

Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) Report

DATE: 22 January 2025

MEETING TYPE: Teams

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

INVITED GUESTS: Trustees: Joyce Scribner, Frank Wetherby.

INVITED STAFF: Melissa Jackson, Asa Whitcomb, Robyn Boland (all present)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Clark Adams

MEETING START TIME: 10:00 am

SPC GOALS: Strategic Plan Initiative #1: **Serve More Vermont Veterans** (Pages 1–2, Pages 14–15); Strategic Plan Initiative #3: **Expand Geographic Reach** (Pages 1–2, Pages 18–19); Strategic Plan Initiative #4: **Offer New Services** (Pages 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 ensure the accomplishment of the Vision and Mission statements for the years to come. The plan will include input from management and staff, and will be reviewed annually in advance of the budget”.

The July 17, 2024, Report: Motion made by CPT Cruickshank, second by COL Fagan, to accept as prepared. No discussion. None opposed. The July 17, 2024, Report accepted unanimously.

Background:

During its June 12, 2024, meeting the Board adopted a Policy to focus on employee stabilization and the reduction of its contracted personnel costs rather than adding service lines or expanding to a new location. Where feasible, and when in compliance with that Policy, the Home, its Board and the **SPC** have affirmed they will strive to implement the Home’s Strategic Plan Initiatives.

During its August 14, 2024, meeting the Board approved, as policy, the **SPC**’s Strategic Plan “Executive Summary” which was accepted as the Annual review of the Strategic Plan.

The Veterans Farm Initiative, endorsed by the **SPC**, was approved by the Board during its June 12 meeting.

Progress Report: STRATEGIC INITIATIVES Implementation

#3 Expand Geographic Reach -- It remains unlikely that significant progress can be made on the Geographic Reach Initiative until such time as new monies are available, an assessment of the need for any program or service is made, a feasibility study conducted, and the proposed activity fully vetted and presented to the legislature for review.

#1 Serve More Vermont Veterans -- Due to the extraordinary estimated costs and insufficient VA construction funds, the demolition and reconstruction of A-wing has been delayed for an undetermined (but anticipated lengthy) timeframe and a new A-wing project event is being developed.

- **A Veterans Farm Initiative** was approved by the Board during its June 12 meeting. The Initiative will serve a modest number of “new veterans”, but will not require additional financial or human resources, not require legislative approval, and therefore be compliant with Board policy.
- **VA/SVH Outpatient Rehabilitation**, a Home initiative not requiring additional financial or human resources, nor requiring legislative approval and deemed compliant with current Board Policy, will be discussed by CEO Jackson in her remarks.

#4 Offer New Services -- Both the Board-approved **Veterans Farm Initiative** and the proposed **Optum Outpatient Rehabilitation**, while considered “new services”, do not require additional resources (human or financial), legislative notification or approval, and are compliant with Board Policy.

Update: Initiatives/activities affecting VVH Strategic Planning -- CEO Jackson:

- Consultations continue with the White River VA Medical Center Executive Director, Dr. Brett Rusch, regarding possible collaboration/partnering on both near-term and longer-term programs and activities including pilot projects with the focus on how we can partner without having to add staff for geographic outreach. Many things are on hold, including within the VA, as President Trump officially took office earlier this week and issued numerous Executive Orders.
- OptumServe, a health services business unit of Optum, is contracted with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide services to veterans. The VA/SVH Outpatient Rehabilitation Program (ORP) which provides services to veterans is under Legal Review by VA’s General Council. If the changes proposed by the (departing) Secretary of Veterans Affairs are enacted, the VVH would be permitted to offer outpatient rehabilitation services within its existing budget and staff (“excess capacity”), generate additional revenue and not require legislative notification or approval. NASVH (National Association of State Veterans Homes) has been working hard on getting this changed within VA’s GEC (Geriatric Extended Care). Pursuant to President Trump’s Executive Order, there are to be no new regulations and this proposed change is also on hold.
- The Veterans Farm Initiative is moving forward. CEO Jackson forwarded a Zoom Invite to 6 bi-weekly “Working Sessions” for the Veterans Farming Program. Should they have any questions or concerns, Trustees are encouraged to participate in these meetings. While community involvement (volunteer, donate supplies/tools/equipment, offer professional skills, etc.) is anticipated, only veterans will be working the farm.
- Budget Update: CEO Jackson hopes to meet again with the Department of Finance and Management Commissioner, Adam Greshin, next week. Concern about the enactment of the anticipated “all in budget” will be discussed. Depending on that outcome, a meeting with Board President and Secretary of Administration, Sarah Clark, may be scheduled. The Card Room “Meet and Greet Legislators” event may present an opportunity to discuss the FY2026 “all-in budget” parameters. Many new legislators were elected this year, including a large number of the members on the House Committee on Appropriations. The Governor’s budget is scheduled to be released next Tuesday.
- Activities to gain access to federal grant funds: The application for the new A-wing project grant is almost complete – it is due April 15. The VA would pay 65%, the State 35%. We

continue to look for other grants, but we need to be careful to not negate our access to VA funding.

CEO Jackson anticipates receiving more information in the next week regarding possible federal grant money to help finish the Mobility Trail.

- Baldrige: The Baldrige Silver Application will be submitted by the end of today.
- Leadership Training: All of the administrative nurses are participating in an 8-week program through LeadingAge called “Nurse Lead”. Aisling Taft, social worker, is doing the Vermont Public Manager’s Certification. Sam Caron, assistant activities supervisor, is doing a LeadingAge management leadership training program as well. Department Heads are participating in a “Back to Basics” program with Shelley Morton, State of Vermont Agency of Human Resources Labor Relations Manager.

NOTE: Trustees, SPC Members, and Committee Chairs are reminded that each Board committee, via its assigned “strategic initiatives”, is responsible for “a piece of the strategic plan”. Upon request, the SPC would work with Committee Chairs and their members to offer assistance with their planning initiatives.

OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED: Steven McClafferty, Finance Director, will be Acting Administrator for the February 12 Board meeting as both CEO Jackson and COO Whitcomb have other (meeting) commitments that week.

The Card Room event is Friday, January 31, from 9am - noon at the State House in Montpelier.

RECOMMENDATIONS: - -

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: Identify and focus attention on shorter term planning – 3 - 5+ years.

MEETING END TIME (adjournment): Motion made by Ms. Carmichael to adjourn the meeting, second by COL Fagan. None opposed. Meeting adjourned at 10:34 am.

COMMITTEE CHAIR: Gary De Gasta 23 January 2025

2025 Strategic Planning Committee Meetings to all start at 10:00 am via Teams: April 30, July 16, October 1