

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 Wednesday, June 8, 2022. The meeting began at 5:33 PM.

Board Members Present in Person:

Gary Keefe, Cindy Lacoste, and Carmen Ostrander

Board Members via WebEx:

Mark Bigda, Sean Collins, and Isaac Mass. Kevin Jourdain joined at 5:40 p.m.

Also Present:

John Cronin, Chief Financial Officer (DVS); Matthew Deacon, Legal Counsel (DVS); Dr. Diane Dietzen, Chief Medical Officer (HLY); Debra Foley, Communications (HLY); Kelly (Hansen) Jones, 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); Elba Pires Morgado, Ombudsman; Cheryl Poppe, Secretary (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), Cindy Lacoste (Yes), Trustee Mass (Yes) and Trustee Ostrander (Yes). Trustee Jourdain joined the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Upon motion by Trustee Lacoste and Seconded by Trustee Ostrander it was unanimously VOTED to accept the unamended minutes of the regular Board Meeting held on May 10, 2022, the Finance Committee Meeting held on March 16, 2022, the Finance Committee Meeting on April 20, 2022, and the Operations Committee meeting held on April 26, 2022

Chairman Keefe conducted a Roll Call vote on the approval of the minutes of the regular Board Meeting held on May 10, 2022, the Finance Committee Meeting held on March 16, 2022, the Finance Committee Meeting on April 20, 2022, and the Operations Committee meeting held on April 26, 2022. The Roll Call vote is as follows: Mark Bigda (Yes), Sean Collins (Yes), Gary Keefe (Yes), Cindy Lacoste (Yes), Isaac Mass (Yes), and Carmen Ostrander (Yes) It was unanimously VOTED to approve the minutes.

Payette Update (Mr. Lazo):

Chairman Keefe informed that group that the next Payette update will be in August.

He asked Mr. Lazo to discuss the request from the new Mayor of Holyoke has requested an update on the new building. Mr. Lazo shared that Mayor Garcia, through his team, has requested an update and Payette will provide that update to him on June 29th. He continued that he will share the presentation that was given to the board in April.

Chairman Keefe asked Mr. Lazo if there will be a groundbreaking date and Mr. Lazo stated that we are waiting on response from Joe Fazio of DCAMM.

CFO/Treasurer Report (Mr. Lynch)

Mr. Lynch updated the board of this month's expenses which included entertainment and bingo. He continued that entertainment was a bit higher at just over \$4,800 which include two live bands that we are going to have outdoors. Mr. Lynch stated that we are focused on additional entertainment for over the summer months. He continued that we generated just over \$2,000 in donations so that is on the lower end but we have been having about \$3,000 for the past few months so it is fairly consistent. He announced that the budget director position is live and he is hopeful that we will attract good candidates and fill the position in a month or so. Mr. Lynch reported that the FY23 trustee fund spending plan that has been reviewed and approved at the Finance Committee meeting with the FY23 spending plan following the same guidelines that we had for FY22 in the hopes that we generate more donations than we are expending. He continued that the initial spending plan for this year, FY22, was \$100,000 and we have only spend in the mid-thirties we still have a strong plan to expend funds in quality areas that impact the veterans. Mr. Lynch stated that one of the areas we updated and added \$5,000 value for this upcoming year was to subscription services we have talked about IN2L and their digital program and we are also having active conversations about additional programming opportunities for veterans and have the trustee fund might be able to fund those types of opportunities. In summary the FY23 spending plan totals \$86,420 with a number of adjustments to the different categories that were sent out to the group.

5:40 p.m. Trustee Jourdain joined the meeting via Teams.

DVS Staff Report (Secretary Poppe)

Secretary Poppe thanked everyone for their participation in Memorial Day Remembrances at the Homes and cemeteries, we had very moving ceremonies. She gave a reminder this Saturday is our Women Veteran Conference at the Norwood 4 Points with guest speaker Commander Billie J. Farrell she is the first female commander of the USS Constitution.

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

Mr. Lazo reported that admissions are continuing, and we currently have 102 veterans in house with 2 in the hospital with 8 beds available after 1 admission today. He continued that we have 99.7% of our staff had the first booster with 4 staff still not eligible. Mr. Lazo stated that we have offered the second booster to eligible staff and

veterans. He continued that right now we are at 99% of eligible consenting veterans receiving the second booster with the 1 left is the new admission, we have had 4 residents that have declined and 4 residents that are not eligible. Mr. Lazo shared that we have periodic shot clinics for those veterans and staff, at this time only 33 staff members have elected to receive the second booster. He continued that as the numbers in the community rise it reflects what we see in positive staff and as of yesterday we have 7 COVID positive staff with 0 positive veterans and we continue to conduct testing two times a week so we are able to capture positives.

