OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE
SEPTEMBER 25, 2026, REGULAR MEETING
ODVA CENTRAL OFFICE
2132 NE 36TH STREET
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73111

The Oklahoma Veterans Commission (OVC) held a regular Meeting on September 25, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) Central Office, 2132 NE 36th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73111. ODVA Executive Assistant Jessica Stuehler was appointed by the Chair to serve as the Clerk of the Meeting, to make a record of the proceedings at the Meeting, and to produce the Minutes of the Meeting. The Minutes of the Meeting are set out below:

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Orr could not be present for this meeting; therefore, Acting Chairman Martin called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

II. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

A. ROLL CALL

Chairman Martin asked the Clerk to call the roll. The roll was taken as follows:
Commissioner Allen – Present
Commissioner Dukes – Present
Commissioner Ellington – Absent
Commissioner Martin – Present
Commissioner Mutchler - Present
Commissioner Offel – Absent
Commissioner Orr – Absent
Commissioner Perry – Present
Commissioner George – Present.

The Clerk notified Chairman Martin that six Commissioners were present.

B. DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chairman Martin declared that a quorum of the OVC was present.

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

The Clerk verified that proper notice of the Meeting was given, pursuant to Title 25 O.S. § 311, as follows: (1) on August 21, 2026, Notice of the Meeting was filed with the Oklahoma Secretary of State; (2) at least twenty-four hours prior to the Meeting, at the principal office of the OVC, which is the principal office of the ODVA: (a) the Notice and Agenda of the Meeting was posted in prominent public view and copies of the Notice and Agenda were made available to the public; and (3) this Notice and Agenda was posted on the OVC's page on the ODVA's website, https://oklahoma.gov/veterans.html.

IV. INVOCATION

Commissioner Dukes led the Invocation.

V. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Mutchler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

VI. WELCOME TO VISITORS AND GUESTS.

Chairman Martin welcomed commissioners, staff, and guests.

VII. BUSINESS: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING:

A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 21, 2026, OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING.

Commissioner Mutchler made the Motion to approve the August 21, 2026, meeting minutes.
Commissioner Dukes seconded the Motion.

Chairman Martin asked the Commission if there was any discussion. There was no discussion.

Chairman Martin called for a vote on the Motion:
Commissioner Allen – Aye
Commissioner Dukes – Aye
Commissioner Ellington – Absent
Commissioner Martin – Aye
Commissioner Mutchler - Aye
Commissioner Offel – Absent
Commissioner Orr – Absent
Commissioner Perry – Aye
Commissioner George – Aye.

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 6 Ayes, 0 Nays.
Chairman Martin declared the Motion passed.

B. ACTING CHAIRMAN – COMMISSIONER BRETT MARTIN:

1. Veterans Forum Update
2. Veterans Foundation 501(c)(3) Update
   a. Discussion and possible action to approve new members to the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Veterans Foundation
3. Oklahoma Statutes

The fourth ODVA forum had good attendance, was more interactive, and brought together representatives from regional and medical centers, tribal and veterans' organizations, nonprofits, and religious groups. ODVA is shifting from building internal systems toward outreach and partnerships; priorities include exploring automated claims and benefits systems and forming an independent advisory board of veteran-organization leaders—not duplicating the existing Veterans Council.

The next forum's date and location are still undecided, with plans for more focused, town-hall-style sessions, commissioner participation, and a statewide newsletter.

The Foundation submitted a request to become a 509(c)(3) supporting organization, and revised bylaws and an MOU have been sent to ODVA's legal counsel; no commission action was needed at this meeting. Sandra Shelton also previewed the Workforce and Warriors event, planned for September 30 at the Oklahoma National Guard Museum, which will connect veterans with aerospace, defense, and other employers through career workshops and resume support; a $10,000 pledge from the Sharp family was still pending. Director Bynum said the Foundation's accounting structure is in place, but a board meeting is needed to authorize Chris Busby's signature authority so it can access and use funds.

The commission had previously approved the Foundation's bylaws and an initial five-member board. Four additional members—Deirdre Gurry, Shad Satterthwaite, Abby Ruscetta, and Geoff Camp—were presented for their military, business, fundraising, and aerospace-industry experience, and the commission approved their appointments. The Foundation operates independently as a fundraising and partnership arm; its board also needs to authorize Chris Busby's signature authority, while the commission retains the power to disestablish and reestablish it.

Commissioner Allen made a motion to vote for the additional members to be added on the board of Directors for the Foundation.
Commissioner George seconded the Motion.

Chairman Martin asked the Commission if there was any discussion.
There was no discussion.

Chairman Martin called for a vote on the Motion:
Commissioner Allen – Aye
Commissioner Dukes – Aye
Commissioner Ellington – Absent
Commissioner Martin – Aye
Commissioner Mutchler - Aye
Commissioner Offel – Absent
Commissioner Orr – Absent
Commissioner Perry – Aye
Commissioner George – Aye.

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 6 Ayes, 0 Nays.
Chairman Martin declared the Motion passed.

The commission reviewed its options for legal counsel. Previous outside counsel had been retained for a lawsuit that has since been closed, the continued need for outside counsel arrangements had ended.

James Littlefield remains counsel to the agency, rather than to individual commissioners. If specialized legal assistance is needed, a request can be made to the Attorney General's Office. The Attorney Generals office can assess whether its attorneys are able to provide legal assistance. If state expertise is unavailable, the commission may request outside counsel upon Attorney General approval.

