

**OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE
FEBRUARY 20, 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, February 20, 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 10:01a.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 – Absent
Commissioner Orr – Present
Commissioner Perry – Present.

The Clerk notified Chairman Martin that seven 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 January 22nd, 2026. 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. Additionally copies of this notice were made available to the public in the principal office to the commission, which is the principal office of the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. 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 JANUARY 16, 2026, OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING.

Commissioner Dukes made the Motion to approve the January 16, 2026, 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 – Absent

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.

B. VICE-CHAIR AND FOUNDATION BOARD OF GOVERNORS' CHAIR SID ELLINGTON, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING:

1. Foundation Update

Commissioner Ellington reported ongoing recruitment for the Foundation Board of Governors, with four members (Joey Morris, Jim Farris, Taylor Poindexter, and Rob Reiners) already committed and additional prospects under consideration. He is coordinating with Chief of Staff Paul Young to establish a website and with the Director of Finance to open a bank account so that, once a few more board members are in place, the foundation can begin fundraising.

Director Bynum emphasized a sense of urgency in standing up the foundation, noting that with flat state funding, federal reimbursements, and rising out-of-pocket costs, a growing funding gap is emerging that could leave some veterans unable to afford care. He explained that initial foundation receipts should prioritize supporting veterans who are being priced out due to not having full service-connected disability ratings. He also reported positive legislative traction on creating a revolving fund to receive foundation and other non-appropriated monies, improving transparency, governance, and cost accounting by clearly tracking federal, out-of-pocket, and supplemental third-source funds. He concluded by offering to support and inform foundation efforts in any way allowed under state rules.

2. Appointing of the Foundation Secretary

Commissioner Ellington made the Motion to appoint Commissioner Orr as the Foundation Secretary.

Commissioner Allen 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 – Absent

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.

3. Signing of the Foundation By-Laws

Commissioner Orr signed the Foundation By-Laws as the newly appointed Foundation Secretary.

C. REPORTS WITH DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING:

1. JAY BYNUM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REPORTS, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING:

Director Bynum gave an overview of organizational improvements over the past eighteen months, including realigning ODVA's four lines of effort, standardizing

leadership expectations (tools, time, training, and clear outcomes), and moving to run ODVA as a full P&L operation with visibility into fully burdened costs. He described progress toward an accrual-based financial system and in-house financial management (QuickBooks as system of record, MOU with OMES, ability to produce trial balance and balance sheet before fiscal year-end), which will improve decision-making, transparency, and tracking of capital projects such as time-limited HVAC/COVID-related funds. He also highlighted statewide standardization in food service—common menus, single vendor, inventory controls—and a food service pilot program in Claremore using an outside provider (Benchmark) to address chronic staffing and quality issues, which is already improving resident satisfaction and may offer a cost-effective model for other hard-to-staff homes.

Director Bynum explained that Benchmark has effectively been running the Claremore kitchen for several months, addressing longstanding complaints and staffing challenges by operating food service, training and credentialing staff, and leveraging bulk purchasing. ODVA is treating this as a contracted pilot to see if outsourcing food service in hard-to-staff locations can sustainably maintain high standards at a lower per-resident cost, while ODVA retains oversight. He noted that enterprise-wide finances are in the black overall, with only two homes (including Sallisaw and Ardmore) operating at a loss due to recognition and facility issues; Sallisaw's VA recognition is under appeal with a contingency plan for re-survey, and Ardmore has a defined remediation and HVAC project under \$1 million funded through VA grants, with no grants currently at risk.

Director Bynum explained that ODVA's overall financial position is positive, with only a small negative burn in the SAA due to lease costs that are covered by a separate appropriation and should net to zero by year-end. Year-to-date figures (about seven months through January 31) show roughly \$40M in appropriations at about a 50% spend rate, with an additional net \$5M that would put the enterprise about \$13M in the black, though this does not include an estimated \$250M capital backlog (about half tied to recapitalizing aging facilities). He noted a strategic decision that state appropriations for homes will be used only for payroll to build room for eventual self-sustainment, and described the shift from a cash-only view to an accrual-based system, including pursuing agency special accounts so ODVA can better match revenues, liabilities, and costs over time and give the Legislature a more accurate financial picture than the state's current cash-balance reporting allows.

Director Bynum explained that the dual cash vs. accrual views were shown to illustrate how ODVA used to see only cash spikes and delays (via PeopleSoft) versus the clearer, smoothed picture accrual accounting provides; the graphs were originally prepared as education for his team on why accrual reporting is more informative. He then updated admissions/occupancy, noting ODVA is at 1,018 residents, with higher admissions but shorter lengths of stay and higher acuity, making cost recovery harder and elevating the importance of driving homes toward 90% occupancy for financial stability. Looking ahead, he set goals to achieve zero clinical deficiencies on upcoming surveys, to have at least one home in the top 20% nationally, and to get at least two homes (including Sallisaw)

CMS-certified, which would allow ODVA to bill Medicare/Medicaid and, over 8–10 years, help move the homes mission toward self-sustaining, non-appropriated funding.