Mr. Lazo reported on the current building construction on 2 South our isolation unit began on May 31 and currently demolition is going on with no major issues noted. He is looking forward to the recreation plan for the summer with the larger bands outside, we also have coming up tomorrow a picnic outside with DAV Chapter 11. He shared that the biggest announcement bringing the home back to its previous activities is that Canteen kitchen opened today for the first time in 1-1/2 -2 years this is a great step getting that open.

Mr. Lazo stated that staffing is at 303 organic employees with 282 reporting to work which gives us 93.3% active rate, our HPPD rate for May was 7.22. He continued that as of May 29 Ms. Jones is our official DON and Lynne Gidaracos who was one of our evening supervisors became our ADON.

Mr. Lazo reported that our General Counsel has accepted that position and will start July 11 and we are continuing to recruit for a chaplain, veteran care coordinator and night nursing supervisor with offers being prepared for one veteran care coordinator and nursing supervisor.

Mr. Lazo stated our VA survey corrective action plan was submitted on April 27 and we were notified on May 16 that we were provisionally certified by the VA following the acceptance of our corrective action plan and will receive full certification once corrective action plan in place.

Mr. Lazo shared on community events that on May 24 he was invited to the Wistariahurst Museum for a uniform exhibit. A student from UMASS, Amherst did research on a variety of uniforms dating back to periods of history and met Mayor Garcia at the event. He continued that on Friday he was invited to and will attend the VFW auxiliary convention, on June 24 he will attend the American Legion convention, and our next Community Veteran meeting will be on August 8.

Chairman Keefe asked Mr. Lazo if we are all set with the 3 veterans that were in need of a PCP. Mr. Lazo replied that his understanding is yes but he will double check with social work. Chairman Keefe asked how the job fairs at the Holyoke Mall and STCC led to anything. Mr. Lazo reported that there was nothing that he is aware of that led directly to our being there. Ms. Jones added that one of the recreation staff came from the job fairs.

Trustee Mass asked Mr. Lazo what percentage of veterans transferred to the VA in Leeds and Mr. Lazo replied, approx. 70%. Mr. Lazo continued that 25% went to Springfield CBOC with the remaining 5 split between other CBOCs. Trustee Mass shared that none of us want Leeds to close but we may need to do some contingency planning for these guys down the line, just something to keep on our radar.

Trustee Jourdain stated that at the last meeting he had requested a report relative to how many staff we have on each shift so we can understand why we have elevated levels of overtime and agency. Mr. Lazo stated that the report was shared with the Operations Committee and was in Trustee Collins materials, so he will discuss.

Trustee Lacoste asked if everybody is out of the dorms. Mr. Lazo confirmed.

Holyoke Soldiers' Home General Counsel Report (Atty Yankopoulos)

Mr. Yankopoulos no significant change to our legal posture. The investigations that are continuing include the Department of Justice and the Inspector General, with no outstanding public record requests and no new lawsuits. He continued that, as Mr. Lazo reported, his replacement on boarding and should be available for the next meeting.

Trustees' Finance Committee Report (Trustee Jourdain)

Trustee Jourdain reported that the Finance Committee met on May 23 and the biggest event was, we appreciated Mr. Lynch coordinated with DCAMM to discuss the tower revenue issue and making sure the future building is fitted to allow such a service. He continued that we had Mr. Fazio, Ms. Ruban and Mr. Tsaparles who is the Deputy Director of the program and has been at ground zero for various state properties for towers and oversees all telecommunication revenue. Trustee Jourdain shared the biggest takeaway from the meeting is that they were not aware we wanted to do this and they did not realize that we are looking to do this in the new building and we had a discussion making sure they and designers are having a conversation with questions relative to making sure this does not take away from anything to do with the building, all we would have is a metal shed on the roof. He continued how this was successful out in Chelsea and it was considered part of the build, talked about the market for this and the potential revenue that would come, mentioned it would be approximately \$24,000 a year in revenue for each one of the leases. Trustee Jourdain reported that they shared that this would give us 40% of the revenue, 50% would go into the general fund, and DCAMM keeps 10% of the revenue. He continued that there would be provisions for our public safety and other partners to have space. Trustee Jourdain asked Mr. Lynch to coordinate and to connect with our people regarding the building design. He continued that they mentioned that there are 3 major providers out there and that this is a great location.

