

# Strategic Planning Committee Report

**DATE:** 16 November 2022

**MEETING TYPE:** Zoom

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Gary De Gasta (Chair), Michael Klopchin, Brenda Cruickshank, Charly Dickerson, Jennifer Carmichael, and Joyce Scribner

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Peter Niles (excused)

**INVITED GUESTS:** Melissa Jackson, Asa Morin, and Robyn Boland

**MEETING START TIME:** 10:45 am

**IMPLEMENTATION of STRATEGIC GOALS:** VVH Strategic Plan Goals: #1 - Serve More Vermont Veterans; Goal #3 - Expand Geographic Reach; and Goal #4 - Offer New Services.

**Review of SPC Report** of June 30, 2022. Follow up items will be Agenda items for the Dec. 14, 2022, BoT meeting:

1. Trustees serving on additional Board Committees and
2. CEO report on the status of the RFP for the feasibility study (due date of November 17, 2022).

Follow up items for consideration today:

1. Creating outcomes metrics to measure implementing the Strategic Plan Goals -- the accomplishment of the Goal Action Steps will serve as a proxy for evidencing progress in implementing the Strategic Plan.
2. Charly Dickerson's updating of the By-Laws may or may not be ready for discussion at the December meeting.

**Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) Meeting Strategy:** The Chair noted the primary focus for today's meeting would be on **reviewing what has been done** (by the SPC/BoT) regarding implementing the VVH's Strategic Plan. A primary for today was expected to be focusing on Goal 1 -- Serving More Veterans:

- **Review of Strategic Planning Workshop III (Lake Morey, October 26<sup>th</sup>): VVH Strategic Plan Implementation** -- presented by Dan Vogt. The Workshop was rated as "Very Good" (rating of 4+ out of 5) and written comments were favorable and supportive.
- **Review the VVH Strategic Plan (summarized):** The VVH has established nine strategic goals for advancing its mission over the next 5-20 years. These goals allow VVH to expand its mission, serve more veterans, strengthen the VVH team and maintain financial health. **For each goal, the plan contains a goal statement, action steps** for VVH to implement the goal, **and background information** for additional context about the goal.
- **Review (perceived) Barriers to fully implementing the VVH Strategic Plan**
  - **Described in the SPC Chair Report presented at Lake Morey:**
    1. The **Covid Pandemic** and its impact (on meetings and attendance)
    2. The **Open Meeting Law** -- an initial barrier until guidance was obtained and the barrier **OVERCOME!**
    3. **Infrequency of SPC meetings** -- **should be OVERCOME** with the implementation of a plan to hold SPC meetings each quarter going forward.
    4. **Absence of Strategic Plan direction garnered through feasibility studies** -- could be on the way to partial resolution should the Feasibility Study "on the street" come to pass.
  - **Growth Constraints (Barriers) -- identified in the Strategic Plan awaiting feasibility guidance as to applicability:**
    1. The **reimbursement rates** for Domiciliary residents -- The reimbursement structure would need to be addressed via federal legislative changes
    2. **Expansion of beds** would require a Certificate of Need (CoN) as well as VA approval
    3. **New facilities and services** elsewhere in Vermont would require navigating the CoN process
    4. Obtaining approval from the State to **add on or establish another facility**
    5. **Labor force** to support VVH's staffing needs and/or growth
    6. Assessing impact Vermont's decreasing veteran population on existing and future operations
- **Review the three Strategic Goals mapped to the SPC:**

**Goal 1: Serve More Veterans:** to bring VVH's demonstrated high-quality care to more veterans in Vermont, serve those who are most in need, and foster a statewide community of veterans with a shared veteran experience.

**Goal 3: Expand Geographic Reach:** To be a statewide provider of veteran care in Vermont and reach new locations with identified veteran needs.

**Goal 4: Offer New Services:** to expand into new services to support veterans and their families, embrace trends in senior living, and demonstrate creativity in how VVH supports fulfilling lives for Vermont veterans.

Reviewed and discussed the CEO's document indicating what VVH is doing as part of their daily operations to address the Action Steps of the Strategic Plan.

**CEO Jackson provided the SPC/BoT her "first pass" document by Department Heads: How VVH Current Operations Support the Strategic Plan.** The SPC used Melissa's comments in reference to Goal 1 (Serving More Veterans) as its **"starting point" for assessing how the SPC can/should support the Home relative to**

**Goal 1: Six (6) Action Steps:**

1. Further analyze the demographics over time by county, region, and gender to identify those areas in most need of expanded services. Focusing analysis on Chittenden, Franklin, Washington, and Rutland Counties might make sense based on more favorable demographic trends. Addison and Orange Counties might be worth focusing on with a lower number of to serve veterans and with Addison County lacking a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) --

**CEO's Comment:** "Market Study RFP released"

**SPC Response:** The SPC concurs that Action Step 1 requires a strategic direction which a well-developed and professionally prepared feasibility study should help to define. Neither the Home nor the BoT has either the manpower or expertise required to accomplish the Action Step requirements.

2. Review trends in veteran needs for care, including needs around geriatric psychiatry, women's health, and homelessness --

**CEO's comment:** "Market Study released seeking to obtain info on Veterans demographics and those who are current providers to veterans"

**SPC Response:** The BoT/SPC can play an important role in assisting the Home with Action Step 2 -- to "Engage with local leaders and Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) in the identified regions to learn, refine, design, and gain local support for the expanded services".

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**CEO's comment:** "Done on a limited basis. CEO will provide legislative priorities to the State VSOs"

**SPC Response:** Action Step3 is another area where the SPC/BoT can play an important role. However, it is essential that the interactions and information shared be current and accurate and that all (Trustees and employees) "sing from the same song sheet". Trustees, located in various regions of the State can use their local contacts to influence and gain proactive guidance and support from VSOs.

4. Foster support for expanded services by meeting with legislative leaders to share and discuss the needs of Vermont in the identified regions --

**CEO's comment:** "Local Bennington leaders are involved and are updated regularly"

**SPC Response:** Trustees can and should play an important role in implementing Action Step 4 -- both with Trustee presence at the Home and legislators representing communities where our Trustees reside.

5. Investigate the needs of veterans in the Northeast Kingdom and identify if there are potential options to help provide care for underserved veterans of the region.

**CEO's Comment:** None offered

**SPC Response:** Action Step 5, not unlike others, requires a strategic direction which a feasibility study very likely would help to define. Neither the Home nor the BoT has the required manpower or expertise to accomplish the Action Step without "outside" expertise.

6. Conduct feasibility studies for cases where VVH intends to expand services to determine that they align with its mission and vision and are sustainable.

**CEO's Comment:** None offered

**SPC Response:** Action Step 6 too requires a strategic direction a feasibility study could define.

**CEO/SPC Discussion items:**

- **Feasibility Study RFP** -- The due date for the feasibility study “on the street” is tomorrow (11-17-22). Two bidders have asked questions. Melissa will provide more information once she has results.
- **Talking Points** -- Talking Points are already “being worked on” which will provide Board and Home employees “consistent and accurate information to use when discussing VVH and the Strategic Plan with others”. The Talking Points will include: who we are, what we do, the budget, what we plan to do in the future, that we are a State Veteran Home “serving the entire State” not just the greater Bennington area. She added the VVH continues to foster a good relationship with local legislators.
- **Getting VSOs more involved** --Considerable discussion ensued on how to “meet with and proactively engage” more VSOs in the Home as well as assisting to identify veterans’ needs.  
**Barriers:** A number of VSOs only use Facebook now instead of having a website making it difficult to link the VVH website to VSO websites (which many do not offer the opportunity to link anyway).
- A SPC recommendation for both the Home and the SPC ensures the Home/BoT does not lose sight of **accomplishing shorter term goals (1-5 years)**. Update the Strategic Plan Action Steps should also be a focus of the Home/BoT.
- **Referencing the Strategic Plan’s Background Context,** there was considerable discussion that, when considering how and where the Home provides services **today** and what it envisions as possibilities for **the future**, serious consideration must be given to **projected changes in Vermont’s veteran demographics** and where veteran needs are concentrated throughout the state. For example, Vermont’s total veteran population is expected to decrease by nearly half over the next two decades—from 40,051 in 2020 to 24,559 in 2040. During this period, women will become a greater proportion of Vermont’s veteran population, though still a smaller cohort than male veterans.
- **Goal 1 -- Serve More Vermont Veterans might translate into:**
  - Providing services to veterans in central and northern parts of the state to bridge the distance between those veterans and families and the current Bennington location
  - Operational presence in central Vermont in closer proximity to Montpelier to further strengthen legislative support and advocacy
  - Providing care and services in the Chittenden County area, which has and will have the greatest population of veterans in Vermont

**OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED:** Proposal for Strategic Plan Committee meetings, date and time schedule (for 2023) After a brief discussion, it was decided to schedule **one-hour quarterly meetings at 10:00 am (Second Wednesday of the month) for the months of:** January 11, May 10, July 12, and November 8. This schedule should allow attendees to plan their calendars well in advance.

**FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS:** Implementing the SPC’s three Strategic Goals (Serve More Vermont Veterans; Expand Geographic Reach; Offer New Services), will require the Home and its Trustees to work together, complementing and supplementing agreed upon joint efforts. Our current thinking that well-developed and professionally prepared feasibility studies are key to providing “the Strategic Direction” we are missing **may have to be reassessed**. In the meantime, Board Committees, including the SPC, **should continue to strive to implement, within their abilities and capabilities, their Strategic Goal Action Steps.**

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:** Implementation accomplishments by the SPC toward achieving Action Steps for each of its three Strategic Goals -- Serve More Vermont Veterans; Expand Geographic Reach and Offer New Services.

**MEETING END TIME (adjournment): 12:10 pm**

**COMMITTEE CHAIR:** Gary De Gasta 18 November 2022