imposed on veterans. The Board agreed that staff and trustees should continue refining the proposal and engaging with elected officials to address these concerns. Trustees were invited to support the initiative through letters or direct outreach.

The Board discussed the role of trustees in supporting fundraising and increasing awareness of the Foundation. Leadership emphasized that trustee engagement is essential not only for revenue generation but also for expanding public understanding of the Foundation's mission across the Commonwealth.

Trustees were encouraged to participate in community events, host or support local fundraisers, and engage with veteran organizations and civic groups. It was noted that long-term sustainability will require broadening the donor base beyond a limited number of major contributors.

B. Board of Veterans Services

Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Chairman Matt Miller provided an update on recent Board activity. He reported that the BVS last met on November 10, 2025 at the Virginia War Memorial. During that meeting, Commissioner Chuck Zingler presented an update on Department of Veterans Services (DVS) programs, services, and priorities. The Board also received a briefing on the DVS Strategic Plan. Chairman Miller noted that reports and materials related to the meeting are available on the Department's website.

Chairman Miller further shared that Kayla Owen provided an update on the formation of the Board of Veterans Services Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) Working Group. The working group, of which Chairman Miller is a member, has since convened three meetings focused on ensuring the long-term stability and success of the

program. He noted coordination with Joint Leadership Council members and referenced similar programmatic efforts being shared by representatives from partner organizations.

Chairman Miller reported that the Board recently held an election for the Vice Chair position, resulting in the election of Joyce Henderson as Vice Chair. He also noted that the Board currently has three vacant seats.

Looking ahead, Chairman Miller stated that over the coming year the Board of Veterans Services plans to focus on strengthening support for veterans and their families through continued collaboration with the Department of Veterans Services. He shared that the BVS intends to hold meetings in 2026 at several DVS facilities, including the Jones Veterans Care Center, the Puller Veterans Care Center, and the Suffolk Veterans Cemetery.

Chairman Miller concluded his report by announcing that the Board's next meeting is scheduled to be held virtually on December 17 at 2:00 p.m. He then offered to respond to any questions from the Board, concluding his report.

C. Joint Leadership Council

Joint Leadership Council (JLC) Chairman Bill Aramony provided an update on the Council's ongoing work and collaboration with the Board of Veterans Services. He referenced continued joint efforts focused on maintaining and protecting benefits and programs supporting dependents of disabled veterans and surviving dependents of veterans killed in action. Chairman Aramony emphasized the importance of sustained cooperation between the JLC and BVS and noted that the working group addressing these matters would convene again later that same day. He specifically acknowledged the leadership and assistance of BVS Chairman Matt Miller in advancing this effort.

Chairman Aramony reported that the next in-person meeting of the Joint Leadership Council is scheduled for December 19, 2025, to be held at the Virginia War Memorial. He also highlighted the Council's upcoming "Day on the Hill" advocacy event, scheduled for Thursday, January 15, 2026, during the General Assembly session.

Chairman Aramony invited trustees and attendees to participate in the Day on the Hill, noting that participants may either meet directly at the General Assembly at 9:00 a.m. or gather at the American Legion headquarters located at 1708 Commonwealth Avenue at 8:30 a.m. for a briefing prior to being transported to the Capitol. Advocacy meetings are expected to continue through midday, with participants recognized in the legislative chambers before concluding the event in the early afternoon.

Chairman Aramony concluded his report by encouraging members to visit the Joint Leadership Council website or contact him directly for additional details. He thanked the Board for its continued support and engagement.

D. Department of Veterans Services

Commissioner Chuck Zingler opened his remarks by noting that this meeting would likely be his final opportunity to address the Board in his role as Commissioner. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve Virginia's veterans, transitioning service members, and their families, and reflected on the privilege of working alongside veteran service organizations and partners across the Commonwealth.

Commissioner Zingler emphasized that Virginia is uniquely positioned to lead the nation in veteran services, citing the scale of collaboration, program growth, and service delivery achieved over the past several years. He noted that peers at the national level have expressed surprise at the scope of Virginia's accomplishments, which he attributed to strong leadership, partnerships, and a commitment to innovation rather than increased resources alone.

The Commissioner highlighted significant expansion across Department programs, including benefits services that completed approximately 130,000 actions on behalf of veterans in the previous fiscal year. He emphasized the Department's emphasis on in-person, high-touch service delivery and described substantial growth in employment, transition, and education services, which have expanded to reach transitioning service members and their families earlier in the transition process.

Commissioner Zingler also highlighted Virginia's partnership with American Corporate Partners, which provides mentoring and coaching opportunities for veterans and military spouses and has resulted in improved employment outcomes. He discussed ongoing efforts to proactively reach service members early in their careers and referenced national recognition of the Virginia Veterans Network as a key tool for connecting veterans and families to resources regardless of location.

