

## **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 January 10, 2023. The meeting began at 5:31 PM.

**Board Members via WebEx:** Sean Collins, Kevin Jourdain, Isaac Mass and Carmen Ostrander.

**Board Members not Available:** Chairman Gary Keefe and Mark Bigda

### **Also Present:**

Melanie Acobe, Budget Director (HLY); John Cronin, Chief Financial Officer (DVS); Matthew Deacon, Legal Counsel (DVS); Diane Dietzen, Chief Medical Officer (HLY); Robert Engell, Interim Administrator (HLY); Debra Foley, Communications (HLY); Glen Hevy, Deputy Superintendent (HLY); Kelly Jones, Director of Nursing (HLY); Linda Lariviere, Quality Manager (HLY); Michael Lazo, Superintendent (HLY); Brooke Leahy, Chief of Staff (DVS); Michael Lynch, CFO (HLY); Caitlin Menard, Director of Social Services (HLY); Haley Pereira (Guest); Cheryl Poppe, Secretary (DVS); Sarah Soan, (VET); Brett Walker, General Counsel (HLY); Linnea Walsh, Communications Manager (VET); Mark Yankopoulos, Deputy General Counsel (VET); and Kathleen Denner, Recording Secretary (HLY).

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

### **Roll Call:**

Trustee Jourdain conducted a Roll Call as follows: Trustee Collins (Yes), Trustee Mass (Yes), and Trustee Ostrander (Yes).

**Public Comment:** No public comment for this month.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Upon motion made by Trustee Mass and Seconded by Trustee Collins it was unanimously VOTED to accept the unamended minutes of the regular Board Meeting held on November 8, 2022, the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on September 21, 2022 and the minutes of the Operations Committee Meeting held on October 26, 2022. No Discussion. Roll Call vote: Trustee Collins (Yes), Trustee Mass (Yes), Trustee Ostrander (Yes) and Trustee Jourdain (Yes). The VOTE passes unanimously.

### **DCAMM/Payette New Home Quarterly Update for November 2022 (Mr. Lazo):**

Mr. Lazo reported that the next update will be in February.

### **CFO/Treasurer Report (Mr. Lynch)**

Mr. Lynch gave an overview of donations received back in November and December. He continued that we received just over \$12,000 for the month of November and just over \$4,000 in December. Mr. Lynch reported that the current balance of Trustee Fund is estimated at \$255,000.

Mr. Lynch shared that over the past couple of months we have had the usual expenditures for bingo and entertainment, and we have had additional expenditures for purchasing items for the veteran's shop.

Mr. Lynch thanked the board for the veteran gifts for Veteran's Day and the holiday season, the shirts and the amenity bags that were received were enjoyed by everybody.

Mr. Lynch stated that we are the midway point of the fiscal year so we will be doing a mid-year review of the departmental budgets and the agency level in conjunction with our partner agencies. He introduced Melanie Acobe the new Budget Director.

### **DVS Staff Report (Secretary Poppe)**

Secretary Poppe wished everyone a Happy New Year and thanked everyone for attending the joint meeting in December. She continued that we were preparing for a lot of holiday activities not only at the homes and thanked everyone for any participation or assistance in the Wreaths across America that took place at our commentaries and Agawam and Winchendon.

Secretary Poppe shared that last week we had a change in administration with Governor Baker taking his last walk on Wednesday January 4 walk and Governor Healy was sworn in on January 5. We are continuing here at DVS to work on the transition planning and the build out of the secretariat with hiring some of the key positions that will be critical to the transition to the new secretary, we appreciate the help of the board with any of the vacancies that we post not only for the department but for both of the homes. Trustee Jourdain asked with new governor has there been any material changes staffing wise that we should be aware of at this time. Secretary Poppe replied that all agencies' heads are staying and remaining stable, Secretary Sudders did retire on the 5<sup>th</sup> and we have Acting Secretary Beckerman is in that roll.

