

Soldiers' Home in Holyoke Board of Trustees Meeting

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Soldiers' Home Holyoke (HLY) was held in person, virtually and telephonically on Tuesday, April 12, 2022. The meeting began at 531PM.

Members Present in Person:

Sean Collins

Board Members via WebEx:

Mark Bigda, Gary Keefe, Isaac Mass, Kevin Jourdain, and Carmen Ostrander (came on after minutes vote)

Board Members Not Available:

Cindy Lacoste

Also Present:

Susan Blomquist, Payette; Sharon Boyle, Legal Counsel (EHS) ; Matthew Deacon, Legal Counsel (DVS); Dr. Diane Dietzen, Chief Medical Officer (HLY); Robert Engell, Interim Administrator (HLY); Joe Fazio, Construction Coordinator (DCP); Debra Foley, Communications (HLY); Stephen Giordano, Business Office Accountant (HLY); Kelly Hansen, Quality Manager (HLY); Glen Hevy, Deputy Superintendent (HLY); Michael Lazo, Interim Superintendent (HLY); Brooke Leahy, Chief of Staff (DVS); Michael Lynch, CFO (HLY); Caitlin Menard, Director of Social Services (HLY); John Paradis, HSH Coalition; Scott Parker, Payette; Elba Pires Morgado, Ombudsman; Cheryl Poppe, Secretary (DVS); Ernestina Sirignano, Executive Assistant to Secretary Cheryl Poppe (DVS); Patti Spirito, Ombudsman; Linnea Walsh, Communications Manager (VET); Mark Yankopoulos, Legal Counsel and Kathleen Denner, Recording Secretary (HLY).

Pledge of Allegiance - All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Chairman Keefe conducted a Roll Call as follows: Trustee Bigda (Yes), Trustee Collins (Yes), Kevin Jourdain (Yes), and Isaac Mass (Yes).

Approval of Minutes:

Upon motion by Trustee Bigda and seconded by Trustee Collins it was unanimously VOTED to accept the unamended minutes of the regular Board Meeting held on March 8, 2022. It was unanimously VOTED to approve the minutes.

Payette Update (Mr. Lazo):

Mr. Parker gave an update of the current work and what is happening over the next 3 months. He continued that this month they are issuing the construction drawings to begin installing the temporary chiller and additional materials testing in domiciliary. In mid-May the temporary chiller drawings will go out to bid at the end of May and a set of construction documents will be issued in the beginning of June for bidding. Mr. Parker shared that they have issued a set of documents and have done some estimating on them and have looked at the markets conditions that are going on and are working on a process to bring them in on budget. Working with CM to do the final technical reviews and are providing input for modifying drawings to be bid on and be in compliance. He continued that they have been looking at subcontractor for prequalifying.

Mr. Parker shared that they are looking to do destructive materials testing in the dormitory to understand the taking down of dormitory. He also shared there is a project labor agreement and as well as diversity goals on the project that the state looks for from the contractors and the

subcontractors, working through how that is going to come together and when the bidding goes out, making sure they can meet the requirements. From a design perspective they have finalized interior and have met with the home and gone through the interior and exterior signage.

Mr. Parker stated in terms of solar readiness, the panels were going to be placed on the roof, but they may be moving to another position. He continued that the geothermal design there was a test well to economize the system, has panned out and are currently finalizing a redesign of the geothermal. Shared images of staff areas. Mr. Parker said that as we are finalizing the construction documents and meeting with local jurisdictions to walk them through the project and make sure we are all on the same page. They have met with fire department, state building inspector, electrical inspectors, FAA to verify that the height of the building is not a flight hazard, met Holyoke Gas and Electric company to process to understand the limitation on gas and electric services to make sure they can provide services during construction.

Mr. Parker shared that discussions have begun regarding licensure, CMS and DPH review. He continued that the lower portion of the forested area potentially has wetland, so we are filing with conservation committee regarding that. Trustee Jourdain asked about the discussions with the Holyoke Water Department that we may use a different water line to service the Home and that we are going to reactivate an old connection coming off of Cherry Street as opposed to the current existing line coming in through Fairmont Street. Mr. Parker replied that the Cherry Street line that exist is old, and your current line comes up form the other direction, that will remain your main service. They have looked into the Cherry Street line into going into the extent it has to go down the street and up to one of the other intersections to get that back fully in service, you will have a connection, but it will not be the primary connection. Trustee Jourdain said he was hearing around town that it would be used for circulation and to improve water quality. Mr. Parker replied that his understanding is that the line that is in the street that the city owns is dated and has begun to scale so they are not sure of the amount of pressure and they were concerned when we reconnected to it that it may dislodge some debris in that line and then would move down to some of the homeowners further down the line and they did not really want them to do that. He continued that they were looking for us to replace the line through the street and at this point we are not going to be doing that. Trustee Jourdain asked if the new building will have sprinklers, Mr. Parker replied yes.

Trustee Jourdain asked about one of the things that the trustees had looked at previously about revenue for the building and would like his thoughts on cell tower revenue on the roof of the building. He continued that we currently provide some as a accommodation for local safety departments. He asked if we will still be able to accommodate, and for future revenue to have cell tower service on the new building. Mr. Parker replied that they have accommodated space on the roof for public agencies who use it for communications it is up to them to put the communication equipment up there and that has to go through the State and as far as cell phone communication it has been discussed but we are not making an accommodation for that at this point but that does not mean it could not be done that would be something the state would have to organize and prepare the leases on. Trustee Jourdain responded that he wants to make sure we have the opportunity and that is something we promised Ms. Blomquist added that they have studied how you can accommodate that into the building.

