

Veteran Advocate Nominating Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2023

1:30 – 2:30 pm

Date of meeting: Thursday, April 27, 2023

Start time: 1:35 pm

End time: 2:05 pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members participating remotely		Vote 1*	Vote 2	Vote 3
1	Daniel Shark (<i>chair</i>) – Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)	X	X	X
2	Gabe Adams-Keane – Office of Senator John Velis (<i>designee of the Senator</i>)	X	X	X
3	Sean Collins – Board of Trustees of the Holyoke Soldiers' Home	-	-	-
4	Emmanuel Dockter – Executive Office of Veterans' Services (EOVS) (<i>designee of Secretary Santiago</i>)	X	X	X
5	Brooke Doyle – Department of Mental Health (DMH)	X	X	X
6	Jeffrey Farnsworth – Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)	X	X	X
7	James C. Fratolillo – American Legion	X	X	X
8	Gary W. Keefe – Mass. National Guard	-	-	-
9	Bill LeBeau – Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)	-	-	-
10	Tom Lyons – Board of Trustees of the Chelsea Soldiers' Home	X	X	X
11	Bridget Plouffe – Office of Representative Cassidy (<i>designee of the Representative</i>)	X	X	X

* (X) Voted in favor; (O) Opposed; (A) Abstained from vote; (-) Absent from meeting or during vote

Proceedings

Assistant Secretary Shark called the meeting of the Veteran Advocate Nominating Committee to order at 1:35 pm. He noted that all votes taken during the meeting would be conducted via roll call vote.

Assistant Secretary Shark provided an update that 29 applications for the Veteran Advocate have been received to date since the application period closed on April 21.

Assistant Secretary Shark provided a summary of follow-ups from the previous meeting on April 13. He explained that after consulting with EOHHS legal, they suggested the best way to maintain confidentiality in the first round of screening is for the Committee to form a preliminary screening subcommittee of no more than 5 Committee members with staff from HRD to conduct a preliminary screening of applicants and narrow down to a list of no fewer than 5 finalists. This would allow the initial screening to occur in executive session and maintain confidentiality of the applicants which would otherwise have a negative effect on applicant pool quality. He also explained that EOHHS legal confirmed that sending materials out to the subcommittee ahead of the meeting is permissible under the Open Meeting Law and subcommittee members should expect the application materials to be sent to them by the end of the week. Additionally, he clarified that while confidentiality can be maintained in executive session, the names of the finalists put forward to the whole committee must be public and discussed in open session.

Assistant Secretary Shark facilitated a discussion of the creation of a preliminary screening subcommittee. He noted that there was alignment from the last meeting that we form the subcommittee. He suggested that members of the subcommittee individually bucket candidates into three buckets: (1) Definitely Interview; (2) Potentially interview; (3) Do not interview/does not meet minimum requirements.

Assistant Secretary Shark asked if there are any questions or concerns with forming a preliminary screening subcommittee and how the subcommittee will evaluate candidates.

Mr. Lyons agreed with the idea to bucket candidates into the three categories. Mr. Fratolillo asked for clarification on how the subcommittee will align on candidates. Assistant Secretary Shark suggested that the subcommittee start out with discussing the list of do not interview candidates and then align on candidates to definitely interview.

After discussion, Assistant Secretary Shark noted that Committee staff reached out to all members unable to attend the meeting to confirm their interest in serving on the screening subcommittee. Assistant Secretary Shark, Mr. Fratolillo (who volunteered to serve on the subcommittee at the previous meeting), and Mr. Lyons have indicated interest and Assistant Secretary Shark confirmed their interest and asked if he was missing anyone that was interested in participating in the subcommittee.

Mr. Dockter volunteered to serve on the subcommittee on behalf of Secretary Santiago. Assistant Secretary Shark noted that there is still space for one more member to join the subcommittee and to reach out to Committee staff if they would like to join.

Vote 1 to approve the 4/13/2023 minutes: Assistant Secretary Shark called for a vote to approve the minutes from the Committee's previous meeting on April 13, 2023. Mr. Farnsworth introduced the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Fratolillo and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

Vote 2 to create a preliminary screening subcommittee: Assistant Secretary Shark requested a motion to create a preliminary screening subcommittee consisting of himself, Mr. Fratolillo, Mr. Lyons, Mr. Dockter, and HRD Staff. Mr. Farnsworth introduced the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Dockter and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above)

Assistant Secretary Shark summarized the previous meeting's discussion of proposed interview questions to ask candidates. He noted members' suggestions of a variety of questions, including asking candidates about their vision for the Office of the Veteran Advocate; their work with veterans or active military members; their expectations for collaboration with other agencies; and the specific qualities of the Veteran Advocate position that match their experience. He noted that members' suggestions have been refined and included in a draft list of questions, which was shared with Committee members prior to the meeting.

Assistant Secretary Shark facilitated a discussion of the draft list of interview questions. Commissioner Doyle praised Committee staff's work on the interview questions. There seemed to be alignment among members on the questions with no additional feedback. Assistant Secretary Shark asked members that if they have any feedback on the interview questions to email Committee staff.

Assistant Secretary Shark noted that materials will be sent to subcommittee members to start the pre-screening process. He explained that the subcommittee meetings will need to be noticed and opened with a quorum in open session, even though the preliminary subcommittee will then go into executive session. He asked that non-subcommittee members attend the meetings for five minutes at the beginning to have a quorum to open the meeting and vote for the subcommittee to enter executive session. He tentatively suggested the subcommittee meet on Tuesday 5/2 and Thursday 5/4 at 1:30-3PM and asked if there are any concerns with those dates among members.

Commissioner Doyle mentioned that it was Mental Health month and that she would be busy over the next week. Mr. Farnsworth and Mr. Lyons both expressed that the 5/2 date does not work for them.

In closing, Assistant Secretary Shark said that Committee staff would reach out to members to find a time that works best to schedule the subcommittee meetings and ensure a quorum to open the meeting. If members have any questions, they should feel free to reach out directly to himself or Committee staff.

Vote 3 to adjourn:

Assistant Secretary Shark requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Lyons introduced the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Farnsworth and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 pm.

Meeting Materials

1. Draft 4/13/2023 Meeting Minutes
2. Draft list of interview questions