

Veterans' Home in Holyoke Board of Trustees Meeting

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Veterans' Home Holyoke (HLY) was held virtually and telephonically on Tuesday February 13, 2024. The meeting began at 5:35 PM.

Board Members via Webex: Chairman Collins, Trustee Kevin Jourdain, and Trustee Isaac Mass and Trustee Carmen Ostrander. Trustee Bigda joined after Approval of Minutes Vote.

Present via Webex: Melanie (Acobe) Gentile, Budget Director (HLY); Kathleen Denner, Recording Secretary (HLY); Robert Engell, Executive Director (VET); Debra Foley, Communications (HLY); Glen Hevy, Deputy Superintendent (HLY); Kelly Jones, Director of Nursing (HLY); Linda Lariviere, Quality Manager (HLY); Michael Lynch, Deputy Commissioner of Administration and Finance (DYS); Michael Lazo, Superintendent (HLY); Jeff Lenahan, Quality Manager (HLY); Caitlin Menard, Director of Social Work (HLY); Kate Sawyer, HR Liaison (HLY); Brett Walker, General Counsel (HLY). Henry Clay, State Treasurer; and Michael Ravosa, UBS.

Roll Call: Chairman Collins conducted the Roll Call as follows: Trustee Jourdain (Yes), Trustee Mass (Yes), and Trustee Ostrander (Yes). Trustee Bigda joined after Approval of Minutes Vote.

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

Public Comment: No public comment for this month.

Approval of January 9, 2024 minutes: A motion was made by Trustee Mass to approve the January 9, 2024 Board Meeting minutes as amended and it was seconded Trustee Ostrander. No Discussion.

Roll Call Vote: Trustee Jourdain (Yes), Trustee Mass (Yes), Trustee Ostrander (Yes) and Chairman Collins (Yes). It was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2024 Board Meeting as amended.

Follow up on "Funds transition"

- Trustees Mass written concerns to Mr. Engell
 - To be discussed in new business.
- Liquidation of Accounts/Transfer
 - To be discussed in new business.

Meeting Schedule for the rest of FY:

Chairman Collins reminded the Board of Trustees that meetings will be held in February, May, August, and November for 2024. The meetings will be on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm.

USB Funds/Investment Update & Oversight (Trustee Jourdain / Guest -Mike Ravosa):

Trustee Jourdain shared on his screen the fund report in the attached materials and Mr. Ravosa presented the information in the portfolio review.

Trustee Jourdain asked if a balance transfer that the board had approved was executed. Mr. Lynch remembered the amount being \$56,000 in early June, Mr. Ravosa confirmed the amount and the month. Trustee Jourdain asked what line the deposit would show up on. Mr. Ravosa will email an excel spreadsheet with the information to Trustee Jourdain tomorrow. Mr. Ravosa continued with the expected cash flow report from the attached document. Mr. Ravosa reviewed the breakdown of the stock and bond accounts.

Trustee Mass asked if Mr. Ravosa could put together a list other public institutions that UBS manages, he would have to ask compliance due to confidentiality. Trustee Mass would like any other public institutions that have deposits at UBS and if UBS has been approved by the Treasurer's Office as a location that can receive deposits public funds under CH29 Section 34. Trustee Mass you went through compliance before you worked with us, Mr. Ravosa yes. Mr. Ravosa will get the answers Trustee Mass state funds.

**DCAMM New Home Quarterly Update (Mr. Lazo):
Construction update**

Mr. Lazo shared DCAMM will be at the next meeting, he will give a small update later.

CFO/Treasurer Update (Ms. Acobe):

Mr. Lynch thanked the Board, as this is his last meeting. Trustee Mass questioned Mr. Lynch about the email he sent to Michael Ravosa and Marissa Robbins, and who told him to send the email. He replied that he received information from the letter that is public regarding the trustee funds at the Home and determining that those funds need to transition into public control with the States accounting system. Trustee Mass asked if it was his decision to send the email absent of the vote of the board of trustees or did someone direct you. Mr. Lynch stated as you can see in the email, I drafted the email. Trustee Mass asked if this was of his own accord without coming to the board of trustees. Mr. Lynch replied if you read the email that was the direction, we're heading in. Trustee Mass asked when you say we who do you mean because the board of trustees has not voted. Mr. Lazo added that there was conversations internally at the Home, I was involved in those and we were required to stay compliant with the recommendations so we agreed that we would reach out to kick off the transfer. Trustee Mass asked Mr. Lazo if he directed Mr. Lynch to send out the email. Mr. Lazo replied with the IG recommendations, yes I did. Trustee Mass asked if the accounts have been liquidated. Mr. Lynch replied that nothing has changed since his last day at the Home.