Trustee Jourdain asked how the current building heats the fuel source and what is the plan for new building. Mr. Parker replied our current building is heated through natural gas with a diesel back up, we will use geothermal for new building so we will be using heat pumps that use ground source water and the backup that is required for that is far less than expensive because you can only lost small portions of the system at one time and we met with Holyoke Gas and Electric and have back up boiler in the building that uses natural gas. Trustee Jourdain we are going with

90% geothermal, Mr. Parker stated that we will be able to run the building off geothermal and on emergency if we lose a circuit in the well field on a rare occasion. Trustee Jourdain observed that the adjacent property to the Home is for sale that abuts the property in the back. Chairman Keefe asked if DCAMM would have address that, Ms. Boyle replied yes that is a DCAMM issue.

Trustee Mass asked if the diversity goals also include veteran owned businesses, Mr. Parker replied that information is not he is party to so he would have to have someone else speak on that, but he believes it is part of the PLA Commonwealth normal process. Trustee Mass asked if he could check on that. Mr. Parker believes the CM that was hired is veteran owned.

Trustee Mass stated that Mr. Parker indicated that the new building was going to be solar ready but not in first phase so his questions are why not and is the parking lot going to be solar ready, so if we were using solar overhangs could they be used in the future. Mr. Parker replied that we are not doing solar right now because Holyoke Gas and Electric is already a green community and they get a lot of their power through hydroelectric and because they are a municipal provider they are not part of the people who give us any pay back on a solar system so they did not oppose us from doing it but in this case due to the provider it is not as effective of a system and when we look at costs and where we are going to spend money it was not best use of funds. He continued relating to where to put solar in the future you could do the parking lot, but they were looking on hillside in the front. He stated that due to the amount of properties the state owns when this one would be considered for going solar.

Trustee Mass shared that we are hearing discussions about the possibility of the Veterans Administration in Leeds closing if that were to happen that would put more pressure on this facility and he is not asking for any changes now but what is the possibility for expansion in the future if we needed to do that. Mr. Parker replied we can put together a response about what this property could do in terms of expansion.

Chairman Keefe asked for the next meeting could you discuss a few locations for COVID-19 memorial. Mr. Parker asked Ms. Blomquist to share some information on that. Ms. Blomquist stated that DCAMM is looking to go out to RFP to hire an artist to help with that design and we would work with them to establish the site and we do have a couple of ideas in mind when we designed the landscape. Chairman Keefe asked Ms. Blomquist to send to Mr. Lazo the lead from Payette so our subcommittee can work with them to position the memorial. Ms. Blomquist suggested the request go through DCAMM first and then reach out to me or Mr. Parker we could help assist with that.

CFO/Treasurer Report (Mr. Lynch)

Mr. Lynch discussed the Finance Data attachment. He stated that last month's donations are at a little over \$3000 that brings annual total to \$41,000, expenses totaling \$34,000. Expenses this past month included entertainment, bingo, St. Patrick's Day events, petty cash, memorial inscriptions, and relocation assistance to a veteran from the domiciliary, also have updated the authorized signers on the checking account to include Trustee Jourdain and Chairman Keefe.

Mr. Lynch stated they are looking to incorporate modern technology into the Homes treasury office which is a credit or debit card reader and begin using electronic funds transfers in regard to bill paying, invoicing and receipt of funds for room and board and other revenue streams that the Home has. These opportunities have been present in the private sector for years and it is time to look to adapt our processes to include easier ways to accept and distribute funds.

Mr. Lynch reported that the PPE remains a top priority with inventory levels in a strong position, assuring our staff has the quality PPE as we work through the pandemic, we will continue to

forecast our needs and maintain strong inventory. He continued that the timeline supply for N95 masks is 1-year, surgical masks 6 months, gloves 8 months, gowns 6 months and face shields 6 months. Trustee Collins asked with the inflation and surcharges, will that impact the budget? Mr. Lynch replied that with the PPE purchases we have had a lot of support from other agencies, we have noticed a slight increase in certain costs, we have not had to go back and as for additional funds. The budget we have been appropriated for FY22 has been able for us to continue to operate on a high level. Chairman Keefe asked if there are supply chain issues for PPE, during COVID it took us a while to get a surplus, are you seeing any issues. Mr. Lynch replied that we noticed that Massachusetts was at the peak of pandemic a few months ago supplies were scarce, and each agency were getting these types of supplies in allotments, so you were limited in what you were getting. We appreciate the efforts made by DVS and EHS to purchase large amounts of PPE and supply to the agencies. Our goal is to have a minimum 6-month supply of our top types of PPE and we continue to monitor weekly supplies and watching supply chains. Trustee Mass stated that we were subject to the order of the Governor of our funds, and we were good, as we are looking at supply chain issues and we are in good place, is it possible to look for American first purchase model that allows us to plan and buy American made products, so we have a relationship with a domestic supplier. Mr. Lynch replied that the procurement team is part of the supplier diversity initiative so we are always looking towards small businesses, minority, women, veteran business approach and we will look at American made and supply chains.

