



Kent County Veterans Services

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DRAFT minutes 12-10-2020

Committee Present: Mary Johnson, John Baxter, Harold Mast, Mel Bauman, Shane Scherer, Trish Torres

Committee Absent:

Staff Present: Martha Burkett, Ryan Grams, Rachel Wustman, Martin Rogers

Guests: Assistant County Administrator Jenny James

1. Meeting called to Order/Introductions –
 - a. The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson at 8:30am
2. Pledge of Allegiance – Committee Member Harold Mast led those in attendance to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Introduction of guests – Martha Burkett introduced Jenny James, the new Assistant Administrator for the county. Martha Burkett introduced Martin Rogers, the new Clerk with Kent County Veterans Services.
4. Approval of Minutes –
 - a. Committee Member Harold Mast made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee Member Shane Scherer seconded, UNANIMOUS
5. Success Stories –
 - a. Veteran Services Supervisor Ryan Gram announced that monies awarded as of December 1 has been \$964,232, which is an increase of \$144,232 over the \$820,000 awarded for the entire year of 2019. Martha Burkett shared that she believes it's due to increased outreach that we are able to help and provide for more veterans.
6. 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. During this month the number of awards and retroactive awards have been higher than last year at this time. \$11,150 in Food Vouchers awarded since starting the program three months ago. Food vouchers have been budgeted for 2021. Food vouchers now take days to get to people instead of two weeks.

7. Manager's Report

- a. **Budget:** Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett gave an update on Veterans Services Budget and clarified points about money coming in and going out, particularly in regards to the 2020 spending plan, which was implemented in June, which makes the reporting look different.
- b. **The General Administration** line is over by 6.29% which is due to the purchasing of cell phones, computers, and Adobe software for staff to work from home, which wasn't budgeted for the year.
- c. **Sailors and Soldiers Relief** is over by 10.19% due to building renovation, Disability Advocate, and Senior Neighbors funding, which weren't budgeted but were approved by the committee.
- d. **Project and Program costs** were over by 31%, which is where the consulting money, the Art Prize money, and the Week Retreat came out.
- e. Martha spoke about the **2020 MVAA grant disbursements**. Original approval was for \$221,082.
- f. Due to Covid, \$11,000+ that was supposed to be for the Walk and Roll Fun Fest was taken and put into **the Meijer food voucher program**. When someone uses a \$100 voucher for an \$80 purchase, the remaining \$20 goes back into the program. Out of the \$11,000+ given out, \$10,672.21 was actually spent.
- g. The **adjusted grant awarded** was \$210,409.79, which Martha Burkett has listed the initiatives line by line.
- h. The original **TV Grant** was paid fully by MVAA.
- i. The **Community Rebuilders grant** was \$7389, which is exactly how much the MVAA paid.
- j. The **Equine Retreat Grant** of \$9762 was requested, of which \$874.82 was denied as the driver was not listed on the expenses.
- k. \$21,000 was requested for **the Dental Day grant**. Only \$8,329 was used and was fully reimbursed.
- l. \$59,500 was asked for **the Jeager Foundation grant**. \$49,000 was asked for. \$39,500 was denied due to not meeting the state's reporting criteria for the budgeting of training the service dogs and the Yeager Foundation's fear of a State audit based on how the grant was written. Six service dogs were still placed with veterans.
- m. Committee Member Harold Mast inquired if there was a way to **recoup the money**. Martha stated that there is not.
- n. Martha Burkett reported the **Psychoeducation Group** is coming along, with another meeting set up with Arbor Circle. Arbor Circle is working on a proposal that will become a contract.
- o. Martha Burkett spoke with the **Treatment Court**, as well as Hillary Arthur, the 63rd District's Court Administrator, who is excited about the programs as a potential referral source for veterans that have substance related disorders.
- p. **The wellness program** will be launched January 1st. It will be virtual to start, with the exception of some equine therapy opportunities at a ranch in town. There are yoga, art, and MSU extension classes that will be available. There will be follow up questionnaires for the veterans to fill out.

