

MINUTES FROM THE UNITED VETERANS' GROUPS OF OREGON MEETING

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2019

Meeting called to order by **Chair, Mary J. Mayer**, at **12:08 p.m.**

Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation: Jack LaBox

Roll Call of Organizations/Voting Members: 9 of 16

Regular Members Present were:

- AFA (Bill Tidd)
- American Legion (Jack LaBox)
- DAV (Tom Cousino)
- MOAA (BG Dennis Merrill)
- MOPH (John Todd Swanson)
- NAANV (John Roten)
- NCOA (Robert Haltiner)
- VFW (Wayne Sharp)
- Chair (Mary J. Mayer)

Regular Members Absent were:

- AUSA
- 40+8
- KWVA
- OPVA
- VVA
- Past Chair
- Secretary/Treasurer (Vacant)

Associate Member Attendee: DAV Auxiliary State Commander, Karen Haltiner

Guest Attendees were:

- Laurie Skillman (ODVA Senior Policy Advisor)
- Toni Cordell (AL OR, District 6 Commander)
- Gus Bedwell (OHCS, Public Affairs)
- Phil Holt Carden (Visitor)

The UVGO Chair reviewed the Strategic Goals for the 2019-2021: Increase membership in UVGO, Increase visibility of UVGO, Invite guest speakers and legislators to the meetings to educate the group on various topics and legislative issues, and Identify 2 to 3 pieces of

Legislation to adopt and champion for the 2020 Legislative Session. BG Dennis Merrill, MOAA Representative, then administered the oath of office to the new UVGO Officers for 2019-2021:

- Chair: Mary J. Mayer, AFA
- First Vice Chair: Tom Coucino, DAV
- Second Vice Chair: Robert Haltiner, NCOA
- Immediate Past Chair: Wayne Harvey
- Secretary/Treasurer: ***Vacant***

The UVGO Chair announced that nobody had volunteered for the Secretary/Treasurer position, but she hoped that the position would soon be filled.

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

In the absence of a Secretary/Treasurer, the UVGO Chair presented the report. The July 20 Minutes and the current Finance Report were approved as issued. FY 20 dues were due by the July meeting. Dues for voting members are \$55.00 and \$27.50 for Associate members. Dues are still owed by VVA; all other members have paid their dues.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The UVGO Chair then stated that Ms. Kelly Fitzpatrick, the Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA), could not attend the meeting due to personal reasons. However, she then introduced Ms. Laurie Skillman, ODVA Senior Policy Advisor, who would cover both the ODVA and Legislative Update. Laurie announced that she is retiring on 31 October 2019, but she will be working at ODVA three days a week for six months.

Here are the highlights of Laurie's report:

- The 2020 Oregon Legislative Session will be a full legislative session and will be held from 1 February through 8 March 2020. Each legislator gets a certain number of bills to present. Although the session only lasts five weeks, there is six months' worth of work being discussed. The legislature does not coordinate bills involving veterans with ODVA; ODVA doesn't know which bills will be discussed until they are dropped.
- In September, November, and January, Legislative Days (informational sessions) are held which give a snapshot on what bills the legislature is considering.
- In 2019, there was a full legislative session held between January and June. In 2020, there was supposed to be an emergency legislative session, but it has turned out to be full-fledged legislative session.
- The Oregon Legislature determines where the Measure 96 funds will go in the odd-number years. Programs involving Measure 96 funding include, but are not limited to:
 - Tribal Veterans' Liaison Coordinator billet approved, and ODVA is in hiring mode. Nine tribes will be assisted; \$200,000 has been set aside for Tribal VSOs.
 - Campus Veterans' Grant Program.
 - Community Forums on Veterans' Behavioral Health hosted by ODVA throughout the State of Oregon.

- The Criminal Justice Commission has set up Veterans' Treatment Courts where, instead of being handled by regular courts, veterans can be pulled out to team up with a team of twelve experts who will help the veterans (many of whom suffer from PTSD).
- The Bureau of Labor and Industries is providing information for those veterans coming back from the Middle East on possibilities for apprenticeship programs. The Federal VA takes care of things like equipment, special clothing, etc.
- Laurie indicated that tribal members enlist in the military at a higher rate than normal citizens.
- ODVA Services:
 - Home Loan Program is a low-interest rate for vets, started after World War II when many veterans were coming home from fighting in the War.
 - The Department runs two skilled nursing homes in The Dalles and Lebanon, OR.
 - The Department provides the following: trains VSOs, NSOs, and Tribal VSOs and deals with women veterans, incarcerated veterans, tribal veterans, the LGBTQ veteran community, and veterans on college/university campuses.
- ODVA partners and leverages with other veterans' services.

