



Kent County Veterans Services

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DRAFT minutes 8-12-2021

Committee Present: Mary Johnson, Michael Blundell, Mel Bauman, John Baxter

Committee Absent: Shane Scherer, Trish Torres, Jill Wolfe

Staff Present: Martha Burkett, Ryan Grams, Rachel Wustman

Guests: Jenny James (Deputy County Administrator), Dave Kennedy

1. Meeting called to Order/Introductions –
 - a. The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson at 8:32am
2. Pledge of Allegiance – Committee Member John Baxter led those in attendance to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Approval of the Minutes from Previous Month
 - a. Committee Chair Mary Johnson motioned to approve the minutes with the correction of the word “it” to “if” on the second line of 8. b. Committee Member Mel Bauman seconded.
 - b. Minutes approved, unanimous.
4. Success Stories
 - a. KCVS Manager Martha Burkett shared that the Women’s Appreciation Banquet was a great success and that she had received a lot of positive feedback from the community.
 - b. Martha Burkett shared that Rachel Wustman has been promoted from Administrative Specialist to Community Outreach Specialist, a well-earned recognition of the hard work and dedication that she has demonstrated over her five years with Kent County Veterans Services.
 - c. KCVS Community Outreach Specialist Rachel Wustman shared that one of the female veterans that attended the Women’s Appreciation Banquet had attended one of the events hosted throughout the week at the KCVS building after learning about it at the banquet.
 - d. Rachel Wustman also shared that KCVS has been sending staff members to speak to veterans at multiple locations including Amphenol Borisch Technologies and Crossroads Elder Care.

5. Monthly Impact Report

- a. Veterans Services Supervisor Ryan Grams provided an update. 15 fully developed claims were submitted, 51 claims are in development, and 14 claims were awarded, 7 SSR claims were awarded, and 6 burial claims were awarded.
- b. Committee Chair Mary Johnson requested that former Committee Member Harold Mast be removed from the Monthly Impact Report as he is no longer serving on the committee, Ryan Grams confirmed that he would make the change.

6. Manager's Report

- a. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett stated that KCVS is on track with everything in the budget.
- b. Martha Burkett gave an update on the spend plan for 2022. The spend plan has been submitted to the Deputy Fiscal Services Director, Marvin Van Nortwick, who had no questions or concerns.
- c. Martha Burkett shared the Veteran Support Coordinator Report. The report showed that between 2/22/2021 and 8/11/2021 Veterans Support Coordinator Nelson Soto interacted with 120 veterans. The report also detailed the types of emergencies the veterans had presented with, the agencies they were referred to, and how the veterans had heard about Kent County Veterans Services. Television was the most common way that veterans had heard about Kent County Veterans Services, word of mouth was the second most common.
- d. Martha Burkett stated that bus signage should be added to the report as a means by which veterans had heard about Kent County Veterans Services.
- e. Martha Burkett gave an update on the Yellow Ribbon Gala. Several of the original participants who helped craft the sculpture by Pamela Alderman that will be on display will be in attendance.
- f. Committee Member John Baxter asked if name badges will be available for the committee members. Martha Burkett stated that having badges made may be too expensive, however name tags will be provided to all staff and committee members in attendance. Committee Member Mel Bauman stated that he would ask his American Legion post for confirmation that probably cost for more durable name badges are in the range of under \$8.00 per badge.
- g. Martha Burkett shared her conversation with Michael Hyacinthe in which he suggested that Kent County Veterans Services should have their own logo, to which she stated that she agreed. Deputy County Administrator Jenny James stated that, as the county is currently reconsidering the current county logo design, she would communicate the desire for a new department logo to the project manager in charge of the initiative.
- h. Martha Burkett shared that on September 18 the Veterans Memorial Park will open as a venue for Art Prize. The Patriot Guard Riders will be in attendance and The Hooligans Flight Team will be performing. Funding for the event will be provided by the West Michigan Veterans Coalition and Finish The Mission. Additional funding may be provided by SpartanNash, though this has not been confirmed. West Michigan Veterans Coalition, Finish The Mission, and Kent County Veterans Services will all have tables to answer questions and provide information.
- i. Martha Burkett reminded the committee that Finish The Mission's Freedom Cruise will be taking place on September 11. The event will culminate in a ceremony to honor a Gold Star

Family and their fallen family member. KCVS staff members will be in attendance to answer questions and provide T-shirts.

7. Old Business
 - a. No old business was discussed.
8. New Business
 - a. Committee Chair Mary Johnson reminded the committee that their November meeting will fall on Veterans Day. As such, it is her wish that each member participate in an event held in observance of the holiday.
 - b. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett suggested preparing a float in celebration of Veterans Day contingent on finding a venue and funding. Deputy Administrator Jenny James suggested that, due to time restraints, the float should be planned for Veterans Day of 2022.
 - c. Mary Johnson determined that the November committee meeting will be held on November 4. Veterans Services Supervisor Ryan Grams stated that, due to the meeting being held early, the Monthly Impact Report will not have accurate numbers for phone communications, but they will be reported at the following meeting.
 - d. Committee Member Mel Bauman shared that the American Legion and The Army and Navy Club will be hosting a joint picnic on August 14 at 1:30pm at Cascade Park. Mission BBQ will be providing catering services. The attire for the event will be casual and everyone is invited to attend.
 - e. Mel Bauman also shared that a Vietnam Veterans Spaghetti Dinner will be hosted at the American Legion Boat and Canoe Club and will be sponsored by the MVAA on August 13 from 5:00pm to 7:00pm.
 - f. Mary Johnson shared that Ashley HomeStore will be having their Veteran Appreciation Day on September 19 at LMCU Ballpark starting at 11:00am.
 - g. Martha Burkett shared that the KCVS staff is currently working on a new schedule to accommodate expanded hours of operation. This schedule will be evaluated and reevaluated at each week's team meeting in order to identify and address any issues that may arise.
9. Public Comment
 - a. No public comment.
10. Adjournment –Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson moved adjourned the meeting at 9:26 am.