Trustee Jourdain shared that we then talked at length relative to Mr. Lynch's goals for his annual evaluation and the Finance Committee is very pleased with the job he is doing and we articulated our opinion to the chairman and the superintendent what our suggestions were relative to Mr. Lynch and our opinions of his evaluations. Trustee

Jourdain stated that they discussed the number of goals and we are supportive of those goals. He continued that we solicited any member that wanted to share their opinions as well and we got that in earlier this week. We discussed the spending plan and also discussed doing a 2-year audit of the trustee fund. Trustee Jourdain stated that they discussed changes to the spending plan. He continued that the Finance Committee approved the recommendation for up to \$3,000 for the August Trustee Picnic including a DJ and food and will make a motion in a moment. He continued that the American Legion motorcycle ride that came and was supportive with over \$1,000 in donations were collected.

Trustee Jourdain made a motion to approve \$3,000 for the Trustee picnic including a DJ and food. Trustee Lacoste seconded the motion. No discussion. All in favor. The motion passes unanimously.

Trustee Jourdain made a motion to approve the FY23 Trustee Fund Spending Plan. Trustee Collins seconded the motion. No discussion. All in favor. The motion passes unanimously.

Chairman Keefe asked Trustee Jourdain if the Finance Committee is comfortable with the entertainment budget and are you getting what you need to bring up the quality. Trustee Jourdain replied definitely yes and at the April Finance Committee meeting the, Recreation Director, Ms. Feyre came in and we told her go bold and feel free to bring in new stuff, high quality and we are going to support it. The recreation team surveys the veterans to make sure they approve of the entertainment.

Trustees' Operations Committee Report (Trustee Collins)

Trustee Collins took everyone through the dashboard. He shared that the KPI's are looking stable, and that staffing is getting where we need it to be in regard to the nursing hours and continues to go up and the agency hours are going down. Trustee Collins stated that in safety that caught our attention and we had some discussion with the team regarding the veteran falls going up and we need to stay on top of. He continued that restraints are stable, behavioral events a little bit in the red but as we discussed at the last board meeting with being a little more open with reporting of those events and these events are beginning to be tracked by nursing. He referred to an article in the Massachusetts Report on Nursing in March addressing the issue with coping with patient assault and not us physical assault but verbal throughout the state not just veterans. He would like to make sure everyone is trained and addressing issues when those types of behaviors are observed.

Trustee Collins reported that we are continuing to have service issues in the Pinnacle report with numbers going up and down. We are looking at different communication solution sets outside of Pinnacle to try to get after what the concerns are. He continued that the response to problems are improving as well as long term satisfaction.

Ms. Jones added the behavior events are reflective of case mix, the May case mix gone up a little bit so what we are hoping to capture is working. Trustee Collins shared that the 4 East numbers had gone up and the numbers are reflective because of new admissions, and it takes time for veterans to acclimate.

Trustee Jourdain asked how come we do not have the overtime reporting for April yet, Ms. Jones replied that we have it now but at the time this was created we did not have it yet because it comes out the full pay period into the month which is 2-3 weeks into the month. Trustee Jourdain asked if she knows what the percentage was. Ms. Jones will send him the information.

Trustee Mass asked regarding the recommend rate that we had a massive improvement from red to green, why is that. Trustee Collins replied that is why he likes to look at the trends and because they only had two responses in the Pinnacle report so a lot of the scores were lower this month but this one popped up because the family member responded they did not know so that will bring down the score versus I recommend it which will skew it in a different direction.

Trustee Collins continued to page 2 getting policy reviews nothing really off there, he loves the employee recognition, looking for folks to recognize. He continued this is the that we were looking for we cannot figure out why, it is not a seasonal pattern there is something different for the month. The breakdowns by medications, when did it happen, those that had fell on the antipsychotics that was a big number so was it related to medication, we continue to do the forensic work, and we are making great strides compared to a year ago. Trustee Keefe asked regarding the total by shift 3-11 from February led with high number of falls and then April and May they moved down, it looks like on Sundays a higher rate, so he is wondering if we have more falls than we what we track, because Sunday had visitors for Mother's Day and Easter and people are more mobile. Trustee Collins replied that all of these things are important to know regarding medication side effects, time of day may be when veterans are getting ready for bed or getting up at night all of those things are important and then you go back to Trustee Jourdain's question what is the staffing mix on the weekend or nights. He continued that all of this is taken into consideration you will see more incidents in a certain period. Ms. Jones stated that there was also a spike in April last year, I would not correlate it to a holiday. She continued that the second shift traditionally leads the pack because it is a difficult time of night with sundowning it makes it more challenging. As far as May and June it starts to drop off, was it a giant influx of new admissions with this changing the dynamics of what is happening. Trustee Collins stated that part of this is to show you on KPI the dashboard there is substantial analysis on those KPI's that have a lot more information.