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ODVA AND THE OREGON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

(OHCS): Mr. Gus Bedwell indicated that OHCS finances affordable, low income housing for homeless veterans. OHCS surrounds the homeless with a complete portfolio of services to help get them back on their feet. The model to house veterans is called the Rapid Rehousing Model.

Mr. Bedwell is one employee whose job's emphasis is on veterans; veterans are over-represented in homelessness. Ten per cent of homeless veterans are women. He needs to get the word out and get the right people to the table to solve veteran homelessness. In the State of Oregon, there is an increase of budget and work regarding the homeless; HUD is also involved. Services include obtaining housing for veterans, mitigating rental payments, repairs on houses, etc.

What's next?

- Need to get Eastern Oregon involved in caring for its veterans who are homeless. VSOs and NSOs should be part of the conversation.
- Need to increase the number of veterans housed. The goal is ten communities to house 500 veterans.
- Need to increase home ownership for veterans.

Funding of around \$1.5 million will be dedicated to:

- \$750,000 for a four-plex in Polk County.
- \$250,000 for housing integration.
- \$100,000 for technical systems provider to provide infrastructure for Operation Welcome Home. Goals are to list veterans by name so they can be tracked and establish a veterans' leadership team to make things happen.
- \$350,000 for an emergency account (1,500 more veterans to be housed).

UVGO UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- **Nomination and Election of Secretary/Treasurer for 2019-2021**
 - Gary Zwicker has been doing the job of UVGO Secretary/Treasurer for 8 years, and he needs to step away due to health issues. This position is critical, and we really need someone to “step up.”
 - During this part of the meeting, Mr. Robert Haltiner, who had just been installed as the new UVGO Second Vice Chair, sent a note to the UVGO Chair, stating that “I, Robert Haltiner, will resign as the Second Vice Chair of the UVGO and will take the position of Secretary/Treasurer for the UVGO, if voted by the present membership. I had this position for many years before Gary Zwicker. This opens the position of Second Vice Chair for the UVGO.”
 - Mr. Jack LaBox then volunteered to fill the position of UVGO Second Vice Chair.
 - A motion was made and seconded that Robert Haltiner move to the Secretary/Treasurer position and Jack LaBox fill the Second Vice Chair position.
 - The membership unanimously approved the motion, so the revised slate of **UVGO Officers for 2019-2021 is now:**
 - Chair: **Mary J. Mayer, AFA**
 - First Vice Chair: **Tom Coucino, DAV**
 - Second Vice Chair: **Mr. Jack LaBox, American Legion**
 - Immediate Past Chair: **Wayne Harvey**
 - Secretary/Treasurer: **Robert Haltiner, NCOA**

UVGO New Business:

- Besides the ODVA Director and ODVA Senior Policy Advisor, the membership indicated that they would like to have guest speakers on the following topics:
 - Veterans’ Treatment Courts,
 - Legislative Commission on Indian Services (Mitch Sparks, Executive Director, 900 Court Street NE, Room 167, Salem, OR 97301, Phone: 503-986-1067, LCIS@oregonlegislature.gov),
 - Various Oregon legislators who may wish to share their legislative priorities regarding veterans with the UVGO membership, and
 - ODVA Volunteer Program.
- Discussions will be held with Ms. Kelly Fitzpatrick, ODVA Director, regarding the date of the next **UVGO – ODVA Third Annual Joint Meeting** to be held at ODVA HQ in Salem, OR.

Items of Interest:

- **Invitation from ODVA Director to Veterans’ Behavioral Health Forums:**
 - Beginning in the 2017-2019 biennium, the Oregon Legislature partnered with the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs and Oregon Health Authority to identify behavioral health needs for veterans in Oregon. Using a dedicated portion of Lottery

- funding, ODVA and OHA commissioned a needs assessment study to identify challenges and opportunities for reforms.
- The resulting study, [Oregon Veterans' Behavioral Health Services Improvement Study](#), was written by Portland-based consulting firm Rede Group (which also produced the Oregon women veterans report a few years ago) and:
 - Describes the availability of behavioral health services for Oregon veterans.
 - Provides findings regarding barriers veterans face in accessing behavioral health services.
 - Recommends policy and other changes that may improve the accessibility and quality of behavioral health services for Oregon veterans.
 - Now that the study is complete, ODVA and OHA would like to invite you to attend one or more of the upcoming community engagement forums in your area to seek feedback from local veterans, service providers and policymakers on the Rede Group's 16 total recommendations.
 - The full study, community forum schedule and registration links can be found on the [OHA website](#). Input from these sessions will also be used to develop OHA's five-year strategic plan to better meet the behavioral health needs of Oregon veterans, in close collaboration with ODVA and the federal VA. The strategic plan is expected to be published in early 2020.

