

**OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE  
MARCH 27, 2026, REGULAR MEETING  
ODVA CENTRAL OFFICE  
2132 NE 36TH STREET  
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73111**

The Oklahoma Veterans Commission (OVC) held a Regular Meeting on Friday, March 27, 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 Martin called the meeting to order at 10:00 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 – Absent  
Commissioner Dukes – Present  
Commissioner Ellington – Present  
Commissioner Martin – Present  
Commissioner Mutchler - Absent  
Commissioner Offel – Present  
Commissioner Orr – Present  
Commissioner Perry – Present.

The Clerk notified Chairman Martin that six Commissioners were present.

OVC General Counsel John M. O'Connor was also present.

**B. DECLARATION OF QUORUM**

The Chair 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 January 22, 2026, Notice of the Meeting was filed with the Oklahoma Secretary of State; (2) at least twenty-four (24) 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 were posted on the OVC's page on the ODVA's website, <https://oklahoma.gov/veterans.html>.

**IV. INVOCATION**

Commissioner Ellington led the Invocation.

**V. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Commissioner Orr led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**VI. WELCOME TO VISITORS AND GUESTS.**

Chairman Brett Martin welcomed commissioners, staff, and guests. Mr. James Littlefield was introduced as the new General Counsel for ODVA.

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

**A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 20, 2026, OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING.**

Commissioner Dukes made the Motion to approve the February 20, 2026, meeting minutes.

Commissioner Orr 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 – Absent

Commissioner Dukes – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Mutchler - Absent

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye

Commissioner Perry – Aye.

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 6 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Chairman Martin declared the Motion passed.

**B. VETERANS FOUNDATION: OVC VICE-CHAIR AND FOUNDATION BOARD OF GOVERNORS' CHAIR SID ELLINGTON:**

1. Foundation Update

Over the past four weeks, Commissioner Ellington focused on advancing the Veterans Foundation, which exists to strengthen Oklahoma veterans and their families by supplementing limited state funding with additional resources and nonprofit partnerships. He presented five nominees for the Foundation's Board of Governors—Jim Farris, Brandy Thomas, Taylor Poindexter, Rob Reiners, and Joey Morris—chosen for their fundraising strength, business and accounting expertise, statewide veteran-community connections, and modern marketing skills. Administrative work is underway, including a new foundation web tab on the ODVA website, draft grant work with Boeing, outreach to the Harold Hamm

Foundation, and completion of banking setup at Watermark Bank, meaning the foundation is ready to begin fundraising. He concluded by asking the Commissioners to approve the five Board of Governors nominees.

2. Vote on the five members to become Governors on the Foundation Board of Governors.

Commissioner Dukes made the Motion to elect Jim Farris, Brandy Thomas, Taylor Poindexter, Rob Reiners, and Joey Morris to the Foundation Board of Governors for three-year terms.

Commissioner Orr seconded the Motion.

Chairman Martin asked the Commission if there was any discussion.

Chairman Martin called for a vote on the Motion:

Commissioner Allen – Absent

Commissioner Dukes – Aye

Commissioner Ellington – Aye

Commissioner Martin – Aye

Commissioner Mutchler - Absent

Commissioner Offel – Aye

Commissioner Orr – Aye

Commissioner Perry – Aye.

The Clerk notified the Chair that the vote was 6 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Chairman Martin declared the Motion passed.

### **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 reported that ODVA leadership has “swarmed” the Lawton home with a strengthened on-site team, including Shawn Kirkland as the acting administrator, an acting director of nursing, and compliance leadership, along with added support from supply, logistics, and facilities staff, to stabilize operations. He noted that detailed discussion of the administrative actions will occur in a properly noticed future executive session, but that public communication has already been aligned with a recent press release and briefed to legislative partners. System-wide, the veterans homes census stands at 1,038 and is on track to exceed 1,040 and push Norman above the 90% occupancy benchmark, and previously out-of-service beds due to HVAC issues at Lawton and Claremore have now been fully restored and are available for use.