No further action or vote was necessary. The prior outside counsel arrangement will sunset.

C. ODVA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JAY BYNUM:

1. Interim Study
2. Audit Results
3. US Foods Transition
4. Sallisaw HVAC Update
5. ODVA Financial Report
6. Update on Payments for John O'Connor's Services

Director Bynum proposed a more detailed financial-oversight process, with commissioners reviewing requirements-based operations and maintenance plans before the budget goes to the legislature and receiving quarterly updates on spending, facilities, and capital needs. The approach will include life-cycle costs and planning for unexpected expenses, with the commission consulted when decisions exceed statutory or emergency authorities. He also noted that ODVA is planning for changing veteran demographics through 2047, including potential shifts in eligibility for service-connected benefits.

Director Bynum said ODVA faces a growing gap between care costs and the funding received for some veterans, while the veteran population is expected to age, include more women, and require more specialized care. He described pursuing CMS certification to access additional reimbursement and potentially serve veterans' spouses and Gold Star parents, with initial certification targeted for a few homes and broader coverage over time. For future construction, he also proposed exploring leaseback or partnership models to reduce the large upfront matching funds required under the current VA approach, potentially starting with Ardmore.

Director Bynum outlined options for future veterans-home projects, including shared-use partnerships and leaseback arrangements, to reduce the large upfront costs of traditional VA funding; Ardmore's available land could make it a pilot site. He said the VA is open to exploring alternatives, though federal funding rules may require changes, and ODVA plans to submit a proposal for commission review. With a substantial maintenance backlog, ODVA's longer-term goals include reducing reliance on state appropriations and growing the Foundation to help offset veterans' out-of-pocket costs. The discussion also noted that ODVA may absorb expensive medications for some residents, while VA covers medication costs in certain private contract-home placements.

ODVA obtains medications through the VA and pays only when they are administered, so officials said there is little additional savings to gain from changing the process; federal action on high-cost medications may be considered. The audit of 2024 federal grant accounts found procedural and accounting issues, but no allegations of criminal conduct or impropriety, and ODVA said it has since digitized and improved its processes. The agency is transitioning food service from Ben E. Keith to U.S. Foods, aiming to integrate dietary instructions with Point Click Care (PCC) and residents' care plans. Officials expect more consistent meals and better pricing, with U.S. Foods estimating about a 5% discount, while ODVA continues negotiating and prioritizes food quality and appropriate dietary options.

ODVA will evaluate food service where meals reach residents, emphasizing that they are timely, hot, appealing, and cost-effective; the VA contract offers scale-based pricing. At the Sallisaw home, Director Bynum suspects the outdoor-air units may be running at only 25% capacity, preventing proper dehumidification and causing short cycling. The agency is bringing together the test-and-balance team, original engineers, installers, and technicians to determine whether the issue stems from system design, installation, or operating settings before deciding on a fix.

At Sallisaw, the VRF refrigerant leak has been repaired, but humidity problems remain, with low airflow through the DOAS units suspected; ODVA will bring together the engineers, installers, test-and-balance team, and technical specialists to diagnose the system before authorizing more maintenance. About $60,000 has been spent so far, and the reported $9 million was the facility's total operating cost—not the cost of the HVAC issues; the home has about 63 residents and needs roughly 125–130 to break even. Director Bynum also said ODVA is building a stronger financial tracking and comptroller process and clarified that a $1.5 million figure reflected delayed transactions during a software transition, not a loss or arrears.

ODVA has moved accounts payable to an electronic workflow, improving transparency and controls, while continuing to build its financial reporting and comptroller capacity. Its updated budget view will include facility and equipment life-cycle costs; current work includes plumbing repairs at Clinton, a hot-water conversion at Sulphur targeted for completion in 45 days, private rooms at Claremore, and planned Ardmore renovations with a $4 million bid target within the $5 million authorization. The agency reported 1,106 residents across its homes, with Sallisaw still a challenge and Lawton nearing full occupancy.

ODVA is strengthening staffing and performance oversight at its veterans' homes, with falls down about 20–25% over five weeks and a goal to cut them in half. The agency and its partners have connected an estimated 150,000–160,000 of Oklahoma's 275,000 veterans and family members to resources. ODVA is also reducing and modernizing its vehicle fleet; while its requested increase in state appropriations did not advance, it secured $23 million in OCAMP funding for maintenance projects.

Director Bynum provided that payments for John O'Connors services for the months of July and August has been made and no further billing is expected.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was presented.

IX. OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING.

October 16, 2026, 10:00AM
ODVA Central Office
2132 NE 36th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73111.

Chairman Martin asked the Commission if there was any discussion. There was no discussion.

X. POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING ADJOURNMENT.

Commissioner Allen made the motion to adjourn.
Commissioner Mutchler seconded the Motion.

Chairman Martin asked the Commission if there was any discussion. There was no discussion.

Chairman Martin called for a vote on the Motion:
Commissioner Allen – Aye
Commissioner Dukes – Aye
Commissioner Ellington – Absent
Commissioner Martin – Aye
Commissioner Mutchler - Aye
Commissioner Offel – Absent
Commissioner Orr – Absent
Commissioner Perry – Aye
Commissioner George – Aye.

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 6 Ayes, 0 Nays.
Chairman Martin declared the Motion passed.

Chairman Martin declared the meeting adjourned at 11:34 am.