

**OKLAHOMA VETERANS
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

JUNE 22nd, 2023, 8:30 AM

Vezey Veterans

Complex 2132 NE 36th

Street Oklahoma City,

OK 73111

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING:

The Oklahoma Veterans Commission held a special meeting on Thursday, June 22, 2023, at 8:30 AM at the Vezey Veterans Complex 2132 NE 36th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73111. A Notice of this meeting was filed with the Secretary of State's Office on June 16, 2023. Jennifer Bloomfield served as the Clerk of the Commission for this Meeting.

AGENDA:

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Allen called the meeting to order at 8:30AM

II. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

A. ROLL CALL

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to call the roll. The roll was taken as follows:

Commissioner Allen – Present

Commissioner Ellington – Present

Commissioner Martin – Present

Commissioner Offel – Present

Commissioner Orr – Present

B. DECLARATION OF QUORUM

The Chair declared that a quorum was present.

III. VERIFICATION OF PROPER NOTICE OF MEETING AND POSTING OF THE AGENDA.

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to verify proper notice to the Secretary of State and posting of the agenda. The Clerk verified that Notice of this meeting was filed with the Secretary of State's Office on June 16, 2023, at 2:13 PM, and the agenda was posted to the front door of the ODVA Central Office and was available at the reception desk of the ODVA Central Office on June 21, 2023, at 7:41 AM. The agenda was posted to the ODVA website on June 21, 2023, at 7:42 AM.

IV. INVOCATION

Commissioner Ellington led the Invocation.

V. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Martin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

VI. ODVA STAFF AND OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Secretary of Military & Veterans Affairs John Nash
Legal Counsel to the Commission John O'Connor
ODVA General Counsel John Settle
Interim Executive Director Greg Slavonic
Deputy Director Shawn Kirkland
Director of Homes Rob Arrington
Communications Director Jennifer Bloomfield
Chief Financial Officer Lisa White
Construction Programs Administrator Nisha Young
Human Resources Director Jennifer Shockley

VII. BUSINESS

A. INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY SLAVONIC, DEPUTY DIRECTOR SHAWN KIRKLAND, CFO LISA WHITE, AND CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATOR NANNEEUSHA YOUNG, REPORT WITH DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING:

1. The ongoing effort to replace the Talihina Veterans Home presently located in Talihina, Oklahoma, with the State Veterans Home currently under construction in Sallisaw, Oklahoma.
2. Summary and analysis of the FY23 and FY24 budgeted revenue and expenditures in contrast with the projected FY23 and FY24 revenues and expenditures for the Talihina Veterans Home.
3. Action options available to the Commission regarding the timing of the opening of the Sallisaw Veterans Home in relation to the closing of the Talihina Veterans Home.

Construction Programs Administrator Nanneeusha Young gave an update on the Progress of the construction of the Sallisaw Veterans Home. She stated that construction was in full progress, with all hands back on site. Ms. Young stated that they are currently working on the final solutions related to the wetlands. She stated that there will be an upcoming meeting with the engineers on July 6th.

The Interim Executive Director stated that the main topic of discussion today was the Talihina Veterans Home. He stated that the agency was facing several challenges, of which the running deficit at the Talihina Home was of particular concern. The Director thanked Secretary Nash for his assistance with securing the funding to complete the Sallisaw Home and stated that the timeline was now 18 months for completion.

The Director told the Commission that CFO Lisa White and himself had participated in several conversations related to FY2024 and the agency budget, and it had become very apparent that there would be a shortfall in the agency operating expenses. He stated that after extensive review, he felt it was important to update the Commission on the ongoing

situation, especially in light of the Sallisaw delay. He stated that the Sallisaw Home was originally scheduled to open in (roughly) three months' time, but now was not expected to become operational until October-November of 2024.

The Director stated that by keeping the Talihina Home open until the opening of the Sallisaw home, the agency would be looking at a \$500,000 per month loss. He stated that the Talihina home was currently at a 22% occupancy rate which totals 36 residents.

Deputy Director Shawn Kirkland provided the Commission with a handout detailing the finances for FY23 and the projection for FY24. Deputy Director Kirkland stated that the projected loss for the next 18 months was currently sitting at \$9 million dollars if the situation remains unchanged. He stated that the Talihina Home had only seen a total of 12 admissions/28 applications spanning FY23. He stated that most of the denied applications were due to the applicants requiring a level of care that the Talihina Home was not able to provide.

