



April 27, 2017 Minutes

Present: Lora Alexander, Ashley Alton, Laura Anders, Fred Baker, Archie Barrow, Michael Bishop, Chris Brandenburg, Roxanne Bras, Tamara Bryant, Charlotte Burnett, Logan Burnett, Joshua Cain, Saima Cardwell, Ken Castille, Jennifer Chauncey, Jeremy Collins, Will Collins, Cajun Comeau, Denise Cozart, Dr. Cheryl Curtis, Hank Debnam, Brooke Dickhart, Paul Dillon, Scott Dorney, Renee Doughty, Jeff Doyle, Rebecca Dunning, Angella Dunston, Julie Dyer, Lane Dyer, Robert Elliott, Shelton Faircloth, Li Fang, Ph.D., Reginna Ford, Moses Gloria, Diana Graham, Penny Greer-Link, Secretary Larry Hall, Judy Harmon, Angela Harper King, Kimberly Harrell, Troy Hershberger, Luarleen Hill, Dr. Pamela Howse, Andy Jackson, Douggy Johnson, Terri Kane, Deidre LaCour, Curtis Leary, Carolyn Lightfoot, Mark Mills, Brenda Monforti, Jeff Netznik, Lynn Newsom, Vincent Penn, Daniel Perez, Markus Player, Brandon Porter, Jim Prosser, Sandra Robinson, Kevin Rumley, Jacob Shaheen, Austen Shearer, Deputy Assistant Secretary Sam Shellenberger, Betty Jo Shephard, Eugene Skinner, Jr., Jeff Smith, Jeff Smith, Tenita Solanto, Richard Spyrison, Richard Stancel, Flo Stein, Annette Stevenson, Justin Streuli, Lea Strickland, Dr. Sam Strickland, Robert Tabares, Doug Taggart, Kate Taylor, Antonia Verhine, Chrissina Verwoerd, Kathleen Vollandt, Steve Vollandt, Lucas Vrbsky, Dr. Joe Wescott, Jan White, Steve Wilkins, Kyle Winder, Scott Wolford, and Martin Woodard

Lane introduced Sam Shellenberger, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations and Management, US DOL VETS. Mr. Shellenberger was a part of an event at Fort Bragg, and said it was great to be a part of both the Fort Bragg event and the GWG meeting. He saw NC as unique, not only in having a collaborative group focused on military members and their families but also initiatives such as NC4Vets and NC Serves. He said working with Veterans on employment opportunities was rewarding. The federal agencies are thankful that the GWG facilitates work at a local level. Service members and Veterans continue to be a priority with new the Administration.

Annette Stevenson expressed her appreciation for being able to update GWG members on the state of Veteran entrepreneurship in NC. She highlighted her employer, SAS, which is the world's largest privately owned business. It connects Veteran-owned businesses (VOBs) to opportunities for starting and growing businesses. She identified Kyle Winder, who received the 2017 Veteran's Business Advocate of the Year. The statewide NC Veterans Business Association (VetBiz) is a member-based nonprofit, which advocates on key issues, educates members, hosts educational events across the State, and connects members by encouraging collaboration Vet-to-Vet. Small businesses drive the economy. She proposed that we think about Veteran small business in new way as health and wellness, education and

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employment, housing and support services, and entrepreneurship. She then gave examples of Veteran-owned businesses:

- ROVE by Dave Brown, where 30-40% of the employees are Veterans. ROVE encourages volunteerism and asks employees to complete service projects.
- Profit Full Lotus by Elijah Sacra. He also founded Warrior Wellness Solutions: a nonprofit working with Veterans.
- Creative Management Staffing Services by Craig Gorham specializes in hiring Veterans.
- Solar Connection by Bill Boyle manufactures solar panels and LED lights and hires Veterans.
- NC Brookhaven Behavioral Health by Fred Baker hires Veterans and provides behavioral health treatment and recovery services.
- Family Services by Joy Inniss
- Martin Woodard works on the State's Access to Recovery initiative and collaborates with veterans in recovery.