Trustee Collins moved to slide 3 shows the breakdown pattern, per shift, the RN, LPN and CNA breakdown when you look at the numbers by unit which shows the great work they are doing. Trustee Collins reviewed the quarterly update on Committee Structure and Charter and that is looking good and moving along well. He continued that the Antibiotic Stewardship program had a good discussion in regard to the

infection control dashboard and the Antibiotic Stewardship program overall in the report cards that every time an antibiotic is prescribed it is scrubbed to make sure it is the right one, Dr. Dietzen has oversight of that. He continued that it is good rationale and if there comment to be made if something was prescribed and may have not been the best choice the feedback is given. Trustee Jourdain stated that this is the date of May 23rd and he is not sure what day of the week that was but does this follow the exact same schedule everyday 7 days a week. Trustee Collins replied yes. Trustee Collins asked these assignments that we have this is the same whether it is a Wednesday or a Sunday. Trustee Collins replied yes. Trustee Jourdain asked if the numbers of how many are organic or how many are agency are not changing on the weekends. Ms. Jones answered that if you look at the sheet the numbers that are in black the staffing patten is just that would be the ideal, the minimum you would have to run a floor the numbers that are in red are the actual. She continued the numbers in black will not change, that is your pattern and the items in red are the actual staff that you have on that day. So that is after your call outs and everything that has occurred. Trustee Jourdain asked of the 303 staff that work here what amount of those are in these two categories licensed and CNA. Mr. Lazo replied that we have 149 direct care staff. Trustee Jourdain asked if we have support staff, like the custodial and different things like that, is that operating on 3 shifts 7 days. Mr. Lazo replied that housekeeping runs two shifts and dietary runs 2 shifts, and maintenance runts 1 shift with on call. Trustee Jourdain asked if there a way to figure out if I ask how much of the organic staff are on overtime versus not overtime. Trustee Collins replied yes. Trustee Jourdain will review. Trustee Mass wanted to understand this chart, the last column in each of the 6 charts is the ratio of veterans to personnel of that type. Ms. Jones replied said yes that the gray is the licensed staff and the off white is the CNA staff on the right is the ratio to veterans. Trustee Mass if the staffing pattern is what we want to have happen. Ms. Jones replied that the staffing pattern is minimal staffing. Trustee Mass asked if there could be a place in this chart for our goal staffing, he would like to look at is our goal and if we are meeting our goals, he would also like the variants is hard to determine because if there is upward and downward variants then at a glance it is hard to determine are we adding staff or not enough staff, in the future to understand patterns these would be helpful for him to understand. Ms. Jones replied that we can add goals and that there are no negative staffing variance. Trustee Mass asked when we start comparing it to goals, how far we are off our goals. Trustee Ostrander asked if there is a legal Ratio for staff to patient care. Ms. Jones replied that there is not a legal requirement but that the VA looks at hours per patient day and it has to be greater than 3.5. Trustee Jourdain asked that staffing can move between floors as needed, so you could usually be 2N and if someone calls out you can move, Ms. Jones replied that we try to keep staff as stable as possible because consistency does improve care but if needed people do move about the building. Trustee Jourdain stated that according to the report you do not have much room for error because you are at the minimum. Ms. Jones replied yes.

Trustee Collins reviewed page 4 and the Pinnacle report slide 4. He continued we only had 2 respondents this month and looking at trends over time, there were no significant issues at this time. Chairman Keefe asked how the dining service be that

low and it was shared that people are picky. Mr. Lazo added that opening the Canteen will make a huge difference in the quality of food. Ms. Jones shared that there is a new cook, and she has been hearing good things. Trustee Jourdain asked what happened to the activities we were doing so great and in May it didn't do well. Trustee Collins replied that the response was "I don't know" which counts as a negative.

Trustees' Bylaws Committee Report (Trustee Lacoste)

Trustee Lacoste reported that the committee reviewed the Admission Transfer Discharge process and made changes from EHS and we made a few minor changes. We shortened some of the response times for appeals. Trustee Lacoste would like to have a vote to push it back up to EHS and Mr. Deacon.

Trustee Lacoste made a motion that the Policy as corrected by EHS and the Bylaw Committee be approved and send up to EHS. Trustee Mass seconded. No discussion being heard. All in favor. The motion passes unanimously.