DVS Staff Report (Secretary Poppe)

Secretary Poppe thanked everyone for the support Women Veteran Network Survey, we have over 550 responses. She continued that we are still doing focus groups, but we think the information we have from here is going to be really helpful informing us of our women VA needs, care, gaps in care and expanding services they will need for the future. Air commission report and there have been a couple of briefings on the report, the report has been shared with Chairman Keefe to distribute to the trustees and we are monitoring it closely.

Holyoke Soldiers' Home Administrator/Staff Report (Mr. Lazo)

Mr. Lazo reported that there are 97 veterans on site. We have had 3 new admissions this month, there will be 2 more this week and that brings the total 25 since we have returned to admitting in September.

He continued that our current COVID status we have 100% of veterans have received the third dose, we do have the fourth dose available and so far 14 veterans have received, 294 organic staff out of 295 have received the booster which is a 99.6% and the one eligible staff member who is not yet boosted is out on medical leave so will be boosted when they come back. Mr. Lazo stated that we have 6 other staff members on long term leaves and two not currently eligible for the booster. He continued there are 0 positive veteran residents, 1 staff member out due to positive test result for that staff member outbreak testing has been done with the third round today. We have reopened the Home to communal activities and dining. We continue to do surveillance testing 2 times a week for staff.

Mr. Lazo mentioned at the last meeting that DPH had given the Home compliments on our infection control program, he reached out to our contact at DPH, Melissa, and sent the email to board. He summarized the email for everyone saying that Melissa responded that nursing homes in Massachusetts average 43 positives over the omicron surge, where the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke only had 5, this shows our infections control and processes are strong.

Mr. Lazo said in terms of construction 2 South, our isolation unit, is moving forward. He continued that a contractor has been identified and a kick-off meeting has been held. It is expected to take 7 months based on supply chain issue extending lead times. He shared that the

construction is expected to last 200 days and one item has a lead time for 260 days, the construction team is working on a way to find an appropriate alternative for that item.

Mr. Lazo reported that the Outpatient Department is very close to our last available transition appointments ending on April 30. We have done a great job contacting veterans to make sure they have PCP's we are at a 99.8% of veterans we were able to contact to have PCP's, we have 3 veterans we are continuing to work with to find a PCP.

Mr. Lazo stated that the dormitory has officially closed and all the veterans have moved onto permanent housing except one who is in transitional housing in Soldier On and that veteran has been assigned a case manager as well as a social worker to assist him in finding permanent housing.

Mr. Lazo shared that congregate recreational activities have started with the standard activities: exercise, art, music. On March 20 we participated in the St. Patrick's parade, with 25 staff members and 6 veterans in our busses. The public very supportive and it was a great experience.

On March 23 we had a visit from the Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Navy Seal Edward Buyers, Jr. he earned his medal in Afghanistan 2012. He was in town for another speaking engagement and offered to take a tour of the home and the veterans were happy to visit with him.

Mr. Lazo reported in terms of staffing we are at 93.7% of staff actively reporting to work. We do have 13 staff members out of the building due to COVID exposure they have a few days left in their quarantine. He continued that our average HPPD is 8.02, which is very strong when compared to the CMS average gold standard.

Thank you to DVS for extending the shift differential payments through July, leaving them at the full \$5 and \$10 level.

Mr. Lazo shared that we have recommended candidates for the new positions of DON and General Counsel, we are wrapping up the interviews for ADON, and on the April 25 our new Occupational Health Nurse will join the team. He continued that we continue to work on hiring two volunteer care coordinator and a night nursing supervisor.

Mr. Lazo reported that we had a VA survey a few weeks ago and have received the report. He gave kudos to Ms. Hansen and her team and also Rich Polwreck and his team. He continued that out of a possible 210 citations we received only 8, and out of a possible 90 domiciliary citations we received only 2. We are currently working on the corrective action plan, which from the time we received the report we only have 20 days to get that submit corrections.

Trustee Mass asked Mr. Lazo of the outpatient patients that we have been identifying who have PCP's can we find out the percentage of them that PCP was at VA in Leeds? Mr. Lazo replied that he does not know if we have that kind of detail, but he will look into.

Chairman Keefe asked if the bonus, the \$5 and \$10 incentive, was going to be cut in June. Mr. Lazo replied initially planned on reducing the shift differential in half but are leaving it at the current rate of \$5 and \$10 through July. Chairman Keefe asked who approves that and will it continue, Mr. Lazo replied that it is a EHS program, and it is based on COVID difficulties finding staffing. Trustee Keefe stated he will ask EHS what justifies keeping this incentive program alive and not take away the incentive. Ms. Boyle replied that we are watching it and do not know if it will be extending again, and not certain of the factors they looked at to keep it. Chairman Keefe

asked Ms. Boyle to do some research to keep the program rolling into the new fiscal year. Ms. Boyle replied that she will take his feedback and we do recognize that it has been very successful, but I cannot guarantee that.

Holyoke Soldiers' Home General Counsel Report (Atty Yankopoulos)

Mr. Yankopoulos reported that currently all the investigations are still proceeding and the attorney general still open, the DOJ is also still open as are the inspector general investigations. He continued that there are no new lawsuits that have come across his desk, our position has not changed significantly since last month.

Trustee Jourdain asked in the recent articles in the Boston Globe is anyone from the Holyoke Soldiers' Home been named in any of these lawsuits. Mr. Yankopoulos replied that if you are referring to the Globe article for the last month or so, so far nobody in Holyoke is involved with those suits to my knowledge.