The Commissioner noted the Department's intentional shift away from contractor-driven models toward rebuilding internal capacity and strengthening workforce engagement. He emphasized the importance of staff expertise, accountability, and mission-driven service.

Commissioner Zingler concluded by expressing gratitude for the partnership with the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation and the Board's continued support. He reaffirmed his commitment to veteran advocacy and indicated his willingness to remain engaged in support of the Department's mission, moving forward before yielding the floor to other Department representatives.

Following the Commissioner's remarks, Trustee Craig Colucci offered brief comments in appreciation of Commissioner Zingler's service. Trustee Colucci congratulated the Commissioner on his tenure and expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to work closely with him. He noted the Commissioner's dedication and leadership and thanked him for his service to Virginia's veterans.

Virginia Veterans and Family Support (VVFS) Mid-Year Briefing

Brandi Jancaitis, Director of the Virginia Veterans and Family Support (VVFS) program, provided an overview of the program's mission and service delivery. She explained that VVFS supports veterans and their families through care coordination, connection to community resources, housing stability assistance, behavioral and mental health support, and peer recovery services. She noted that Foundation support allows the program to address critical gaps not covered by federal or state funding.

Ms. Jancaitis highlighted the program's dual approach of partnering with local homeless service providers while also delivering direct services through regional teams. She shared that this model enables VVFS to reach veterans and families at risk of homelessness, support those exiting homelessness, and provide stabilization services that promote long-term wellness and self-sufficiency.

She discussed the importance of tracking household-level outcomes rather than individual transactions, emphasizing how VVFS measures impact through housing stabilization, homelessness prevention, and access to behavioral health services. Ms. Jancaitis shared examples of how timely intervention helped veterans overcome medical or financial hardships and remain housed.

Ms. Jancaitis noted that housing instability, homelessness, and behavioral health needs continue to be significant challenges statewide and are not expected to diminish. She emphasized the value of community partnerships as a force multiplier to expand the program's reach beyond what staff alone can provide.

Ms. Jancaitis concluded by identifying transportation as an emerging priority. She explained that without reliable transportation, veterans may be unable to access employment, healthcare, or supportive services, which can undermine housing stability. Potential transportation assistance would be coordinated through existing community partners and could include resources such as bus passes and ride-share services.

Following the VVFS presentation, Trustee Matt Scalia commented on the transportation component of the program, noting that housing stability alone does not fully address the challenges faced by veterans and families. Drawing on his professional experience in public transit, he emphasized that access to reliable transportation is essential for employment, healthcare, and long-term stability.

Trustee Scalia expressed support for VVFS's approach of working through existing public transit systems and community partners rather than providing direct assistance such as vehicle purchases. He noted that similar models are used effectively by other public agencies and nonprofit organizations and affirmed that modest, targeted transportation investments can have a meaningful impact when coordinated through established service providers.

Veterans Education, Transition, and Employment (VETE) Mid-Year Briefing

Patrice Jones, Director of the Veterans Education, Transition, and Employment (VETE) program, provided an overview of the program's role as the "front door" for military families seeking education, workforce entry, and career transition support. She emphasized the use of the Virginia Veterans Network to connect veterans and families to employment and education resources.

Ms. Jones reported that during FY25, the program assisted more than 12,000 military families with employment through partnerships with V3-certified employers and hosted workforce events on military installations across the Commonwealth. She highlighted key initiatives, including Hire Vets Now events and the V3 Summit Awards Luncheon, which convened employers, educators, and strategic partners.

Ms. Jones also provided updates on education initiatives, including the laptop program offered through community college and university partners and expanded credentialing opportunities aligned with high-demand workforce needs. She noted that additional grant-funded initiatives are in development and will launch following formal authorization.

Ms. Jones concluded by outlining future priorities, including expanded employer partnerships, increased outreach to women veterans, and exploration of fast-track credentialing pathways to support quicker workforce entry for transitioning service members.

Veterans Care Centers Mid-Year Briefing

Deputy Commissioner Steve Combs provided a mid-year update on the Veterans Care Centers and highlighted the upcoming grand opening of the Puller Veterans Care Center in Warrenton. He noted that with the recent openings of the Virginia Beach and Warrenton centers, Virginia now operates four Veterans Care Centers, effectively doubling capacity within the past two years.

Deputy Commissioner Combs discussed the impact of Foundation-supported initiatives that enhance quality of life for residents, including the successful replacement of beds at the Davis and McDaniel Veterans Care Center and the continued support of Operation Holiday Spirit. He also referenced ongoing enhancements such as sensory and memory-care spaces currently in development.

He highlighted recent quality achievements, noting that the Davis and McDaniel Veterans Care Center has been ranked among the top nursing homes in Virginia by *Newsweek* for three consecutive years and that Virginia's Veterans Care Centers have earned four- and five-star ratings from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Deputy Commissioner Combs concluded by outlining future considerations focused on sustaining high-quality care, including potential investments in technologies to support nursing staff and expanded resident enrichment opportunities, and emphasized the important role of Foundation support in these efforts.

Veterans Cemeteries Mid-Year Briefing

Andre Logan, Director of Veterans Cemeteries, provided a mid-year update and introduced himself to the Board, noting that he recently joined the Department and has extensive experience from the National Cemetery Administration. He outlined the mission of the state veterans cemeteries to provide dignified final resting places for veterans and spaces for families to honor their loved ones.

Mr. Logan discussed priorities focused on maintaining national shrine standards across Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries. He highlighted efforts to preserve and maintain existing infrastructure through improved grounds maintenance and equipment, emphasizing the importance of presenting cemeteries with dignity, respect, and attention to detail for families during services and visits.

Mr. Logan also provided an update on planned technology enhancements, including the development of grave locator systems and supporting software. He noted that these tools would improve visitors' access to information, particularly at rural cemetery locations, and could serve as a model for future expansion across all state veterans cemeteries.

Board members expressed appreciation for the update and support for aligning allocated funds with operational needs. The discussion reinforced the purpose of the mid-year review as a forum to ensure resources are used effectively and transparently to maintain and enhance the cemeteries. Mr. Logan thanked the Board for its guidance and support.

E. Foundation Report

Executive Director Kayla Arestivo provided an update on Foundation activities and progress toward established objectives. She reported that the Foundation has raised more than \$263,000 since the start of the fiscal year and remains on track with engagement goals across the Commonwealth. She noted that donor participation is ahead of the same point in the prior fiscal year, reflecting positive momentum in fundraising and outreach efforts.

Ms. Arestivo highlighted ongoing marketing and communications efforts, including increased activity on social media and the use of veteran impact stories from Department of Veterans Services to strengthen outreach and awareness. She emphasized the importance of trustee engagement in hosting and supporting fundraising and awareness events to further expand the Foundation's reach.

Ms. Arestivo then introduced the Foundation's new Grant Writer, Suzanne Armstrong, noting the value of having a grant writer based in Richmond and engaged in in-person events. She invited Ms. Armstrong to share her early observations and perspective on grant opportunities and strategy.

Suzanne Armstrong, Grant Writer for the Foundation, provided brief introductory remarks and shared early observations from her initial review of grant opportunities. She highlighted her extensive experience in grant development and her focus on reconnecting with past funders, identifying new funding sources, and strengthening the Foundation's grant infrastructure.

Ms. Armstrong noted that many corporate and institutional funders increasingly limit their giving to organizations with a 501(c)(3) tax designation, which presents a challenge for the Foundation in accessing certain grant opportunities. She explained that this funding landscape may restrict eligibility for some donors and emphasized the importance of evaluating strategies that could improve long-term competitiveness for grant funding.

Ms. Armstrong concluded by reaffirming her commitment to expanding funding opportunities for the Foundation and supporting efforts to ensure veterans and their families continue to receive the services needed.

Board members discussed potential pathways for the Foundation to establish a 501(c)(3) designation. An Office of the Attorney General (OAG) representative present at the meeting indicated that his office would review potential options and conduct further analysis, with findings to be shared with Foundation staff.

Ms. Arestivo provided a visual recap of recent Foundation engagement and fundraising efforts, including participation in the Virginia Chamber Executive Forum and several Veterans Day-related events. She highlighted a recurring annual fundraiser that raised \$10,000, its most successful year to date, and noted continued strong partnerships and upcoming events on the Foundation's calendar in 2026.

F. Treasurer's Report

Kim Barton presented the Treasurer's report. As of September 30, 2025, the total income for the FY26 1st Quarter reached \$169,566.60. Total expenditures during the same period amounted to \$170,747.76, resulting in an excess of income over expenditures of (\$1,181.16).

The beginning fund balance was \$2,888,176.38, leading to a total FY2026 1st Quarter ending fund balance of \$2,887,535.22.

G. VSF Finance Committee Report

Finance Committee Chair Mike Coleman presented the quarterly financial report as of October 31, 2025, which was included in the board packet and submitted as the required quarterly report to the Commissioner. The report detailed revenues received, budgeted allocations, expenditures to date, and projected balances.

As of October 31, the Foundation is projected to have approximately \$2.2 million available for execution in FY27, assuming all currently budgeted agency allocations are fully expended. Of this amount, approximately \$452,000 remains unrestricted and available for Foundation use.

Mr. Coleman also reviewed year-over-year revenue trends. While total donations for FY26 are slightly lower than FY25 at this point, this variance is largely attributable to a significant one-time in-kind donation of medical vans valued at \$288,000 received in FY25, which did not recur this year. Importantly, cash donations in FY26 are tracking ahead of last year, with approximately \$226,000 raised to date compared to \$165,000 during the same period in FY25.

The report further highlighted the Foundation's revenue composition, noting the importance of both major gifts, such as the \$115,000 grant from Altria and a high volume of smaller donations, reflecting broad donor participation across the Commonwealth.

Mr. Coleman concluded by noting that overall fundraising performance remains on track from a cash perspective, while emphasizing the continued need to offset prior-year-in-kind contributions through increased fundraising efforts. No additional questions were raised following the report.

H. Development Committee Report

Executive Director Kayla Arestivo presented the Development Committee report on behalf of Development Committee Chair, Trustee Shannon Spencer-Watson. Ms. Arestivo noted that corporate giving and grant funding continue to tighten nationally, underscoring the need for the Foundation to be more proactive and diversified in its fundraising efforts. She reiterated that identified annual programmatic needs across DVS service lines continue to range between \$2–\$3 million, while current fundraising levels remain below that threshold.

Ms. Arestivo reported that recent Development Committee discussions focused on the potential for the Foundation to host its own fundraising event, specifically proposing a low-expense, high-yield charity golf tournament. She noted that while VSF regularly benefits from externally hosted golf tournaments, the Foundation does not currently host one of its own. Ms. Arestivo expressed confidence that a tournament could be fully sponsored through partnerships with a golf course, food vendors, and corporate supporters, minimizing upfront Foundation costs while generating net proceeds.

Trustees engaged in discussion regarding the proposal, noting both the fundraising potential and the operational effort required to host a tournament. Members shared examples of successful golf tournaments raising significant funds for veteran causes, while also acknowledging that results can vary depending on scale and execution. The consensus was that golf tournaments can be an effective fundraising mechanism when well-planned, and that further exploration of hosting a

VSF-led tournament or alternatively partnering as a beneficiary with a larger existing tournament was warranted.

Ms. Arestivo concluded by noting her intent for the Development Committee to continue evaluating options for a targeted fundraising event in the spring or summer, with further recommendations to be brought back to the Board.

I. Procedures and Policies Committee Report

The Procedures and Policies Committee, chaired by Trustee Jarris Taylor, met on October 31, 2025, to review Foundation policies and proposed draft legislation related to operational alignment between VSF and DVS.

The Committee reaffirmed its recommendation to advance the previously shared draft legislation, unchanged, for consideration by the General Assembly and requested Board approval during the meeting.

The Committee will continue reviewing policies and procedures to support effective governance and operational efficiency.

Chairman Griffin asked for a motion to approve the Procedures and Policies Committee report presented by Trustee Taylor. Trustee Scalia motioned to approve, and Trustee Pillion seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

J. Nominating Committee Report

Trustee Coleman presented the Nominating Committee report, noting that it was included in the meeting materials and is largely self-explanatory. In accordance with the Foundation's bylaws, the board must elect a Chair, First Vice Chair, and Second Vice Chair each year.

Three individuals initially expressed interest in serving in these leadership roles. However, one candidate later withdrew for personal reasons, leaving two individuals to fill the three required positions.

The Nominating Committee formally recommended Joel Griffin for Chair and Ros Poplar for First Vice Chair. Given the vacancy in the Second Vice Chair role, Trustee Coleman suggested that if no nominations came from the floor, the board might refer the matter to the Policies and Procedures Committee to evaluate whether three elected officer roles are still necessary moving forward.

Before that course of action was taken, Trustee Spencer-Watson nominated herself to serve as Second Vice Chair, filling the final vacancy.

Following the Nomination Committee report, Chairman Williamson made a motion to take a 5-minute break. Trustee Coleman moved the motion. Trustee Tim Pillion seconded.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Approval of \$50k Altria Grant to support VETE programming.

The motion was passed unanimously with no further discussion.

2. Approval of Finance Committee to review and provide allocation recommendations to VVFS for transportation services.

The motion passed unanimously with no further discussion.

5. NEW BUSINESS

1. **GAMVC Dinner Sponsor: Mike Coleman**

Trustee Coleman recommended that the Foundation investigate sponsoring a dinner that would conclude General Assembly, give the Foundation exposure and connect the organization to state legislators. Discussion was had and the motion to move forward was approved unanimously.

2. **Legislative Efforts: Board Chair**

N/a

3. **Other New Business: Board Chair, Executive Director, Trustees, Other**

N/a

6. **Adjournment**

The next Board of Trustees Meeting will be held on **March 11, 2026, at the Virginia War Memorial, beginning at 10:00am.** The meeting was adjourned at 12:48pm.