### **Holyoke Soldiers' Home Superintendent/Administrator Report (Mr. Lazo)**

Mr. Lazo reported that current census is 108 residents with 3 beds available. The Admissions Committee will meet on Thursday to discuss next available veterans to join our group.

Mr. Lazo shared that COVID at the Home that the surge has decreased with 2 positive staff members and 1 positive veteran resident. The positive veteran is on the isolation unit with some slight symptoms but otherwise in good spirits.

Mr. Lazo stated that as of today we have 94% of our veterans have received the bivalent vaccine and 95% have also received their flu vaccine in terms of staff 25% have received the bivalent vaccine and 36% have received the flu vaccine.

Mr. Lazo shared that the Recreation Department is doing a tremendous job in therapeutic activities for all veterans whether they are in the in the isolation unit or able to participate in activities. He continued that the volunteers are working with the veterans in various activities such as exercise programs and 1 on 1 quiet conversation. Mr. Lazo said that we still have weekly trips off site trips but they are weather dependent this time of the year, but the trips will alternate between scenic and shopping tips.

Mr. Lazo reported that over the holidays great meals were provided and activities were sponsored by various veterans' groups. He added that the atmosphere was slightly

subdued compared to thanksgiving based on the COVID atmosphere at the time but the veterans still seemed to have a good time over the holidays. He thanked the veteran partners for sponsoring activities as well the Harvard Music School for provided a zoom concert on New Year's Day.

Mr. Lazo informed the group for the upcoming surveys the Department of Veteran Affairs has reached out to the Home to confirm their intention so survey the Home this month. He continued that we are expecting an onsite survey that will be unannounced.

Mr. Lazo informed the group that we continue to work with the CMS consultant to ensure that we are properly aligned with the requirements of CMS so we can move towards CMS certification.

Mr. Lazo reported that our Pinnacle scores for 2022 we ended the year with a 96.3% favorable rating and a 4.55% overall satisfaction score. Staffing is at 96% active and reporting to work with a HPPD for December was 7.29% which is above the CMS gold standard. He continued that our orientation class included 4 CNA's, 1 per diem CNA, 3 dietary staff members, 1 EVS staff member and an occupational health assistant. We continue to recruit for a veteran care coordinator and 2 nursing supervisors.

Mr. Lazo shared that the construction on 2 South, which is our isolation unit, continues with a slight delay due to the back order of a fan, pushing the opening day back by about a month to early March.

Trustee Mass thought we were over 90% last year for staff vaccination, can you explain the shift for flu or bivalent vaccine. Mr. Lazo replied that this year neither is mandated by DPH or the State, last year the first booster was mandatory. Trustee Mass asked if we are doing anything to encourage the staff. Mr. Lazo replied that we have vaccine clinics for both the flu and bivalent two times a week he continued that education has waned a bit but we can reinvigorate that program. Trustee Mass wants to know how our flu compare to pre covid because it does not have the controversy that the COVID vaccine. Mr. Lazo replied that prior to COVID the flu shot was mandatory with the repercussions for anyone who did not get a flu shot was they would have to wear a mask while they went about their day and of course now we wear masks all the time.

Trustee Mass shared that a high-profile report came out about the deficiencies at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home, and I did not read anything in the report about the Holyoke Soldiers' Home and I think it would be nice for anyone listening in to have reassurance that those deficiencies are not in place at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home. Mr. Lazo said that the letter that was posted, we do not have any similar issues at this Home and we are happy to prove that when the VA comes to visit us this month.

Trustee Collins is curious regarding the flu vaccine because we have even seen that trend across the health care delivery systems and the DOD that the uptick of the flu this year is waned a little bit. Trustee Jourdain asked for confirmation that at this point only 2 staff and 1 veteran have COVID, Mr. Lazo confirmed.

