

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE READJUSTMENT OF VETERANS

January 26-27, 2021  
Virtual (WebEx Platform)  
1:00PM – 5:00PM (EST)

**MINUTES**

**Tuesday, January 26, 2021:**

**Attendees:**

**Committee Members Present:**

Verdie Bowen, Sr., Chair  
Erin Cook, MEd  
Stephen Curda, PhD  
David Duren, PhD  
Michael Embrich, MA  
Thomas Hall, PhD  
Robert Simmons, MA  
Joseph Violante, JD

**Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Present:**

Richard Barbato, Designated Federal Officer  
Kevin Swallow, Alternate Designated Federal Officer  
Matthew Newman, Acting Planning & Policy Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service  
Elisabeth Parrott, Vet Center Director, Lowell, Massachusetts  
Joan Clifford, ENRM Bedford VA Medical Center Director, Bedford, Massachusetts

**Public Attendees:**

Greg Orto, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, [gorto@vfw.org](mailto:gorto@vfw.org)  
Rene Campos, Military Officers Association of America, [renec@moaa.org](mailto:renec@moaa.org)  
Ellen Milhiser, Synopsis Newsletter, [emilhiser@yahoo.com](mailto:emilhiser@yahoo.com)

**Opening Remarks:**

At 1:00 p.m., Designated Federal Officer Richard Barbato welcomed the Committee members, initiated with housekeeping items, to include the WebEx platform, and the process involved in navigating. He provided an update to the RCS FAC 20<sup>th</sup> report. He then took roll call attendance, quorum established. He then invited members of the public to introduce themselves for the record.

Members of the public introduced themselves.

Committee Chair Verdie Bowen, Sr. called the Committee to order, and provided an overview and agenda review of the meetings 1/26/2021 and 1/27/2021.

Presentation:

DFO Barbato led the Committee in a review of the Committee Charter. She also provided an overview of the Committee Report process.

DFO Barbato then introduced Stephanie Birdwell, from the Office of Tribal Government Relations, who presented on outreach and tribal consultation they provide to Native Veterans across the nation.

Questions from Committee members included:

- Committee Chair Bowen asked when the FACA Committee OTGR is now authorized will be stood up.
- Committee Chair Bowen then inquired as to whether there were any plan to stand up additional Vet Centers on tribal land.

DFO Barbato then introduced Anna Richardson Co-executive Director and Chief Counsel, Veteran Legal Services, who presented on their organization, the MOU they hold with the U.S. Department of veterans Affairs Medical center (ENRM Bedford VAMC), and the legal services and support they provide to Veterans.

Questions from Committee members included:

- Committee Chair Bowen inquired as to the impact of family related legal issues on Veterans.
- Michael Embrich inquired as to legal issues Veterans are presenting with and inquired as to whether Massachusetts had Veterans Courts.

The Committee recessed at 3:20 p.m. to 3:30p.m. for a break

Chairman Bowen then re-opened the meeting, and public observers were asked to identify themselves (no new public attendees identified).

DFO Barbato then introduced Dr. Elisabeth Parrott, Director of the Lowell Massachusetts Vet Center presented along with Joan Clifford, Director of the ENRM Bedford Massachusetts VA Medical Center, on Vet Center – VA Medical Center collaboration and partnership.

Questions from Committee members included:

- Stephen Curda inquired regarding opportunities as to expanded collaboration in the community
- Michael Embrich inquired as to the impact of the Mission act on Veterans engaging in services.

DFO Barbato then introduced Brennan Mullaney, Senior Director, Training & Education for the Travis Manion Foundation, who provided an overview of the foundation.

Questions from Committee members included:

- Michael Embrich inquired as to the level of engagement, and manner of engagement experienced with the post 9-11 generation of Veterans.

The committee recessed at 5:00p.

**Wednesday, January 27, 2021:**

**Attendees:**

**Committee Members Present:**

Verdie Bowen, Sr., Chair  
Erin Cook, MEd  
Stephen Curda, PhD  
David Duren, PhD  
Michael Embrich, MA  
Thomas Hall, PhD  
Robert Simmons, MA  
Joseph Violante, JD

**Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Present:**

Richard Barbato, Designated Federal Officer  
Kevin Swallow, Alternate Designated Federal Officer  
Matthew Newman, Acting Planning & Policy Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service  
Michael Fisher, Chief Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service

**Public Attendees:**

Greg Orto, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, [gorto@vfw.org](mailto:gorto@vfw.org)

**Opening Remarks:**

At 1:00 p.m., Designated Federal Officer Richard Barbato welcomed the Committee members, initiated with housekeeping items, to include the WebEx platform, and the process involved in navigating. He then took roll call attendance, quorum established. He then invited members of the public to introduce themselves for the record.

DFO Richard Barbato then introduced the Chief Officer, readjustment Counseling Service, Mr. Michael Fisher, who provided an update on the activities of the readjustment Counseling Service.

Chairman Bowen then initiated his overview of the remaining agenda time and spoke to the breakout groups that would be working through the varying topics. Discussion followed with each breakout group, with committee members speaking to their various areas.

Open Discussion:

Chairman Bowen then covered the four topics the Committee would focus on for the 21<sup>st</sup> report, based off of the brainstorming session conducted at the last meeting. Groups were shaped, and breakout sessions were formed to work on the subject areas. Groups came back after the break-out sessions concluded and presented on ideas and language crafted. The table below represents the working recommendations working for the 21<sup>st</sup> report. :

<b>Work Group</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Recommendation Topic</b>
Erin Cook / Jara Monetathchi	Native Veterans	<u>Access to Care:</u> Connecting Native Veterans With Vet Center Services
Stephen Curda / Michael Embrich	Legal Aid	<u>Legal Aid / Resources:</u> Referral Sources, Services, potential collaboration with Vet Centers
David Duren / Thomas Hall	Counseling	<u>Counseling Services:</u> Connecting Veterans utilizing G.I. Bill and VOC-Rehab with Vet Center Services
Robert Simmons / Joseph Violante	Rural Veteran Engagement	<u>Leveraging Technology:</u> Connecting Veterans in Rural areas with Vet Center services through utilization of multiple channels.

Requests:

- Field visit moving forward in the southwest, vicinity of Tempe Arizona (Native Veteran and Vet Center collaboration example).

The committee recessed at 5:00p.m.

  
 Verdie Bowen, Committee Chair

2-4-2021  
 Date