

Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission

Commission Meeting Room 680, Truman State Office Building Jefferson City, MO 6510

April 8, 2010

Meeting Minutes

Members Attending: Dalton Wright, Chair; Jeff Bloemker; Larry D. Kay; Kent Thomas; Senator Frank Barnitz; Senator Bill Stouffer; Bob Welling; Representative Terry Witte, Vice Chair; Sherry L. Anderson.

Others attending: Colonel Dennis Sandbothe (Ret.) Executive Assistant for Brigadier General Stephen Danner; Sergeant Major Roger Layman (Ret.); Dr. Annie Sobel, University of Missouri; Mark Van Zandt, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; General Arvid West, (Ret.); and Rachel Wheeler, Whiteman Air Force Base Liaison.

Guests: Jamie Albers, Whiteman Air Force Base School Liaison Officer; Leslie Burk and daughter; Daina Dawkins, wife of Operations Group Commander, Whiteman Air Force Base; David Snodgrass, Deputy Director, Colonel of Engineers, US Army (Retired), Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army.

Chair Wright called the Commission meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Roll call was conducted with a quorum present.

Minutes from the January 13, 2010 were approved.

Presentations:

Chair Wright introduced *David Snodgrass, Deputy Director*, Colonel of Engineers, US Army (Retired), Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations and Environment (Kansas City) and asked that he provide the members with an overview of a meeting that was held at the Leonard Wood Institute (LWI) on April 6th with the Kansas Governor's Military Commission, the Kansas Department of Commerce and the LWI advisory board members. Attendees from Missouri: Dalton Wright, Chair of MMPEC; Joe Driskill, Executive Director, Leonard Wood Institute; General Arvid West, Ret.; Mike Dunbar; Dr. John Park; Rick Prugh; Steve Ehrhardt and David Snodgrass.

Attendees from Kansas: John Armbrust, Director, Kansas Governor's Military Council; and Mr. Lyle Peterson, Kansas Department of Commerce.

Joe Driskill, Executive Director of the Leonard Wood Institute (LWI) and an advisory member of MMPEC presented an overview LWI and its tremendous success as a Missouri-based, 501(c) 3 non-profit formed by a state-led consortium of technology organizations. It was organized to better connect regional businesses, universities, and non-profits to Army training and technology needs and, as a result, build a stronger research base and improve the economy.

The LWI initiates, funds, manages and collaborates in applied research projects benefiting the Army and focused on opportunities at the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence (MSCoE) and Fort Leonard Wood (FLW).

The LWI effort with University of Missouri (UM) is designed to support the Army's imperative to innovate with a common focus on increasing mission critical capabilities at FLW through technology, education and training.

The UM focuses on education, research, service and economic development and the UM Technology Park facility for innovation ... The vision for the Technology Park was to create a competitive, high technology research park for companies and other organizations that value: 1) A close proximity to the U.S. military and research universities; 2) A high security environment with full business services and easy interstate, air and rail access; 3) A diverse, skilled and highly motivated workforce; and 4) A small community setting that provides great quality of life and educational opportunities for employees and their families at affordable costs.

The UM Technology Park development started in 2000 with the Army granting a long-term lease of 61 acres to UM. UM and the Department of Economic Development (DED) partnered to fund the park development at \$1.6 million each and UM is the managing partner. In 2000 the first building was opened and in 2004, UM lent the project another \$1.96 million. By 2005, two more buildings were opened and by 2010 the Park was full and profitable.

The benefits of the LWI especially for the Army have been: 1) Surge capacity for new or expanding missions; 2) Jobs for spouses; 3) Reduced utility costs through infrastructure sharing.

John Armbrust, Executive Director of the Kansas Governor's Military Council (GMC) presented an overview to the Leonard Wood Institute. The GMC was created in January of 2006.

The GMC is chartered to:

- Protect gains arising from the BRAC 2005 process and other Department of Defense decisions that grow the military presence in Kansas;
- Remove operational impediments, increase operating efficiencies, and recruit/acquire new missions and forces; and
- Implement initiatives to enhance the quality of life for all military personnel: active, guard/reserve, retired and their dependents

The GMC is funded by the State of Kansas and the Department of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA). Its council members are:

- The Governor of the State of Kansas
- Kansas Congressional Delegation
- Four State legislators
- The Kansas Adjutant General
- Business/community leaders from the five major bases communities
- Full-time executive director
- Washington D.C. based consulting firm
- Installation Commanders as ex-officio members

Mr. Armbrust presented a summary of the annual impact of each military installation in Kansas. He stated that statewide the tax revenue is \$333.6 million dollars; the output is \$7.7 billion (7% of state output/GSP); employment is 169,560 (9.14% of the total Kansas employment) and earnings is \$5.7 billion (5.8%) of state earnings.