Commission Offel asked the Deputy the range of care needed for the current residents. Deputy Director Kirkland stated that it varied from mostly independent to the requirement of 24-hour care.

Commissioner Offel asked if the agency was currently able to maintain the needed staffing requirements for the Talihina Home. Deputy Kirkland stated there are currently 84 state employees in addition to 38 contracted staff in the Nursing department. He stated that the contracted staff were a large contributor to the cost of operations.

Deputy Director Kirkland stated that the need for this conversation has always existed, as the Talihina Home is scheduled to close with the opening of the Sallisaw Home. He stated that the question has now become, does the agency need to have this conversation sooner rather than later. He stated that the agency was prepared to act based on the decision of the Commission today, and stated that the primary focus was the residents, ensuring that they continued to be cared for and that assistance would be provided to them during any possible transition. He stated that the other six Homes would be available to all residents as a transfer option.

Commissioner Offel asked which Home was the closest option from the Talihina Home. Deputy Kirkland stated that the Sulphur Home was the closest in distance, followed by the Claremore Home – both options being roughly 2 hours from the Talihina location. Commissioner Martin asked if the agency had enough bed space to accommodate the transfer of the Talihina residents. Deputy Kirkland stated that there was enough space at all six of the homes to accommodate all resident transfers.

Deputy Director Kirkland explained to the Commission that once the

agenda for the meeting today was finalized, a conversation was had with the residents and staff of the Talihina Home to give them an advance notice that this would be the topic of conversation today. He further stated that the HR Director, Jennifer Shockley, and Director of Homes, Rob Arrington were currently on their way to Talihina to speak with the staff and residents in person and make themselves available for any questions they may have.

Commissioner Offel asked what the initial reaction was to the news of the topics on the agenda. Deputy Kirkland stated that for the most part, everyone knew this conversation was coming at some point. He stated this was earlier than what they had previously thought, but overall, most seemed willing to move forward with whatever direction the Commission decided to go in.

Interim Executive Director Greg Slavonic stated that it was his belief that this conversation should have been had with the previous Commission. He stated that if detailed financials would have been provided to the previous Commission, they would have been informed that the other six Homes were subsidizing the Talihina Home and have been for quite some time. Director Slavonic stated that in the current state, if no changes are made, he will have to return to the Capitol to request more funding in addition to what has already been provided.

Commissioner Offel asked what the timeline was to put a plan in place on the Talihina Home before they would need to request more funding. Deputy Director Kirkland stated that the agency was ready to put a plan into action today if that's what the Commission decided. He stated that if the Commission decided to act today, a 90-day window would begin for the residents and staff, with a planned closure of the Home by October 1, 2023.

Chairman Allen asked what assistance would be provided to the residents, and would they have the option to go to the Sallisaw Home once it opens. Deputy Director Kirkland stated that the agency would be doing everything in its power to assist the residents and their families. He stated that if the Commission decided to move forward today, individual conversations with the residents and their families would begin to take place. He stated that the agency would be assisting with transfers to the other six Homes, privately owned facilities in the area, or with transitions into a private residence if that is what they wanted. Deputy Kirkland stated that the current residents of the Talihina Home would have the first opportunity to move into the Sallisaw Home once complete if they chose to do so. Chairman Allen asked if we would also be assisting with the physical moving of the residents. The Deputy stated that yes, the agency would be taking care of that as well.

Commissioner Martin asked if prompt action had been taken in October 2021 when the issues with the Sallisaw construction were first

discovered, would the agency be in this position now? Deputy Kirkland stated that he felt the agency could have moved a little faster with this process, but that the process to close the facility was always the plan.

Secretary Nash asked how long the longest-term resident has been at the Talihina Home. Deputy Director Kirkland stated that a conversation was had yesterday with a resident that had been at the Talihina Home for eleven years. He stated that individual could be the longest standing resident of the Home, but that he was unsure. Secretary Nash requested the number of current residents who were at the Home in 2018 when the plan was detailed that the Talihina Home would remain open until the opening of the Sallisaw Home. Communications Director Jennifer Bloomfield informed the Commission that 23 of the 36 current residents were at the Talihina Home in 2018.

