

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, February 8, 2022. The meeting began at 5:30 PM.

Members Present in Person:

Gary Keefe, Chairman; Cindy Lacoste

Board Members via WebEx:

Mark Bigda, Sean Collins, Isaac Mass, Kevin Jourdain, Carmen Ostrander

Board Members Not Available:

All Present

Also Present:

John Cronin, Chief Financial Officer (DVS); Matthew Deacon, Legal Counsel (DVS); Dr. Diane Dietzen, Chief Medical Officer (HLY); Robert Engell, Interim Administrator (HLY); Carolyn Fenn, HCWQ/PRR Program Coordinator (ELD); Debra Foley, Communications (HLY); Stephen Giordano, Business Office Accountant (HLY); Glen Hevy, Deputy Superintendent (HLY); Karen Krause, M.S.W./L.I.C.S.W. (HLY); Michael Lazo, Interim Superintendent (HLY); Brooke Leahy, Chief of Staff (DVS); Michael Lynch, Chief Financial Officer (HLY); Mark Yankopoulos, Legal Counsel, Caitlin Menard, Director of Social Services (HLY); John Paradis, HSH Coalition; Cheryl Poppe, Secretary (DVS); Sheila Serra Dietary; Ernestina Sirignano, Executive Assistant to Secretary Cheryl L. Poppe; Linnea Walsh, Communications Manager (VET); Leslie Wilson, Assistant Director of Nursing (HLY), and Kathleen Denner Recording Secretary

Roll Call:

Chairman Keefe conducted a Roll Call as follows: Chairman Keefe (Yes), Trustee Bigda (Yes); Sean Collins (Yes), Kevin Jourdain (Yes), Cindy Lacoste (Yes), Isaac Mass (Yes), Carmen Ostrander (Yes)

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

Approval of Minutes:

Upon motion by Trustee Lacoste and seconded by Trustee Bigda it was unanimously VOTED to accept the unamended minutes of the regular Board Meeting held on January 11, 2022 and all subcommittee meetings in January. All in favor, minutes approved

Payette New Home Update (Mr. Lazo):

Next update at the April 2022 BOT meeting

CFO/Treasurer Report (Mr. Lynch):

Mr. Lynch updated the board that the trustee fund received donations last month just over \$3000 bringing the annual total just over \$34,000 for the year, having expenses just under \$26,000. He continued that the routine expenses were entertainment and bingo, with the purchase of QuickBooks to link to the trustee bank account. Mr. Lynch shared that the Finance team has completed several interviews with candidates for an account, procurement specialist and a veteran account specialist and we continue to emphasize staff education and training opportunities related to procurement and state protocols. He reported last month that the team

was working on procuring PPE for the Home and finance team has reviewed storage spaces and updating order management processes.

Trustee Jourdain requested a moment of silence for Navy Seal, Kyle Mullen who on February 4 passed away during a training exercise. Chairman Keefe proceeded with a moment of silence.

DVS Staff Report (Secretary Poppe)

Secretary Poppe shared information regarding the Women's Network Veteran Survey, about needs of women veterans and long-term care options. She thanked Chairman Keefe for sharing the survey with the Public Affairs office and the National Guard. She continued that the survey will be kept open for a month and there may be a possible extension. They will need to have the report at the end of the year to the legislation with the recommendations, they will also be having focus groups so if there are any suggestions for locations please send to me.

Secretary Poppe continued that the funding for the search firm to hire the new superintendent will be coming from the of Department of Veteran Services out of our appropriation; given the fact that we supervise the superintendent.

Chairman Keefe shared with Secretary Poppe that on March 18 the National Guard is having an Officer Professional Development training at the DCU center if you would like set up a table to get feedback for the survey.

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

Mr. Lazo reported that the census currently at the home is 91 veteran residents, 1 domiciliary veteran on extended leave of absence , 9 veterans have been admitted with 6 being from outside the home and 3 from domiciliary with two new admissions tomorrow. He continued that we currently have 1 COVID positive veteran who is in 1N isolation and is doing well. Mr. Lazo shared that we are working toward meeting the February 28 deadline to have staff boosted, right now all veteran residents have been boosted, with 74% of staff having received 3rd dose. He stated we have booster clinic on Tuesdays and Fridays. He continued that next Monday we will be having the Community Veteran meeting with conversations around our current building and the new Home, Outpatient Department. Domiciliary and admissions.

