

Strategic Planning Committee Report

DATE: 17 January 2024

MEETING TYPE: Teams

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Gary De Gasta (Chair), Jennifer Carmichael, Brenda Cruickshank, Charly Dickerson, Peter Fagan, Michael Klopchin, Cathy Tester

INVITED GUESTS: Joyce Scribner, Asa Morin, Robyn Boland. Melissa Jackson (absent).

MEMBERS ABSENT: none

MEETING START TIME: 10:00 am

SPC GOALS: Strategic Plan Initiative #1: **Serve More Vermont Veterans** (Page 1 – 2, Page 14 – 15) Strategic Plan Initiative: #3 **Expand Geographic Reach** (Page 1 – 2, Page 18 – 19) Strategic Plan Initiative: #4 **Offer New Services** (Page 1 – 2, Page 20)

SPC Duties: By-Laws of the BoT VVH (ARTICLE VI. DUTIES OF COMMITTEES SECTION 6) -- “The Strategic Planning Committee will prepare a strategic plan for the Board that will insure the accomplishment of the Vision and Mission statements for the years to come. The plan will include inputs from management and staff, and will be reviewed annually in advance of the budget”.

The Committee reviewed the following:

- **November 8, 2023, Report:** Report was approved as prepared.
- **CEO comments from December BoT meeting:** CEO Jackson commented on a conversation with *Dr. Brett Rusch, Executive Director, WRJ VAMC* regarding Telemedicine and potential sharing agreements for optometry and audiology; announced that the Brattleboro and Keene, New Hampshire, CBOCs are combining and will become a “Specialty Clinic” offering more services than are routinely provided by a CBOC and expressed a concern about VA Sharing Office (Washington, DC) delays approving sharing agreements.

Follow up actions:

- **Statutory changes:** VP Fagan provided an update regarding Vermont Statute, **Title 20: Internal Security and Public Safety, Chapter 087 Vermont Veterans Home**, and legislation proposed by Rep. Mary Morrissey with 50 co-sponsors (Republican, Democrats and Independents) to enable the Home to pursue strategic plan initiatives which diversify and/or expand programs and their reach beyond the confines of the Bennington campus.
- **VA Sharing agreements:** President De Gasta reported that in his conversation with *Ryan Lilly, Director VA New England Healthcare System*, Mr. Lilly did not envision processing issues regarding any mutually agreed upon sharing/contract agreements between the VVH and the WRJ VAMC. Mr. Lilly also stated he would gladly “shepherd” endorsed agreements through the VA’s National Sharing Office in Washington, DC.

CEO requested input from the Committee: Prior to taking on Gibbous Market Study, Trustees briefly addressed two key items identified by the CEO:

- **Future care options for the VVH must start with addressing the Healthcare workforce** -- during discussion, the Committee could not offer any definitive guidance and concluded the issue was extensive, pervasive, and likely will take years to resolve. The Committee felt the Board should evidence its support by continuing to advocate for a meaningful budget that permits the VVH to hire “travelers” to supplement its own employees.
- **Statute Changes** (to enable the Home to consider program expansion and increase its geographical footprint beyond the confines of the Bennington Campus) -- as discussed above,

Legislation has been drafted with dozens of co-sponsors -- may require testimony from Home and Board members.

Contents and summary of discussions:

Analysis and Discussion -- Final Gibbous Market Study (Dated Dec. 15, 2023) -- **Goals** (extracted from April RFP Market Study Report): “*The **end goal** of this project is to provide VVH leadership and the Board of Trustees with data regarding areas of possible growth for expanding their footprint to provide services for more veterans*”.

- Identification of the number of Veterans and disbursement across the state.
- Identification of the competitors.
- Customer Service Improvement: To identify the number of Veterans in the State of Vermont, the current services available to them, and their health care service needs.

CHARGE: SPC discussion Final Gibbous Market Study

INTRODUCTION: As the Market Study Report has been finalized and submitted, its slides, summaries, data, and other content is available for discussion by the Home/Board for planning and implementation.

NOTE: Slides, data, summaries, etc. provided to the VVH by our Market Study vendor, Gibbous, is proprietary information and is **NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED OR SHARED** outside of the Board until we are advised to the contrary.

COMMITTEE RESPONSE:

One of the main goals of the Market Study assessment was to identify and gain insight into expanding the number of veterans the Home provides services to and, accordingly, the type of non-acute services to consider expanding. The SPC concludes these goals appear to have only been partially fulfilled!

Issues/topics/questions raised during the meeting included:

- The Committee felt the problems of staffing are indeed enormous and likely will require years and a significant number of resources to address. A key role for the Board will be to advocate for a budget that continues to fund “travelers” to support the Home’s staffing needs.
- There is a concern that the veteran populations may not exclude “double counting”.
- The Study did not identify preferred geographical areas or preferred programs.
- In view of the current climate in healthcare, is now the right time to consider an expansion of programs/services?
- Is the VVH sufficiently “stable” in its resources/staffing/programs to undertake in a new program?
- Is telehealth (for the VVH) a viable “program” for consideration? How can/should telemedicine be utilized for enhancing services or creating new revenue streams?
- Can/should the Home consider purchasing/sharing “slots”/NH beds for program services outreach?
- The absence of a “Veteran’s Database” in Vermont makes the collection of veterans’ data difficult at best. Vermont very well may be “missing out” on federal resources or its ability to (appropriately) “shift” programs’ expenses from the state to the federal level.
- **NOTE:** House Bill H-168 proposes such a database (the bill also includes provisions for exemption of some military retirement pay from state income taxes). The bill is sponsored by Trustee and State Representative, Bob Hooper.
- Can the Commandant’s House (or land) be used to address housing needs for potential employees? Possibly erecting a building (Dormitory). At the Committee’s request, the feasibility and ways and means to pursue this concept was supported by President Gary, referred to the Building and Grounds Committee and the charge accepted by Chairperson Cathy Tester.
- How do we make sure that Vermont Veterans receive the care, through accessing it, that they need to maintain their quality of life?

Questions/Issues: A Resource Document

“Partnering”, “A Financial Proposal”, “Strategic Scenarios”, “Study Data Presented” and “Gibbous Unanswered Questions” are topics emanating from the Market Study likely requiring more study/analysis/discussion at the February 14, 2024, Board meeting during the Gibbous presentation.

OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED: - -

FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS: - -

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: - -

MEETING END TIME (adjournment): Meeting adjourned at 11:35 am.

COMMITTEE CHAIR: Gary De Gasta 17 January 2024

2024 Strategic Planning Committee Meetings to all start at 10:00 am via Teams:
May 15, July 17, October 2