Mr. Armbrust concluded that:

- Military activity is a major player in the Kansas economy;
- Continued efforts are necessary to ensure maintenance and growth of this sector of Kansas' economy;
- Opportunities exist to leverage the military growth into private sector growth (defense-related jobs).

The committee members discussed the issues that each state is facing: 1) Encroachment is a big issue and Kansas just passed legislation that addressed that issue. 2) Quality of life issues: a) Community-based health clinics for veterans and retired veterans. Tri-care is the healthcare provider at FLW, they do provide healthcare service to veterans, but not veterans' spouses, which is outsourced. b) Mental health services and treatment are critical and may not be provided at the needed standard.

Mr. Snodgrass concluded that the GMC and the LWI are very unique in each of its missions, but yet very similar in their charges to work with the military bases to ensure that Kansas and Missouri meet their goals are to be more military-family friendly states.

Commission Business Meeting

New Business

Department of Army-Unemployment Compensation for Military Spouses

Chair Wright introduced Leslie Burk, a military spouse from St. Joseph. Mrs. Burk stated military families often face frequent moves and these moves can add unique financial pressures, as spouses may have to leave their employment due to a military transfer and the families may face a reduction in income. This is situation she is facing because her husband was transferred from Kentucky to Missouri before his deployment to Iraq. Generally speaking, when an individual leaves a job voluntarily, then the person is ineligible for unemployment benefits but 15 states have passed legislation to address this issue.

Recognizing that spouses of military service personnel who quit their jobs due to a military transfer may not be quitting “voluntarily,” some states have amended unemployment compensation laws to help military families who are relocating between states. In several states, state legislators deemed it “a good cause” if military spouses leave their employment to follow their spouses in a military relocation, thus becoming eligible for unemployment benefits.

In Missouri, legislation has been introduced by Representative David Day, a MMPEC member (House Bill 2318), to address this issue. Ms. Burk appealed to the Commission members to support this legislation because she is disqualified from receiving unemployment benefits because Missouri has not amended this provision in its unemployment benefits law.

Chair Wright asked the members to support placing this issue be high on the list of legislative priorities for 2011. If House bill 2318 does not pass this year, Missouri must address this issue to help it maintain BRAC-proof status.

Chair Wright asked Ms. Anderson to research this issue further with regard to “how does the person draw from a state’s unemployment benefits coffer when the employer has not paid unemployment taxes in the state.”

Mr. Welling and Mr. Bloemker both offered Mrs. Burk with viable suggestions and have committed to assisting her in her efforts to find employment.

Military Legislative Issues

Review of proposed legislation

House Bill 2332, sponsored by Representative Witte-Rep. Witte reported that it took three weeks for the bill to be assigned to a committee after he sent a letter to the House Speaker. The bill is scheduled to be heard in the House Veterans Committee on April 20th.

Rep. Witte stated that during floor debate on April 6th, he proposed an amendment which was actually House Bill 2332 to an omnibus education bill. During debate on the amendment, it was argued that the amendment was not “germane to the bill” and was a precursor to open enrollment. Rep. Witte argued the amendment was germane, but he lost the argument and the amendment was ruled out of order.

Rep. Witte said he had spoken to the chairman of the House Education Committee, who supported the language in House Bill 2332, but realized that some members viewed this language as a precursor to “open enrollment.”

Mr. Bloemker stated that he was at the Capitol last evening (April 7th) and several school superintendents approached him to discuss the issue because they knew he was a MMPEC member, and overwhelming they were opposed to House Bill 2332.

Representative Witte agreed that it was going to be an uphill battle because House Bill 2332 had been labeled as an “open enrollment” bill.

Rachel Wheeler, Whiteman Air Force Base liaison and wife of Whiteman’s base commander, General Robert Wheeler, commented that it was imperative that all sides of the issue be heard. She announced that General Wheeler would not be able to attend the committee hearing for House Bill 2332 because he would be “sitting atomic alert” for the President during that time and the only way for him to be able to attend the hearing would be to obtain permission from the President.

Ms. Anderson suggested that General Wheeler video tape his testimony and it be played during the committee hearing. Larry Kay offered to provide IT support and equipment the day of the hearing.

