

Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) Report

DATE: 17 July 2024

MEETING TYPE: Teams

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

INVITED GUESTS: Trustee: Joyce Scribner.

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Clark Adams, Cathy Tester

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 ensure 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 May 15, 2024, Report was approved as prepared.

Although not in attendance, Clark Adams was welcomed to the SPC as the newly-appointed Chairperson of the QA Committee.

Background:

During its June 12, 2024 meeting, the Board approved the SPC’s recommendations:

Policy of the VVH and its Board of Trustees Adopted June 12, 2024

At least for the immediate future, the **Home’s leadership, with the support of its BoT**, will diligently work on employee stabilization, the reduction of its contracted personnel costs, rather than adding service lines or expanding to a new location.

Together **we** will pursue a goal of financial solvency without compromising the quality of healthcare or services.

While addressing contemporary personnel and budget challenges, **we** will continue to think and plan strategically:

- **We** will evaluate the need for, and feasibility of, implementing new programs and services; any proposed service will be fully vetted and presented to the legislature for approval.
- **We** will Investigate pilot projects and partnerships (such as the VA) to assist us in funding and implementing future activities; no decisions will be made without an in-depth feasibility study.

When H.794 was signed into law by Governor Scott on June 3, 2024, **the Home and its Board** were granted statutory authority to expand “services and programs” including “establish(ing) an additional State Nursing Home”. **We** will only pursue such ventures “when the timing is right, a feasibility study completed and validated, and the resources are available”.

Chairperson De Gasta thanked COL Fagan for his astute recognition of the necessity for enabling legislation which became H.794. COL Fagan, in turn, recognized Representative Mary Morrissey for sponsoring and introducing the bill, shepherding it through the legislature and securing its passage in record time.

Operational Focus of the SPC -- In view of the challenges the Home is facing for the ill-defined “near term”, Chairperson De Gasta posed the following “strawman” questions for Committee members to reflect on and offer input:

- **How does the Board’s Policy** (presented above) **affect the SPC’s implementation of its assigned Strategic Initiatives?:**
 - #1 **Serve More Vermont Veterans**
 - #3 **Expand Geographic Reach**
 - #4 **Offer New Services**

DISCUSSION: The consensus of the SPC was that, even with the recently adopted policy, the Home, its Board and the SPC are actively engaged in **implementing Strategic Initiatives #1 and #4** (Discussed in more detail below).

- **While we diligently work to address “present-day” personnel and budget challenges, how can/does the SPC “think, as well as plan, strategically”?**

DISCUSSION: The Committee noted that the Home, its Board, and the SPC are in the midst of implementing two of its three Strategic Initiatives:

Strategic Initiatives #1 (Serve More Vermont Veterans) -- A major near-term (2-3 years) strategic activity is the demolition and rebuilding of A-wing. Once completed, the new memory care unit will feature a modern infrastructure and better able to “serve more veterans”, especially those with special needs. Unfortunately, the project, fully funded by the VA, is facing financial challenges that will require the attention of the Home and its Board to ensure that the project proceeds as planned. Due to the higher than bidded costs, there has been a delay in the A-wing project start time. The Administration is exploring options to reduce the project’s scope as well as the options to pursue State funding.

Strategic Initiative #4 -- Offer New Services --The Veterans Farm initiative, which will not incur any Home expenditures, was approved by the Board during its June 12 meeting. It is a “new service” which will “serve more veterans” and provide an educational experience as they learn to farm on land made available by the Home and its Board. A number of Trustees did not vote for the initiative which raised concerns on the part of the sponsoring organization regarding whether to fully engage with the Home. More clarity on the status of the initiative is expected to be provided by the August Board meeting.

NOTE: While not “mapped” to the SPC, two additional strategic planning initiatives were raised by CEO Jackson:

Enhance Leadership -- this strategic initiative is mapped to the **Executive Committee** and **Cultivate an Excellent Team** -- this strategic initiative is mapped to **Quality Assurance**.

DISCUSSION: Leadership development and succession planning are critically important. Developing strong leaders (especially mid-level managers) and teaching them “how to lead” will help sustain a quality organization -- one where potential residents will want to come and prospective employees will want to work to help the Home to become an even better place “to serve veterans”.

- **Does the SPC have a role (and, if so, what is it?) in:**
 - **“Evaluating the need for, and feasibility of, implementing new programs and services”** (recognizing that any proposed service will be fully vetted and presented to the legislature for approval)?
 - **Investigating pilot projects and partnerships**, such as the VA, to assist us with implementing and funding future activities” (acknowledging no decisions will be made without an in-depth feasibility study)?

DISCUSSION: The Committee supported COL Fagan’s proposal to focus a good deal of energy on the one main effort that will “move us forward” -- the A-wing demolition and rebuild.

NOTE: CEO Jackson and the White River VA Medical Center Executive Director, Dr. Brett Rusch, will be meeting this fall to discuss possible collaboration/partnering on both near-term and longer-term programs and activities including pilot projects.

- **For the (yet to be determined) near term, should the SPC focus on the near term (1-5 years out?) On what should we focus our time and energy?**

DISCUSSION: As previously discussed, the A-wing rebuild and veteran farming program are two “near-term” strategic areas requiring focus and attention. There was discussion whether the Home should attempt to gain access to federal grant dollars or explore opportunities for a nonprofit credit union partnership (as raised by Ms. Carmichael). CEO Jackson will consult with Department of Finance and Management Commissioner Adam Greshin and she and Ms. Carmichael will also look into credit union partnering options and advise.

- **For our annual review of the Strategic Plan how should the SPC proceed?:**
 - **Undertake a comprehensive update of the Plan?**
 - **“Update” the Plan with an “addendum”** stating: “Personnel and budget issues confronting the Home are expected to hinder program expansion for the immediate future” or other such language?

DISCUSSION: The SPC concluded a comprehensive update of the strategic plan is not feasible and not necessary at this time. Ms. Carmichael suggested, and the Committee concurred, that the newly-adopted Board policy statement be considered an “Executive Summary” attached to the Home’s Strategic Plan serving as the SPC’s “annual review of the Plan”.

- **Should the SPC offer to serve as a “sounding board” for Board Committees, Trustees, and Administration** as we all grapple with planning in a dynamic healthcare environment?

DISCUSSION: Each Board committee, via assigned “strategic initiatives”, is responsible for “a piece of the strategic plan”. A role for SPC, upon request, might be to work with Committee Chairs and their members as they focus on their planning initiatives.

OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED: - -

RECOMMENDATIONS: Create an addendum/update to the Executive Summary of the Strategic Plan for presentation to, and approval by, the Board of Trustees on August 14, 2024.

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

MEETING END TIME (adjournment): Meeting adjourned at 10:48 am.

COMMITTEE CHAIR: Gary De Gasta 18 May 2024

2024 Strategic Planning Committee Meetings to all start at 10:00 am via Teams: October 2