Kevin Rumley gave a brief testimonial on how the VA and NC Brookhaven Behavioral Health changed his life. During his deployment with the marines in 2005, he experienced an IED explosion that killed his friend and injured him. After being airlifted to Germany, he was transferred to Walter Reed Hospital where he had 32 surgeries and was told he would never walk. He was prescribed opioids for his pain and became addicted first to the prescription drugs and later to heroin. In addition, he had unaddressed MH problems. He eventually became homeless and suicidal and had no hope and was experiencing a slow death through his drinking and substance abuse. The Asheville VA saved his life. After his recovery, he went into public health and eventually started working for Fred Baker. He feels that he now has purpose, working with Veterans at the Buncombe County Veterans Treatment Court, providing assertive community treatment, getting a master's degree in social work, and becoming a SA counselor in NC. Through entrepreneurship, he hopes to help people by helping them be productive.

Kyle Winder asked, Can we all agree that NC should do all it can do to support this community? He showed a US map where the State Tracker indicated no activity for Veteran entrepreneurship in NC yet other states offer best practices. Last year, VetBiz signed a MOU with NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and they are working with Secretary Hall and Jim Prosser to help Veterans find jobs and to start their own businesses. He recognized entrepreneurship programs at Fayetteville Tech and Wake Tech. VetBiz has developed a *Roadmap to Entrepreneurial Success*, which lists the following steps: know yourself, know your business, know your opportunities, know

your certifications, and know your network. The State has lots of resources but it needs a deliberate strategy to support the Veteran business community. He recognized several entrepreneurs that had graduated from the VDOP program:

- Bob's Smokin' Southern BBQ Sauce sold 20,000 bottles last year and wants to sell 60,000 this year.
- Rebecca Dunning, Center for Environmental Farming Systems, NCSU
- Barry Hines, Bee Blessed Pure Honey
- Ron Hobbs went through VDOP program in Fayetteville and Raleigh and started Red Plate Catering. He was connected with Robert Elliott, a Veteran farmer, and to Tenita Solanto, Green Panda Farm, who grows greens. She recently received a grant to improve her facility in Siler City

Scott Dorney believes that NC has the best infrastructure for starting, growing, and helping small businesses leverage new markets. He noted that Durham County is the #1 federal contractor. According to SAM, NC has 1508 Veteran-owned small businesses but this number is likely underreported. He encouraged businesses to register in SAM and to be verified by the VA. Scott's job is to get more federal contracting in NC. His agency, the NC Military Business Center (NCMBC) is part of the community college system, and they match businesses with contract opportunities.

Mark Mills, Small Business Training and Development Center (SBTDC) works closely with Scott and works out of NC State University. They have 16 regional offices across the state. He encouraged attendees to see the many resources on their website, <http://sbtdc.org>. He noted that there are currently 532 VOSBs, 97 members who are National Guard and reserves, and 60 active duty members.

Tamara Bryant is replacing Robert Reeder as the director of the FTCC Small Business Center. Funded by the Small Business Administration, she helps military members and spouses transition to entrepreneurship. The Veterans Business Outreach Center at Fayetteville Tech serves NC, SC, and KY.

Scott Wolford runs the Small Business Development Fund, a nonprofit small business lender. SBDF offers 100% financing for Veteran-owned businesses and helps Veterans through the loan application process.

Kyle mentioned that VetBiz is working on an economic impact statement. Secretary Hall said that business development and startups are one of Cooper's priorities for Veterans. Flo noted that two of the three regional NC STRIVE conferences had been held and the third is scheduled in Raleigh for May 11. To date, 12 community colleges, 8 UNC schools, and 13 four-year private schools have sent representatives. The conferences have involved the LME/MCOs, NC DHHS, ND DMVA, and VA.

Archie attended the hiring job fair at Fort Bragg. On May 23, NC4ME will host a program in Winston-Salem.

Cajun Comeau thanked all for collaborating with the seven Veteran Engagement Boards across the State. He is in the process of identifying core issues. A plan, led by Veteran leaders in the community, will develop a plan based on identified issues. They have a Facebook page, NCCVE. He indicated that they are getting more corporate action, and they are trying to leverage each other's strengths.

Kathleen Vollandt said that through their award-winning business model, her agency has helped 60 people start their own companies.

The next meeting will feature *Opioids and Pain Management* on May 25, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm at the NC National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh.