

**OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE  
JANUARY 16, 2026, REGULAR MEETING  
ODVA CENTRAL OFFICE  
2132 NE 36TH STREET  
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73111**

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING:**

The Oklahoma Veterans Commission (OVC) held a Regular Meeting on Friday, January 16, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) Central Office, 2132 NE 36th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73111. The Minutes of the meeting are set out below:

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Martin called the meeting to order at 10:02 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 – Present  
Commissioner Martin – Present  
Commissioner Mutchler - Present  
Commissioner Offel – Present  
Commissioner Orr – Present  
Commissioner Perry – Present.

The Clerk notified Chairman Martin that eight Commissioners were present.

**B. DECLARATION OF QUORUM**

**III.** The Chair declared that a quorum of the OVC was present.

**IV. VERIFICATION OF PROPER NOTICE OF MEETING AND POSTING OF THE AGENDA**

The Clerk verified proper notice and posting of the Notice and Agenda of this Meeting. Notice of this meeting was filed with the Oklahoma Secretary of State on December 8th, 2025. The Notice and Agenda of this meeting was posted at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to this Meeting, in prominent public view at the principal office (the central office) of the ODVA and the Commission, and by posting on the OVC's page on the ODVA's website, <https://oklahoma.gov/veterans.html>, pursuant to the provisions of Title 25 O.S. § 311. ODVA Executive Assistant Jessica Stuehler served as Clerk of the Commission for this Meeting.

**V. INVOCATION**

Commissioner Ellington led the Invocation.

**VI. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Commissioner Perry led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**VII. WELCOME TO VISITORS AND GUESTS.**

Chairman Brett Martin welcomed commissioners, staff, and guests.

**VIII. BUSINESS: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING:**

**A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 21, 2025, OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING.**

Commissioner Dukes made the Motion to approve the November 21, 2025, meeting minutes.

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 – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Mutchler - Aye

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye

Commissioner Perry – Aye.

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 8 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Chairman Martin declared the Motion passed.

**B. CHAIRMAN BRETT MARTIN, GENERAL HOUSEKEEPING, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING:**

- i. OVC Meeting dates for the remainder of 2026.

Commissioner Dukes made a motion for the OVC meeting dates for the remainder of 2026, the third Friday of the month, at 10:00am, at the ODVA Headquarters for the remainder of the calendar year.

Commissioner Orr seconded the Motion.

Commissioner Martin asked the Commission if there was any discussion.

Chairman Martin called for a vote on the Motion:

Commissioner Allen – Aye

Commissioner Dukes – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Mutchler - Aye  
Commissioner Offel – Aye  
Commissioner Orr – Aye  
Commissioner Perry – Aye.

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 8 Ayes, 0 Nays.  
Chairman Martin declared the Motion passed.

ii. Signing of the Foundation By-Laws.

The Foundation By-Laws were signed by Commissioner Offel and Commissioner Ellington.

Since approval of the foundation bylaws, Commissioner Ellington reported that a draft organizational structure has been developed with John O’Connor and Chief of Staff Paul Young, several volunteer Board of Governors candidates (including Joey Morris, James “Jim” Farris, and Robert “Bob” Reiner) have committed or expressed strong interest, additional high-value prospects and connectors are being engaged, stakeholders broadly support the foundation in light of anticipated state revenue constraints, and work is underway to establish the foundation as a separate non-public entity with its own website and bank account.

Director Bynum explained that, with support from Senator Stanley, ODVA is pursuing legislation to create clear “landing zones” for donations so they are not co-mingled with existing revolving funds (which are primarily funded by veterans’ out-of-pocket payments). The proposal is to use the already authorized but unfunded Veterans Assistance Fund as a dedicated account for foundation-related donations, providing a clean, earmarked place for those dollars and subjecting their use to oversight by both the Commission and the Legislature; this is a new initiative that will be tracked through the current legislative session.

Director Bynum highlighted that foundation dollars are primarily intended to help cover rising maintenance and infrastructure costs (including restoring offline beds in Lawton and Claremore amid \$250M in deferred maintenance) and to fund stronger outreach to approximately 150,000 “untethered” Oklahoma veterans—especially younger and older Vietnam-era veterans—while leveraging improved transition partnerships and technology to better connect separating service members and bring them into ODVA’s support system.

ODVA, partners, and guests discussed that many shorter-service and younger veterans wrongly believe they are not “real” veterans or do not deserve benefits due to weak TAP briefings and misconceptions, underscoring the need for stronger education, outreach (including via social media), and support from organizations like the Dale K. Graham Foundation to help veterans understand and claim the healthcare and benefits they have rightfully earned.

**C. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JAY BYNUM REPORTS WITH DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING:**

Director Bynum introduced new clinical and operational leadership (including Director of Clinical Services Angela Battles, senior clinical educator Sally, and Deputy/Chief Operations Officer Shawn Kirkland), outlined a strengthened training and leadership culture in the veterans homes built on “nuclear watch-standing” standards, and signaled a planned shift from a generic “Called to serve” motto to a measurable, outcome-driven model that starts from the veteran’s experience and emphasizes clear accountability and Commission oversight.

