

Soldiers' Home in Holyoke Board of Trustees Meeting

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke (HLY) was held telephonically on Tuesday, May 12, 2020. The meeting began at 5:20 PM.

- **Members Present:**

Kevin Jourdain, Chairman; Christopher Dupont, Cindy Lacoste, Cesar Lopez, Richard Girard, Isaac Mass.

- **Also Present:**

Val Liptak, Acting Superintendent; Dan Tsai, Assistant Secretary, EOHHS; Norman Gousy, Chief Financial Officer, Pat Dill, Interim Nurse Executive; Francisco Ureña, Secretary, DVS; Mark Yankopoulos, Legal Counsel; Stuart Ivimey, Legal Counsel, DVS; and Nancy Shimel, Recording Secretary.

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

- **Public Comment**

No public comment – a veteran from Soldiers' Home in Holyoke dormitory had expressed interest in speaking with the Board of Trustees. This will be on a future agenda if he chooses to do so.

- **Approval of Minutes**

Upon motion by Kevin Jourdain and seconded by Cesar Lopez, it was unanimously VOTED to accept the unamended minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting held on April 16, 2020. Kevin Jourdain conducted a Role Call vote on the approval of the unamended minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held on April 16, 2020. The Role Call vote is as follows: Christopher Dupont (Yes), Richard Girard (Yes), Cindy Lacoste (Yes), Cesar Lopez (Yes), Isaac Mass (Yes), Kevin Jourdain (Yes).

Upon motion by Kevin Jourdain and seconded by Richard Girard, it was unanimously VOTED to accept the minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting held on April 21, 2020 with the following changes:

1. Replace spelling of "Roll Call Vote" to "Role Call Vote" within meeting minutes.
2. Under Retention of Counsel for the Board: Change the following sentence: "Attorney Bagley is the president of the Hampden County Bar Association and is also a member of the American College of Trial Lawyers" to "Attorney Bagley is the former president of the Hampden County Bar Association and is also a member of the American College of Trial Lawyers."

Kevin Jourdain conducted a Role Call vote on the approval of the above two changes into the minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held on 4/21/20. The Role Call vote is as follows: Chris Dupont (Yes), Richard Girard (Yes), Cindy Lacoste (Yes) Cesar Lopez (Yes), Isaac Mass (Yes), Kevin Jourdain (Yes). It was unanimously VOTED to approve the two changes to the Board of Trustees meeting held on 4/21/20.

- **CFO Update**

Norman Gousy reviewed the "Trustee Fund-Summary of Receipts and Disbursement Report for FY20 for the period ending April 30, 2020, as well as the operating budget and current month's activity detail. He noted that the increase in Investment Gains provided recovery from the March losses. Norm reported that this report is a point in time view of our spending this year. It does not reflect the more recent increase in costs related to stabilizing the Home. We are focused on serving the veteran residents safely and the stabilization of the Home. Norm reported that EOHHS has assured us that we will have any funding that is needed for this. He noted that additional management staff had been brought in for nursing administration, facilities and operations. There has also been increased expense for PPE supplies, disinfection protocols, routine deep cleaning and enhanced security measures when entering and exiting the building. Norm reported that we will have a fuller picture of the costs for FY20 over the next few months as we are billed and reconcile invoices for these additional services. He will keep the Board of Trustees apprised of overall financial data, and will provide an update at the next Board of Trustees meeting. Cesar Lopez asked for clarification on the consultant expense of \$101,640. Norm reported that the majority of this is for the Ripples Group for the electronic medical record project. Cesar

CFO Update (cont'd):

inquired whether these funds came out of the Trustee fund or the state budget. Norm confirmed that they had come from the Trustee Fund. Chris Dupont stated that at a former Board of Trustees meeting, he had requested a brief on how the Soldiers' Home goes about formulating the budget for the new fiscal year. He requested that a placeholder be put on this item for a future Board of Trustee agenda item once normalcy has resumed with the Home. Kevin Jourdain noted that he plans to schedule a Finance Committee meeting in early June. He will follow up with the Finance Committee members to schedule.