Director Bynum reported that ODVA’s total bed capacity is 1,423, with 1,285 currently available (about 90% of capacity), and that they are still awaiting the VA

recognition survey date for Sallisaw, anticipated in early April. Most of the agency's major legislative initiatives did not advance this year, including a proposed Veterans Assistance Fund and new revolving funds, though federal partners are exploring possible alternative funding and lease-back models for future recapitalization of state veterans homes. To improve transparency and Commission oversight, ODVA is developing a bottom-up, requirements-based budgeting process covering facility sustainment, modernization, fleet, and manpower planning, tied to long-range demand forecasts. On the operational side, Director Bynum explained that he used emergency authority to stabilize food service staffing at Claremore and requested an additional \$37,500 to extend that interim contract through July 1, plus a short 45-day, ~\$39,000 emergency engagement at Lawton until the state-level contract is in place.

Chairman Martin asked for a motion to approve the requested funding, but OVC General Counsel John M. O'Connor advised that it could not be acted on because it was not detailed in the public notice. The Chairman then directed that the funding request be fully detailed and placed as one of the first business items on the agenda for the next meeting.

Director Bynum explained that his current emergency spending authority is capped at \$150,000 per incident, most of which has already been used to stabilize food service at Claremore, and that the true net cost is less than \$37,500 because some state payroll has been reduced. Commissioners discussed that such a relatively small amount should not normally require Commission approval if it falls within his authority and noted that the \$150,000 cap is a Commission-set limit that could be raised. They agreed the matter must appear in a public notice before any action, and asked Bynum to bring back two items for the next (or a special) meeting: (1) a specific request for the additional funds, and (2) a recommended new emergency-authority limit, with supporting information, so both can be voted on transparently.

ODVA reported strong year-to-date net income and is moving to full financial transparency for the Commission, including all appropriated and reimbursed funds, while state and VA per-diem audits are underway but viewed as low risk. The agency is transitioning to an accrual-based QuickBooks system integrated with the State Treasurer, centralizing purchasing, inventory, and maintenance, and tightening controls over resident trust funds and federal HVAC/COVID grants—changes commissioners praised as major professionalization. Commissioner Offel highlighted that ODVA now has the people, processes, and technology to operate like an efficient business; Director Bynum credited Candice McIntire for veteran-centric process and cleanliness/food-service standards and noted that the Talihina facility remains essentially abandoned with limited reuse potential and possible risk of significant environmental remediation costs.

Director Bynum reported that Ardmore is slightly in the red but stabilizing, with 50 beds under remediation and a 3–4 year “maintain but don't over-invest” plan while long-term recapitalization/lease-back options are explored. System-wide, ODVA is

pushing to maximize census (especially at Norman and Claremore), centralize admissions so wait-listed veterans are waiting only on beds, and prepare Clinton, Sallisaw, then Norman for CMS (Medicare/Medicaid) eligibility; Sallisaw already has about 100 applicants ready to admit once VA recognition is granted. He outlined major staffing and financial reforms, including eliminating most contract nursing, moving to 12-hour shifts with a PRN model to cover peaks, and using roughly \$9M–\$11.4M in operating surplus—not as profit—but as a capital reserve against an estimated \$250M maintenance/recap backlog, with the overarching goal of a break-even operation that reinvests all funds into facilities and quality of care.

Director Bynum described efforts to modernize ODVA’s outreach and case-management systems, including an RFP for a holistic platform with 24/7 AI call-center capability, scheduling, and integration with VA “quick submit” tools. The agency’s goal is to systematically reach roughly 261,000 Oklahoma veterans, particularly “untethered” veterans, with a target of at least 1,680 new connections per year, using purchased contact data, targeted outreach (currently yielding about a 4% response rate), and partnerships across the state. ODVA is expanding its presence in TAP classes, National Guard transitions, and upcoming collaborative events at Tinker AFB, and will pair this with internal/external newsletters and CRM-style tracking—flagging even those who initially say “don’t bother me” for appropriate future follow-up, since ODVA is not constrained by no-call lists.

