

***VITAL RECORDS IMPROVEMENT FUND  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE***

*To The New Hampshire Department of State*

***- MINUTES -***

***Friday***

***November 22, 2013***

**-MINUTES-**

**Vital Records Improvement Fund Advisory Committee Meeting**

November 22, 2013

Archives & Records Building  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room  
71 South Fruit Street  
Concord, New Hampshire 03301-2410

***COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:***

David Scanlan, Deputy Secretary of State, SOS Appointment  
Stephen M. Wurtz, State Registrar  
Tricia Piecuch, Nashua City Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment  
Brian Burford, State Archivist  
Brook Dupee, DHHS Appointment  
Ashley Conley, Municipal Data User, DHHS Appointment  
Debra Clark, Charlestown Town Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment  
Joanne Linxweiler, Auburn Town Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment

***COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED:***

Thomas A. Andrew, MD, Medical Examiner Appointment  
Peter Morin, Funeral Director Association Appointment  
Nelson Allan, Public Member, SOS Appointment  
Janice Bonenfant, Concord City Clerk, NHC&TC Association Appointment  
Bruce Riddle, Data User, DHHS Appointment  
Theresa Pare-Curtis, OIT CIO Appointment

***GUESTS:***

Chris Bentzler, DOIT  
Dan Cloutier, SOS IT  
Karen Festa, SOS IT  
Dave Fournier, SOS IT  
Jeff King, SOS IT  
Nicholl Marshall, Vital Records

## **1. Call to Order and Introductions:**

- *Ms. Tricia Piecuch called the meeting to order at 09:39, although a quorum had not yet been achieved, but a quorum was expected shortly.*
- *Introductions were made. Mr. Dan Cloutier introduced the information technology professionals who are working on the support of NHVRIN.*

## **2. VRIFAC Budget:**

- *Mr. David Scanlan observed that the budget document is also a reflection of expenses as well as a budget. Mr. Scanlan noted that there are over \$3.8 million in the fund balance, which is a healthy amount. After accounting for approximately \$1.7 million which is allocated for NHVRIN II, there still remains over \$2 million. Previously, significant funds had been going to the state Department of Information Technology monthly for the services DoIT had provided. Now that the information technology professionals working on the upkeep of NHVRIN are within the Department of State, many overhead charges will be eliminated, which should save money in future.*
- *Ms. Ashley Conley asked how the funds are used. Mr. Stephen Wurtz replied that the funds are used solely for vital records automation or the improvement of vital records. The money essentially goes back to the users in the form of purchasing computers or restoring records in the cities and towns.*

## **3. Approval of the Minutes:**

- *Mr. Brook Dupee arrived at 09:47 and a quorum was achieved. Mr. Dupee was introduced to the information technology professionals who are working on the support of NHVRIN.*
- *Ms. Piecuch suggested amending the minutes of the April 19 meeting by stating that Mr. Brian Burford could not have made a motion to adjourn because a quorum was not present at that moment. Mr. Burford moved that the minutes be approved as amended. Vote taken – all in favor.*

## **4. NHVRIN Report:**

- *Mr. Wurtz discussed the updates and progress of NHVRIN. The Oracle back-end database has been going strong since 2004 and will be replaced one day. A code freeze, limiting alterations to the current system, has been in place for some time now. Starting this past July 1, the support of NHVRIN was changed. DoIT is no longer on this project, so there has been no developer since July 1, but the system has been stable. Any problems that have occurred stems from the back end and the updating of historical information. DoIT had established the ODAR system*

for such problems, and Mr. Jeff King will take over the ODAR system. The number of training sessions for new users in the last year has been minimal because the new system had been expected to be ready at any moment. But more training sessions are now planned due to turnover in town/city clerk's offices.

- Ms. Piecuch was pleased that NHVRIN has lasted so long and that Mr. Cloutier was available to work out any bugs.

## **5. NHVRIN2 – IT Update:**

- Mr. Cloutier has been familiarizing himself with NHVRIN and working with Netsmart to get the necessary documents and data from the state DoIT. Meetings with Netsmart occur a couple of times per week. There are three parts to the project: the hardware (on which Mr. Dave Fournier is working and ensure that we have two web servers), the software (on which Mr. King and Ms. Karen Festa are working including explaining to the vendor what is needed and data quality), and training (on which Mr. Chris Bentzler is working, including desk top support, especially when NHVRIN ends and NHVRIN II begins simultaneously)
- Ms. Piecuch asked if the roll out will happen with the hospital towns first, because, having been through three conversions, she is cautious about giving up NHVRIN if something fails in NHVRIN II. Mr. Wurtz explained that the current NHVRIN was turned on for everyone simultaneously. NHVRIN II will also be turned on for everyone at the same time and there will be no phases. Mr. Cloutier responded that training will occur prior to when NHVRIN II is turned on and that people will be on the telephones to answer questions when NHVRIN II does go live. Mr. Cloutier suggested that perhaps NHVRIN II can have a “playground” similar to ElectioNet before the go-live data. Mr. Wurtz added that the “big bang” approach to the end of NHVRIN and the start of NHVRIN II is best because two software operations and two back-end operations are affected as the transition is made from an Oracle database to a SQL database, and all of them can not be talking to each other simultaneously. Also, a new link to the EDW is being developed. Every effort is being made to make the change as seamless as possible.
- Ms. Joanne Linxweiler asked when this transition will take place. Mr. Wurtz explained that the goal is April 1. When that date was selected, a full complement of DoIT staff was working on this project. Now, the new staff is being brought up to speed. Ms. Linxweiler asked if the marriage worksheet will be drastically changed. Mr. Wurtz explained that there are no changes to the forms that are being used.

- Mr. Dupee asked if there would be any changes to how an EDW user would view vital records. Mr. Cloutier responded that no changes are expected to EDW. Mr. King is working on the flow of vital records data from NHVRIN II to the EDW.

#### **6. Vital Records Preservation Grant:**

- Mr. Wurtz noted that at the previous meeting, discussion turned to replacing the boxes in which historical records are located in the research room. The current containers are made of a paper-cardboard base and have deteriorated over the years, thus the containers need replacing. A vendor was given an amount of boxes needed, and the vendor offered a quote of \$16,998.48. Volunteers from the genealogical community are willing to transfer these old records from the current boxes to the new boxes. Mr. Burford made a motion to approve the purchase of the new boxes; Ms. Linxweiler seconded the motion. Vote taken – all in favor.
- Ms. Piecuch noted that on many occasions, town/city clerks refer customers to the state genealogy room instead of having customers search for old vital records through several different towns.

#### **7. VRIFAC Open Position:**

- Mr. Scanlan likes the team assembled to complete the NVHRIN II project, and notes that recent new hires only transferred positions from DoIT to the Department of State. Mr. Scanlan made a motion to take Doug Teschner's former position during the local preservation grant program and fill that position to help bring the NHVRIN II project to a conclusion. This person would help the testing of the new system and training of the officials, thus taking strain off of the DVRA staff. Mr. Burford seconded the motion.
- Mr. Dupee asked if funding for this position is out of the Vital Records Improvement Fund. Mr. Scanlan said that such funding would be out of this fund, just like the local preservation grant program several years ago. This would be an unclassified position equivalent to an assistant secretary of state.
- Ms. Conley asked if this would be an indefinite position or a limited-time position. Mr. Scanlan said it would be indefinite until the position was no longer needed; Mr. Teschner's role ended when the advisory committee voted to end it.
- Ms. Conley wondered if this position could take on additional projects such as helping with training and explaining why vital records are so important. Mr. Scanlan believed this would be so. Ms. Piecuch noted that more positions had been funded out of the Vital Records Improvement Fund, such as a program specialist.

- Discussion on Mr. Scanlan's motion ended. Vote was taken – all in favor.
- Ms. Piecuch made a motion to fund the program specialist position if the position has not been eliminated. Mr. Burford seconded the motion.
- Mr. Burford asked what salary would be associated with this position. Mr. Wurtz answered that this is a labor grade 19 position.
- Ms. Piecuch asked if the position is eliminated, why would state legislation have to re-establish it if the position is funded by the Improvement Fund. Mr. Scanlan stated that a position has to be created in the budget. Mr. Dupee said that another alternative is to make a reclassification request, which is taking a job of any labor grade and change it to what you want.
- Ms. Debra Clark asked what this person's activities would be. Ms. Piecuch explained this person would help in training and going out to users and take telephone calls. Mr. Wurtz added that it would help the present DVRA staff focus on doing what they were originally supposed to be doing.
- Discussion on Ms. Piecuch's motion ended. Vote was taken – all in favor.

