



## **MILITARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE BOARD**

Meeting Minutes  
August 29, 2016

### **1. Call to Order/Roll Call**

An emergency meeting of the Military Family Assistance Board (MFAB) Meeting was called to order by Secretary Joey Strickland at 1:30pm on August 29, 2016, at the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs (LDVA) Administrative Office in Baton Rouge. Secretary Strickland conducted the roll call of the newly appointed board members. Seven of ten members were present, establishing a quorum.

MFAB Members present: Joey Strickland, LDVA Secretary; Sulanda Lonnette, Governor's designee; Col. Jona Hughes, National Guard designee; Thomas Enright, State Treasurer designee; (Mrs.) Alex Juan, honorably discharged veteran; John Nolan, Jr., honorably discharged veteran; and Billy Robbins, honorably discharged veteran

LDVA Staff present: Homer Rodgers, Undersecretary; Charlie Dirks, Executive Counsel; Alfred Leger, Third Party Administrator; English Josey, Internal Auditor; and Charmagne Scott, Confidential Assistant

### **2. Pledge/Silent Prayer**

The pledge of allegiance was said in unison. Afterwards, Secretary Strickland asked everyone to join him in silent prayer for the recent events that had occurred in the local area (police shootings/protests and flooding).

### **3. Board Consideration/Vote of Chairman**

Secretary Strickland called for nominations for a board chairman. Secretary Strickland was the only nomination made.

It was motioned by Col. Hughes, seconded by Ms. Lonnette, that Secretary Joey Strickland be appointed chairman by acclamation. The motion passed unanimously.

### **4. Board Consideration/Vote of Fund Committee Members**

In accordance with MFA rules, the MFAB Chairman designates members to serve on the Fund Committee; therefore, no vote was necessary. Secretary Strickland appointed Ms. Juan, Mr. Nolan, and Mr. Robbins to serve on the Fund Committee, mainly because they reside and work in the local area and would be able to convene

should a claim require their immediate consideration. Mr. Enright was appointed as an alternate member.

## **5. Discussion of Recent Law Changes/Proposed Amendments to MFA Rules**

Mr. Dirks reviewed handouts of Act 185 passed during the 2016 Regular Session, effective August 1, 2016, and proposed amendments to the MFA rules based on the law changes. This information had previously been provided to the members for review prior to the meeting. If approved, Mr. Dirks recommended the amendments be submitted as emergency rules for publication in the Louisiana Register. It was noted that Act 185 expanded the applicants for fund assistance to include veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. One of the amendments was applicants who are activated military personnel who served after September 11, 2001, be given priority consideration when requesting fund assistance.

A motion was made by Ms. Juan, seconded by Ms. Lonnette, to approve the proposed amendments to the MFA rules as presented and the submission of the amendments to the Louisiana Register for publication as emergency rules. The motion passed unanimously.

## **6. Consideration/Vote on MFA Applications Received**

Mr. Leger reviewed handouts showing the current MFA Fund Balance as of August 29, 2016, which was \$775,314.26. He also briefed on applications that had been received and processed from veterans affected by the recent flooding. Mr. Leger provided a list of approximately 75 applicants for fund assistance due to flood damages as of date. A total of \$4,500 had been disbursed to date. It was noted that several applications had already been approved and awards had been disbursed in the amount of \$750 each. Based on the anticipated increase of applications for assistance and in an effort to assist more veterans, the following recommendations were made regarding disbursements:

- the total amount of disbursements from the fund would be capped at \$350,000
- the award per applicant would be \$350
- Post-9/11 applicants would be given priority consideration
- applicants requesting the maximum \$10,000 award would be considered on a case by case basis

It was noted that a request would have to be submitted and approved by the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget to expend MFA funds in the amount of \$350,000, as the Secretary only has spending authority for a total of \$114,000. Secretary Strickland questioned if reserve funds from the State Veterans Homes' budget can be used as disbursements for flood assistance if the requests exceed \$350,000. Mr. Rodgers felt this would not be a problem since the reserve funds were federal, not state dollars. However, Mr. Enright suggested this matter be reviewed more carefully before being considered.

After a lengthy discussion, the following motion was made:

It was motioned by Col. Hughes, seconded by Ms. Juan, to approve the recommendations as submitted regarding disbursement of funds for flood damages. The motion passed unanimously.

## **7. Adjournment**

There being no further business brought before the MFA Board, a motion was made by Mr. Robbins, seconded by Mr. Enright, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:33pm.

*Minutes submitted by: Charmagne Scott, Confidential Assistant*

*\*Copies of all handouts referenced in the minutes are available upon request.*

**//Minutes approved by the Military Family Assistance Board at its November 10, 2016, meeting.**