Commissioners noted that, unlike prior years when there was “no plan and no action,” ODVA now has a clear plan, active implementation, and transparent financials, though lifecycle needs—about \$250M in backlog for sustainment and recapitalization—are not yet fully reflected in the operating numbers. Director Bynum explained that census is seasonal and currently improving, that actual occupancy percentages are somewhat better than the conservative metrics presented (since Sallisaw is counted before certification), and that the agency is pursuing Medicare/Medicaid (CMS) certification at Clinton, Sallisaw, and then Norman. He described plans to align incentives with CMS five-star ratings and top-20% survey performance, highlighting Clinton’s near-perfect recent survey as evidence of a strong culture and operational excellence.

Director Bynum highlighted Clinton as a longstanding flagship home with strong culture, low staff turnover, and business-savvy leadership under Administrator Stephanie Taylor, which is being used as a model for other facilities. He outlined a growing PRN/seasonal staffing strategy (targeting roughly one-third of the workforce at 30–32 hours/week to balance flexibility and cost) and noted limited legislative wins, including authority to hire seasonal employees and a pending “3044” provision to allow donations via state forms. He also described agency-wide professionalization efforts: a standardized 30/60/90-day onboarding and skills-verification program for all new employees, stronger quality control and physical security policies across all homes, and a unified culture and training approach, all of which commissioners praised as evidence that ODVA leadership has a solid handle on the agency.

Commissioners praised Director Bynum’s leadership and recent compensation adjustment as well deserved. In response to a question about PX/store access for residents, he explained that some homes have canteens or “veterans’ places” stocked mostly with donated items, while ODVA also provides snacks; veterans can use up to \$2,500 in managed personal funds for purchases or deliveries (e.g., Grubhub). He noted that these are not revenue generators and that the Foundation could help expand and standardize these amenities across homes.

**D. PROPOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION REGARDING CLAIMS, INVESTIGATIONS AND LITIGATION INVOLVING THE OVC OR THE ODVA — AUTHORIZED BY TITLE 25 O.S. §307 (B) (4).**

OVC General Counsel John M. O’Connor advised the Commissioners that public disclosure of the discussions concerning current and potential OVC and ODVA litigation will seriously impair the ability of the OVC and the ODVA to process any claims or conduct any pending investigation and litigation on behalf of the State and in the public interest.

Commissioner Dukes made a motion, based upon legal counsel’s advice, that the OVC go into Executive Session regarding litigation involving OVC or ODVA. 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 – Absent
- Commissioner Dukes – Aye
- Commissioner Ellington – Aye
- Commissioner Martin – Aye
- Commissioner Mutchler - Absent
- Commissioner Offel – Aye
- Commissioner Orr – Aye
- Commissioner Perry – Aye.

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

The board entered Executive Session at 11:18 am.

**E. RESUMED PUBLIC SESSION OF THE REGULAR MEETING:**

Commissioner Dukes made a motion to resume the regular meeting at 12:02 pm. Commissioner Perry seconded the Motion.

Commissioner Martin asked the Commission if there was any discussion.

Chairman Martin called for a vote on the Motion:

- Commissioner Allen – Absent

Commissioner Dukes – Aye  
Commissioner Ellington – Aye  
Commissioner Martin – Aye  
Commissioner Mutchler - Absent  
Commissioner Offel – Aye  
Commissioner Orr – Aye  
Commissioner Perry – Aye.

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

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

No new business was presented.

**IX. OKLAHOMA VETERANS COMMISSION NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING.**

**NEXT REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING:**

April 17, 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 Dukes made the motion to adjourn.  
Commissioner Offel seconded the Motion.

Chairman Martin called for a vote on the Motion:

Commissioner Allen – Absent  
Commissioner Dukes – Aye  
Commissioner Ellington – Aye  
Commissioner Martin – Aye  
Commissioner Mutchler – Absent  
Commissioner Offel – Aye  
Commissioner Orr – Aye  
Commissioner Perry – 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 12:03 pm.