- q. Martha Burkett announced that there will be a **“Suicide Prevention” program**, but that name carries too much liability, so it will be from a wellness perspective. She wants to set up a call center to help with mental wellness by offering resources and counselling, referring to 911 if the caller is suicidal. Martha proposed to hire a full time staffer to manage the calls. Lu Dunlap, the KCVS intern from Grand Valley is being considered for the position, while Martin Rogers and Jacob Calvert, the two Clerks, will be cross-trained to assist.
 - r. Martha is working with the **Dental Association to figure out a program** to provide for “the working poor,” veterans without dental insurance or coverage through the VA.
 - s. Contracts are being worked on for the **billboards, bus signs, and TV ads**, as well as the Yeager foundation for the dogs, Community Rebuilders, Senior Neighbors, and Treatment Court.
 - t. **The Art Prize Gala** in June is going to be the big focus for 2021. Zaneta Adams has agreed to be the keynote speaker. Senator Gary Peters has been invited to be a keynote, as well as Rosemarie Aquilina, who is an Air Force veteran who also worked on the Larry Nasar/MSU Gymnastics sexual trauma case. The Art Prize sculpture will be unveiled that night. There is not currently a home for the piece. Martha proposes that it make its way around town, settling at Grand Valley. Harold Mast suggested it be placed at the State Veteran’s Affairs office or one of the new veteran’s homes.
 - u. Martha had spoken with 92 for 22 about **the Suicide and Crisis program** as well as the QPR training to increase calls to their hotline as well as advertise that KCVS is sponsoring the training.
 - v. Martha Burkett sent a **proposal to videographer Mike Bano** to shoot a video for the upcoming projects for KCVS, with a projected cost of \$2500.
 - w. Martha Burkett shared images of the **KCVS building renovations**. The project is done minus furniture. By the direction of Governor Whitmer and Kent County, KCVS staff will be working remotely “for a while.”
 - x. KCVS Staff member Rachel Wustman shared **the new KCVS webpage and calendar**, which displays the registration for the upcoming wellness events.
 - y. KCVS Staff member Ryan Gram shared **the KCVS Performance Management Review Report**. Martha Burkett explained that it shows how KCVS aligns with the overarching strategic plan of the county.
 - z. Martha Burkett announced that all the KCVS staff, other than Martin Rogers, the new KCVS Clerk, has passed **the Veterans Service Officer Accreditation process**.
8. Old Business
- a. No old business discussed.
9. New Business-
- a. Committee Member Mary Johnson moved that voting take place for 2021 positions.
 - b. Committee Member Mary Johnson moved to take nominations for chair. Shane Scherer nominated Mary Johnson. Harold Mast Seconded. No other nominations for Chair.
 - c. Committee Member Harold Mast motioned to vote for Mary Johnson as Chair. Vote was a unanimous “aye.”
 - d. Committee Member Mary Johnson moved to take nominations for Vice Chair.

- e. Committee Member Mary Johnson nominated Shane Scherer. Mel Bauman and Harold Mast both seconded. No other nominations for Vice Chair.
- f. Committee Member Mary Johnson motioned to vote for Shane Scherer as Vice Chair. Vote was a unanimous “aye.”
- g. Committee Member Mary Johnson moved to take nominations for Secretary
- h. Committee Member Mary Johnson nominated John Baxter. Committee Chair Harold Mast seconded. No other nominations.
- i. Committee Member Mary Johnson motioned to vote for John Baxter as Secretary. Vote was a unanimous “aye.”

10. Around the Table-

- a. Committee Chair Mary Johnson shared a Certificate of Recognition for Harold Mast, for devoting countless hours to ensure quality programs were available to veterans of Kent County. This is Harold Mast’s last meeting as a part of the committee. Committee Chair Mary Johnson shared that Harold will be missed. Martha Burkett seconded.
- b. Harold Mast shared that his new focus will be on aging veterans needing home care, so he will still be around.
- c. New events-
 - i. No New Events

11. Public Comment –

- No public comment

12. Adjournment –Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson moved adjourned the meeting at 10:11am.