

MINUTES

**Meeting of the
Missouri Veterans Commission
Veterans Innovation Task Force
January 25, 2019 — 10:00 AM
Springfield Job Center
2900 East Sunshine Road
Springfield, Missouri**

I. Welcome & Opening Remarks – Tim Noonan, Chair, Missouri Veterans Commission

Commissioner Noonan welcomed the Task Force members by phone. He indicated he appreciated all of the hard work thus far and encouraged everyone to seek input from the community as they continue their important work helping veterans.

Sabrina Bonnette, a Disabled Veterans Employment Opportunity Specialist with the Division of Workforce Development, welcomed the Task Force members and provided a short presentation about what their office does to help veterans who may have barriers to employment.

Task Force Members in attendance:

Scotty Allen – Office of Missouri Attorney General
Elliott Barrowclough – Missouri National Guard
Steven Beem – Ft. Leonard Wood
Shawn Burnette – Missouri Veterans Commission – SE MO area
Star Cathcart – Team Red, White & Blue
Joe Driskill – State of Missouri Military Advocate, MO DED
Michael Elmore – Disabled American Veterans
Lowry Finley Jackson – American Legion
Sarah Froese – Harry S Truman VA Medical Center – Columbia
Betty Gonzales – Missouri Association of Veterans Organizations
John Hathcock – Veterans & Military Coalition of the Ozarks
Jennifer Henderson – Missouri Veterans Commission – SW MO Area
Terry Jarrett – Healy Law Offices, LLC
Mark Jones – Missouri National Guard – Skyline
Jacki Kelley – MO Department of Corrections Probation & Parole
James Klahr – Missouri Veterans Commission, Deputy Director
Mike LeBlanc – American Legion
Grace Link – Missouri Veterans Commission, Executive Director
Jamie Melchert – Missouri Veterans Commission
Tim Noonan – Missouri Veterans Commission, Chairman
Jim Nugent – Missouri Veterans Cemetery Program
Rusty Ratliff – Missouri Department of Corrections
Robert Ross – University of Missouri, Student Veterans Center
Tony Russell – Pierson Construction, Inc.
Jon Sabala – MO Department of Mental Health, Veterans Services Director
Jeanne Savel – ESGR & St. Louis Veterans Support Network

Mike Smith – Missouri Veterans Commission – NE MO area
Adrienne Spadavecchia – Missouri National Guard
Dave White – MO Department of Corrections
Melissa Wilding – Missouri Veterans Commission
Tim Woods – Missouri National Guard

Task Force Members absent:

Ron Azdell – Mexico Missouri Veterans Home Assistance League
Spencer Bartlett – MO Department of Revenue
Kim Chamberlain – St. Louis County Veterans Program
Shams Chughtai – MO Division of Workforce Development – Veteran Services
Todd Cowan – Team Red, White & Blue
Angela Drake – University of Missouri – Columbia – Veterans Law Clinic
Elaine Gerstenberger – Missouri Veterans Commission – NW MO area
Karen Gettinger – United Way of Missouri – KC
Adam Gresham – Office of the Lt. Governor
Jeff Huffman – University of Central Missouri – Veteran Services
Bill Kiefer – Focus Marine Foundation
Jason Klaus – Perry County Sheriff's Department – MO Crisis Intervention
John McKenzie – Missouri Department of Revenue
Sara O'Connor – Team Red, White & Blue
Sarah Parsons – Missouri Housing Development Commission
Angela Peacock – Washington University – Brown School of Social Work
KC Rafferty – MO Office of State Courts Administration
Terry Roberts – Veterans United & Welcome Home, Inc.
Brian Russell – Meyerkord, Russell & Hergott
Sandy Wilson – Institute for Community Alliances
Nancy Yohe – St. Patrick Center

II. Member Introductions – Grace Link, Executive Director, Missouri Veterans Commission

Missouri Veterans Commission Executive Director Grace Link led the introductions. Task Force members introduced themselves and described the work they do with veterans. They also stated in work which group they are a member.

III. Adoption of November 7, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Member Ross made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for November 7, 2018. Member LeBlanc seconded the motion. By a voice vote, the minutes were passed unanimously.

IV. Adoption of VITF Mission Statement

Members discussed a draft mission statement to guide the Task Force members in their work. Various suggested edits to the draft mission statement were offered. The Missouri Veteran Commission staff will take the suggested edits and send out a revised mission statement for members to review.

V. **VITF Work Group Expectations & Updates**

Missouri Veterans Commission Deputy Director James Klahr reviewed a document covering expectations for each of the Task Force Working Groups. He also reviewed upcoming meeting dates with Task Force members. A copy of the Expectations & Meeting Dates document is attached to these minutes.

Each of the eight work groups, through its Chair or Co-Chair provided a report of the work group's actions to this point.