Ms. Gentile shared the attached spending plan as of January. The year-to-date spending is at 56% of the budget and the current balance is \$180,729.56 not including donations that are at \$28698.04.

Ms. Gentile reported that they are working on the procurement of an audit.

Ms. Gentile asked for the approval of a third IN2L unit for the recreation room. The total is annual service fee of \$2775. Ms. Gentile would also like the approval of a purchase order for 150 tote bags for Volunteers Appreciation Week in April with a total of \$1001.

A motion was made by Chairman Collins for the IN2L fee and the tote bags for the volunteers in the amounts of \$2775 and \$1001 respectively and was approved by Trustee Mass and was seconded by Trustee Ostrander.

Roll Call Vote: Trustee Jourdain (Yes), Trustee Mass (Yes), Trustee Bigda (Yes), Trustee Ostrander (Yes), and Chairman Collins (Yes). The motion passes unanimously.

State Treasurer Update given by Mr. Clay.

Mr. Clay introduced himself. He gave an overview of the Treasury and how the portfolios will work.

Trustee Jourdain stated he was taken aback that the Chelsea funds have been retained since the 1800's ours has been since 1952 and just now in 2024 we are having this discussion. Mr. Clay does not know how this occurred. Trustee Jourdain stated that we usually keep \$150,000 not more than \$200,000 in our checking account that pays for our expenses to help direct benefits to veterans providing entertainment and services. He continued that the other account we have invested over 3 million dollars and we view it to be a long-term endowment supporting residents of the Home and being good steward of the money and grow it for the veterans. Trustee Jourdain would like to know how Mr. Clay sees this working in a day to day, that we have some bank is approved so will we have to report to you and then the check cutting goes through MARS system but will the funds stay at Westfield and then we report to you the comings and goings. Mr. Clay confirmed Westfield is an approved state vendor. He continued that we would go to a local bank and make a deposit, the treasury will receive a report from the bank and create an ACH file for that amount and it will be transferred into Commonwealths general fund and the uploaded to MARS. Mr. Clay shared that if you need to pay for an entertainer you will go through MARS to make a payment. Trustee Jourdain questioned if it is going to operate basically the same. Mr. Clay stated that the Comptrollers' Office is in charge of the MARS system. Trustee Jourdain asked if the funds would stay at Westfield Bank and Mr. Clay replied no it will be moved to the general fund at M&T Bank and the information is available on MARS.

Trustee Mass reiterated that the deposits will go into the Westfield Bank account and then gets swept into the general fund at M&T bank and is that an interest account. Mr. Clay replied that it generates interest for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Trustee Mass believes that is not the intent of the donors to give money to the Home and the interest go to Commonwealth and what about the interest on bonds. Mr. Clay stated that we no use them for that and right now we us M&T the manager for that is Federated investments. Trustee Mass asked where do earnings on the bonds go. Mr.

Clay replied if you have a separately invested fund, as you do in Holyoke, the earnings will go back to Holyoke. Trustee Mass asked if we wanted to maximize the amount of earnings and keep the minimum amount in M&T. Mr. Clay stated that this is a training issue that he sees in a lot of other agencies and it is incumbent upon the staff locally in Holyoke to send an email to the treasurer's office saying we have funds available and to invest them and then the funds would get transferred into M&T Bank so you can earn interest on that. Trustee Mass stated that the report we received from the OIG covers a lot of topics then the legislature changed the law and the legacy account and put those under the control of the board of trustees and he believes that for some people that means that the board of trustees only have control of the expenditure of those funds. He would like to learn more about how to solve that and have someone from the OIG's office come and talk to us. Trustee Mass continued that when we do transfer over we would have no control over the investment policy and that would be completely at the discretion of the Treasurer's Office. Mr. Clay replied that is going to be the Commonwealth investment policy. Trustee Mass is concerned about paying our vendors and are our individual vendors going to have set up an account with the Comptroller's Office to get paid. Mr. Clay replied that he thinks so but he is not a representative of the Comptroller's Office. Trustee Mass thinks it would be a complicated process for our vendors and we may need to have someone from the Comptroller's Office come in and talk to us about that.

Trustee Mass we need to have the next steps with getting a legal opinion on behalf of the board of trustees to talk to Comptroller's and OIG Offices to see where we are going. I am hoping it does not have a negative impact on the services we provide.

Chairman Collins stated that we should have someone from the OIG next meeting to explain the letter. Trustee Jourdain asked if Mr. Engel can work through some of these steps and put together what we need to do for next steps, vendors and banking.

Holyoke Veterans' Home Superintendent/Administrator Update (Mr. Lazo):

Census report

Mr. Lazo reported that the Home census is currently 111 veterans with 1 bed available. The wait list is 121 veterans. Mr. Lazo shared that we are currently collaborating with EOVS and the Veterans Home in Chelsea to update policies including infectious disease communication and isolation. Once those two policies are finalized we can open our 1 North unit and we will have an additional 12 beds. The admissions team has gone through the wait list and has identified 12 veterans to take those beds and we will continue to review the list to find the additional 4 to fill the unit.

Mr. Lazo shared that the Home has COVID and flu vaccines for veteran and staff. It was mandated for staff by DPH to have both vaccines or they will need fill out declination form. We are 97% for the COVID vaccine and 87% for the flu vaccine. Mr. Lazo stated that the staff are required to wear masks in the Home and the infection rates in the community is at 13.8% and once we are below 12% we can consider removing masks but any staff that did not receive the COVID or the flu vaccines will have to wear mask through the end of March. This is the best way to keep the veterans safe and support the staff.

Mr. Lazo shared that the recreation group activities including off site trips dining out, celebrating black history month to include documentaries, poetry, jazz music, and

history. He continued that Communications is sharing facts, we have a weekly update, and social media posts. We will have a small Valentines event tomorrow afternoon. We are registered for the St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 17. Mr. Lazo thanked the veteran community partners who support our activities.

Mr. Lazo reported that our current survey. The VA came for their annual survey on January 23 through the 26th. Out of 400 standards the home received 3 deficiencies with no clinical deficiencies. One of the deficiencies was the mental health sharing agreement which is outside of the control of the Home. We have not yet received the official report and then we will put together the corrective action plan.

Mr. Lazo stated that we have been working with EOVS to engage with various levels of the government to find the best way to move forward to mitigate and we have been working with the governor's office to come up with suggestions. We are getting closer to putting a plan in place to satisfy all parties

Mr. Lazo made known that our Pinnacle report for the second month in a row we have had no surveys, we discussed a process in place to get numbers for February. We did receive the cumulative number for 2023 and the Home exceeded the national average and we have seen a steady increase in scores since 2020. He continued that this week we received 12 Pinnacle Excellence awards for being in the top 15% of providers. Mr. Lazo shared that from the staffing standpoint we have 95% our staff reporting to work with some out for COVID and COVID type symptoms.

Mr. Lazo reported that our HPPD is at 6.72 for January, which is below gold standard. We have filled 2 vacancies, the Occupational Health Assistant, the Chaplin and the Nurse Practitioner and we continue to look for recreational therapists, an Occupational Health Nurse. We have a new position for Procurement and Contract, Retention and Recruiting Coordinator and a Technology Systems Project Manager. The use of agency staffing remains low at 10% in January, with organic staff at 80% which is the highest in a number of months, and our per diem staff is at 2%.

Mr. Lazo stated that the capital improvement for the new home is working on the foundation and the footings, drainage work. The mock of construction the new Home is in rear parking lot. He continued that here at the current Home we upgraded transfer switches to transfer of power if we have to go to the generator.

