



Kent County Veterans Services

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DRAFT minutes 8-6-2020

Present: Mary Johnson, Trish Torres, John Baxter, Harold Mast, Mel Bauman, Martha Burkett, Ryan Grams, Rachel Wustman, Jacob Calvert, Bradley Langerak

Absent:

Guests: Mary Sumner, Dan Ophoff, Theresa Robinson

1. Meeting called to Order/Introductions –
 - a. The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson at 8:30am
 - b. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett and Veterans Services Supervisor Ryan Grams introduced new VSO Bradley Langerak and new Clerk II Jacob Calvert.
2. Pledge of Allegiance –Veterans Services Supervisor Ryan Grams led those in attendance to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Approval of Minutes –
 - a. Committee Member Harold Mast made a motion to approve the minutes with the amendment of including documents with minutes to be approved. Committee Member Mel Bauman seconded, UNANIMOUS
4. Success Stories-
 - a. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett shared about the Women Veteran Equine Therapy Retreat that happened on July 24th-July 26th. Both she and KCVS AC Chair Mary Johnson attended the retreat and spoke highly of the experience and look forward to having more opportunities for equine therapy in the future.
5. Monthly Impact Reports
 - a. Veterans Services Supervisor Ryan Grams provided an update for the monthly numbers. While the office is still closed for face to face appointments, the VSOs are still able to start and complete claims virtually.
 - b. For July there were 20 claims awarded

- c. As of 8/5/2020 the \$11,000 of MVAA Grant awarded Meijer Emergency Vouchers were all gone. However also as of 8/5/2020 \$30,000 in Meijer Emergency Vouchers were ordered because of the SSR exception that passed at last months meeting. They are expected to arrive in the first week of September.
- d. In the interim, there is still SSR money available to help with financial hardships including food vouchers and other bills.

6. Managers Report

- a. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett gave an update on the MVAA Grant initiatives.
 - i. The womens equine therapy retreat ended up going over budget due to hotel room costs. When the initiative was initially proposed, the amount used for the hotel rooms was a government rate as directed. Martha called the MVAA to see if it would be allowed. Incidentally, the renovation budget for the department included new furniture, so the grant funds that were going to be used for new lobby furniture were reallocated to pay for the overture of the equine therapy retreat due to room rates
 - ii. By the end of August The Jaegar Foundation will have executed all by \$10,000 of their grant funds. They are averaging about 2 applications per month.
 - iii. The Meijer Voucher program has spent all of its money, but as previously stated Staff is working on replenishing the emergency vouchers with SSR money.

7. Old Business

- a. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett submitted the budget proposal to the County for approval. Martha explained that there were 2 additions that she added, but she did email the committee prior to this meeting. The additions were about dental and The Jaegar Foundation.
 - i. There were no objections from the committee about the additions.
- b. Committee member Mel Bauman inquired if we were looking to work with specific dentists or if the veterans would pick their own. Martha advised that they will need to write a policy for both new line items.
- c. Committee member Harold Mast wondered how the budget proposal was received by the County. Martha advised that the initial budget review came back with no questions and no invitation to meet to discuss anything further. The County advised it looked good and it will be pushed forward in the process.

8. New Business-

- a. KCVS Staff member Elena Bridges turned in her resignation, her last day was July 31st, all the staff wish her well.
 - i. Did an internal posting for her position.
- b. VSO Theresa Ergang is completing Accreditation Training virtually this week. Once her certificate is received she will be able to take over Elenas case load.
- c. Committee Chair Mary Johnson inquired possibly changing the date that the Advisory Committee meets. Generally it's the first Thursday of the month, but Chair Johnson wanted to propose meeting the second Thursday of the month, main reasoning is giving staff more time to get numbers for reporting. All Advisory Committee Members present agreed.
- d. Committee Member Randy Tharp submitted his resignation.

- e. Committee Member Harold Mast's term is over at the end of the year; Mary Sumner with Kennari Consulting proposed that the Advisory Committee start thinking about replacements. While the Advisory does not get to choose the replacement, they can suggest candidates to Martha, who can then pass them on to the proper committee. Some suggestions from the Advisory Committee were as follows: (note: this topic was opened up to the public for input- no public comment was given)
- Women veterans
 - Veterans of color
 - A veteran with their thumb on the pulse of the political climate
 - Iraq/Afghani/Persian Gulf Veterans
 - Marine veterans

9. **Survey Responses –**

10. Around the Table-

- a. Committee Member Mel Bauman inquired if there was a way to do Equine Therapy locally. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett responded that there was not a place locally that met the criteria and timeline of what they were looking for, however for 2021 the search will have much more time. Committee Member Mel Bauman offered to do some research on local places. Manager Burkett thought that would be great and asked that he fill out a new Committee Contact Sheet.
- b. Committee Member Mel Bauman also shared that he thinks the staff at Veterans Services is a great team doing great things and he is excited for what is to come for the department.

11. Public Comment –

- Dan Ophoff from Friends of the Veterans Treatment Court requested follow up and supporting documents, like the budget etc be sent to him. Administrative Specialist Rachel Wustman will send to him.

12. Adjournment –Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson moved adjourned the meeting at 9:24am

13. The next Veterans Services Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, September 10th, at 8:30am place is TBD due to the Governors orders.