

Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services
14 December 2009
U Mass Dartmouth, Fall River

Secretary Thomas Kelley recently met with Secretary of Veterans Affairs Shineski.

At this meeting, there was much discussion about the VA working to eliminate homelessness in the veteran population.

There is an acknowledgement that the current GI Bill needs to be expanded to include technical and vocational schools.

There is also a problem with money getting to the veterans in college in a timely manner. They hope to correct this problem very soon.

Under Secretary Coleman Nee discussed the opening of the local Fisher House on the grounds of the West Roxbury VA Hospital. Hopefully this will be opening in early 2010.

Panayiota Bertzikis Coordinator, DVS Women Veterans' Network discussed that there are 28,000 female veterans in Massachusetts and the Department of Veterans Services is trying to meet their needs. A conference will be held in 2010 to further make people aware of special concerns and issues these veterans have. TBA

Lt Governor Timothy Murray discussed the veterans Bill which was signed into law on 11 November 2009. This bill includes: set asides for disabled veterans for State contracts, money for each deployment a State veteran makes in the current war on terror, formal recognition of those veterans who lost their lives in war with a Commonwealth Medal of Freedom, study the expansion of nursing home care for veterans, and MRI's for those National Guard personnel before and after deployments.

There was great support for outpatient care at the Soldiers Homes from the audience. The Office of Veterans Affairs is looking to outsource through health insurance, Com Care, Mass Health or the VA. If this does not work then they will look to use Chapter 115. They are also looking to get some private health care providers to work at the Soldiers Home.

The idea of outsourcing is opposed by the American Legion and DAV.

Some Veteran Service Officers complained about the difficulty they are having with funds being reimbursed from the State to their towns.

Korean War Veterans President Jeff Brodeur discussed respite for veterans with TBI. The families of these veterans need support in caring for them. The special adaptive housing grant that provides financial assistance has not been updated since 1948.

Fall River Career Center is operating to help veterans find work.

Yellow Ribbon Program Major Henche spoke on upcoming events. 9 & 10 January 2010 there will be a welcome home ceremony for the National Guard in Mansfield. 7 February there will be a ceremony in Worcester at the DCU.

In their facility in Wellesley there is a program – survivors outreach services for Gold Star Families.