Trustee Jourdain asked how are you making out on the new attorney hiring, are we doing interviews, did you find candidates, what are your thoughts on that. Mr. Yankopoulos replied that he is of the process right now and I would have to refer to Mr. Lazo who can fill you in on more detail. Mr. Deacon shared that they have conducted interviews and they are currently negotiating with a current candidate.

Home's Family Advocate Committee Report (Ms. Menard)

Ms. Menard reported they are trying different times out, last month we did noon and then 4 pm this month and 6 pm next month. We only 2 families join on the 4 pm even though that was a good time with the survey. The families were happy with the continued communication regarding COVID. She continued that food and laundry were brought up and we did get some valuable feedback about admissions as far as a person who joined us had recently admitted her dad and talking about her anxieties and questions were alleviated by admission.

Home's Veterans Advocate Committee Report (Ms. Menard)

Ms. Menard reported that they have the Veteran meeting this Thursday. She continued that at the last meeting it was more about launching the canteen and reopening it to what it used to be, having dietary come, trying to replace the ice cream vendor and discussion around the parade which went very well. Chairman Keefe asked what is the biggest recurring complaint you get from the family advocate group. Mr. Menard answered that is always food and laundry. She continued that as we open up to families being able to do their laundry that might help, and we do have a new chef.

Trustees' Finance Committee Report (Trustee Jourdain)

Trustee Jourdain reported that we had a meeting on March 16 and we discussed the capital plan and with Mr. Lynch that the budget was going well, received additional funding in the budget talked about the new furniture in the solarium, discussed the inflationary supply chain, reviewed the residence of the domiciliary, keeping track of the board evaluations for the superintendent/ CFO/ treasurer, purchase of QuickBooks, INT2L programming payments, reviewed donations, talked about the November 4 gift from the board approved \$50 for meal approved for Christmas time, looking into making sure the rooms are Roku compatible and veterans have the channels they need, reviewed the investment reports, discussed the governors executive order 597 investment with Russia and we were told we have none, at a future meeting we would like to have Ms. Feyre the recreation director come and discuss other types of entertainment that the veterans may be interested in. No other requests out of the usual for Trustee fund requests. Chairman Keefe asked Mr. Lazo invite Ms. Feyre to next regular meeting and can she bring an agenda or plan of events and the funding affiliated to each of these for the Board. Mr. Lazo replied yes.

Trustee Jourdain stated that the thinking of the committee was that we are doing all the regular entertaining that we have always done but is there something that we can do to keep it fresh.

Trustee Jourdain stated that the committee discussed UBS with the stock market going up and down and that is why we feel with the conservative approach of 50% in equities and 50% bonds is good and we have been averaging about an 11% return.

Chairman Keefe asked what was the amount that we extended to the last domiciliary resident, Trustee Jourdain said it was good, it wound up being less than the \$3000 at \$2409.

Trustees' Operations Committee Report (Trustee Collins)

Trustee Collins reported that the KPI progress for people to volunteer for their shifts is still a little bit in the red but are making progress. He continued that safety is looking great. On services there is progress being made and the team is working so hard in communication, Ms. Menard talked about how she is getting after it, and we keep discussion at operations meeting of how to keep after it. Trustee Collins highlighted what we are tracking new this year is which is looking for skin injuries, trying to determine what a benchmark is for that. These are things like bruises and so forth. The progress under total veteran care to prevent skin ulcerations.

Trustee Collins stated that the census tracking that admission are up and new applications continue to make progress. With that in mind looking at the case mix with a review of the case load and acuity level to spite the new admissions they have balance out acuity level on units and getting it right to maintain the levels and this reflects in staffing.

He shared a new metric they are getting after is oral care after some meetings with family members in regard to some reported issues. A program for oral care and have been reporting out on that. Trustee Collins continued another item that should have a chart are the PT program and there days from referral to evaluation this quarter is down to 4.08 days and last quarter it was 4.6 days, they have made progress for referral to evaluation.

Trustee Mass asked about the agency staffing level and he has not seen a plan of attack for addressing and we have not changed our metric saying this is acceptable. He would like to see us develop a plan for combatting that, I don't think it is more expensive to have agency staffing than internal staffing and I don't want to just through it out there without having a solution to the table, I am wondering like we did, and incentive shift differential can we have a referral bonus? He continues with an existing staff member brings a nurse in and they stay for 90 days they get a \$100 bonus so that our staff is out there recruiting for us. I would like to see a creative solution to target that staffing number. Ms. Hansen shared that the home meets with EHS HR on a weekly basis to review openings and recruitment. They have a dedicated recruiter who is trying to generate as much interest as possible, they are talking about additional school affiliations, other incentives. The HR Liaison has been reading about referral bonuses being an effective way to recruit staff and agreed that we get most of our hires who stay as referrals.

Trustee Collins shared an example of an audit form/survey, and this is something we are getting after with chart audits. I wanted to highlight the outstanding job that these audits are getting done and the important metrics they are looking at. One of the metrics that jumped out to him was the medication reconciliation that is absolutely critical, and it done 100% of the time so these survey and audits are getting the metrics to improve the veteran care here at the Home.

Trustee Collins with the credentialing review we looked at licensed independent clinical social workers Ms. Menard and Ms. Krause packages have passed with flying colors.

Trustee Collins we looked at policy reviews and there was nothing significant in meeting.

Trustee Collins discussed the recommends to others and looking at last three month's there has been improvement and we are hitting benchmarks and beating national averages, but we want to be in best in class. We are always asking Mr. Lazo how can we get communication better and I see that we have our ombudsman on the call tonight and a lot of great things are happening and this is where I get disappointed that the team is working so hard. Mr. Lazo explained that the way the survey works is that it goes out to a subset of veterans, and they will respond, the questions typically of private sector questions/survey, used to drive more referrals and increase their census. He does not think that this question impacts us that much. We try many differently types to communicate to families, advocacy meetings, email, and it is a work in progress. Ms. Menard added that Dr. Dietzen and herself have met with a few people on how we can on how to break down communication issues and looking to break down the questions to get better answers. Trustee Mass asked Trustee Collins if we know who is best in class and can we reach out to them to find out how we can improve, Trustee Collins we will work on finding that out. Chairman Keefe said a lot of these categories and the ratings are what they use in private nursing homes, it would be interesting to see how we compare with at private institution that are costing \$12,000 a month compared to the affordable care that we provide the residents here, it would be interesting to see where we rate against a private long term care facility. Mr. Lazo will reach out to Pinnacle to find out, we are above national benchmark metrics on most if not all metrics.

Trustee Jourdain asked if in the future we can have on the agenda the medical director through the operations committee or some opportunity to give a report, I noticed that we have the superintendent and the CFO, and I want to make sure Dr. Dietzen has the opportunity to share, and the board would appreciate hearing the things they are doing to improve. Dr. Dietzen stated that she is available and does give a review at the operations committee and she has been working on quality metrics with Ms. Menard and Ms. Hansen and meet with medical staff to get them engaged in those projects as well.

Trustees' Bylaws Committee Report (Trustee Lacoste)

Trustee Keefe reported that they were reviewing the discharge policy and wanted to make sure ours and Chelsea are standardized. Trustee Mass shared that there were some cross policies also that needed to be in place. Mr. Deacon shared regarding the admission and discharge regulation that you received back from EHS, he briefs the Chelsea board and that we were taking this action and the Chelsea statutory is a little different. He continued that the Holyoke statute says you should regulate admission and discharge, but the Chelsea statute does not have that, so I think they were more comfortable working some of these issues through policy than a regulation. Mr. Deacon thinks they will be similar because they are very reflective of VA requirements and CFR. Chairman Keefe asked if he sees any of the policies being standardized between both, Mr. Deacon stated it makes sense to standardize some policies between the two, but I thought we were talking regulations, their policy will mimic your regulations say and it will be a policy and not a reg. He continued that Mr. Engell is working with the superintendents on seeing what the status on the polices and where there are opportunities to standardized. Mr. Deacon will attend the next bylaws meeting.

Superintendent Hire Committee Report (Trustee Lacoste)

Trustee Collins is waiting on hearing from Mr. Cronin in regard to the state lists of vendors, the subcommittee is interested in list to get this moving. Trustee Collins asked Mr. Deacon for assistance to get this position rolling. Mr. Deacon shared the reason working with John Cronin he is the DVS; CFO and he works with COMMBUYS. He continued that they have identified the state contract, Mr. Cronin he took the bullets and worked it into a solicitation letter that will go out I think he said mid-morning Wednesday. Chairman Keefe asked if the vendor lists are MassHire is

that a separate entity from the vendor list, Mr. Deacon replied that the vendor list is specific to search firms and employment placement firms so those are contractors that have already worked and engaged with the State, the MassHire process is what the vendor is going to use to onboard and filter the candidates.

Chairman Keefe wanted to know if we have to wait for them or can we put an advertisement on MassHire and then the vendor will have applications already there. Mr. Deacon said he does not think one precludes the other, some of this is business process and not legal. He continued that one thing the board may want to consider is if you post it and then we onboard a search firm are the people who applied going to be stale by the time the search firm starts? Trustee Mass thinks one of the problems with that you hire a search firm is to put the job description together it is not just talent acquisition on how to get someone we want and how we want to draft it to attract the right candidates including what the salary range and benefit packages. Trustee Jourdain pointed out Mr. Holloway dropped out May 7, 2021.

Old Business

COVID-19 Memorial Planning Committee status(Trustee Keefe)

Trustee Keefe thought it was interesting that Payette had an area for potential memorial and someone that is a design artist, Ms. Blomquist can let us know the point person who will be. He continued that a big thing for the committee is going to be to make sure that the committees and the surrounding community's inputs are factored into what we put forth.

Update of EMR vendor contract (Mr. Engell)

Mr. Engell reported that they have been having operational meetings with the vendor Wellsky and we are doing preliminary planning meetings as it relates to the next step is we are finalizing the RFQ search document for implementation team. He continued that we are anticipating that this will be a multiple phase need going from our current workforce training, gap analysis, workflow analysis and then leading to implementation and follow up to include readiness assessment.

Update on VA Small Home Grant Program (Sec. Poppe/Mr. Engell/Trustee Keefe)

Chairman Keefe learned last week while he was in DC, Congressman Neal did have a meeting with the Secretary of the VA and was told a decision is forthcoming part of the delay was how long it took to have a federal budget pass and on top of that some of the other items that were added on, post Afghanistan post relocation of displaced persons from Afghanistan and then where we are now with the Ukraine. He continued that he sat down with Zach Dupont and Congressman Neal; the congressman feels he will hear something in the next month. Secretary Poppe stated that the information is close to the update she had from the VA. She continued that she was speaking with the VA State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program on a couple of different grants that are out in process, and we were told the priority list would be expected mid-late April, which is later than I have seen, and we have also had an unusual year with the federal budget

Staffing Status (Mr. Lazo)

Mr. Lazo shared that the offer letter has been approved for the general counsel position and will go out in the next day or so.

Update on License Plate Program Initiative (Trustee Jourdain)

Trustee Jourdain reported on March 22 with Chairman Lyons and Dan Magoon from Mass Fallen Heroes. He continued that there is a requirement that you get a bond for the presale of the plates

and Mr. Magoon said it is a ton of work and you will need heavy duty media and had to use tv stations. They found getting people to do preorders and to have a preorder campaign was hard and a lot of work. He continued you have to escrow the money and then have a plan, or you could potentially lose the bond and the whole plate all together. There is a requirement to commit 1,500 plates but ultimately that is just the preorder 1,500 you ultimately have to have 3,000 within a two-year period of time or your plate gets pulled. Trustee Jourdain shared that is the official rule, but they almost never pull anyone's plate they just make you scramble around and get more people.

He continued that the next complexity was there is quite a number of other plate programs that are out there that you are competing with, and the marketing would be a challenge Mr. Magoon said basically do not rely on the Registry of Motor Vehicles to provide any assistance they are overstaffed, and it is on you to get the word out.

Mr. Magoon told Trustee Jourdain that there is approximately 40,000 people in the current veteran plate program. Trustee Jourdain stated that is a heavy-duty lift for the first 3 years. He continued that the \$28 of the first 40 in the first 2 years, \$12 of your \$40 goes to the purchase of the plate itself, you would get on renewal the full \$40. Mr. Magoon shared with Trustee Jourdain that one of the techniques is to try to auction off the low plate numbers, you have to have 5000 plates to have a good return on your investment. He also told him to be really careful in making your design because once you design it you cannot change.

Trustee Jourdain stated the bottom line is they were encouraging other avenues for more revenue that this is so labor intensive and that it is not so much about putting up the money and the effort by us and Chelsea to make this a success. Mr. Magoon also shared that we should be making sure that we are doing is there are certain plates like the United We Stand plate that 25% goes into the general fund and there is a question of why is that happening as opposed to going to veterans' program, maybe we can find out with the assistance of the registry and some of our state leaders. They discussed potentially requesting the state lottery again these were brainstorming other ideas as alternatives: a lottery ticket for veteran with proceeds going to veteran groups, a dinner or gala with programming talking about the building we are building, asking corporations for support for programming for the veterans. Chairman Keefe thanked Trustee Jourdain for researching this and agreed that we should look at other potential fundraisers.

Chairman Keefe stated that it will depend on how we want to focus, Boston would be separate from Holyoke and a lot depends on just the locale and who has family members in one of the hospitals. He continued that it sounds like you are recommending to shelf this and look at other potential fundraisers. Chairman Keefe asked the trustees how do we start discussing some other options and vetting them? He feels you will get to a lot of veteran organizations out there and you find your fishing in the same pond with a lot of them, so potentially it may be better for us to focus on organizations, especially out here in western Massachusetts that might want to donate based on our veteran service organizations: coalition, family members, two big very large air facilities out here, Chicopee, Westover and Barnes at the 104th. Chairman Keefe feels we may be better suited to establish some kind of fundraising event that would allow all those support organizations that are very dedicated to the Home and what the Home stands for. Chairman Keefe asked the board members to come up with some creative solutions, he believes it has been a long time since there has been a veteran's type of event or a gala out here, a lot of them happen in Boston. Trustee Jourdain added that are some new economies out here like the new casino industry and

the marijuana industry; a lot of these organizations are not required but do a lot of charitable giving. Has anyone even asked so that they know we are out here this would be an option for them. Trustee Mass said he appreciates all the work Trustee Jourdain has done and I get the upfront challenge, but it is something once it is in place reoccurs with very little effort on behalf of the board or the Home. He is really excited to thinking about other fundraiser opportunities and how we may be able to do this in different ways this isn't the only solution. He wanted to add that when we originally started talking about this, it was not about going through the same process that everyone goes through for nonprofits, the question was because we are a government agency could we get legislative approval to get a plate dedicated to the two Homes and maybe that is the way to go back to look at this plate option is ignoring the process that happens to be in place already for every other nonprofit out there but talk to our legislatures about getting a non-veteran plate that supports the Home, that was the initial question. He continued then we went down this well this is what already exists, any idea that is out there for raising money for the home and getting up where our financial goals are for the trustee account is worth exploring and I am looking forward to doing it. Chairman Keefe stated for clarification you are not talking about plates as a fundraiser you are talking about plates just to show support of the home without raising funds. Trustee Mass replied no I am suggesting that we bypass the regulatory hurdle by going to the legislature and having them approve a plate without all the additional burdens and they may not do that because that is why the hurdles are in place otherwise every nonprofit would be out there getting plates, but I think we are in a different spot than any of the other charitable organizations whether it be the Basketball Hall of Fame, Environmental Justice on the Cape, the Whales Tale, Education, we are the State so if the legislature wanted to approve a plate to raise money for us with a surcharge and bypass the hurdles if they wanted to. He continued that we want to save our legislative efforts on more important things. Chairman Keefe stated that a good place for us to start is we have a discussion with Senator Velis and Representative Duffy and ask them to do a little research on the plate and why the funds generated from that are going into the state general fund and not being doled out to the different veteran organizations and then we look at some corporate sponsorships. Trustee Jourdain clarified the veterans plate money is around United We Stand plate that is the one that some people wondering where all that money is going?