Trustee Jourdain asked if there are any senior leadership vacancies or critical management positions. Mr. Lazo replied all executive level are filled and the biggest need right now is a Veteran Care Coordinator and one evening supervisor and one night shift supervisor. There was an onsite hiring event on December 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Holyoke Soldiers' Home General Counsel Report (Atty Walker)**

Mr. Walker reported that the general council is taking their time going through our policies to make sure they are in conformity with CMS, and he is working with CMS experts to be compliant. Mr. Walker is also offering assistance to Chelsea which is going through a general council transition.

**Trustees' Finance Committee Report (Trustee Jourdain)**

Trustee Jourdain shared that the Finance Committee met on November 16 and there were no major budgetary changes to report, the Departmental Budgets are on track. He continued that the current outstanding capital projects of approximately \$531,000, the Holyoke Soldiers' Home has the money it needs in place in order to handle those capital projects. The CFO reported that less than 2% of revenue was reverted back, the board voted a few minor adjustments to the trustee spending plan. Trustee Jourdain reported there was an increase of \$100 a month for Bingo for the remainder of fiscal year. The OIG report and referral investigation and some of the questions we have, the finance committee voted to send the questions to John Bagley for legal guidance.

Trustee Jourdain stated that the Finance Committee reviewed inventory control plan, we also went through the vehicle inventory for the Home, talked about the audio equipment with no replacement recommended at this time but are thinking about a third IN2L program there has been an offer to donate a third unit from the Friends of the Soldiers' Home with a cost of about \$8,000 plus \$1,155 for shipping but we would have the Trustee Fund pay for the annual subscription fee which is about \$2,800 per year.

Trustee Jourdain shared that the Finance Committee reviewed the lottery account which has approximately \$180,000. He continued that there was a discussion regarding about a development consultant and we would like to talk to Mr. Lazo at the next Finance Committee is a marketing plan to get the great message of the improvements of the Home and the board would also like to retain a development consultant to allow us to help do additional fundraising for the Home. We would like to provide the type of charitable resources we can for the Home but we want to develop a developmental plan and Trustee Mass is taking point on getting us off the ground.

Trustee Jourdain stated that the Finance Committee reported the account balances and our investments are doing much better than the benchmarks of the general stock markets and bond markets and we continue to appreciate guidance of Mr. Ravosa. There is going to be additional review of the investment policy.

Trustee Jourdain reported that the Finance Committee discussed moving with the plaques for retirees and will be discussed later in the agenda.

**Trustees' Operations Committee Report (Trustee Collins)**

Trustee Collins updated everyone that our last meeting was back in November and we continue to have discussions we are still in the red in the staffing hours as well as agency hours. He continued it is positive that we had the hiring event. Trustee Collins added that the nursing hours overall have made a little progress during the holidays probably got a little tighter and will discuss later this month at the Operations Committee meeting. He shared that the veteran falls was in the red and has made some improvement so will watch this trend. He added that the behavioral events have stayed in the red and has been a topic of discussion of how to best get after that,

training with staff and has asked for a little more clarification on how the staff is being offered training with social workers to help with behavioral modifications with the veterans and are still working on the specifics, are there more verbal or physical.

Trustee Collins continued that we did see pressure ulcers pop up but everything else is doing very well.

Trustee Collins moved on to the census information that is dated information but good at tracking applications and who is on the waiting list, and we will get the updated report to include December and January for our next report.

Trustee Collins reported that the case mix is rock stable with good patient distribution throughout the facility so no one unit is carrying a heavier load than the other.

Trustee Jourdain asked on the KPI relative to communications and response to problems I am really impressed at the improvement here, we were seeing scores in the mid 70's and low 80's and now high 90's, what got us over the hump. Trustee Collins answered that it is concerted effort by the whole team and having the ombudsmen there and their ability to report on their interactions with families and veterans. He continued that there was an issue with admissions and there was a comment made in the survey and Mr. Lazo responded quickly to the family members concerns and there was a clerical error and he addressed that. Mr. Lazo added that one of the big successes is around communication effort from Ms. Jones the Director of Nursing and Ms. Gidaracos the Assistant Director of Nursing. He continued that the staff works very hard that whenever there is a change of status of any veteran the family is contacted to let them know what the situation is and what our plan of action is to correct, mitigate or care for that veteran. He shared that the standard was set by the nursing leadership and the staff has responded to that.

Trustee Collins reported that the pressure ulcers were red on page one under the KPI's, this is how we do the deeper dive and I am interested in where are the pressure ulcers coming from sites and locations. He continued that this is the level of detail that the Home keeps tracks of things and addresses concerns and this is how Holyoke keeps on top of things. Trustee Collins shared that from my interest and Dr. Bigda and Trustee Ostrander is drilling down a bit. I am interested I the data we seem to have good months and bad months and are these veterans repeats, in hospice or more prone to skin break down. Trustee Collins stated there were two ulcers reported with one stage one and one a stage 2, and I asked where they were and in the stage two, which is deeper, was on the coccyx, it is someone who is bedridden, and it was a reoccurrence of an old injury. He added that everyone gets their skin checked and then just heightened awareness when they are picked up as any stage of decubiti.

Trustee Collins continued with the Infection Prevention and Control report and gave kudos to the team and how they track at a very high level and shared part of the dashboard that we look at in regard to the units, what type of infection and then what kind of bacteria, that is the level of detail they are tracking. He is very proud of the work they did on tracking that and as we consolidate and get smarter as we move forward to get that into a true dashboard that is readily available and easy to follow.

Trustee Collins stated he is impressed by how they are tracking the symptoms of depression and the use of psych meds. All of the veterans are being evaluated for

depression and getting the appropriate referral to Geri psych for either counselling or medication is appropriate. He added they are not always going after pharmacy first but trying counselling and interventions.

Trustee Collins reviewed the Smoking Policy that began January 1 and he asked Mr. Lazo how are you going to keep track of that, some veterans will be grandfathered in and the VA can do it so we can. He feels this will be a challenging transition. Trustee Collins wanted to make sure the board knew that there is a new policy with a speed limit for motorized wheelchairs.

Mr. Lazo shared that we have not been tested on the new smoking policy. He continued that the current veterans who smoke are still allowed to smoke because they have been grandfathered in but the new veterans have not smoked up to this point. Trustee Mass said he remembers closing the smoking room, but he thought there was a vote to make the entire campus nonsmoking for all parties and he asked what is the current policy. Mr. Lazo shared that as of January 1, 2023 incoming veterans into the Home are not allowed to smoke and veterans who currently reside prior to January 1 can smoke. He added that there are 5 veterans who still smoke. Trustee Mass asked where are they doing that, is it outside of the building somewhere Ms. Menard Caitlin replied that they are going outside to smoke.

Trustee Collins stated that on the Pinnacle report everything is doing well except for communications and the admissions process and that is the one that caught his attention because we have a new admissions process, and it was a great policy and was concerned when he saw it on the Pinnacle report. There was an issue with a veteran on the waiting list with a clerical issue, it was addressed right away and rectified.

Trustee Collins discussed one other item, not on the dashboard, which is the ongoing mock survey matrix that Mr. Lazo and the team are developing to take the results from the mock survey and track where they are. Trustee Jourdain added that it was nice to see the uptick in the quality of food score.

### **Trustees' Bylaws Committee Report (Trustee )**

#### **Is the By-Laws Committee still required after 1 March 2023 transition to New Governance?**

Trustee Mass reported there was no December or January but we do need to have a meeting in February to review the Bylaws and the concern is that committees structure of having 3 members, while reducing the board composition to 5 members is a violation of open meeting law so we need to think about if we want to continue with the committee structure or operate as a committee of the whole and in all of our deliberation and guidance and we do not have simple procedures in place like, how elect new chairman, we need to make recommendations to the board for what the new bylaws will be. Trustee Mass will send out current bylaws so everyone can have some input and Mr. Walker can assist.

### **Upcoming Special Events/Programs at Holyoke Soldiers' Home**

Ms. Menard shared that her most exciting news is that we will be participating in the St. Patrick's Day parade. Ms. Foley added that we have a full schedule of activities with not major events coming up but will have veterans participating in the parade. Trustee Jourdain asked about the Recreation Director. Mr. Lazo replied that we did hire a new

director, Danielle Hayes who is certified in recreational therapy, and this was internal promotional.

## **Old Business**

### **Update of EMR vendor contract (Mr. Engell)**

Mr. Engell reported that we have had good movement on the project. He continued that the RFR when out in August to get the vendor implementation and PMO process moving. Mr. Engell said they have met as a SST (Strategic Sourcing Team) to review the responses and asked questions to the bidders and they responded and then we met earlier this week and we are anticipating making a recommendation for a consensus decision of our group and submit a recommendation memo to Secretary Poppe and the Secretary of EHS. Mr. Engell shared with the group that the timing for technology things tend to take longer and believes that this was a very valid and thoughtful process. Trustee Jourdain asked in terms of milestones could you reroute us, picking the vendor is anticipated to be for when and the project completion date was expected to be approximately when. Mr. Engell replied that the vendor of the EMR has been selected and is WellSky Corporation. We are looking at making a decision for the implementation vendor is being then pushing forward with the selection of the bidder and starting implementation in March to April timeframe. He continued that they would begin with status updates and review of our readiness of our team, then establishing a process for review of all of the implementation metrics decision making process as we proceed forward with each implementation step. Mr. Engell shared that full implementation phased to have the EMR up and done for the first quarter of 2025. Trustee Mass can you tell us, on the implementation phase, are you anticipating both Holyoke and Chelsea implementing simultaneously. Mr. Engell replied that we will do both meaning we will be including both of our teams from Holyoke and Chelsea as we development the implementation, the phasing and education and training, but then we will be going sequentially aspects at one of the Home and then the second Home. We will have lessons learned along the way. Mr. Engell shared that we will be starting in Chelsea as they are moving into their new building, it won't be quiet ready as they are moving in but we are currently scanning all of the records and then we will be moving forward subsequently. Trustee Mass asked why was Chelsea chosen first and since it is phased could it be alternating. Mr. Engell replied that he would prefer to wait and see what the readiness assessment tells us, in the best way to move forward at both so we will be doing that at both Homes simultaneously and with membership from both Homes with our PMO and implementation vendor and working forwards to seeing how the staff are able to respond to the training and be ready for the implementation. He continued that the initial decision associated with moving the EMR into Chelsea first was to have the ENR in new building. Trustee Mass asked if the physical capabilities of the building so are we going to be able to fully implement the EMR in the existing building in Holyoke and what is the transition for the new building. Mr. Engell responded that there are not building issues with the implementation, it is a web based system and we are WIFI enabled, so it will move seamlessly into the new building.

### **Update on VA Small Home Grant Program (Mr. Lazo/Mr. Hevy)**

Mr. Hevy reported that the Soldiers' Home continues to move forward with the VA Construction Grant. We have recently, since the last Board of Trustees meeting, posted the draft Environmental Assessment Survey for the construction project prepared by Fort Point Associates on behalf of Payette for the required 30-day notice review for public comment.

Mr. Hevy continued that the public notice was placed in the Springfield Republican newspaper and the draft Environmental Survey was posted on the Holyoke Soldiers' Home and the Department of Veteran Services website for public review where a website was established to collect any public comments received regarding the draft. DCAMM, Holyoke, and DVS worked closely with the VA to obtain VA approved templates for the public notice prior to its placement.

Mr. Hevy stated that once the 30-day public notice period is up (February 2, 2023). Fort Point Associates/Payette, DCAMM, DVS, and Holyoke will discuss any comments received and determine how they will be implemented into the final version for submission of the Environmental Assessment Survey to the VA as part of the final document submission process by the state.

Trustee Jourdain asked if Mr. Hevy believes the process is progressing according to plan and are we tracking the way we should be at this point. Mr. Hevy replied yes and that the final checklist is almost complete with only a few final steps left because they include the final budget numbers and the final project planning process. He continued that whatever we have needed to supply to the VA we have already and these final few things left remaining will be completed over the next couple of months.

**Update on transition to new governance of "State Homes" per passage of H.4441/S.2761 (Mr. Engell/ Atty Boyle)**

Mr. Engell reported that on January 20 the members of the DVS team are meeting with Chairman Lyons and Chairman Keefe, and we will be going through our understanding of the new regulations and talking through any issues, questions or concerns. He continued that from there they will have sessions with both of the local boards and in March with our consolidated council statewide. Trustee Jourdain asked if it is the intention of the leadership to have a maiden voyage of the new statewide council in March and have you identified the people who will be filling all of these seats. He continued that it is straightforward at this point relatively speaking the two local boards which we comprise ten of the seats but is everybody else been identified and can you circulate around to everyone so we can get acquainted. Mr. Engell replied that he cannot speak to any of the developmental detail at this point, I have not been briefed in yet for some of it and I know that many people are working hard to get this moving forward. Mr. Engle shared that they have appointments at the governor's level, the Secretary at EHS level and our two local boards, more to come is the answer on that. Mr. Engle stated that+ we are addressing all of the questions while we are transitioning and address everyone's points.

**Legal opinion between the State Legislature and the OIG on the Board's authority relative to the Trustee Fund. Questions posed during 9/13/22 Regular Meeting by Trustee Jourdain.**

**Atty John Bagley, MORRISON & MAHONEY LLP**

Trustee Jourdain shared that they have the questions out to Mr. Bagley. He continued that he did have an opportunity to speak to Mr. Bagley recently and he inform him they are working on this, and timeline have wrapped up by the Finance Committee next week, hopefully we will hear at the meeting next week.



**Status of Plaque recognizing a minimum of 20 years' Service to Holyoke Soldiers Home**

Mr. Lynch stated that Dinn Brothers would be the vendor for the large plaque with a cost just under \$400 and I do not think we need a motion since it is less than the \$2000 threshold.

Mr. Lynch updated the committee if we are going to provide a smaller plaque for each retiree found from Dinn Brother the cost for a standard retirement plaque ranges from \$27-\$120, so maybe assuming we would find something that is \$30-40 and you in script them then you can project 10-20 individuals retiring in a year, the general fund financial impact total of \$750 for about 15 retirees in a year to the trustee fund and the board. He continued that we can move forward in purchasing the large plaque and begin to identify names of those who have served over 20 years and attaching those inscriptions to the large plaque that can be placed here at the Soldiers' Home. Mr. Lynch stated that he would turn it over to the board to determine if it is their intention to provide individual plaques to retirees assuming it is close to \$50 per person estimate. Trustee Jourdain asked if there was 15 people a year retiring with 20 years of service. Mr. Lynch replied that it could be around that quantity, right now we have a number of staff and if we go back to when this discussion began and it was brought up with the retirement of Maggie Feyre, there are number of staff who meet that threshold. Trustee Jourdain said they will discuss at the next Finance Committee meeting.

Trustee Jourdain confirmed that we do not need to vote on the \$400 because the amount is under \$2,000.

**New Business****Meeting Date /Time with Chelsea& Holyoke Boards Chairmen on Transition to New Governance Issues (Mr. Engell)**

**January 20, 2023 the time TBD**

Trustee Jourdain confirmed the governance transition meeting on January 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjourn:**

Trustee Mass made a motion to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Trustee Collins. Roll Call vote: Trustee Collins (Yes), Trustee Mass (Yes), Trustee Ostrander (Yes) and Trustee Jourdain (Yes). It was unanimously VOTED to conclude the meeting at 6:52 p.m.

The next meeting will be on February 14, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathleen Denner, Acting Secretary for the Board of Trustees

**Attachments:**