

Transcript

October 8, 2025, 6:29PM

BA

Bennett, Alec (CFM) 1:05

So hello everyone.

I'm seeing that it's 2:30 PM here on the East Coast.

Thank you for logging into today's webinar.

I'm just going to give it another minute or so and then I'm going to get started, so thanks.

So.

I see that it is.

231 and in the interests of respecting everyone's time, we're going to.

Move ahead.

Next slide please.

So before we get started.

This meeting is being recorded for those that are not able to participate.

VA is also taking notes and will retain a summary for the administrative record.

If you would prefer not to be recorded, please decide either to just listen today.

Or sign out and e-mail the VA Historic Preservation office.

At the address on the screen.

VA acknowledges that consultation is A2 way government to government exchange.

VA will meet with any tribal or native Hawaiian leader or their section 106 contact

that requests a private or a one in one meeting or discussion concerning the proposed MPA or any state Veterans Home undertaking.

Please use the e-mail on screen to arrange.

Next slide please.

Thank you for joining today's meeting to discuss V as proposed nationwide programmatic agreement for the state Veterans Home Construction Grant program.

It has been about a year since we last met to discuss this proposal.

My name is Alec Bennett.

I am the deputy Federal Preservation officer for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I am joined today by a couple of VA colleagues.

I do have today from the.

State Veterans Home Construction grant program.

A manual.

Onioga. Sorry. Onioba. Who's the supervisory grant manager?

And I also have.

Angela McArdle, who is Virginia's federal preservation officer.

So before we get started, I just like to mention that the chat feature will be monitored throughout this call.

You can ask questions or post comments into the chat.

We do ask that you use the chat feature if you have a specific.

Document or web page reference so we can record the link correctly and all of the notes in the chat will be included in the admin.

In record.

We will pause the presentation at various points for questions.

We are also going to take questions at the end.

If you would like to ask a question, please utilize the hand raised feature.

The comment period on the draft nationwide programmatic agreement remains open through October 17th.

VA the request that you know, if you do have recommendations or comments that you provide that to us via e-mail at the e-mail provided.

These comments will be collated, summarized and posted to the VA Historic Preservation Office website.

And.

As I briefly mentioned just a couple moments ago, this is the second round of meetings about the proposed state Veterans Home nationwide programmatic agreement.

Next slide please.

So the purpose of this meeting.

VA distributed the draft nationwide programmatic agreement for the state Veterans Home Grant program in September.

That draft was included in the e-mail sent out.

Notifying you of this meeting, and it is also available online on the VA Historic Preservation Office website.

The purpose of today's meeting is to discuss the draft nationwide Pennsylvania for the state Home grant program.

In the interests of everyone's time.

We are looking to focus on the stipulations that we've put on the screen.

So we're going to focus on these during the.

Presentation, but then at the end of the presentation, we will open the floor for questions.

Regarding other portions of the draft agreement.

Next, next slide please.

So in this slide, we're calling out stipulation 6.

Stipulation 6 relates to the proposed exemptions within the agreement, specifically undertakings that have been identified to fall below the threshold.

For adverse effects to historic properties.

These exemptions would apply only in undertakings without ground disturbance.

Or if ground disturbance would be required in areas that have been determined, not contained intact archaeological deposits, either because the land was tested in the last 10 years or because the area does not have a potential due to known disturbance and.

The state veteran's homes subject to the undertaking was constructed after 1985.

Or determined.

Not historic.

Through consultation.

So.

If those above conditions are not met, then VA would follow standard section 106 consultation.

So on this slide, we have highlighted a couple of examples where for the state Veterans Home program, VA would follow standard Section 106.

One example is what the state Veterans Home program refers to as bed replacement projects.

Bed replacement projects are, you know, construction of new State Veterans Home facilities.

So for those types of projects where the state Veterans Home Construction Grant program would be providing a grant.

Funding for a state to build a new state veteran's home.

You know, we would go through the standard section 106 process.

We would not utilize the proposed MPA if.

A state veteran's home grant was.

Being used as part of a demolition project, we would also follow standard Section 106, so you know those specific types of projects would be.

Following the standards, Section 106 consultation procedures.

Next slide please.

So this slide really calls out highlights, Appendix B of the NPA, the Appendix B.

Focuses on the list of proposed exemptions.

Exempted projects the state Veterans Home Grant program uses kind of broad categories for its types of projects.

One of the categories.

Is safety, so safety projects are are within their own category within the state.

State veterans own grant program.

These types of projects that are included in Appendix B include.

You know, systems such as nurse call systems.

You know, infection control measures.

Those types of.

Grant projects are, you know, some of the standard projects that have received funding through the the state home program over the years.

There are other types of projects that are included in Appendix B and and would be included in this list of exemptions.

Would be.

You know, renovations or alterations of existing buildings.

Such as.

Roof replacements we often receive.

Roof replacement projects as part of the.

State Home grant program.

You know, these would be also the the types of projects that would be exempted you as long as they meet the criteria that were defined in the in the previous slot.

So.

You know, let me take a moment just to catch my breath.

Are there any questions about the proposed process of stipulation 6 or the the list of projects in Appendix B?

That CIC, you have your hand up.

BM

Betsy Merritt 13:09

Yes, this is just sort of a gut reaction.

But the exemption of window replacement, the complete exemption of window replacement from any one O 6 review seems.

Potentially very controversial.

Since window replacement is often an issue in one O 6 consultation, and you know, perhaps roof replacement as well.

But those strike me as perhaps not.

Not worthy of a complete absolute exemption.

BA **Bennett, Alec (CFM)** 13:44

Thank you, Betsy. And.

If you wouldn't mind putting that in a message to us, that would be, you know, appreciated certainly would be a, you know probably the best way for us to be able to include that you know within the the roll up of our comments and respond to it.

BM **Betsy Merritt** 13:57

Sure.

BA **Bennett, Alec (CFM)** 14:08

You know, one thing that I I do want to emphasize here is that, you know, this proposed exemptions.

You know really would be connected, you know, mostly almost entirely to.

Facilities that were constructed over the last, you know, couple of decades.

So you know any, you know, roof replacement or excuse me, window replacement project for a historic property or you know any property.

That was over.

You know, 50 years old would be moving through the.

Standard Section 106 process so.

BM **Betsy Merritt** 14:58

It's it's really useful to understand that that's your intention. And so I could suggest some wording that would make that.

More clear cuz right now I feel like it's ambiguous.

It creates the impression that every window replacement on 100 year old building would be exempt from review.

So thanks for clarifying that.

That's that's good to hear.

BA Bennett, Alec (CFM) 15:19

No problem and and you know, if I haven't been clear on the presentation, you know, I apologize.

Kelly, would you go back to the previous slide please?

So you know, for this slot, this slide, it's really if a building was constructed, you know after 1985.

You know or has been determined, not historic.

Then those Appendix B exemptions kick in.

So we are really, you know, if you know we have a, you know, 1980s building for instance, you know we would not be able to utilize this Appendix B.

BM Betsy Merritt 16:01

Again, thank you very much for that clarification.

That's that's very reassuring and helpful.

BA Bennett, Alec (CFM) 16:03

No, no.

No, no, no problem.

I mean, you know it, you know.

The.

You know way that we're trying to structure this, it's kind of connecting 22 separate parts of the MPA.

So that's exactly why we wanted to have this webinar so.

Could you go back to the?

To the next slide, please. So.

You know.

All of these you know, in summary, you know, would have to meet those those criteria in the previous slide before we would utilize this list.

You know.

And that is something that, you know when we, you know, finish with the comment period and roll up all the comments.

And.

Post this on our website.

Push this out. You know that is something that we really can kind of, you know,

under score and highlight that we're really, you know, looking at these exemptions for properties that are, you know, 40 years of age or less.

Next slide please.

So VA has already started to receive, you know, comments on the proposed draft NPA.

We have received the comment relating to this particular stipulation.

This is the stipulation concerning the definition of an archaeological high probability.

You know, because we received a comment on this, we did want to.

Call it out.

In the webinar to make sure that consulting parties are tracking this. If you do have comments on the stipulation, please send us an e-mail at historic preservation at VA Gov.

Next slide please.

So.

This slide connects to stipulation 8 in the draft NPA, as we discussed on you know the previous calls for this proposed agreements.

One of V, as you know, primary goals with this initiative is to establish emergency or disaster related disaster response procedures for a little bit of background.

The state Veterans Home Grant program received dedicated funds through the CARES Act.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, these dedicated funds were intended to help state veterans, home homes, construct and alter facilities.

To help combat COVID-19.

You know, creating more individual style living space.

Cases in state veterans homes, because this was during the national emergency and because these funds were.

Pushed out through the Cares Act and specifically dedicated to combating the emergency.

Virginia did utilize emergency procedures for section 106 consultation, one of the kind of consistent comments that we received back from the.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, when we did utilize those emergency procedures, is that a CHP encouraged us.

To establish our own emergency.

Or disaster relief related procedures.

So.

This MPA is in part in response to those comments from the ACH.

CHP from a couple of years ago.

So one thing to keep in mind with the stipulation is that within the state Veterans Home Grant program, you know, VA is a grantor of funds.

VA does not, you know, have a direct response role with these facilities.

State veterans homes are.

State properties. They're not owned by Virginia.

They are owned and managed by states of Virginia as the grantor funds.

It is 3/8 CFR part 59 which.

Which are the regulations for the State Veterans Home Grant program?

So VA, you know, provides these grants to states.

You know for construction, but does not actually operate these homes.

So that's just an important.

Thing to keep in mind within this framework.

So you know within the MPA stipulation 8 VA would apply the exemptions that we just discussed.

Within an emergency response environment, so you know if there was.

A.

You know, replacement nurse call system.

As part of an emergency, you know that would follow, you know, the procedures and stipulations 6.

If.

A.

Proposed undertaking was not exempted through the.

Stipulation 6 provisions VA would consult within the seven day comment period.

Afforded by 36 CFR 800.12.

In the event of a ongoing disaster or an emergency, such as a pandemic.

VA has requested that ACHP would extend.

The 30 day period afforded by 36 EFR 812-D.

So.

You know, with that, let me take another breath.

Are there any questions about the proposed emergency procedures?

OK, hearing none, I'm going to go to the next slide.

So for this slide, we just wanted to give some space to open the floor for any questions or any comments on any portion of the draft NPA.

So hearing none, just let me reiterate. You know, if you do have specific. Recommendations or? Comments. If you would please send us an e-mail to the. Address that was just dropped into the chat box. You know, that would be greatly appreciated. Those are kind of the best way that we can, you know, respond to your comments. Next slide please. So this slide really just kind of takes us through the next steps of the process. As mentioned, the comment period remains open. It remains open until the 17th. We, you know, we'll consider, you know, all comments through that date. We are also going to. Post the summary of the of this meeting to our website. You know it's being flashed on the screen right now. So there will be like a record of the of of the transcript of this meeting. Betsy.

BM **Betsy Merritt** 25:07
Hi. Can I just ask another question?

BA **Bennett, Alec (CFM)** 25:09
Sure.

BM **Betsy Merritt** 25:11
And again, it has to do with that Appendix B list so.

BA **Bennett, Alec (CFM)** 25:14
Mm-hmm.

BM **Betsy Merritt** 25:16
Just so I understand the concept, if you're going to exempt all 1985 or later buildings which you know I'm perfectly comfortable with that, why do you even need Appendix B?
Necessarily need those details if you're just going to say.
Basically, anything 1985 or later is doesn't have to go through 106 review.

BA Bennett, Alec (CFM) 25:46

You know, there are certain projects that will go through 106 review for those types of.

For those types of campuses like building demolitions, for instance.

So you know what we're saying?

BM Betsy Merritt 26:05

A total demolition of a 1986 building would go through 106 review.

Is that what you're saying?

BA Bennett, Alec (CFM) 26:12

Brett.

BM Betsy Merritt 26:13

Oh, OK.

OK, that that helps explain it. OK.

BA Bennett, Alec (CFM) 26:17

So you know there, there are certain projects that will kind of go through a, you know, standard 106 review regardless of age. You know that would be demolitions for instance. We have had bed replacement projects that are on you know.

You know, in in those bed replacement projects, no matter what the age of the campus, they would go through.

So you know what would Appendix D is really intended to to do.

Do is kind of give more clarity to you know these are the type of projects that we are going to be accepting. You know you know to kind of help.

Consulting parties understand.

You know, these are the kind of standard types of grants that the the state Veterans Home program supports.

BM Betsy Merritt 27:14

OK.

That's a useful explanation. Thanks again.

BA

Bennett, Alec (CFM) 27:17

No problem.

So.

As I said.

You know, we're still accepting comments.

We.

Are, you know, still open to?

You know one-on-one consultation calls if that would be your preference. What we are planning on doing is.

You know once the.

The comment period ends.

We are going to.

Roll up all of the comments into a matrix.

That will include responses.

We're happy to post that mate.

We're going to post that matrix on the website that.

That has been put into the chat.

And then we are going to review and consider.

All comments before revising the draft.

So you know that is.

You know, really the next steps after the comment period ends.

And we are going to plan on moving forward with that.

Obviously, you know Virginia, even though we're in the government shutdown, our office has not been furloughed.

So we are going to be moving ahead.

With that.

Next slide please.

So this is intended just to give you know one more time. You know a link to that website and then our our e-mail address.

You know.

We.

Really do appreciate.

You know, everyone taking the time to log into this webinar this afternoon and.

You know your engagement.

Certainly. You know, we look at this as a way to, you know, really Polish and and improve the draft. So thank you.

Next slide please.

So.

You know.

Again, you know greatly appreciate everyone's time. We will be in touch.

You know, after the comment period.

And you know, we'll continue consultation.

Just one last plug if you know you would like to have a one-on-one consultation call, we'd be happy to to work that.

So thank you everyone.

We will be in touch regarding this proposal. Thank you.



Betsy Merritt 30:18

Thank you.

□ stopped transcription