Increase Awareness to Veteran Benefits – Scotty Allen, Chair

The work group has discussed challenges of veterans obtaining necessary transportation, especially in Northwest Missouri. The group has also discussed the challenge of getting the veteran to understand what resources are available and the need to get the veteran to see a Veteran Service Officer in person so the veteran can truly understand what benefits he or she may be eligible to receive. The work group also discussed streamlining the process for getting a person who is homeless to be recognized as a veteran in the system.

The work group has discussed potential fixes to include having a resource at the statewide official level to assist with these issues. The Task Force members discussed the Lt. Governor's Office already has the statutory responsibility to advocate for veterans so the law already addresses this. The second fix is to have training in place so a person taking a veteran's call knows to follow-through after the phone call to see if the veteran has received the assistance needed. Finally, the work group supports improving the recruitment and retention of Veteran Service Officers.

Improve Employment Opportunities for Veterans – Jeanne Savel, Co-Chair

One issue the work group identified is that veterans do not always know whether they should list their military service on their resume or not. This reflects the idea that some veterans believe the employers may view their military service as a liability rather than an asset. Employers who have a veteran's representative on staff are much more successful in hiring veterans than those employers who simply rely on recruiting through on-line tools. A challenge is that the Disabled Veterans Employment Opportunity Specialist and the Local Veterans Employment Representatives at Missouri's Career Centers are among the lowest paid in the country.

Joe Driskill commented that the transition process from military service to civilian service can be bewildering. There needs to be structural reform to simplify that transition to make the transition more effective for those separating from the military. There was further discussion about working more closely with the Missouri Chamber of Commerce to raise further awareness of how employers can better recruit veterans.

Increase Access to Education and Job Skills Training for Veterans – Robert Ross, Chair

The work group's charge is to position the State of Missouri as a military-friendly state for military members, veterans and their families. The work group would like to see the Veterans Commission website include links to information about education

and job skills. Another recommendation is for each university campus to have veteran specific “campus spaces” for student veterans. The work group would also like to address the issue of “gap funding” where a veteran has funding for 70% of educational expenses but not the full cost. There was discussion that Texas is addressing this issue.

Task Force members further discussed potential discrepancies between those veterans seeking an undergraduate degree compared to those seeking a professional degree, such as a degree in the ministry.

Decrease Veteran Homelessness – Grace Link, Chair

The work group has determined that data on homelessness is difficult to gather and coordination of efforts statewide is much needed. MVC will establish and assume lead role on coordination of efforts statewide. Executive Director Link said she would be visiting other states that have had success in addressing homelessness.

Increase Access to Behavioral Health and Decrease Veteran Suicide – John Sabala, Co-Chair

The work group consists of representatives from about a dozen different organizations and includes the Truman VA in Columbia and Senator Jill Schupp’s office. The group also includes veterans who have experience with suicide or have attempted suicide. When the work group has its first meeting, the main points of focus will be policy development, resource coordination, life skills and resilience.

Enhance Service Member Readiness for Transition into Civilian Life – Mark Jones, Co-Chair

Based on recent survey data, those transitioning from the military want one stop to get things done. Further, it is important for the military member to establish a connection and communication so the member understands that the person he or she is working with is going to follow-through in assisting that member. Mark used the example that he will tell the member that he will contact the member’s unit to follow-up on information the member provides. This develops accountability and trust between the member and the person he or she is working with.

Increase Community Coordination Supporting Veterans – Adrienne Spadavecchia, Chair

The work group has identified the challenge that there is no central database for veterans to access for services. Texas was mentioned as a model for having a website providing this type of “one stop shop” for veterans. The work group believes there needs to be a more organized veteran’s coalition, citing the effective mental health coalition in Missouri as a model. The work group recommends looking at a checklist for cities and if a city meets the various items on the checklist, it would be considered to be veteran friendly.

Enhance Coordination of Services for Veterans in the Justice System – Jacki Kelley, Chair

Jacki mentioned several issues the work group is focused on: law enforcement training, peer support, communication, treatment courts, utilizing the VA and the VJO’s (Veteran Justice Officers), and how to address those veterans who may not be able to access VA treatment because of their discharge status. Sarah Froese added the work group should also look at issues involving those who are victims of

crimes committed by a veteran, including spouses who are victims of domestic violence. Dave White added that it is very important to track a veteran all the way through the probation and parole system to help ensure that veteran's success.

VI. Next VITF Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Missouri Veterans Commission Veterans Innovation Task Force is scheduled for Friday, April 18, 2019 10:00 AM at the St. Louis Veterans Home, 10600 Lewis & Clark Boulevard, St. Louis, MO.

Executive Director Link thanked all members for their time and attention.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Grace Link".

Grace Link, Executive Director
Missouri Veterans Commission