[Medford Community Forum on Veterans' Behavioral Health](#)

10/16/2019 10:30 AM PDT

Medford Community Forum on Veterans' Behavioral Health sponsored by Oregon Health Authority. Date/Time: 10/16/2019 10:30 AM to 1:30 PM. Location: Options Southern Oregon, 200 Beatty St., Medford. Veterans, behavioral health care providers, policymakers: Please join us for a forum about behavioral health services for Oregon veterans. All are welcome to attend these discussions, share their perspectives, and offer feedback. You must register to attend: <http://redegroup.co/veteran-bh-forums> or register by phone by calling Rede Group at 503-764-9696. Contact: Rede Group, 503-764-9696, vbhforum@redegroup.co. More info: <https://www.oregon.gov/OHA/HSD/AMH/Pages/Veterans.aspx>

▪ **Nov 16 Apprenticeship Event in Portland**

- Nov 16 Apprenticeship Event, Portland sponsored by Oregon Apprenticeship and Training Division. Date/Time: 11/16/2019 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Location: Pacific Northwest Carpenters Training Institute, 4222 NE 158th Ave., Portland. Oregon Apprenticeship and Training Division in partnership with Oregon Department of Labor and Oregon National Guard Family Services will conduct a one-day apprenticeship event. Available to Service Members, Veterans, and Spouses RSVP

at: https://16_nov_apprenticeship_event.eventbrite.com Apprenticeship Programs at event: Pacific Northwest Carpenters, NEAC-IBEW Electricians, Oregon and SW Washington Mason Trades, Sheet Metal Training Institute, Oregon and Southwest Washington Plasterers, Oregon Laborers, Oregon and Southwest Washington Cement Masons, and Local 701 Heavy Equipment Operators Contact: Jessica Dunn, Oregon Military Dept., jessica.k.dunn.mil@mail.mil.

▪ **Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds Project**

- **Resources:** For additional information and the current proposed design of the Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds project, please visit the website for the Vietnam War Memorial Fund at www.vietnamwarmemorialfund.org
 - **For additional information, contact: Steve Bates, President - Vietnam War Memorial Fund;** email: vietnamwarmem@aol.com office phone: 503-663-6271
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▪ **2020 Oregon Women Veterans Conference**

- Hosted by the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA)
- Date: 29-31 May 2020
- Location: Riverhouse on the Deschutes, 3075 N Business 97, Bend, OR 97703-7511.
- **Invitees:** All military women are invited. No conference fee, but individual must pay her own lodging and transportation.
- **Veterans' Organizations:** encouraged to set up Membership Information Tables.

▪ **40th National Veterans Wheelchair Games** from July 3-8, 2020

- The National Veterans Wheelchair Games is co-presented between the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America. 650 to 700 athletes attend these games from every state, Puerto Rico, and England.
- The Games serve Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury, Multiple Sclerosis, Amputations, and other central neurological impairments with the goal to increase their independence, healthy activity, and quality of life through wheelchair sports and recreation. Veterans are being exposed to wheelchair sports at their home VAMC or PVA Chapters as part of their rehabilitation to improve function, independence, and getting them active in their home communities in sport and fitness.
- The National Veterans Wheelchair Games has 19 different events in which Veterans can choose to participate. Events such as Wheelchair Basketball, Softball, Swimming, Cycling, Power Lifting, and Trap Shooting are just a few of the events that support this dynamic competition.
- To carry out a successful event, history has shown that it takes upwards of 3,000 volunteers from the community to bring this event together. There will be many opportunities for organizations--such as the MOAA Portland Chapter--to sponsor/donate to the general operation or specific events/needs.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER: Karen Haltiner, DAV Auxiliary State Commander, announced that the DAV was having its Fall Conference next weekend.

The next UVGO MEETING will be **Saturday, January 11, 2020** from **12:00 to 2:00 pm** at **Center 50+** in **Salem, OR**.

The meeting was adjourned at **12:01 PM**.

Respectfully submitted,

ROBERT HALTINER

UVGO Secretary/Treasurer

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Reviewed by:

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