Trustee Mass asked if the Pinnacle report receives the same compensation whether they get response or not? Mr. Lazo will look into that. Chairman Collins asked about the current building and the DPH issues and will that hold anything up long term? Mr. Lazo replied that there is an additional meeting tomorrow, we have a vendor standing by to put mitigation plan together for DPH to accept our plan. Chairman Collins asked how is CMS coming along. Mr. Lazo stated that the application has been submitted and we received the recommendation for approval from CMS and it was forwarded to DPH. Chairman Collins asked if the outreach in Franklin County was achieved. Trustee Mass will send the contact to Mr. Lazo and he will reach out. Chairman Collins asked about the St. Patrick's Day parade regarding the use of his Jeep. Chairman Collins stated that this is the time to be recruiting nursing students. Mr. Lazo shared that the head of our staffing department has been engaged with outreach in the local community colleges and attending job fairs in the area. Mr. Lazo will follow up and let Chairman Collins know.

Holyoke Veterans' Home General Counsel Update (Atty Walker):

Mr. Walker reported that the criminal prosecution against Mr. Walsh and Mr. Clinton will start April 3. Trustee Mass asked if we should be seeking council for any of the employees. Mr. Walker replied that as of now no conflicts have been identified and would be available to talk offline about potential conflicts. Trustee Mass is in agreement.

Quality / KPI update

Mr. Lenahan reviewed, attached, Key Performance Indicator Report, which included the VA Survey, the Quality Initiatives for 2024 and they are now tracking grievances.

Trustee Mass asked about the new tracking of grievances and are they also followed by the Ombudsman. Mr. Lenahan replied that most of the grievances are filed with Social Work. Mr. Lazo shared that when EOHS became EOVS the statute to hire an ombudsman for each Chelsea and Holyoke. When this person was hired the Western Mass Elder Care contract was allowed to expire. Mr. Lazo stated that the new EOVS ombudsperson, JM Sorrell, is very much engaged with the veterans and families.

Trustee Mass would like to see a metric of grievances report on resolution, Ms. Menard will share the information with the board.

Chairman Collins asked Mr. Lenahan regarding falls were they supervised or unsupervised. Mr. Lenahan said he will get him the information for next month.

Chairman Collins asked if the insulin pens that cam up were thy rapid acting or long term. Mr. Lenahan said they were supposed to short acting and long acting was sent to the floor.

Mr. Lenahan continued his report and there is not update for Pinnacle and we have reached out to Pinnacle to make sure they have all the information they need to get scores for next month.

Mr. Lenahan reviewed the Infection Control Report and Policies to be reviewed from the attached document.

OIG Letter to Secretary Santiago – “Fiscal Practices at the Commonwealth’s Veterans’ Homes” dated 19-January-2024

Chairman Collins informed the group that we will get the interested parties to have discussions with them at next meeting.

Letter from Veteran Robert Fuller, Chapter 115 benefits

Chairman Collins wanted to acknowledge we received the letter from Mr. Fuller and it is attached. Trustee Mass asked if veteran services may be able to help him. Mr. Lazo recommended that Mr. Fuller reach out to the local veteran service officer and they can advise him on how to execute his 115 benefits.

No Executive Session Scheduled for this meeting.

March 26 is the next statewide council meeting.

Adjourn:

Trustee Ostrander made a motion to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Trustee Mass.

Roll Call Vote: Trustee Bigda (Yes), Trustee Mass (Yes), Trustee Ostrander (Yes), and Chairman Collins (Yes).


It was unanimously VOTED to conclude the meeting at 7:28 PM.


Respectfully submitted


Kathleen Denner


Acting Secretary for the Board of Trustees


Attachments:


 Census Master 01.31.24.xlsx


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 Letter from Rober Fuller Agawam VSO.pdf


 MS 2024 1 11.pdf


 UBS Fixed Income & Investment Equities Janua...

 FY24 Trustee Fund Spending Plan January.xlsx

 Holyoke_Veterans_Home_Liquidation_Assets_U...

 Letter to EVOS re Fiscal Practices at the Comm...

 Quality BOT-FEB v2.pptx

 Westfield Bank- January 2024 Trustees.pdf