

Joint Committee on State Building Construction

By Gregg Burden

Director, Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office

October 29, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Joint Committee on State Building Construction. I am Gregg Burden, Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office. Attending with me today is Mark Heim our Chief Fiscal Officer, Wayne Bollig our Deputy Director, and Eric Rohleder our Cemetery Director.

The Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office (KCVAO) is privileged to support the quarter million veterans who live in the State of Kansas. Our mission is to serve Kansas veterans, survivors, and their dependents with dignity and compassion. The KCVAO is a principal advocate in ensuring that they receive information, advice, direction, and assistance through the coordination of programs and services on state and federal benefits: medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials in recognition of their service to Kansas and the nation.

The goal of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office is to ensure Kansas veterans and their families receive all the services and benefits they have earned in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible. These services and benefits include; long-term nursing and assisted living care to eligible veterans and dependents, interment options and maintenance of four state veterans' cemeteries, and coordination with federal agencies to provide financial assistance to Kansas veterans for health care and disability income.

The agency also administers the Veterans' Claims Assistance Program a system by which the eligible residents of Kansas can obtain assistance and advice in procuring benefits from the state and federal governments in the area of veterans' or survivors' benefits. These services are provided through 13 field offices located throughout the state, Quality Assurance Office, three Mobile Vans, and six Veteran Services Organizations offices (funding provided by a State Grant) located in the Federal Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) Medical Centers in Topeka, Leavenworth, and Wichita.

That is just a brief overview of the services and programs the KCVAO provides. The KCVAO recognizes that there are growing issues in our State concerning our veterans such as access to medical and mental health services, job opportunities, education, and many other concerns. Our goal is to support the State in addressing these very important needs required for our veterans.

Our approved FY 2019 capital improvement plan contains five projects for the Kansas Veterans' Home, seven projects for the Kansas Soldiers' Home and six projects for the Cemetery Program. The Veterans' Home projects are Install Covered Walkway for Bleckley Hall, Replace Air Handlers for Donlon Hall, Install Handrail system for Corridor Timmerman to Triplett, Replace Boiler #1, and Resurface Parking Lots.

The Soldiers' Home projects include Demolition of Campus Structures, Nimitz Modular Boiler Replacement, Replacement of HVAC Units, Eisenhower Hall Conversion, Halsey Hall Kitchen Renovation (Request Additional Funding), Asphalt the Service Entrance, and Halsey Hall Elevator Upgrade. The Cemetery Program projects include Installation of Scattering Garden Wall at Ft. Dodge Cemetery, Flag Pole Base Repair at Winfield Cemetery, Repair

Loose Building Mortar at Winfield Cemetery, Paint Interior Administration Building at Winfield Cemetery, Replace Carpet at Winfield Cemetery, and Replace Fence at Ft. Riley.


For FY 2020 the KCVAO is requesting approval for four projects at the Kansas Veterans Home, four projects at the Kansas Soldiers Home and three projects for the Cemetery Program.

- Replace Boiler #2 which is old and failing due to age. It leaks and is deteriorating. Replacing boiler will create efficiencies and improve reliability.
- Install covered walkway for Donlon Hall - This project will provide a covered walkway from the front entrance to Donlon Hall.
- Roof Replacement of Staff Resident Homes – This project will replace the roofs of the three residential homes which house the Superintendent and two staff.
- Construct Maintenance Building – This project will build a 40' by 100' metal maintenance building to consolidate the maintenance operations at the KVH
- Automatic Doors for LTC and Domiciliary – Previous renovations have caused new access issues and caused a need for new automatic doors (ADA compliant).
- Visitor Parking and Welcome Center – As a historic site which hosts thousands of visitors each year the facility does not have adequate parking or information center.
- Halsey Hall parking lot and Mill & Overlay – provides a new parking lot surface for employees and visitors for LTC facility.
- Pershing Barracks Parking Area – Renovating building to house administrative functions and offices and requires a new parking area to facilitate employees, residents, applicants, and visitors.
- Columbarium Wall at the Winfield Cemetery – New above ground structure designed for the interment of the cremated remains of veterans and their dependents.
- Cemetery Security at all State Veterans Cemeteries – Install cameras to enhance security of cemeteries.
- Install Storage Unit Room at Winfield Cemetery – Install metal roof to the existing concrete storage units to protect supplies and materials from the elements.

Looking to the future, the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office will strive to ensure Kansas maintains its special place as a veteran-friendly state. We will pursue initiatives that allow us to remain at the forefront of veteran advocacy, ensure we maintain secure veterans' homes, and provide state cemeteries that are memorials to honor our veterans. We will continue to work closely with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) and monitor the requirements and feasibility of future long-term care needs and services for Kansas veterans. The department will analyze the possibility of new home construction as well as other options to assist veterans.

On behalf of the KCVAO, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to brief the committee and for your continued support. I look forward to working with the Joint Committee on State Building Construction and other parties as we move forward working together helping veterans and their dependents. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,



Gregg Burden