

Military Affairs Commission

Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes

DATE: February 25, 2014

TIME: 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

LOCATION: National Guard Joint Forces HQ - TAG Conference Room
4105 Reedy Creek Road
Raleigh, NC 27607

MEMBERS:

Bowlin, Thomas
Decker, Sharon
DeSpain, Lance
Dordal, Paul
Dorney, Scottt
Elmore, Creswell
Friday, Paul
Glover, Joshua L.
Lusk, Gregory A.
Martin, Bud
McKissock, Gary S.
McNeill, Dan K.
Moore, Anna Lea
Pantano, Ilario
Thrash, Joy
Wilson, Jr., Cornell

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Will Collins for Decker, Sharon
Dordal, Paul
Dorney, Scott
Elmore, Creswell
Glover, Joshua L.
McKissock, Gary S.
McNeill, Dan K.
Pantano, Ilario
Thrash, Joy
Wilson, Jr., Cornell

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Bowlin, Thomas

Lusk, Gregory A.
Decker, Sharon
Friday, Paul
Martin, Bud
Moore, Anna Lea

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Beth Barton
Sebastian Montagne
Evon DiGregorio
Will Collins
Ken Siragusa
Archie Barrow
Lane Dyer
Austin Walther
Richard Comer
Frank Poovey

Welcome/Introductions

Chair LtGen Gary McKissock called the meeting to order and welcomed all, inviting attendees to introduce themselves. Each attendee introduced themselves and provided their respective backgrounds. Chair McKissock reviewed the purpose of the Economic Development Committee relative to the Military Affairs Commission, inclusive of a focus on transitioning military, looking at the best practices in other states as they relate to connecting prospective employers in the business community with the skillset of transitioning military members, active duty Guardsmen and Reserves and veterans seeking employment. In May, the Full Commission meets and is preparing to report to the Governor and Legislature at that time.

The Challenges for Veterans to Find Jobs in North Carolina and for Employers to Connect with Veterans

Chair McKissock addressed connecting the two "customers", i.e., departing enlisted, e.g., who remain in North Carolina, and a prospective employer. When speaking with soldiers and employers, he inquired as to how the process is working from their respective points of view, and concluded that more cohesion is necessary in this process. For example, in attending a job fair on a military base, the employers are not identifying a clear means of finding prospective job candidates, nor are those seeking employment. There are no statistics to look at that show how many enlisted are finding employment through existing programs, in order to document their success. Chair McKissock indicated that we are on a listening tour at this juncture. Meeting with individuals in economic development to obtain their input and hear what they are encountering in connecting the job seeker with the hiring employer is one of the tasks at hand.

Presentation by Maj. Frank Poovey, and Q&A :

MAJ Frank W. Poovey, Director of the NC National Guard Education and Employment Center, presented on the formation and role of the Center whose function it is to establish ongoing relationships with veteran-friendly employers within the state of North Carolina. Maj. Poovey used powerpoint slides to illustrate the 4 regions in the State where Center career counselors are located and job seekers are provided assistance ranging from help with resumes and engagement skills, to mock interviews. Methods of advertisement such as radio PSA's,

NC Vets Monster website, word-of-mouth to units through commanders and First Sergeants, Yellow Ribbon events, Facebook and Linked In, along with a public site on the NCNG main web page, are currently being used. The upcoming EEC events calendar was presented, employers participating with the NCNG EEC were listed, and statistics on the success of the program with 289 personnel being placed, were also presented. Division of Veteran Affairs Director Ilario Pantano commented that the Division of Veteran's Affairs would be relocating to the NCNG HQ in June of this year. Mr. Pantano indicated that he intends to reach out to other State agencies such as the Department of Commerce, DHHS and Division of Veterans Affairs to plug in to the NC National Guard Education and Employment Center, as well.

The Present Situation

The meeting was turned over to Will Collins of Workforce Development, who briefed the Committee on his background in human resources, his connection with the military and his position with the Department of Commerce. Mr. Collins stated there is increasing support and interest in the hiring of the military. He added that there is a lack of awareness about what Workforce Development does and provided a portfolio handout to attending members with inserts that included a Veterans Employment Services Summary, a copy of the power point presentation with data on the Division of Workforce Solutions, a report by the Labor & Economic Analysis Division, contact information for the Veterans' Employment Service Staff, and a spreadsheet illustrating Employment Facts and Statistics generated by the Office of Economic Opportunity/Veterans Benefits Administration.

Mr. Collins then introduced Lane Dyer to expound on the role of the Division of Workforce Solutions, a primarily federally-funded State agency that functions from several federal grants. Division of Workforce Solutions is an agency that has merged with the Employment Security Commission and the Division of Workforce Development within the Department of Commerce. Division of Workforce Solutions employs a staff of 84 veterans through federal grants, and provides assistance to transitioning service members, veterans and other eligible persons "...by providing them employment, education, and training assistance and referrals." They have created a website called "NCWorks Online" at ncworks.gov with a job banks system for employers and job seekers. Mr. Dyer also discussed implementation of the Integrated Services Delivery model. Ken Siragusa of the Veterans Employment Service Staff continued this presentation, discussing their services and the success of certificate and degree programs for high-demand occupations available to qualifying veterans through the VA. Mr. Siragusa explained the functions of LVER (Local Veteran Employment Representatives) staff and DVOPS (Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialists) staff.

Gen. Dordal inquired about the number of individuals enrolled in this program, placement success rate, and the process for transitioning veterans to obtain unemployment compensation. Chair LtGen McKissock inquired as to how separating personnel connect with hiring employers, and whether there is "eye-to-eye" marketing and contact between the job seeker and prospective employer. The reply was that, as there is no advertising per se, other than vis-à-vis state agencies and outreach, VA referrals and job fair referrals, it was necessary for the LVER's to make eye-to-eye contact in an effort to connect the two customers. Television and radio PSA's are used as well.

Evon DiGregorio addressed federal grants as the source of funding for DVOP positions. DoD, DoL and the VA are responsible for the TAP positions in NC, but Ms. DiGregorio ensures that there is a facilitator present at local bases to put transitioning personnel in touch with a point of contact.

Mr. Will Collins commented that there is a desire to improve, but questioned whether part of the challenge is confusion about where to go for resources.

Command Chief Warrant Rick Comer stated that a large part of the challenge is getting to the right source. He commented on a \$10m grant that created short-term, VA-approved, non-degree programs such as truck driving, IT, barber/hair vocations and training to become a minister, but none of the VA-approved programs exist in community colleges. There is a need for VA-approved, non-degree programs to allow veterans access.

BREAK: There was a brief break. The Committee reconvened at 3:12 PM.

Discussion/Recommendations

General Paul Dordal provided a brief presentation on success/failure lessons learned from the last Commission. At a job fair Gen. Dordal attended, he asked one of the hiring company HR personnel whether any hiring resulted and was told that the company representatives attending the job fair were not hiring managers, but employees who simply passed out brochures and information about the company. He contrasted job fairs to what is known as a "hiring event," with hiring managers actually present, and where companies have agreed in advance to hire vets and have researched the military occupational skill of prospective candidates. Beth Barton, Camp Lejeune representative, discussed a hiring event last April that resulted in 49 hires out of 100 applicants contrasted to a 2-5% hiring rate at a typical job fair. Gen. Dordal discussed the disappointing results of the JP Morgan Chase 100,000 Jobs Mission that promised to hire 100,000 vets over the next ten years, and has not yielded any better results over the past year-and-a-half than the national average. He stated that it is difficult to track hiring data without working directly with the hiring managers. Chair LtGen McKissock noted the presence of more small businesses at job fairs. Gen. Dordal pointed out that in the present economy, they are not hiring.

Proposed Way Forward

Chair LtGen McKissock indicated that his intent is to talk with each Committee member about issues that have been identified, such as advertising at the statewide level, and possibly sitting with a panel of HR representatives to get their input and perspective on hiring veterans, as well as speaking to young servicemen to get their perspective. We need to look at:

- Software
- One-size fits all does not work

Mr. Pantano pointed out the structural challenges of tracking accountability, incenting job providers and clarifying the metrics of what needs to be fixed. Joy Thrash, Community Coordinator, added that in defining the picture of success, we need to consider tracking those that become employed, those remaining in and coming into to NC from installations expecting employment, and bringing all resources together.

Chair LtGen McKissock suggested advertisement and inclusion of information in monthly base newspapers not only advertising employment, but highlighting success stories, so that there is awareness of the North Carolina brand and producing an emotional commitment to this State starting on the front end in boot camp.

Chair LtGen McKissock asked that all think about today's discussions noting that there would be several more Committee meetings prior to the next Full Commission meeting, and that we shall be prepared with recommendations that the Commission can bring to the Governor. Chair LtGen McKissock commented that the Commission fully endorsed by unanimous vote the UNC Board of Governors in-state tuition resolution for the first year of departing military personnel.

Maj. Bobby Lumsden noted three issues encountered by departing military personnel: 1) setting of realistic expectations; 2) coordination of all of the available resources that can be overwhelming; and, 3) that result in well-rounded assistance that takes into account all of the factors that may be in play for a departing soldier.

Chair LtGen McKissock added that with the shrinking size of the military, there will be well-qualified, highly-skilled personnel who will be asked to leave, and we should be prepared to catch them. Gen. Dordal discussed the partnership between USASOC and the motorsports industry, and the feasibility of similarly approaching employers by industry. Gen. Wilson commented that the Governor strongly supports attracting jobs to NC to be able specifically to hire veterans, and that we anticipate having a good plan that keeps our veterans in the State and that may include some spending in advance of the General Assembly meeting in May.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:56 PM by Chair LtGen McKissock.