Director Bynum outlined major cultural, technology, and facilities initiatives, including strengthening shared ownership and transparent oversight; replacing outdated case management, health record, and phone systems with integrated, AI-enabled tools to better “tether” veterans; using data partnerships to build a single statewide veteran database and expand outreach despite low response rates; shifting away from costly contract labor to fund raises and address long-standing pay gaps for key staff; and accelerating maintenance, occupancy gains, and energy-efficiency efforts in high-cost homes like Sulphur, potentially with foundation support.

Director Bynum reported that ODVA is pursuing facility and cost-efficiency improvements (including Ardmore planning, standardized furnishings and food service, and creative staffing in hard-to-serve locations), deepening partnerships and training for veteran service officers, and advancing legislative and budget initiatives—repeating a \$63M request with a \$16M increase, phasing in higher private-pay rates while aiming for Alabama-style affordability supported by a strong Veterans Assistance Fund, and seeking statutory authority for agency special accounts to enhance financial flexibility and oversight.

ODVA is advancing several legislative and financial initiatives, including shifting to accrual-based, GAAP-aligned accounting to improve oversight beyond the state’s cash system, aggressively recovering long-owed funds and earning interest on its working capital, seeking a \$7M capital request to help move the homes toward long-term self-sufficiency (including pursuing Medicare/Medicaid certification to add revenue and serve spouses), carefully reinvesting in facilities like Sulphur and Ardmore while planning for eventual replacement, and clarifying to legislators that only about \$40M of its \$200M+ enterprise is state-appropriated and the rest is tightly tied to the full cost of caring for roughly 1,100 veterans.

Director Bynum explained that the apparent cash on ODVA’s financial slides represents fee-for-service receipts (from VA and residents) that are tightly managed through individual resident accounts and largely fund salaries and care, clarified that FY26 year-to-date per diem receipts show all homes operating positively except Sallisaw (which is temporarily negative because it is not yet VA-certified and has no per diem revenue), and noted that once Sallisaw passes its upcoming survey and fills beds, its financials should turn positive as well.

The Commission noted that, unlike prior years when ODVA's homes ran negative and required about \$10M annually in extra support, most homes are now positive at mid-year—reflecting much stronger fiscal management, life-cycle planning, and new financial talent under Chris—though ODVA still faces \$255M in unfunded capital needs and aging facilities, is building better tools and systems (fleet, facilities, and budgeting) to support a true bottom-up FY28 budget, and continues to caution legislators that apparent cash balances do not mean the agency is “flush with cash.”

ODVA explained that maintaining 90% occupancy across 1,123 recognized beds (to trigger VA bed-hold payments) drives faster maintenance and bed repairs, outlined ongoing work to equip administrators and nursing leaders with better financial tools and centralized support, and described a major cultural shift toward performance-based incentives—including merit bonuses tied to quality metrics and surveys, and a new Employee of the Year program—so the agency can attract and reward talent in a way comparable to high-performing civilian healthcare systems.

**D. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING PERFORMANCE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:**

Commissioner Dukes made a motion to go into Executive Session for the discussion and possible action regarding the employment, hiring, appointment, promotion, demotion, disciplining, or resignation of any individual salaried employee: The position of the Executive Director.

Commissioner Ellington seconded the Motion.

Commissioner Martin asked the Commission if there was any discussion.

Chairman Martin called for a vote on the Motion:

Commissioner Allen – Aye

Commissioner Dukes – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Mutchler - Aye

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye

Commissioner Perry – Aye.

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 8 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Chairman Martin declared the Motion passed.

**E. RESUMED REGULAR MEETING:**

Commissioner Dukes made a motion to resume the regular meeting at 11:58am.

Commissioner Orr seconded the Motion.

Chairman Martin asked the Clerk to call the roll. The roll was taken as follows:

Commissioner Allen – Not Present  
Commissioner Dukes – Present  
Commissioner Ellington – Present  
Commissioner Martin – Present  
Commissioner Mutchler - Present  
Commissioner Offel – Present  
Commissioner Orr – Present  
Commissioner Perry – Present.

The Clerk notified Chairman Martin that seven Commissioners were present.

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

Chairman Martin asked if there were any motions to be presented to the floor.

Commissioner Perry made a motion to establish a special committee to analyze and make recommendation to the Executive Director's compensation. The members of that committee initially will be: Commissioner Perry, Commissioner Offel, and Chairman Martin. The committee will report back at the next scheduled, regular meeting, on February 20, 2026 at 10:00am at the ODVA Central Office.

Commissioner Dukes seconded the Motion.

Commissioner Martin asked the Commission if there was any discussion.

Chairman Martin called for a vote on the Motion:

Commissioner Allen – Not Present  
Commissioner Dukes – Aye  
Commissioner Ellington – Aye  
Commissioner Martin – Aye  
Commissioner Mutchler - Aye  
Commissioner Offel – Aye  
Commissioner Orr – Aye  
Commissioner Perry – Aye.

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 7 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Chairman Martin declared the Motion passed.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

**X. OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING.**

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING:**

February 20, 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.

**XI. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING ADJOURNMENT.**

Commissioner Dukes made the motion to adjourn.  
Commissioner Orr seconded the Motion.

Chairman Martin called for a vote on the Motion:

Commissioner Allen – Not Present

Commissioner Dukes – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Mutchler – Aye

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye

Commissioner Perry – Aye.

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 7 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Chairman Martin declared the Motion passed.

Chairman Martin declared the meeting adjourned at 12:01 pm.