Domiciliary Closure & Patient Placement Update (closure March 31, 2022) for remaining patients needing Residence Off Holyoke Soldier Home (Ms. Menard)

Mr. Lazo thanked the board for assisting with funding for the one particular veteran.

New Business

Status of Regular meetings in July and December 2022

Chairman Keefe stated that we are required to have 9 regular meetings a year and we traditionally surpass that so he would like to put up that in July and December to not have regular meetings. Trustee Jourdain made a motion to not have meetings in July and December. He feels we are meeting more than our statutory requirements and I think the board is functioning at a high level of efficiency at this point and I think that the suggestion is an appropriate one, it was seconded Trustee Collins. Chairman Keefe opened the floor for discussion. Trustee Mass stated he is not in support of this, he understands the impetus behind it, but his concern is that we do not have a superintendent and I know it is being handled at a subcommittee level, until we have a superintendent we should be meeting more frequently. Chairman Keefe stated that this does not preclude us from calling a special meeting to discuss superintendent process. Trustee Mass said if we are not making any progress, it prohibits us from asking why we are not making any progress. Motion no meetings in July and December for 2022. Chairman Keefe conducted a

roll call vote: Trustee Bigda (Yes), Trustee Collins (Yes), Trustee Jourdain (Yes), Chairman Keefe (Yes), Trustee Mass (No), and Trustee Ostrander (Yes). The motion passes.

Date for Statutorily Required Joint Chelsea & Holyoke Board Meetings

Secretary Poppe is looking at the June time frame, she asked Mr. Engell to coordinate the date and that it would be held virtually but if anyone would like to see CLC in Chelsea to get an idea of the future we can try to work that out. Chairman Keefe suggested middle of June because of High School Graduations, he asked Mr. Engell to send out a few dates. Trustee Mass stated that we just cancelled the July meeting, and the June is a joint meeting with Chelsea so that means between May and Augusts we are not going to get an update on the superintendent. Chairman Keefe replied we can still schedule a regular meeting if we have applications, till we find out what the vendor is going to do and how long that is going to out there let's press on with this for planning purposes and if we have some reason the vendor is moving forward, and resumes have to be reviewed we can pull together a special meeting. Trustee Mass said if we are not ready to hire a vendor in May which means next month when we are just putting this out that means we cannot hire a vendor until August, I am thinking maybe it is worth at least a segment of the joint meeting, in June, that we break out to have discussion if necessary. Chairman Keefe replied that is fine and a great suggestion.

Board Input to performance Evaluations for Superintendent & Treasurer/CFO

Date inputs due to DVS

Chairman Keefe asked if Mr. Deacon or Secretary Poppe could discuss the issues on what can be legally shared with the board when it came to goals and measurements that are tied to state appraisals, could you refresh our memories on what the limitations are and what is guiding those limitation. Mr. Deacon stated he talked to Secretary Poppe about the timeline, and I believe Secretary Poppe indicated a good time to receive the inputs would be June 15 I think she has until the 30th of June to submit her inputs. He continued that a decision was made about asking for the boards input for the evaluation process I don't think we are interested in sitting and doing it together, but we are interested in receiving your input. Mr. Deacon said he believed there was a question from Trustee Collins about format and how that should be received, Secretary Poppe indicated that she would receive it in any format whether it be narrative or bullet form. Chairman Keefe asked regarding questions from the board and started with the Operations Committee chair would take the lead for the inputs from the board on superintendent and Finance Committee chair for CFO. Trustee Collins as the chair for the Operations Committee he thought we discussed at an earlier meeting that there was a template? He continued that for us working with interim superintendent we can definitely provide that feedback but the question I have is a two-way street and going back to my question for Trustee Jourdain that he had heard that the Finance Committee was going to get bullets on Mr. Lynch from his evaluation so that they have an idea of what is being said so it is a two-way street.

Chairman Keefe interjected that he will have Mr. Deacon or Secretary Poppe talk to this because he has had this conversation with them last week and they are going to explain the legalities of why that cannot happen. Trustee Jourdain clarified one point that in fairness to Trustee Collins the request of the Finance Committee was not for us to hear what they the State leadership were evaluating the two gentlemen it was simply to give us the goals only with no commentary from the state on how they are performing so that when we give, we are measuring the same thing. So that it is not the structure in that that if it says goal is to stay on budget or to have the budget on time or to have good feedback and communicate whatever the goals are they get to make them up we just wanted to have the goals, and I was told we should not be even provided goals and that is where it got dicey to me and I want to talk about that this evening. I just want to clarify what the ask was. Mr. Deacon replied as a going in position on this we look at the employee's personnel records as confidential, and we want to make sure we protect the privacy of state

employee. He continued that there is a system in place for evaluations within the Commonwealth and that is a protected system and a confidential system, so we thought a way to bridge the gap would be the board who regularly meets with these individuals if they want to provide input they certainly can but I think we have an interest in protecting private information of state employees so that is kin of what is behind this decision.

