

Veterans Home at Holyoke
Board of Trustees Meeting

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Veterans Home at Holyoke (HLY) was held virtually and telephonically on Tuesday November 12, 2024. The meeting began at 5:33 PM.

Board Members: Chairman Collins, Trustee Bigda, Trustee Mass and Trustee Ostrander.

Present via Webex: Robert Engell, Executive Director (VET); Melanie Gentile, Budget Director (HLY); Kathleen Denner, Recording Secretary Diane Dietzen, (HLY); Debra Foley, Communications (HLY); Kelly Jones, Director of Nursing (HLY); Michael Lazo, Superintendent (HLY); Jeff Lenahan, Quality Manager (HLY); Brett Walker, General Counsel (HLY); JM Sorrell, Ombudsperson; Ciara Hanlon, Budget Director (HLY)

Roll Call: Chairman Collins conducted the Roll Call as follows: Trustee Bigda, Trustee Mass, Trustee Ostrander and Chairman Collins.

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

Public Comment: No public comment for this month.

Approval of October 2, 2024 minutes: A motion was made by Trustee Mass to approve the October 2, 2024 Board Meeting minutes and it was seconded Trustee Ostrander. No Discussion.

Roll Call Vote: Trustee Bigda (Yes), Trustee Mass (Yes), Trustee Ostrander (Yes) and Trustee Collins (Yes). It was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2024, Board Meeting.

Old Business:

Follow up on "Funds transition"

Chairman Collins reviewed that this has been discussed at the last two meetings and we have been working with Mr. Deacon and Mr. Engell to get that scheduled.

Donation by the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company

Chairman Collins updated asked for an update. Mr. Lazo shared that the Ancient and Honorable Artillery were able to negotiate directly with the Touch to Play vendor and was able to get a demo unit for Holyoke and one for Chelsea. Mr. Strunk, from the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, has provided all our information with the vendor and we expect deliver of the unit in the next few weeks.

Westfield Bank Transition

Ms. Gentile updated the board that the transfer of checking account from Westfield Bank to Bank of America it would be turned into an expendable trust. Any donations that are moved from the fund and deposited moving forward will stay in the account and every fiscal year it will roll over to the next fiscal year if not spent. She continued that the only exception is that we would not receive the interest from the personal checking.

Trustee Mass asked if future donations move from Bank of America to the UBS account might be more difficult if we do not have an agreement in place. Ms. Gentile said she will get clarification on the process. Trustee Mass asked if we could have the investment account and the if we can transfer to it?

IN2L

Chairman Collins asked if we will be Including IN2L in the Operating Budget for next year. Ms. Gentile replied that we should be able to absorb, but it has not been approved yet because we are in the request phase of the process.

Chairman Collins asked on behalf of Trustee Jourdain in regard to open meeting law if we meet online are we in compliance. Trustee Mass replied that under the exceptions under COVID that keep getting extended, that we are in compliance.

Trustee Mass is concerned that the statute allows the governor to appoint members of the board of trustees from anywhere in the Commonwealth. He continued that they do not have to be from the Western four counties, but, if we meet in person this will make it harder for someone from the Cape or the North Shore to our meetings on a monthly basis. He continued that meeting in person to keep Western Mass representatives.

New Business:**Construction Update**

Chairman Collins discussed the Topping Off ceremony and his appreciation to the staff. Mr. Lazo will share Chairman Collin's kind words with staff. Mr. Fazio retired Barry Heidke, DCAMM employee, is his replacement.

CFO/Treasurer Update

Ms. Gentile reviewed the attached Spending Plan Budget spreadsheet. She highlighted the addition of the new audit and marketing line items. Chairman Collins asked if we have ever done a deeper dive on where donations come from, for example families, communities, or veteran organizations. Ms. Gentile shared that we do have a spreadsheet that shows where they come from and most come from when veterans pass away, we can break it down even further into categories.

Ms. Gentile reported that for the audit posted for quotes through the statewide bidding process system and received no responses. She continued that we will post again to a wider spectrum to show due diligence.

Trustee Mass thought auditing was exempt from the statewide bidding process. Ms. Gentile responded that it is exempt from bidding but not from statewide contract with vendors who already have gone through the vetting process, so you are asking for a quote not a bid.

Ms. Gentile gave an update for the marketing that we are waiting for clarification from Comptrollers because the funds are in Bank of America account and that is technically a statewide contract funding, so we have to find out how it works for the board to manage.

Ms. Gentile updated on the FY26 budget which starts July next year has been submitted A&F and EOVS. We have asked for a budget increase of 8 million to fund for new building expenses.

Trustee Mass asked if we have looked at the costs related to the opening the Adult Day Care. Ms. Gentile replied that the costs are not the responsibility of the Home, there will be a delay of the Adult Day Care opening after the actual Home opens. There will be some reimbursements when it opens, and we are still getting clarification on reimbursements and operational expenses. Trustee Mass asked when we will have to know. Ms. Gentile replied that we will be including it in the budget of FY27.