Director Bynum explained that while CMS certification would not fully replace lost revenue, it could add roughly \$260 per day per resident, narrowing today’s \$400–\$500 daily shortfall to about \$100–\$200 and also allow, under certain conditions, admission of spouses and Gold Star parents, improving quality of life and bed utilization. He outlined efforts to increase occupancy to 1,100 residents by year-end, including exploring a VA-style lease-back redevelopment of Ardmore using existing bond authority, and described key legislative priorities: a seasonal employee exception to create PRN-like staffing flexibility, and establishing a Veterans Assistance Fund to segregate donations and external funds from existing revolving accounts for cleaner, more auditable financials. He noted they are also modernizing purchasing (electronic POs), improving financial visibility, and undergoing a favorable-expected audit focused on the VA per-diem (400-series) fund.

Angela Battles described a new “task layering” approach to onboarding clinical staff, where skills are built step-by-step by role (PCA, LPN, RN) and each layer requires hands-on competency demonstration before independent practice, replacing prior online-only “training.” She outlined systemwide credentialing initiatives, including APIC certification for infection preventionists in every home by year-end and national-standard wound-care certifications, to standardize infection control and wound care and support CMS/Five-Star expectations. She also detailed upgrades to the PointClickCare EMR, configuring modules to “talk” to each other (falls, infection control, skin/wound, etc.) so events trigger follow-up, reveal trends, and improve documentation and accountability. Director Bynum added that this shift from manual, paper-based, person-dependent processes to standardized, EMR-driven workflows will reduce missed documentation, support consistent high-quality care, and, paired with formalized budgeting and project approval, maintain strong Commission oversight and transparency on spending and major projects such as HVAC work.

In response to a question about replicating Clinton’s strong occupancy, Director Bynum said ODVA is standardizing and centralizing admissions and application processes across all homes, with a new mindset that if one home can care for a veteran, any home can, barring rare exceptions. They are focusing on a veteran-centered experience, shortening turnaround times, and aggressively addressing capacity constraints (e.g., expediting HVAC work at Lawton, reconfiguring Ardmore, reassessing the special needs unit at Sulphur) so beds can be filled more quickly. Administrators are being pushed to think like P&L owners rather than only risk-managers—empty, available beds are now defined as “mission failure”—with a target of getting Norman to 90% occupancy by March 6, then driving similar gains in Claremore, Lawton, and ultimately reaching 1,100 residents by year-end.

Angela Battles confirmed that each home maintains an RN in the building 24/7, supported by LPNs, CNAs, and advanced certified medication aides. Director Bynum explained that ODVA provides full-time nursing care once veterans can no longer perform key activities of daily living, and that most homes already provide memory care, while a “Special Needs Unit” is intended for veterans with severe behavioral issues (e.g., TBI-related aggression) but remains difficult to fully utilize at Sulphur.

**2. PAUL YOUNG, CHIEF OF STAFF, REPORTS, DISCUSSION
AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING:**

Paul Young reported on how the central staff has evolved, noting that ODVA added a Chief of Staff role (his), a Director of Clinical Operations (Angela Battles), expanded clinical education/training (Sally Holloway), a new program administrator (Nisha), and will add a long-needed General Counsel on March 1. These changes allow the COO to focus on day-to-day operations while Angela drives clinical oversight and training. He also introduced ODVA University, a multi-day, recurring leadership development program for senior leaders (administrators, assistant administrators, DONs, HR directors, and eventually General Counsel) designed to build culture, standards, and leadership skills; the first cohort (including leaders from Lawton and Norman) has begun, and the program will be run about quarterly and made mobile across homes.

Paul Young compared ODVA University to a high-level leadership course and then asked Angela Battles to outline related onboarding changes. Angela explained that onboarding is being streamlined and standardized: non-clinical staff will now have about one day of classroom orientation before precepted on-the-job training, and clinical staff will have three structured classroom days with competency check-offs by proficient preceptors, plus optional Thursday remediation (e.g., BLS/CPR), with rollout targeted for March 1. To improve retention and continuity, she is also implementing a 30/60/90-day check-in program where unit managers, ADO-Ns, and DONs meet with new hires at set intervals to assess how orientation went, identify issues early, coach in real time, and adjust processes so new staff are better set up for success and more likely to stay.

Director Bynum explained that the new 30/60/90-day check-in process also serves as a feedback loop to HR, allowing ODVA to evaluate whether it is recruiting the right people by tracking retention, attrition, and terminations and asking leaders if new hires meet operational needs. He emphasized a broader culture shift toward formal performance management and standardized expectations, including agency-wide performance reviews and inviting commissioners to observe ODVA University and orientation. Paul Young added that these changes are being embedded as standard policy through a comprehensive, legally vetted top-to-bottom policy review (about 1,000 documents, targeted for completion around July), so that all homes and central office operate under unified, easily accessible, “nuclear navy”-style standards of professionalism, transparency, and consistency.

Chairman Martin asked Angela Battles to track and report metrics on the 30/60/90-day program that show both successes and problems (“the good and the ugly”) so the Commission can clearly see what is and isn’t working.

D. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING EMPLOYMENT, INCLUDING PERFORMANCE AND COMPENSATION, 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 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 – Absent

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.

E. RESUMED REGULAR MEETING:

Commissioner Allen made a motion to resume the regular meeting at 12:08pm.

Commissioner Perry seconded the Motion.

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 – Absent

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 Ellington made a motion to raise the annual salary of the Executive Director, according to research, with the average salary of agency directors from across the state, to \$219,000.

Commissioner Allen 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 – Absent

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:

March 27, 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 Allen made the motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Orr seconded the Motion.

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 – Absent

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 12:11pm.