#### **8. New business:**

- According to statute, one individual that serves on the advisory committee is the Chief Information Officer of the Department of Information Technology or designee. Now that DoIT is no longer involved in the support of NHVRIN, Ms. Piecuch believes it would be better if such an individual was an information technology professional within the Department of State.
- Mr. Scanlan asked if NVHRIN still depends on DoIT for a few things. Mr. Cloutier responded that DoIT still provides limited physical support for the computers for NVHRIN, but when NHVRIN II is up and running, that relationship would be probably severed. Mr. Scanlan prefers not to isolate the committee from other departments, but rather maintain dialogue among the state's agencies. Mr. Scanlan suggested changing legislation to add another person, namely an information technology professional within the Department of State, to the committee.
- Ms. Piecuch noted that historically quorums have not always been achieved, so if that were to be in effect today, nine people would be necessary for a quorum. Ms. Piecuch suggested that in addition to adding a new person on the committee, legislation should include the definition of a "quorum" for this advisory committee.

- Mr. Dupee departed at 10:39 and a quorum was no longer present.
- *Ms. Piecuch noted that this is the second consecutive meeting where a quorum was lost. Mr. Wurtz said that the new Funeral Director Association appointment would be present, but a family emergency necessitated his absence today. Ms. Piecuch recognized that another Department of State appointment has health issues which caused his absence today. Ms. Piecuch wants to ensure that current members of the committee are still willing to serve.*

## **9. SENECA Help Desk:**

- *Mr. Cloutier explained that when any NHVRIN user has a problem with NHVRIN at any time, that user can call a toll free telephone number, and the responder will answer that there will be a charge of \$19.66. Usually there is not much activity with the help desk. But when the system was down for three days a few months ago, the numerous calls bore a price in the hundreds of dollars. The help desk performs Tier One support, collecting information so that they know to whom the issue should be sent, whether to DVRA, DoIT, etc. The state Department of Health & Human Services will probably no longer be with SENECA starting August 2014. DoIT proposed that DoIT may take over performing this Tier One support.*
- *Mr. Burford asked for clarification. Mr. Cloutier responded that DHHS will no longer be with SENECA in several months, and that NHVRIN essentially hitched onto the DHHS contract. SENECA may not necessarily go away, but if SENECA remains, the future price is uncertain. This may require a Request for Proposal.*
- *Mr. Wurtz asked how the RFP would come into play. Mr. Cloutier said that once DHHS severs its ties to SENECA, NHVRIN has no help desk contract.*
- *Ms. Piecuch asked once DHHS ends its relationship with SENECA, because NHVRIN is on their contract, would NHVRIN utilize what DHHS will later use. Mr. Cloutier said this would not be the case. At the time, it was logical to be on the DHHS contract.*
- *Mr. Cloutier also made clear that if SENECA is abandoned, then between 16:30 and 07:30, there is no one to answer the physical call; this is one of the reasons why SENECA was used, so that a live voice can be heard. But nothing will happen anyway between 16:30 and 07:30 because no one at the state staff is present; someone will come in at 07:30 and triage any help requests made overnight.*

- *Mr. Cloutier asked how many calls does the SENECA Help Desk receive during the overnight hours. Mr. Bentzler says that they receive information such as how many calls per day and who receives the ticket. Most tickets arrive during regular business hours.*
- *Mr. Wurtz observed that if the replacement for SENECA is brought in now, it will be during a time when the call volume is low, and they will be seasoned by the time the switch to NHVRIN II is made.*
- *Mr. Burford's understanding is that there are two options after August: go with DoIT without an RFP, or put out an RFP which would garner responses from SENECA and others. Mr. Cloutier mentioned a third option: the HAVA personnel could be Tier One Support, which is agreeable to the HAVA personnel, but money would have to be moved between the Vital Records Improvement Fund and the Election Fund.*
- *Ms. Clark observed that if SENECA is contacted and SENECA returns the call later, the return call may occur when the town clerk's staff are busy helping customers at the counter and no one is available to take the return call. Thus having a live voice at the help desk is of limited benefit. However, this scenario does not happen often.*
- *Mr. Wurtz said there is no simple way to broadcast e-mail, but it can be built in future in case NHVRIN is down. Or perhaps put a message on the log-on page indicating that NHVRIN is down, similar to how ElectioNet works now.*
- *Mr. Cloutier estimates that during the month of September, there were thirty calls made to SENECA, which is low.*
- *Mr. Fournier asked if a call is made and the same user made a follow-up call, would that count as two calls. Mr. Wurtz said that it would count as one call, and Mr. Bentzler explained that the help desk would just update that ticket.*
- *Mr. Cloutier mentioned that HAVA also performs Tier Two support for ElectioNet currently. In the instance of a Tier Three situation, it would be sent to Mr. Cloutier or someone at HAVA. If HAVA is selected to be the vital records help desk, the HAVA personnel must be trained in vital records.*
- *Mr. Wurtz said that having a help desk provides our own environment to track because the statistics gathered from that can help determine what sort of Level II support HAVA might provide. However, Mr. Cloutier noted that HAVA does not use such an automated system now; HAVA uses a simple journaling system.*

- *Mr. Burford is comfortable with using DoIT or HAVA, but ultimately it comes down to what is best for the users.*
- *Ms. Piecuch asked how many calls to the help desk are from the hospitals or funeral directors, rather than the town/city clerks. Mr. Wurtz said they were most of the calls. Mr. Bentzler added that when the help desk receives a call, the help desk asks what is the user role of the caller.*
- *Ms. Piecuch added that it would be beneficial for all users to talk to a live person at the help desk, but is concerned if state workers performing this additional work would result in changing job descriptions or classifications. Mr. Cloutier answered that it would not be additional work. Ms. Piecuch mentioned that if HAVA had this role, responding to vital records calls at the time of a Presidential election may be challenging.*
- *Mr. Cloutier prefers to avoid creating an RFP if possible. Ms. Piecuch asked what is the cost threshold. Mr. Cloutier answered that the threshold is \$35,000 per year.*
- *Mr. Wurtz asked if the committee's approval is necessary to shift from SENECA to another help desk. Mr. Scanlan would like to have input from the advisory committee. Since NHVRIN users will be utilizing this service, the input of those users, some of whom are on the committee, is preferred. Ms. Conley speculated that a brief survey of about five to ten questions to be distributed to NHVRIN users might be helpful. Mr. Scanlan asked if the subject could be taken up at the regional meetings of town/city clerks. Ms. Piecuch answered that regional meetings are not until May, so it would be too late.*
- *Mr. Wurtz is concerned if the matter of the help desk and its associated costs will be determined by the roll-out of NHVRIN II, which is projected for April. A survey of NHVRIN users must be performed anyhow because NHVRIN II has certain prerequisites. Mr. Bentzler noted there must be .net 4.0 and Mr. Cloutier mentioned someone with 4.5 had problems loading it. Mr. Bentzler added that when he has installed Windows XP and Windows 7, a person can log on. Mr. Bentzler further added that current NVHRIN works only on Internet Explorer and it must be determined if NHVRIN II can work on other web browsers such as Firefox, Safari, etc. Ms. Piecuch said it was her understanding that when the RFP was issued, NHVRIN II would have to be able to operate on various web browsers. Mr. Cloutier explained that web browsers evolve over time; for example, in the time since the RFP was issued, Internet Explorer has evolved from version 8 to version 11. Thus there is no guarantee that future versions will*

*be compatible with NHVRIN or NHVRIN II, no matter what a software vendor creates.*

- *Mr. Scanlan suggests that the due diligence should be completed, the survey be sent to the clerks, and make a recommendation based upon the results. Ms. Piecuch mentioned that time may be short.*

#### **10. New business:**

- *Ms. Clark is entering death records for a Vermont crematory and no New Hampshire funeral director will do this because many of them have their own crematories. Thus, the Vermont crematory went to the Charlestown town clerk for inputting death records. Ms. Clark asked who makes the decision for an applicant to have access to NHVRIN. Mr. Wurtz answered that would be himself, and historically that decision was made based upon whether the applicant was a New Hampshire funeral director because of the danger of someone inputting erroneous information. In case a New Hampshire funeral director was entering incorrect information repeatedly, DVRA could request that funeral director's license be pulled. Ms. Piecuch explained further that an out-of-state funeral director will pick and choose a New Hampshire NHVRIN user (some charge a fee and some do not) to input their New Hampshire death records.*
- *The New Hampshire Retirement System made a formal request to Mr. Wurtz for access to vital records data for the purpose of purging deceased people from their system. Mr. Wurtz refused the request on grounds that the NHRS is not a state agency, but recommended that NHRS propose legislation that clearly allows NHRS to have access to vital records data, similar to the Memorandum of Understanding between DVRA and DHHS. Such legislation has been proposed which permits NHRS to have limited access to vital records data.*

#### **11. Meeting dates:**

- *Mr. Wurtz does not anticipate anything requiring a vote from the committee between now and the proposed implementation date of NHVRIN II. Mr. Wurtz suggests the next meeting dates, subject to change, will be Friday March 21, Friday July 25, and Friday November 21.*
- *Meeting was adjourned at 11:14.*