Secretary Nash asked what the best-case scenario timeline was for the opening of the Sallisaw Home. Construction Programs Administrator Nanneusha Young stated that the current estimate was for October 2024, however due to the processes involved in licensing the building for occupancy, it could be January 2025 before the Home is able to admit residents. Secretary Nash asked for the original planned opening date of the Sallisaw Home. Ms. Young stated that the original date was July 2023. Secretary Nash stated that in fact, this new timeline to cease operations is longer than what was originally planned. Ms. Young said, yes, that was the case.

The Interim Executive Director stated that if the engineering and architectural issues to the Sallisaw Home had not occurred, the timeline of July 2023 would be accurate. The Talihina Home would have already begun the process to cease operations were it not for those delays. He stated that while a difficult decision, he felt that this was the responsible decision to be made.

Commissioner Orr asked if no action was taken from the Commission, would ODVA have no other option but to return to the legislature and request additional supplemental funding. Interim Executive Director Slavonic confirmed that yes, that would be the only option. Commissioner Orr asked if the legislature even had an appetite for such a request given the additional funding that had already been provided to the agency for FY23 and FY24. The Director stated that he didn't know but wouldn't think so. Commissioner Ellington stated that it would be a big ask. Secretary Nash agreed.

Commissioner Offel asked if based on the current census of the Talihina Home, the staff numbers could be reduced. Deputy Director Kirkland explained that reduction in state staff was a process, one that if not highly detailed and transparent would cause staff to seek other employment rather than wait in uncertainty. The deputy pointed out that was a dangerous position to be in as quality of resident care was always

a priority.

Deputy Kirkland explained the current RIF (Reduction in Force) proposal to the Commission. He stated that all state employees would be offered eighteen months of their employee only insurance premium. He stated they would be given the dollar amount equivalent to that. He stated that all state staff would also be given their next longevity payment, which is a payment given yearly after two years of service that increases over time. All state staff would have their annual leave balance paid out up to the maximum allowed by statute, as well as the maximum stipend allowance of \$5,000. Deputy Kirkland stated that this package would be offered to all state employees of the Talihina Home in exchange for their agreement to remain at the Talihina Home until the cease of operations. He further stated that they would then be free and welcome to apply to any of the other six State Veterans Homes. He stated that he believed the team had done everything in their power to take care of the staff as much as possible, as well as be transparent with them about their options.

4. Possible action by the Commission in response to the report.

Chairman Allen asked the Commission if there was any further discussion.

There was no further discussion.

Chairman Allen stated that he would need a Motion and a Second if the Commission wished to act on the report.

Commissioner Martin made the Motion that the Commission authorizes ODVA to initiate a plan to make arrangements for Residents and Employees in conjunction with closure of the State Veterans Home in Talihina. Let's put this plan into action today.

Commissioner Ellington provided the Second.

Chairman Allen called for discussion.

There was no discussion.

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to call the roll. The vote was as follows:

Allen - Aye

Ellington - Aye

Martin - Aye

Offel - Aye

Orr - Aye

The Clerk notified Chairman Allen that the vote was five (5) Ayes and zero (0) Nays.

Chairman Allen declared the Motion to have Passed

**B. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING RENEWAL OF 20i
LEGAL SERVICES CONTRACT A-23 056 REGARDING THE
ENGAGEMENT OF JOHN M. O'CONNOR, PLLC, FOR LEGAL
CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION OF THE VETERANS**

COMMISSION, JULY 1, 2023, THROUGH JUNE 30, 2024.

Commissioner Ellington made the motion to renew the 2 A 23 056 contract for John O'Connor.

Commissioner Offel seconded the Motion.

Chairman Allen called for discussion.

There was no discussion.

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to call the roll. The vote was as follows:

Commissioner Allen – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 5 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Chairman Allen declared the motion passed.

C. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING DATE TO INCLUDE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Next Meeting:

August 11th, 2023 @ 10:00AM

Norman Veterans Home

1776 E. Robinson St.

Norman, OK 73070

D. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING ADJOURNMENT.

Commissioner Martin made the motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Ellington seconded the Motion.

The Motion is not debatable.

Chairman Allen asked the Clerk to call the roll. The vote was as follows:

Commissioner Allen – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 5 Ayes, 0 Nays. Chairman Allen declared the Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 am.