- **Report from State and Superintendent:**

Daniel Tsai, Assistant Secretary for EOHHS, expressed his thanks to the Board of Trustees, the Legislature, and all others on-site, for the work going on at the Soldiers' Home. He particularly would like to thank Val Liptak, the Soldiers' Home staff and the National Guard who continue to work tirelessly day in and day out. We have had a continued effort from Baystate Medical Center, Behavioral Health Network and Holyoke Medical Center. We are currently finding our way to stability and coming out of clinical crisis mode with the Command Center and moving toward stabilizing day-to-day operations at the Home. We are working to prepare from a Refresh standpoint, and will then bring back the veterans currently residing at Holyoke Medical Center. Staff have been returning who were out relative to COVID. Staffing levels sustained, supplemented with assistance from the National Guard. Potential for the Board of Trustees to come for a social distance visit to see what is happening at the Home, and to observe the work done by the staff and Command Center over the past 2 months.

Val Liptak, Interim Superintendent, presented the Superintendent's Report:

Statistics: Val reviewed the current census, resident deaths/testing data, employee data relative to COVID. She noted that we continue work with the Return to Work guidelines and are following up with all staff regarding their employment status.

Soldiers: Our focus continues to be on Safety/Separating. We continue to have regular physician rounding and clinical assessments done on a regular basis for all veterans. As recommended by the Baystate Infection Control Team, we continue to retest veterans as they come symptomatic. We are still moving patients and cohorting appropriately. We currently have 6 units open: 2 negative units, 4 positive units, 3rd floor was completely closed on 4/27/20. As of today, we have no patients that are symptomatic. We will continue to swab veterans if they become symptomatic. Our medical and infection control team remains partnered with the Baystate Medical Team regarding our delivery of care practices for our veterans. We are working with our team on a plan for our veterans to get fresh air and visit families. Rehab services for our veterans are underway and their care plan adjusted accordingly. With many patients stabilizing, we are adjusting our recreational programs to meet infection control requirements while giving our veterans a great sense of normalcy. Recreational activities include music, trivia, doorway bingo, and yoga. Recreation staff go by unit and veterans' social distance by staying in their doorways. Military Friend Foundation donated 20 Ipads and Brighton Marine donated approximately 180 Ipads for veterans to connect with families. A number of legislators have to come to visit and tour the Home over the last several weeks, including Senators Timilty and Welch, and Representatives Campbell, Velis, Vega, and Finn. The community outpour of support has been amazing. We have received letters and numerous donations, including Ipads to connect our veterans to their families and meals and snacks for the staff.

Staffing-Staffing Patterns and Plans: We remain above the industry standard for staffing patterns based on Hours Per Patient Day (HPPD) – maintaining a 5-Star long term care facility rating. We are currently plugging active staff into the staffing pattern matrix as they return to work. As the organic staff continue to return to the workforce, we are in the process of phasing out the National Guard Staff over the next 4-6 weeks. We remain very grateful for their support and commitment. We continue to hire clinical positions in preparation for receiving our veterans that are currently at Holyoke Medical Center and prepare for an increase in our census. As for additional staffing supports, we will have 2 BHN Social Workers on-site to support the veterans, line staff, and to provide weekend coverage. Our interim Clinical Consultant Team remains in place for approximately the next 3 months – our Executive Consultant, Pat Dill, has a team of 4 nurse executives that have been assigned to different areas to assist the organic leadership team. The focus areas are staffing, infection control, quality improvement, training and development, and daily operations of the units to ensure we have the correct policies and procedures in place to ensure a safe environment for our veterans. Currently we have three vacant Executive

Superintendent's Report (cont'd):

positions: the Deputy Superintendent, which is currently posted; the Director of Plant Operations, which is currently posted. During this gap, we have an Interim Director of Plant Operations, who will be with us for 6 months. We are working with DCAMM to complete our refresh project and address our emergency life safety issues, including generators, transfer switches, the cooling tower, and suppression system. The Medical Director has given his notice to resign from the Medical Director position once a replacement is identified. Dr. Clinton will remain part of the medical team on a part-time status. We are currently interviewing for an interim Medical Director and will take this opportunity to complete a review of our current Medical Model, policy and procedures, and operational practices.

Stuff - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Procurement of PPE is an ongoing partnership with EHS. We have been able to maintain adequate PPE par levels. Baystate PPE coaches continue to be on-site providing on-time training with our staff on the units. Our executive infection control nurse continues to support the organic team and assist with rounds on units to ensure proper use of PPE.

Space – Facility practices to prevent spread: Additional housekeeping services remain in place. The refresh project is underway. This project is critical to be able to bring veteran residents back safely from Holyoke Medical Center. It is also critical to be able to safely manage infection control for the facility for the medium to longer term plan. The entire 3rd floor is emptied. The Refresh Project includes removing 70-year-old wallpaper and patient room treatments that don't comply with infection control standard. Addressing this is critical to be able to maintain appropriate daily and terminal cleaning of the units and to mitigate infection spread. The project also includes replacement of wardrobes that are old and stained. Once the first phase of the Refresh Project is complete, we will move the in-house veterans to the three refreshed units and move into the second phase. The second phase will involve doing the same level of refresh for infection control purposes on the second floor plus 2 North. This project is expected to take approximately 2-3 months. Once complete, we will be able to bring back the veterans from Holyoke Medical Center. Looking forward, we are further analyzing industry best practices on infection control and assessing our space to optimize safety and health at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home.

Specifically, we are assessing configuration of beds and number of residents that have historically resided in each of the rooms. Currently, some beds are only 24 inches apart. This will need to change for both appropriate social distancing and appropriate personal space for veteran residents. A more thorough analysis will be completed and we will report back when that is done.

Stabilization – Communications with the families continue via phone and through virtual platforms like Facetime. The dedicated Family Hotline that we established shortly after standing up the Clinical Command is averaging less than 20 calls a day. Due to the fact there have been no evening calls, the hotline hours have been modified to 8am-4pm Monday through Friday. Families can still reach the Soldiers' Home outside of the hotline hours by calling the main number for the Home. A letter was emailed and mailed to the Health Care Proxy regarding these changes. Please note we will continue to work with the Baystate Team as we look to recovery of normal operations and rolling out a plan for visitation with loved ones.

Systems – As we move to the state of stabilization, our focus continues to be working to create systems to improve workflow and support staff to return to a state of normalcy. This includes implementing more sustainable processes for specific clinical, operational, financial, human resources, and other management functions as we look to transition out of crisis mode and into day-to-day operations. This also includes identifying where there are additional supports needed for the staff and management teams. We anticipate updating the Board further on these items at next month's Board of Trustees meeting.

Isaac Mass asked if it is a requirement of the posted Deputy Superintendent position to have a Nursing Home Administrator license. Val said it is not required, it is preferred. She further noted that based on her clinical experience, this is not a top priority of hiring for this position. She stated that finding the right candidate is what is most important, not the license. She expressed that we are looking for someone who has experience with a broader background. Isaac inquired if there is a level of medical expertise requirement. Val stated that we'll need to look at the entire executive team to identify that we have the strengths we want. Isaac noted that he is trying to understand how we are going about this, inquiring if we are looking at replacing the entire executive team. Val reported that, based on vacancies, more than half of the executive team will need to be replaced. Isaac inquired if we have strategically planned what we want for each position to ensure they have the expertise, given what has

Superintendent's Report (cont'd):

happened, and to ensure this does not happen again. Val stated that this is currently under discussion. We will be looking at the whole process; seeing who applies, reviewing qualifications to see where the expertise lies. We are looking at a couple things, or may bring in interim executive team until the Superintendent is in place.

Isaac had inquired at the last meeting about the HVAC system and making sure appropriate system in place to prevent further spread of COVID as we move into the summer. Val had indicated at that time that the plant manager was being onboarded and would be identifying any issues with temperature control. Val confirmed that air scrubbers are in place on the units, which will improve air quality and exchange. There are additional units coming. Isaac stated that he appreciates the explanation and what is happening with the movement of the veterans the rehab of the units they are in, with the primary purpose being infection control to stop the spread of the disease, not cosmetic.

Chris inquired if the Home goes forward to pursue bringing those three executive positions on board, is the current salary appropriate to bring on the best candidates for those positions? Val noted that this is a valid question, and we'll need to do a salary comparison looking at other facilities this size.

Kevin reported that Massachusetts law requires there to be one person who has a Nursing Home Administrator license. If this is a preferred qualification for the Deputy Superintendent position, who do you envision would have this license? Dan Tsai expressed that both Chris and Kevin's questions are good. One thing that Val mentioned was around stabilization as we come out of crisis mode; taking a look at management processes and skill sets across the executive team to ensure all the right functions are in place to operate the facility. This will be a thoughtful, strategic decision. Dan stated that we could also put someone in the interim role while long term decisions are worked through. He noted that we do not anticipate any hiring decisions to be made yet. By the next Board of Trustees meeting, we will have a better idea of this, so we can define who we want to put into place or other roles that need to be added to the team. Dan reported that Pat Dill is a interim nurse executive who was brought in to clinically support the executive team.

Kevin noted he is mindful of the fact these positions can take a long time to fill. He is aware that the Board of Trustees does not have a say on the fulfillment of any of these positions, as it is an EOHHS decision, but know that they are available for advice and counsel on what is best for the institution. He would like to have a sense of the model in the next month of where the organization is going, as it may then take another 6 months to find candidates. He stated that he looks forward to more discussion on this. Dan Tsai and Val proposed this as an action for next month to provide an update.

Kevin thanked Val for the weekly updates to the Board of Trustees the last 2 weeks on what is happening at the Home. He inquired what the current vision is for the veterans currently residing at Holyoke Medical Center, and if they will all be coming back to the Soldiers' Home. Val confirmed that they all plan to come back to the Home. They will be brought back once Phase 2 of the Refresh Project has been completed. She is working with Spiros Hatiras, CEO of Holyoke Medical Center, on the return plan for these veterans. Kevin inquired on a report from Val that the VA had reached out to take the 30 veteran residents currently at Holyoke Medical Center, but that all the families/veterans declined, representing that these 30 families and veterans still have ongoing confidence in the facility. Val confirmed this, noting that the families have a very friendly, healthy relationship with the staff.

Kevin asked for confirmation on the number of active employees. Val reported that updated number is 301 active employees, with 45 employees currently out. Kevin noted that the current vacancy rate seems to have decreased. Val stated that the total number of employees is 346, representing both clinical and non-clinical employees. Val noted that we currently have enough staff to manage 6 units, but not the 10 units, which is what we will be getting back to. She is working with Norm Gousy to get the FTE count to run 10 units and will report on this information to the Board of Trustees.

Superintendent's Report (cont'd):

Kevin inquired on what the current view is for the role of the Medical Director . Is it to stay as a 20 hour Chief Medical Director or is there another scenario being evaluated for this role? Val confirmed that Dr. Clinton is currently in a 20 hour position. She reported that we will be taking on an interim Medical Director, while looking at the current medical model, staffing pattern for the medical team, as well as the medical practices to make a decision on the medical complement for this facility.

Kevin Jourdain inquired about the cost of the Refresh Project. Val reported that this is strictly an infection control project, involving removing wallpaper, curtains not meeting infection control standards, replacing wardrobes that can't be cleaned properly. It is a short term project to bring veterans back safely and meet guidelines for occupancy so that staff can care for veterans safely, as there are currently too many veterans in one room, with beds sometimes 24 inches apart. Kevin asked for a clarification on the dollar amount for the project. Dan stated that it will be capital funds of between 1.5-2 million dollars. We will have a better idea when we know what the vendors' costs will be. We are committed to this to ensure the safety of our veterans, noting that this project is non-cosmetic – it is being done from a clinical and infection control standpoint. Kevin noted that this is a generous amount of money, and wants to give credit to EOHHS for giving these funds to the facility; being a significant improvement.

Kevin Jourdain inquired if the deep cleaning being done is ongoing. Val reported that there was an initial deep cleaning done. We continue to have additional cleaning on high touch areas. There is a higher volume of re-cleaning and ensuring entire facility is being cleaned. Contracted cleaning team brought in as current staff not able to handle the volume of this based on current infection control guidelines.

Kevin Jourdain noted that with the National Guard being transitioned out and operational plans beginning to take route, the Board of Trustees look forward to continue to working with Administration to hear the vision and watch this vision take effect. Kevin requested follow-up on a requested item from the March Board of Trustees meeting regarding CDC guidelines regarding Return to Work protocols. Val confirmed that she will send these to Kevin.

Chris Dupont asked if we have an idea of what the total number of beds in the facility will be going forward, with greater space planned to be put between beds. Val reported that based on square footage requirements, it will be between 160-170 veterans. Will need to determine separation/privacy methods on 1N and 2N care centers. Val also reported that they are looking in to the creation of an all Female Unit, due to the bathroom setups, as well looking at the Hospice Program. She stated that families like to stay on the unit where they have received their care, with the same staff, rather than move to a separate Hospice Unit. We are looking into having a designated room on each unit so this could happen.

- **Old Business**

Trustee Account Update – Kevin Jourdain reported that the Trustee Account audit had been put on hold for 30 days. It will now continue to progress. More to follow on this.

Electronic Medical Record – no new business to report.

- **New Business**

Tour of Facility for Trustees with Val Liptak and Staff – The Board of Trustees will arrange to tour the Home in two separate groups. Kevin Jourdain requested that the Board Members provide their availability to do this between 8:00-10:00 am during the weeks of 5/18/20 and 5/25.20. He will proceed with making arrangements for the two tours.

Business request: Dementia Walk for the Board – Norm Gousy reported that the Home received a restricted donation of \$100,000 for the creation of an outdoor area for veterans with Dementia. An architect was hired. A preliminary study was done in 2018 that covers code enforcements, and is available for review. The architect contract is for \$20,000. Norm reported that we already have made a \$3,900 payment and just received another

New Business (cont'd):

invoice for \$5,850. Norm is looking for approval to disburse the sum of \$5,850 for the work that has been done. Kevin Jourdain inquired if we have enough funds to cover the total cost of the project. Norm reported that the preliminary study does not include the total cost of the project. Kevin recommended that this be included on the agenda for the next Finance Committee Meeting. In advance of this, Kevin can address with Norm what due diligence we can do. Kevin would like to learn more for any discussions we may need to have with the donor so that we have the overall project cost and where we are at with the budget. Norm stated that the architect is available to come in to discuss.

Donations to the Soldiers' Home – Kevin Jourdain expressed that, as we all know, there is a lot of praise and compliments to go around. The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke is a special, revered place in the community and there is deep affection for the residents, institution and staff. Kevin noted that we are receiving many reachouts from the community on food donations or other things that can be done for the Soldiers' Home. He recognized in particular, Tom Lyons, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, and Trustee Richard Girard. These two individuals reached out to Brighton Marine to get 185 ipads for the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, and a comparable number of ipads for the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea. These ipads will be used to connect the veterans with their families. He thanked Brighton Marine for their generosity. We have also received a donation of 20 ipads from the Central Hampshire County VFW and Friends Foundation, which was reported in the Daily Hampshire Gazette. A comparable number of ipads was donated to the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea. Kevin also recognized Excelerator Fans for their offer to donate a number of high powered fans and to set up sanitation stations at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. They will be coordinating with Jim Baron, Interim Facilities Director, to pay for the electrician costs to install the fans and stations. Thank you to Excelerator Fans and Jim Baron for their assistance with this. Kevin also thanked Peter Pan Bus Company for offer of food donations for staff appreciation. Kevin will coordinate this with Val Liptak. Kevin Jourdain noted that that the Disabled Veterans of America reached out to him, as they are interested in creating a memorial at the Home and at the Veteran's Cemetery on behalf of the veterans. He will be meeting with them to obtain more information. More to come on this. Kevin expressed his thanks to all the regular donors, both small and large donations help to make the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke a better facility going forward. We will be good stewards of those funds.

- **Adjourn:**

Kevin Jourdain made a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose stated on the agenda. Mr. Jourdain noted for the public's awareness that the Board of Trustees will not be returning from Executive Session to Public Session. The Board of Trustees will adjourn after the Executive Session has ended.

Kevin Jourdain made a motion to conclude the Public Session and move into Executive Session, seconded by Chris Dupont. Role Call Vote is as follows: Chris Dupont (Yes), Richard Girard (Yes), Cindy Lacoste (Yes), Cesar Lopez (Yes), Isaac Mass (Yes), Kevin Jourdain (Yes). It was unanimously voted to conclude Public Session and move into Executive Session at 6:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Shimel
Acting Secretary for the Board of Trustees