Mr. Lazo thanked Renee Garcia from the Outpatient Department for the excellent work reaching out the 1471 community veterans that were patients, at this point we have 43 veterans that we are not able to find contact information for an we have been working with the VA and local VSO's and cannot locate. He shared that there are 19 veterans that we have good contact information but not have received responses, we have sent out a letter listing all local VA cbox in the area or they can reach out to us for assistance and we are still on target for June 30 date for veterans to have new PCP's.

Mr. Lazo reported that there are 6 veterans remaining in the Domiciliary and Ms. Menard is working hard to find the next place for them.

He continued that the Recreation Department is still have activities going on even though we have some units quarantined. The entertainment that will go into the chapel and use our close caption tv system to broadcast into veteran rooms.

Mr. Lazo state as soon as we have testing come back negative, we will have 2 units coming off quarantine and then can gather with social distancing in place. He shared there will be a Super Bowl party on Sunday.

Mr. Lazo gave an update on staffing we have 309 staff members with 290 active. He shared that we currently have 11 staff members out for COVID related reasons which about a month ago we had 40 out . Our HPPD is still high with it being double what the CMS gold standard is.

He also thanked EOHHS for financial incentives for staff.

Mr. Lazo reported that the Home is working to hire a Director of Nursing, Occupational Health Nurse, Legal Counsel and organic security. He continued that interviews for the director of nursing continue, there will be 2 interviews this week for legal counsel, and the new Veteran Care Coordinator on will begin on the 28th. Trustee Collins asked when the admissions started, and Mr. Lazo replied that admissions have been ongoing since December but there was one week where we postponed admissions due to COVID. Trustee Collins then asked when you are admitting patients and place on a unit is that part of the intake and evaluation, Mr. Lazo replied as part of medical assessment the clinical team will decide where the appropriate bed is where the acuity levels are so they get the proper attention. Trustee Collins Outpatient Department regarding the 40ish patients when was the last time they were seen, Mr. Lazo replied that we have limited our look back to the past two year.

Trustee Collins asked regarding the Director of Nursing position have we used any search firms or has it been by word of mouth and posting on the job board, Mr. Lazo replied that we have not used any search firms yet so far it has been posted on the Mass Careers website and word of mouth. Trustee Collins asked if coming up in February and March will there be Irish singers, Mr. Lazo replied yes we will. Trustee Mass while searching for Occupational Health can you tell me about that department and is there physical therapy going on? Mr. Lazo replied that our Occupational Health team does not do our rehabilitation service they are done by agency therapy group. He continued that Occupational Health department maintains surveillance testing and Binax testing. Trustee Mass thought we were looking for a physical therapist and Mr. Lazo let him know that we are not at this time. Trustee Mass asked if we are looking for a Director of Education and Mr. Lazo replied that we already have but that position is not currently in the building. Trustee Mass asked how many people are in the Education Department and Mr. Lazo responded that there are 3 people in that department and education is ongoing. Trustee Mass then asked if policies on education and training for the board can we get a report on where we are at for developing the education policies for the next meeting, Mr. Lazo replied yes.

Chairman Keefe gave a point of order that at the end of the meeting we will go into executive session, stated the statute and gave the topic.

Chairman Keefe highlighted and thanked EHS for the bonus and listening; these are making a huge difference. He asked Secretary Poppe to thank HHS thank you from the board.

Holyoke Soldiers' Home General Counsel Report (include status of HSH Investigations) (Atty Yankopoulos)

Mr. Yankopoulos reported that since last month there have been no significant change in our legal position. He continued that all of the investigations that are open are still proceeding including the Attorney General, Inspector General and Department of Justice. Mr. Yankopoulos shared that there have been no new investigations or suits that he has been made aware of and we have no outstanding record requests. He shared that we are interviewing 2 candidates this week for his replacement. Trustee Jourdain asked is there an any scenario that the Attorney General would be investigation that you would not be notified of, Mr. Yankopoulos replied that generally speaking I would not be notified until I am served with some type of notification.

Trustee Mass asked Mr. Yankopoulos regarding the executive session if we are discussing personnel member do we need to give them notice and the opportunity to be present with counsel. Mr. Yankopoulos replied to discuss potential litigation he is not sure we could do that without notice, pending an emergency that required it. Mr. Deacon agreed if it is an emergent issue, but if not, it could be subject to challenge.

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

Ms. Menard shared that the Veteran Advocate meeting will be held this Thursday and that the Family Advocate came out with a survey to see if there are more convenient times so we will probably alternate times to get more attendance.

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

See above.

Trustees' Finance Committee Report (Trustee Jourdain)

Trustee Jourdain reported that the finance committee met January 19 with all members present and Mr. Ravosa our financial investment advisor and Mr. Lynch, CFO. He continued that we took a review capital projects and while we are getting a new building there are capital needs for the current building i.e, security camera, brick work, COVID screening trailer, goal to become a CMS certified facility.

Trustee Jourdain shared that they discussed the license plate issue was discussed and we are requesting that we partner with Chelsea and create a letter with Mr. Deacon to proceed if they would be supportive on a number of dollars involved and a bond to be put up. He continued that the goal is to see if the Chelsea board is as interested as we are.

Trustee Jourdain we received our fund performance report for UBS there is 2.91 million in long term savings account. He shared that UBS is doing a risk reward balance and following our investment policy we posted over the last 23 months since we started with UBS a 9% rate on return, focusing on growth and income. Trustee Jourdain shared that the fund in the time period we have gained over \$450,000 in investment gains, considering that we spend \$150,000 a year budget. He reported there is \$259,000 Westfield checking account and an approval in audit report to get QuickBooks for finance team to receive 5 licenses and training.

Trustee Jourdain let Ms. Menard know that if any domiciliary veterans are having financial difficulty or needs assistance, please let us know so we can assist. He also mentioned that we are doing the CFO annual evaluation by May 1 and continuing too look forward to the goals and a conversation with Mr. Lynch and Mr. Lazo regarding that.

Trustee Jourdain shared that we discussed the new EOHHS out of state travel polity was discussed and what that potentially opens the door for in the future. He mentioned that the CFO discussed a Budget Director position to be hired. Chairman Keefe asked if Trustee Jourdain is making a motion on the letter. Trustee Jourdain replied yes I would like to have your permission to draft a letter to Chelsea board regarding the non veteran license plate application to registry of motor vehicle and we would support the bond funding to do that and it is approximately \$150,000 need \$75,000 each and we would discuss the allocation of the plate revenue and that is only required if we do not get enough interest and additional discussion and updates to the board, we want to find out if they are interested in conversation? Motion made by Trustee Jourdain to draft and send a letter to Chelsea Board leadership to discuss cosponsoring the states special license plate program divided between the two homes, Trustee Lacoste seconded. Roll call vote Trustee Bigda yes, Trustee Collins yes, Trustee Jourdain yes, Chairman Keefe yes, Trustee Lacoste yes, and Trustee Ostrander yes. The motion passes unanimously.

Trustees' Operations Committee Report (Trustee Collins)

Trustee Collins reported the Operations Committee met on January 25 and our resources with Ms. Hansen, Dr. Dietzen and the rest of the team. He continued that the dashboard was sent out to the board with the KPI. As discussed at the last board meeting in regard to the Homes hours but with COVID the quarantine impacted all practices. He continued the KPI's are solid with definitely areas to work on with communication of problems really trying to get after for the beginning of this year. He stated that the feedback from Pinnacle and ombudsmen will help us get after these issues.

Trustee Collins stated that the census dashboard is looking strong new applications are every month up by 10 and accepting veterans into the home even better. He asked the question regarding the case mix acuity level making sure that the board and public now where the veterans are going and acuity level and nursing care and staffing on their floor.

Trustee Collins shared the hand hygiene chart has a lot of progress. He continued reviewing the summary of the annual report from Pinnacle regarding the overall satisfaction on how things are rated. He shared that the combined scores compared to the national average that we are doing very well overall. He discussed the trend overtime from 2017 and that you can see where COVID had an impact in a downward trend and excited to see that 2022 we are on an upward trend.

Trustee Collins took out the identifying information to show what drives the scores in the comments for this cycle there were 7 interviews that were given and he shared snippets from 3 of them, the who reported as anonymous gave negative comments. The COVID tracker shows who is getting tested, positive, and what unit; it is a lot of information. Trustee Collins appreciates how they rapidly respond, isolated and contact traces positive patients.

Trustee Collins discussed the medical staff meeting and how they have connected with Holyoke Medical Center electronic medical records for the clinical staff and providers to immediately see lab and treatment of our veterans.

Trustee Collins shared that the Operations Committee reviewed the transition plan that the acting superintendent Val Liptak had put together, we have been tracking and reviewing line by line. There are some items we should pull into the Operations subcommittee like the contract tracker was not sure if finance was tracking that.

When we look at the outside agencies coming in like the VA wants to come in January and we may be expecting them at the end of the month. Trustee Mass asked when the next DPH inspection is? Trustee Collins responded they do not usually give any notice, Mr. Lazo confirmed that we do not have notice of when they will arrive. Trustee Mass asked when was the last one and Mr. Lazo replied that it was about 1 year ago. Trustee Mass stated that we are probably due, Mr. Lazo thinks it will be sometime this summer. Dr. Dietzen added that the last time the DPH was here it was infection control focused in July.

Chairman Keefe asked that if you need to share slides please send them to Ms. Foley so she can put on the screen so everyone at home can follow along.

Trustee Jourdain mentioned that the Holyoke Parade Committee announced that the St. Patrick's Day Parade will be happening on March 20th. He was hopeful that the Home would be participating and to let the Finance Committee know what they can do to support those who are participating. Trustee Collins offered his restored jeep, that he uses for parades, to the Soldiers' Home. Mr. Lazo shared that there has been discussion about participating in parade about a month or so ago when COVID was strong at that point. He continued that a put out to staff and only 6 responded but now that we are on the downward side of the Omicron surge we can put it out their again. Mr. Lazo stated that we have used vans in the past to bus for veterans. Trustee Mass asked regarding activities and getting veterans out he would like to see them come out to the Franking County Fair so they can get out of the Hampden area and let Franklin County know a little more about the Home and their services. Chairman Keefe asked the trustees to look for events to reinvigorate the Home and any events that have been sidelined for the last two years. Chairman Keefe asked Trustee Mass to get it to Ms. Menard information on the fair and if anyone listening has something the Soldiers' Home used to participate please email to Ms. Menard.

Trustees' Bylaws Committee Report (Trustee Lacoste)

Trustee Lacoste reported that we have not had a meeting in the last couple of months she continued that she would reach out to Mr. Deacon and Mr. Yankopoulos to let her know if the discharge policy has been looked at EOHHS yet. Mr. Deacon will reach out to them and see where it is at.

Superintendent Hire Committee Report (Trustee Lacoste)

Chairman Keefe shared that Trustee Lacoste, Trustee Collins and Trustee Ostrander are the members of the committee and Trustee Collins and Trustee Lacoste are co-chairs. Trustee Collins reported that at the January 25 meeting there was discussion clarifying how to seek a search firm and the vendors on state list and created an information sheet to put out to state vendors and then evaluate the responses and then move on from there. Trustee Collins

appreciates the funding that the Secretary was able to secure. He continued that when we receive the feedback from counsel then will get out to vendors and proceed.

Chairman Keefe reported that he was notified earlier today that the vote on legislation for the reconstruction reorganization of the management of the Soldiers' Homes has come out of committee and will be voted on Thursday. Trustee Jourdain asked if the board can we get a copy of what their version is the vote on Thursday. Chairman Keefe will email the board members a copy.

Old Business

Update of EMR vendor contract (Mr. Engell)

Mr. Engell reported that the EMR process is proceeding with at least 50 subject matter experts from both Chelsea and Holyoke participating in demonstrations during the past month to include representatives from all disciplines and the actual hands on users of the equipment and technology. He continued that we had 4 vendors make presentations during the demonstration process and the Strategic Sourcing Team has met and completed its evaluation process and has a draft recommendation memo which is being finalized for the process of moving forward to executive review and approval. Mr. Engell shared that at that point we can move forward with a vendor which would be considered selected for contract negotiations and statement of work. Still on track for March 6 upload to the VA system. Trustee Lacoste asked when they send the letter to vendor and did we get this far this last time and we did not choose them, are we past this point? Mr. Engell replied that the terms could not be agreed upon so the contract was terminated. EHS, IT legal has reminded us a vendor who replies to an issued request to the State as part of the response the standard Commonwealth contract and statement of work they in essence have agreed to that so let's see how closely they stay to that agreement. Trustee Jourdain asked if the vendors give any indication on the prices or not until they decide to move forward. Mr. Engell replied that we receive a cost estimate from all of them as part of their response he continued that as part of the process we ask for best and final offer and we have received those from all the vendors. Trustee Jourdain asked when conversation with the last vendor and there were changes to the order did they add the extra so this is my bid plus additional expenses. Mr. Engell replied that is how it works in general and that they all participated in the demonstration process, they all received our request for proposal which includes thousands of detailed requirements that have been prioritized so they know exactly what we are looking for and they also received the detailed statement of work document from us which was drafted with EHS IT Legal. Trustee Jourdain stated that you do get into that level of detail, and Mr. Engell replied yes. Trustee Jourdain asked when the team makes a final recommendation, they have had an opportunity to review the financial packages of each of the proposals, Mr. Engell replied yes and the recommendation that goes to the Secretary is best value to commonwealth, best product not necessarily the lowest price and best value based on price consideration.

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

Secretary Poppe reported that we have not heard any updates and I have asked through the channels at the Association of State Veterans Homes that are tracking this very closely and they have not heard anything yet, Secretary Poppe added that she has seen the list came out as late as March 25. Chairman Keefe shared that he heard very similar and spoke with Zach Dupont of Chairman Neil's office and the continuing resolution is the reason nothing has moved and when you combine that with other priorities like the build back better legislation some of this other

legislation backing up to it. He continued that there was discussion in DC about a yearlong to continue the resolution which is bad and now talking about an extension to continue the resolution for an additional 30 days and discussion of an Omnibus Bill for the budget to move it forward. He thinks that is just for obligations and expenditures, it is possible that in March the list will come out. Secretary Poppe asked Mr. Lazo if he heard that it was put on the draft priority list. Mr. Lazo has no updates at this time. Chairman Keefe also believes what is slowing this down is the national command region for the federal district because no more than 40% of staff was allowed in the facility during the day. Trustee Mass stated that it sounds accurate but he is wondering if we might start contingency planning for if some reason the funding does not come through, part of that planning should include starting conversations on which build back better might be moved forward first because he believes they are going to start breaking away pieces and finding out which one has the best chance of passing and gluing this as an add on to whatever that bill is, we may stand a chance of getting into that line. Chairman Keefe asked Secretary Poppe if that is something her LL team can be looking at. Secretary Poppe replied that she can take that back and reminded the board that the state has the capital authorization to continue working on the project because we did have the bond bill.

Staffing Status (Mr. Lazo)

Mr. Lazo had no additional updates from what was reported above.

Update on License Plate Program Initiative (Trustee Keefe)

Covered above.

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

Ms. Menard reported that right now we have 6 veterans still in the domiciliary all of them with active plans with some on waitlist for HUD Dash and have a contingency plan with Solder On till they get in. She continued 3 actively working with Soldier On with one would have to be on waitlist; and one pursuing community independent living, one going to live in a community apartment and one going into long term care. Trustee Jourdain is interested in hearing about the communication community engagement for after following up and support services. He asked if Ms. Menard could send the after-care plan to board for review because he is worried that everyone has a place they feel comfortable with and their networks of support. He continued that some may need very little support and have family, but he is interested in the first-year folks leaving that they are getting to their groups and how are they doing. Ms. Menard reported that 5 out of 6 are discharging to social workers and case managers, the one that is not going to have a social worker will be referred to community services because he does not need much assistance and my plan is to follow up within the first month of their discharge and continue as needed. She confirmed she will send the plan in writing to the board. Chairman Keefe asked if all 6 of the domiciliary veterans are staying in Western Massachusetts area, Ms. Menard replied yes. Chairman Keefe asked if Ms. Menard has a list of the VSO in their area that you can reach out to. Ms. Menard said she will follow up with the VSO's.

Status of future COVID-19 Memorial (Trustee Keefe)**Planning Committee established?**

Chairman Keefe asked for two trustees for the committee and they will be Trustee Jourdain and Chairman Keefe. He asked the Coalition for 4 members and they gave him Laurie Baudette, Troy Hankins, Jesus Pereira and Eric Segundo. Chairman Keefe asked for two members of the staff with one being the Superintendent and Mr. Lazo shared that the second would be Ms. Foley. He then asked Secretary Poppe for two members from DVS one being a lawyer and another member. Secretary Poppe responded that she will check with Mr. Deacon and Mr. Yankopoulos and let Chairman Keefe know and she has another staff member that is artistic. Chairman Keefe will ask Payette to get involved and it will be placed in the memorial garden of new design plans.

New Business**Update on use of State appropriation dollars to fund selected Superintendent Search firm (Sec. Poppe/Ms. Rego)**

Discussed above.

Executive Session: Chairman Keefe reported that we do not have legal justification to go to into executive session.

Adjourn:

Trustee Lacoste made a motion to adjourned and it was seconded by Trustee Jourdain. It was unanimously VOTED to conclude the meeting at 7:02 PM.

The next meeting will be March 8, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Denner
Acting Secretary for the Board of Trustees

Attachments:

BoT-Minutes-20220111-Draft
BOT January Finance Data
Soldiers home Operation Dashboard January 2022