It was also suggested that the Colonel Ricki Rodgers, Whiteman’s Vice Base Commander, testify before the committee in order to provide a detailed explanation of the duties and responsibilities of “mission essential” personnel. Whiteman AFB is critical to national defense; as a result there are required personnel policies that touch school-aged children of military personnel deemed “mission essential.” In most circumstances, military families can choose their residence and school district. However, “mission essential” personnel are required to reside on base. Commanding officers past and present have been vocal concerning these issues.

Finally, it was agreed the most compelling witness would be Jimmy Dawkins, the son of an Operations Officer and Daina Dawkins, a MMPEC guest, because he has become the test case regarding this issue. Jimmy's father was previously assigned at Whiteman and the family lived in Warrensburg and Jimmy attended school in Warrensburg. When the family came back to Whiteman in 2009, his father was deemed "mission essential," requiring the family to live on base in the Knob Noster school district. The family requested a waiver from Warrensburg for Jimmy to attend the school as a junior in high school. The school district allowed the request; however, he was still not eligible to play varsity sports. This matter was later resolved when a waiver was granted by MSHSAA.

Rachel Wheeler stated that she and General Wheeler had approached Dr. Anderson, Knob Noster Superintendent, about the Dawkins' situation and Dr. Anderson stated that she understood the situation and she was surprised that the federal impact aid did not follow the student. Dr. Anderson did say that she was concerned that all 19 "mission essential" families would want to leave the district. Ms. Wheeler explained to Dr. Anderson that it takes special circumstances for families to choose a school out-of-district but she did want them to have the choice. She explained that in the past, families have taken out loans to finance tuition for their child.

Mark VanZandt confirmed that DESE has ruled that the parent being "mission essential" personnel is not a sufficient reason to allow state aid to follow the student to Warrensburg. There is no federal impact aid since the federal impact aid is tied to the state funding and the impact aid goes to the school district where the military installation is located, Knob Noster.

Mr. Welling reminded the members that a purpose of the Interstate Compact for Educational Opportunity for Military Children Agreement adopted by the State of Missouri is to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents and to promote flexibility and cooperation between the educational system, parents and the student in order to achieve educational success for the student. Furthermore, it is against the law to charge military personnel tuition for their child to attend a public school.

Senator Stouffer suggested that Rep. Witte review Senate Bill 815, an Omnibus Education bill that had recently passed in the Senate as a possible link to HB 2332. Rep. Witte stated that he had spoken to the House Education Committee chairman regarding HB 2332 and the chairman had endorsed the language.

Ms. Wheeler reiterated that General Norton Schwartz, Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, stated that his highest priority is to ensure that the standard and quality of life for military families is maintained at all 54 Air Force bases.

Ms. Wheeler thanked Rep. Witte for all his efforts and believed that it was already a victory to be able to have a hearing on HB 2332.

Rep. Witte noted that he was asked by Rep. David Day, chairman of the House Veterans Committee, why he narrowly wrote the bill to only include Whiteman AFB and why he excluded Fort Leonard Wood (FLW) from HB 2332. Dr. Sobel suggested including FLW would be a favorable gesture even though it is not an issue at FLW.

The commission reviewed the MMPEC 2010 Legislative Watch List and the progress of several legislative bills affecting military personnel and their families.

Updates from Advisory Members

Rachel Wheeler, Liaison Whiteman Air Force Base, presented an overview of the Vermont law on the subject of domestic relations; annulment and divorce; military parents' rights. The law establishes court procedures to address parental rights and responsibilities and parent-child contact when a military parent is deployed for service unaccompanied by family members. Ms. Wheeler stated that the mobilization of military parents, with sometimes little advance notice, can have a disruptive effect on custody or visitation arrangements involving minor children. Ms. Wheeler recommended that MMPEC utilize Vermont's law as talking points in Missouri's efforts to create a more "military-friendly" environment.

Next Meeting

Chairman Wright scheduled the next Commission meeting for Wednesday, July 14th, DED Conference Room-Room 680 Truman Building, Jefferson City, beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Announcements

Rachel Wheeler extended an invitation to MMPEC members and their families to be guests of the General and her at the "Wings over Whiteman" event September 17th and 18th.

Adjourn

With no further business, Mr. Welling moved and Rep. Witte seconded the motion to adjourn. Motion approved. Chairman Dalton Wright called the April 8, 2010 meeting adjourned.

Chairman Dalton Wright

Date