Chairman Collins asked if the team has been looking at other Adult Day programs. Mr. Lazo replied we have visited the Long Island State run Home to see their program, and now looking at a non-veteran Home closer to our Home to see CMS reimbursement looks like and also VA reimbursements. We have been reviewing the staffing assessment that included Adult Day Health program in it with some staff being built into the FY26 budget. Mr. Lazo finished with that there is a separate licensure Long Term Care and the Adult Day Health program.

Checking account balance transfer from Westfield Bank to State's BOA

Christmas Veteran gift approval Fleece Vest for \$3063.75

Trustee Mass made a motion for Fleece Vest Christmas gift for Veterans, and it was seconded by Trustee Ostrander.

Discussion: Trustee Mass commented if extra vests be produced for when events at that the Home and for Board members to purchase. The addition of 50 vests would make a new total of \$4269.25. The amendment to motion \$4269.25. Mr. Lazo did add that we have an employee store with logo items. Trustee Mass would like to have this overstock not necessarily for purchase but to give away. To legislature, governor, mayor or dignitary and/or anyone we are building relationships with. Mr. Engell questions and asked that we table the procurement of fleeces for nonresidents veteran purposes until we can have council take a deep dive on if we can we use these funds for these purposes, he is not sure and is just raising this as a question. Chairman Collins said we will move forward with the proposed order of 50 and then we can decide at a later time, because of set up fees and costs, we can always give to new veterans if need be.

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

Holyoke Veterans Home Superintendent/Administrator Update (Mr. Lazo):**Census Report**

Mr. Lazo reported that the Homes census is currently at 118 veterans with 6 beds available. We 118 veterans on the waitlists. There is zero 0 covid in the building. As of Monday, staff who have not received COVID and flu vaccines will be required to mask. If community rates rise all staff will staff will be required to mask. As off today the community rates are at 11%. We have flu and COVID vaccinations available for Veterans and Staff. Staff will have to have vaccines or fill out declination form.

Mr. Lazo shared that Recreation has been very busy with Halloween and with Thanksgiving coming up. They had Trunk or Treat on October 24 and on October 31 we had the Annual Costume Parade. We had our first new Veteran Drama Club performed The Little Mermaid. He continued that on Friday November the 8th Veteran's Day event was creating knotting blankets for veterans in need in Chicopee.

Survey Mr. Lazo reported that we are expecting our annual VA survey in January 2025. With our staff remaining survey ready always. Mr. Lazo continued that we are continuing to prepare CMS certification in 6-9 months. Pinnacle satisfaction for October with 100% favorability, 4.9 out of 5 recommends to others score, and a overall satisfaction score of 4.78 out of 5.

Mr. Lazo stated we have 305 FTE with 96% of our staff reporting to work every day. The HPPD for October was 7.35, our RNHPPD 1.26, LPN was 1.29 and CAN was 4.80.

Mr. Lazo shared that the state had a hiring freeze for the summer months, and it is lifting November 1. We can now hire for non-clinical support positions such as accountants and canteen workers.

Mr. Lazo reported that for the month of October the Home was at 91.7% organic staff with only 8.3% agency staff. We are constantly reviewing over time.

New Construction

Mr. Lazo shared that the Topping Off Ceremony was held on November 7. This is the milestone of the steel being completed. Governor Healy, Congressman Neal and Secretary Santiago and three Board members were on site for the event. Two beams were placed in the lobby that were signed by veterans and staff; a third beam was signed by attendees of the event. After the event the everyone entered the building and met with the veterans. Ten of our employees were given certificates of achievements from the state and the security team. Employees who could not attend the Carballo award ceremony a few months ago were also acknowledged.

Mr. Lazo stated that the current Home continues to work on items identified during the DPH Licensure survey and our EMR is going well. Chelsea will be going live with their EMR shortly and then we can work on best practices together.

Holyoke Veterans Home General Counsel Update (Atty Walker):

Mr. Walker updated the board of trustees on open cases and speaking opportunities.

Quality / KPI update

Mr. Lenahan reported on the Homes Continuous Quality Improvements. He shared the power point presentation that is attached. He discussed our surveys, reviewed the data YTD, and Quality Projects.

2025 Board of Trustees Meeting Dates

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Day		11	18		13	17		12	16	14	11	16
Principle		HSH -BOT	COUNCIL		HSH -BOT	Council		HSH -BOT	Council	HSH -BOT	HSH -BOT	Council
Start Time			5:00 – 7:00 PM		5:30PM	11:00- 1:00 PM		5:30PM (Picnic)	5:00 – 7:00 PM	5:30PM	5:30PM	11:00- 1:00 PM

No Executive Session Scheduled for this meeting.

Adjourn:







Trustee Bigda made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and it was seconded by Trustee Ostrander

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 6:44 PM.

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

Attachments:

-  BOT.QJ.NOV24
-  FY25 Trustee Fund Spending Plan- October
-  Holoke Soldiers Home account 2 October 2024 (1)
-  Holyoke Soldiers Home Account 1 Oct 2024 (1)
-  Meeting_Schedule_Calendar_2025
-  Purchase Order Request Form- Christmas Vests for Veterans