Superintendent Hire Committee Report (Trustee Lacoste)

Trustee Lacoste asked Mr. Deacon to speak regarding putting out RFP that nobody took. Mr. Deacon was having microphone issues so Trustee Lacoste continued that a waiver was put in place by the state to let us go outside the approved vendors. She continued that Mr. Deacon put the waiver in place on May 23 and just we got the response that the waiver was approved by the State and we can go outside with the RFR to do a wider search. Chairman Keefe read the email for the waiver request submitted, was approved, next step RFR posted on COMMBUYS so any vendor can respond. Mr. Deacon shared that because they were State vendors and we thought the path of least resistance was to go with a State vendor and nobody responded so we had to submit a waiver to OSD. He continued that OSD approved our waiver so we are going to draft a RFR and anyone can respond to get a vendor for the search. Trustee Mass asked if we are doing this passively or asking people to look at it and apply, he has submitted vendors, are we being passive or proactive. Mr. Deacon replied that once it is posted on COMMBUYS we can push it and publicize it in trade publications and we can say it is live. He continued that if we are going to push it we may want to consider having it open for longer instead of the 14 day RFR we can have a 30 day RFR. Trustee Mass agreed that it makes sense to give 30 days to respond especially that it is summertime and asking people to look and apply. Mr. Deacon said he spoke with one of the procurement attorneys and she gave a good example of how to publicize once it is live on COMMBUYS and that will add to the integrity of the process if we push it out as much as possible so as many people see it because we did try the State contract and we got nobody to respond so we want to make sure we get someone this time around.

Old Business

Chairman Keefe shared that the signed resolution went out to our Federal Congressional Delegates of the Commonwealth, it went to the director of the VA, the

Governor's office, Senate President's Office, Speaker Mariano's Office, and to the Legislatures of Hampshire, Hamden, Berkshire and Franklin Counties received emails and hard copies. Chairman Keefe has already received approximately 7 emails from State Legislatures in the Western Mass area that they received it and they appreciate the support of the Home. The resolution identifies the fact that the trustees do not agree with the potential closure of the Veterans Administration Hospital in Northampton/Florence Massachusetts.

Update of EMR vendor contract (Mr. Engell)

Mr. Lazo shared that have been no real changes. He continued that Mr. Engell is working with DVS on the supporting activities including contract for scanning as well as a contract for project management.

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

Chairman Keefe has not heard any update. Secretary Poppe stated she has not formally heard any update. Chairman Keefe will be in DC and has meeting a with Chairman Neal's staff.

Staffing Status (Mr. Lazo)

Mr. Lazo stated that there is not additional information.

June 21, 2022 Joint Chelsea & Holyoke Board Meetings Issues (Mr. Engell)

Chairman Keefe reminded everyone that on June 21st there will be a joint meeting with Chelsea. He also shared that the virtual meeting ends in August unless there is an extension from the Attorney General's Office. Chairman Keefe asked Mr. Deacon and Mr. Yankopoulos if the virtual not extended and the trustees have to meet in person does that mean we will have to open the facility to the public and that is a potentially an issue, are we required to do this type of format for people with disabilities. Mr. Deacon stated they did look at one issue regarding the building when it comes to access and if we want to keep open forum through Webex we may not have to open the room where the trustees meet in. He continued that there was an opening meeting law decisions that we looked at when we would have to let the public into a place that there is a quarantine so will be doing more research, utilizing this technology will be useful. Chairman Keefe understands it is good for us the trustees to be here, but while we are protecting against variants.

Board Input to DVS for performance Evaluations for Superintendent & Treasurer/CFO By June 3, 2022

Chairman Keefe thanked the Operations and Finance Committees for providing the input to DVS for the evaluations of the Superintendent and Treasurer/CFO. I appreciate the people that took the time to put it together and also the DVS team this is the first time this has been done with the Board having input for the evaluations.

Chairman Keefe shared that the Memorial Day event was outstanding. It was held at the flagpole on the hill with singers was an outstanding event.

New Business**Annual Trustee Picnic/August Board of Trustees Meeting August 9, 2022
Picnic at 11 am and BOT Meeting at 1:30 pm.**

Cindy Lacoste turned in her resignation for the end of the month. Chairman Keefe shared that the Governor's Office is currently looking at a few people to replace Trustee Lacoste.

Adjourn:

Trustee Lacoste made a motion to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Trustee Mass. It was unanimously VOTED to conclude the meeting at 6:47 PM.

The next meeting will be August 9, 2022.

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

Attachments: