

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS AND REVENUE

Budget Review Subcommittee on General Government, Finance, Personnel, and Public Retirement

Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the 2019 Interim

July 9, 2019

Call to Order and Roll Call

The second meeting of the Budget Review Subcommittee on General Government, Finance, Personnel, and Public Retirement of the Interim Joint Committee on Appropriations and Revenue was held on Tuesday, July 9, 2019, at 8:00 AM, in Room 131 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Robby Mills, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Robby Mills, Co-Chair, and Representative Jim Stewart III, Co-Chair; Senators Julie Raque Adams, Reginald Thomas, and Phillip Wheeler; Representatives Kevin D. Bratcher, Joe Graviss, Mark Hart, Adam Koenig, Michael Meredith, Jerry T. Miller, Patti Minter, Wilson Stone, and Nancy Tate.

Guests: Major General Steve Hogan, Adjutant General, Department of Military Affairs (DMA); Commissioner Ben Adams, BG, US Army (Retired), Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA); Dean Stoops, Deputy Commissioner, DVA; and, Mark Bowman, Executive Director, Veterans' Centers, DVA.

LRC Staff: Emma Mills, Liz Columbia, and Spring Emerson.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Representative Koenig to approve the minutes of the June 4, 2019 meeting. The motion was seconded by Representative Minter, and the minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

Department of Military Affairs (DMA)

Adjutant General Steve Hogan gave an overview of the DMA and its budgetary issues.

Chair Mills expressed his appreciation for the DMA cooperating with officials in Crittenden County as they work through some issues with the courthouse.

In response to a question from Co-Chair Stewart regarding the amount of voluntary donations made to the Veterans' Trust Fund, General Hogan deferred to Commissioner Adams, KVA, who said a breakdown of that fund will be provided at a later date.

In response to a question from Representative Miller regarding personnel vacancies, General Hogan said the highly technical positions are difficult to fill; however, there are always openings that support other, more low-density functions.

In response to a question from Representative Miller, General Hogan said that, even though AC-130 Gunships are not housed in Kentucky, a hangar is necessary for servicing them.

In response to a question from Representative Bratcher, General Hogan said the \$15 million of annual state funds is approximately seven percent of the overall agency budget.

In response to a question from Representative Meredith regarding a veteran's military records, General Hogan said the veteran could call his office for further information.

Representative Stone commented that the sale of specialty license plates could be one way to collect revenue for the DMA.

Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)

Commissioner Ben Adams, BG, US Army (Ret), gave an overview of the DVA and its budgetary issues.

In response to a question from Senator Thomas regarding the locations of the five Veterans' Cemeteries in Kentucky, Commissioner Adams said Hopkinsville is the location in the west, Radcliffe is the central location, Williamstown is in the north, Hyden is the southeast location, and Greenup County is the location in the northeast.

In response to a question from Representative Meredith, Mr. Bowman said the Bowling Green project is now on the federal Priority One list, which means that it is eligible for matching funds when they become available.

In response to a question from Representative Minter regarding the difficulty of identifying women veterans, Commissioner Adams said they are encouraged to come forward, but they sometimes feel disconnected and not part of a group. In addition, their current address may not be the same as the address available on their DD-214 discharge form. Also, men tend to join veterans support organizations more often than women do.

In response to a question from Representative Koenig, Commissioner Adams said that staff at the Veterans' Centers are state employees and are paid from the General Fund. Mr. Bowman added that operations support for the DVA consists of approximately 20 percent from the General Fund, with the remainder coming from VA per diem payments, Medicare and Medicaid payments, private pay, and service-connected disability.

In response to a question from Senator Wheeler, Commissioner Adams said DMA believes there are approximately 600 homeless veterans in Kentucky, of whom about 12 percent are disabled. Outreach efforts include assistance with job searches and housing.

In response to a question from Senator Thomas, Commissioner Adams said there are about 200 World War II veterans alive in Kentucky and fewer than 400,000 in the US.

In response to a question from Co-Chair Stewart, Commissioner Adams said armory managers set rates for armory rentals and the money goes into that armory fund.

In response to questions from Chair Mills, Commissioner Adams said the Veterans' Centers not being filled to capacity is due to budgetary limitations for salaries and personnel vacancies. An increase of \$25 million in the General Fund is needed to be competitive.

In response to a question from Representative Tate, Commissioner Adams said full capacity cannot be reached without additional staff.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the subcommittee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:13AM without objection.