Trustee Mass asked Mr. Deacon why can't this be done in executive session and those be confidentially held by the board of trustees who at least to the superintendent is the highest hiring and firing authority. Mr. Deacon replied that he can reengage on that particular point but there does not seem to be a desire to open the books and share the information they want to keep the information protected. Trustee Mass asked if there is a fear that the board of trustees would violate the executive session and not keep the information confidential. Ms. Boyle stated that it is the individual who is entitled to the privacy. Trustee Mass stated that is correct the individual could choose not to have it in opens session upon their request but then there is no need for confidentiality because they are not asking for it. Ms. Boyle answered that the individual is entitled to confidentiality including from the trustees, it is confidential period, we are not sharing it. Trustee Mass asked Chairman Keefe I think we had asked at the last meeting for independent opinion from our counsel on this issue, have we gotten anything on that. Chairman Keefe replied that he came into the last meeting during executive session due to travel and was not around when you mentioned that. He continued I don't understand this I am a state employee and what we are asking for the position description of the jobs, and I understand once the evaluation is filled out that you want to protect the privacy, but I do not understand how this applies to the expectation of an individual when a lot of this stuff seems to be public knowledge in a position description. Ms. Boyle replied that you can have the position description. Chairman Keefe continued that on top of that I just don't understand if it is broken down by percentage, I don't agree with your legal opinion on this one. Ms. Boyle stated that goals are set by each individual's managers in consultation with their direct report that is an individual thing. Trustee Mass stated to Ms. Boyle that the ultimate problem is if we do not find a solution through executive session or some other means we are able to get this information, it forces the board, as the hiring and firing authority, to establish their own goals and objectives to the extent that they would be in conflict with the States goals and objectives presumably the superintendent whoever it is going to follow the board and not the state, because the state cannot fire the superintendent only the board can and it puts you at a huge disadvantage to not work with us to be aligned with these issues. Ms. Boyle replied that she appreciates his views and is happy to take them back.

Trustee Jourdain stated that he asked for a legal opinion from Mr. Deacon and Ms. Boyle, and I will start with their legal opinion they are already on the clock on the stage. He believes they need to defend the position in writing in a legal opinion because here is the dilemma, I don't see the board as outside the circle of confidentiality, if anything in the org charge, we sit at the top of the pyramid I am actually listening to subordinates tell me that I am outside of the circle of the confidentiality. He continued that it is quite the opposite we are not outsiders walking down Chery Street we run the place and that is in the statue. Trustee Jourdain stated that we have heard this from judges, legislature it is absolutely codified it is not even a question but even if I know that to be true, I am a nice guy, so I said I will compromise even though I think I could ask for a copy, I do agree I have to keep it confidential, I could aske, and by the way this came up in the Pearlstein investigation, that we as trustees have access to all this information, and it puzzled the investigators when they found out that there was a great number of things not told to the board about the former superintendent and various HR things that were occurring with our appointee, if you do not share that information that becomes liability in the future to you as it was in the past. But again, I am willing to compromise on that and simply ask for the goals, so we are rating these two gentlemen on the same think. 25% is doing x and 10% is doing Y and you can keep how you are rating him at least from me, others may feel differently because we are being left in the

dark if we have a bad apple which is the point Trustee Collins is making that we would not want to be in a situation wither the trustees are in dark with things going on and we don't know and there is the veil of secrecy around us all in the past and we don't want to see that happening. Trustee Jourdain said to move us forward give us the goals because he does not see how there is any confidentiality issue relative to that because again the board is not a third party, we are this institution we are running the place you are sharing confidential information with confidential source. There is nothing like this is private information that we cannot have access to and if that is true I want to see a legal opinion starting with yourself and I will keep an open mind but you are going to have to not just give conjecture you are going to need to give me legal reason to argument in a legal opinion that defends that decision that we can evaluate that to see maybe we are convinced maybe you have brought up something in law or fact that we are not aware of. He continued that this seems to me a whole issue out of nothing, give us the goals and we will give you our opinions respectively on these two positions. I don't see how you can do this without board input. Chairman Keefe asked Ms. Boyle we would like to see that legal opinion and I agree a lot of what Trustee Jourdain is saying and why the board cannot see the goals. We have all worked hard to get his institution out of the mud to where it is right now and when I say us all I am saying the trustees, the staff, Mr. Lazo who has been the acting superintendent now for probably over a year and the great strides that have been met and working on the concept between us the trustees, and DVS working as one team. Chairman Keefe Understand the appraisal but not the goals and it does not make any sense to me and if we wind up with a problematic superintendent or CFO how are we going to be able to terminate him if we are not actually with you guys in grading on the same criteria. Ms. Boyle appreciates the feedback, she will take that back and will need to process it. Chairman Keefe we know the good work that is going on here, and we may see some stuff you don't see going on. What the operations committee is doing with that report every month, that appraisal writes itself. He is hoping Ms. Boyle can apply common sense to this as you push it up the chain of command.

Trustee Jourdain asked if anyone has an update on the legislature, where it is the house and the senate. He continued that maybe it could be on the agenda for the next meeting. Chairman Keefe will reach out to Senator Velis and try to get him to come in and give an overview.

Trustee Mass asked if we having the annual picnic this year? Chairman Keefe asked Mr. Lazo to schedule and let the finance committee know what we might need to support that. Trustee Jourdain will put on finance committee's agenda . Mr. Lazo replied that typically the cookout has been in September and we have it penciled in for then, but we can look at that if you want to consider another date.

Adjourn:

Trustee Jourdain made a motion to adjourn seconded Trustee Ostrander. It was unanimously VOTED to conclude the meeting at 7:57 PM.

The next meeting will be May 10, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Denner, Acting Secretary for the Board of Trustees



Payette presentation Soldiers_Home_Oper BOT April Finance
22_0412_BOT_MEETINation_Dashboard_MarData March 2022.pdf

Attachments: