



Kent County Veterans Services

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Minutes 04/13/2023

Committee present: Mary Johnson, Melvin Bauman, Reginald Howard, Mike Blundell, Chris Kamps & Jill Hinton-Wolfe (Remote)

Committee absent: Phil Yeater

Staff present: Ryan Grams, Rachel Wustman, Martha Burkett & Amanda Lake

Public: Paul Ryan

1) Meeting called to order/ instructions-

- a. The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee chair Mary Johnson.

2) Pledge of Allegiance – Lead by Mel Bauman

3) Approval of the minutes from February Meeting-

- a. Approved by- Chris Kamps, Seconded by- Mel Bauman

4) Presentation from WZZM 13 Kathleen Alsobrooks and Paul Mack

- a. The presentation was based on reporting from the first quarter of 2023. The report recap shows the analysis and evaluation of the campaign strategy that WZZM 13 has for Kent County Veterans Services.

5) Success stories

- a. KCVS Martha- We had a Surviving spouse of a veteran who was looking for a powerchair to help her get around. VSO Theresa put the spouse in touch with our Veteran support coordinator Kenyon. KCVS Kenyon had just received a phone call from a community member who was looking to donate a powerchair to a veteran. KCVS Kenyon was able to put them in touch with each other and the spouse was able to get a new to her powerchair. The powerchair was also in the exact color that the spouse was really wanting.
- b. KCVS Rachel- We are currently going to the clinic once a month to help serve popcorn for VFW 702. I had a veteran come up to ask about how he could get in touch with his Service Officer there at the Clinic. The veteran and his friend were both struggling to get ahold of their service officers to work on increases for their claims. I got both of their names, numbers and got them in touch with our Service Officers here at KCVS. So just

going in to serve some popcorn, we were able to get these two veterans hooked up with a Service Officers

- c. KCVS Martha- We have another good new story here in our office. One of our staff members here at KCVS, Amanda was nominated as Kent County Employee of the Quarter. A veteran that she helped provide services for wrote into the county and nominated her. She will be honored at the next Kent County Board of Commissioners meeting. She will also have an article written about her one of the county publications.

6) Monthly Impact statement

- a. KCVS Ryan- Again, a very busy month this month. Brad has been booked solid every day, doing more and more claims for our veterans. We have made a few changes in our office recently. VSO Andrew is changing over from Service Connected to Non-Service Connected. We will be having VSO Theresa change from Non-Service Connected to Service connected. Which is why VSO Brad has been so busy.
 - i. KCVS Rachel- While Ryan is speaking about VSO Brad, we also wanted to share a letter that VSO Brad received from spouse of a veteran that was working with VSO Brad. She said how her husband hasn't had good luck with the VA and how VSO Brad sat down and took the time to listen to the veteran. She said how much they appreciated the time he spent with them and how he listened to their concerns and answered all their questions.

7) Managers' Report

- a. KCVS Martha- Our investment income we are currently over what we projected, which is good. We are under budget on everything else, so we are on track with everything. Ryan has also developed a fantastic tracking device that will be helping us so much with our MVAA reporting.
 - i. KCVS Ryan- This report will help both you, the Committee and the Board of Commissioners understand where our money is all going. This tracker will also help to track how much money is remaining in each one of the programs for Millage funded programming and MVAA Grant programming, but more importantly how many veterans each one of these programs is helping.
 - ii. KCVS Martha- This program will also help advise us on our future programming. We can look to see what programs are being utilized and what ones we can cut.
- b. KCVS Martha- I shared our spending forecast and a draft of the millage spending. I was able to add \$50,000 into our dental program, \$20,000 into Senior Neighbors and Disability Advocates, \$5,000 into the Treatment Court and \$8,750 into Community Rebuilders. We have decided to cut the Yoga program, that wasn't being utilized. We will use the remaining \$3,000 for a new laptop, tablet and kiosk that we will use at the front door for signing in and tracking at the front. We were concerned when we thought we were only getting \$72,000 from our grant, but when I got the new email stating that we were receiving \$324,000 we were relieved. We would like to try to supplement into our housecleaning and recreation programs with those being very well utilized and popular. Our staff had some ideas with adding lawn care and snow removal. But also, KCVS Ryan had a good idea about budgeting for budget classes for our SSR clients because that is something we should be providing but haven't been able to.

- i. Mary- How many do we have in the housecleaning?
 - ii. KCVS Rachel- We have 21 right now through the grant program.
 - iii. Reggie- Is Heroes Corner able to be a vendor with Kent County for grant money?
 - iv. KCVS Martha- You can write me a proposal, but we will have to see if something like that will be a conflict of interest with you holding a board position or not.
- c. KCVS Martha- Another budget item was the money from GR Digital, we won't be using that money for the intended purpose. So, we will be moving that money to Dental. Another thing is that we did not budget for swag this year, but we have \$15,000 in our travel budget but will only be using about \$8,000 of that. So, we are using \$5,000 for swag including T-shirts with our new logo on them and hats for Kent County Veterans.

8) Old Business

- a. Mary- We won't be approving bylaw this week. We are doing some more research about the wording. So bylaws are currently on hold.

9) New Business

a. Women's Banquet

- i. KCVS Martha- I am looking for help with executing help with this, so if anyone on the board is looking at helping please let me know. One of the goals I have established is working on equity and inclusion for African American and LBGTQ veterans. I have reached out to Thresa Brandson with Kent County to set a meeting to see if I can get some information from her.
- ii. Reginald- Was there any African American veterans that she has spoken with?
- iii. KCVS Martha- Yes, but if you are interested in being a part of this, we would be happy to include you in the conversations.
- iv. Reginald- I'm in. I am born and raised in this city.
- v. Jill- I am willing to help volunteer and support in whatever you are planning for the women's banquet. I think Meijer Gardens went well last year.
- vi. Mary- I can help also. I would also like to know when the meeting is with Theresa Brandsons meeting is.
- vii. KCVS Martha- We are going to poll some female veterans to see what their thoughts are.

10) New Activities

a. Outreach

- i. KCVS Rachel- Stand-down meetings have begun. This year Stand-down event will be held here at KCVS September 7th from 10am-2pm. We also recently toured the Community Food club here in Grand Rapids to see how the program

worked and see how they could help us if we went away from food vouchers. I have attended a few different meetings this month including the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan, United Veterans counsel of Kent County meeting, the West Michigan Veterans Coalition meeting just to name a few. We are trying to keep our finger on the pulse of the county to keep informed on everything going on. I always bring cards and flyers to help spread the word of KCVS. We are still doing the popcorn at the clinic once a month. I know VSO Bradley and VSO Andrew both recently attended the PACT ACT event at the clinic and that was successful. I recently went on 8 West and Fox 17 to just let them know what we had going on and to promote our outreach efforts. Thank you to Reggie and Heroes Corner for hosting one Thursday morning a month for art workshops we have put on.

- ii. Mary- Is there an Art Prize this year?
- iii. KCVS Martha- I am working on setting up a meeting with Pamela and Michael to start talking about it. We have funds set up. They are working with 22 veterans this year already. I need to see if Michael put in for money for the Gala, so I will have to update you on that. If he didn't ask for it, maybe we can ask for community support for that event.

11) Public Comment

- a. Paul Ryan- Armed Forces Thanksgiving is May19th. We have 60 corporate tables to sell, and we have sold 57 as of yesterday. Our goal is to invite 120 Veterans who will be able to come in for free, we currently have 112 signed up. We are looking to get some more high schools involved. The Memorial Day parade will be the evening of May 30th. Even though it falls on a weekday. United veterans counsel banquet will be Friday June 23rd. We just secured our guest speakers. We have received quite a few requests for our military family assistance fund, not a surprise with inflation. We are planning a symposium for September 27th for health care providers, which will take place on the campus of Davenport University. Some will include non-traditional mental health, suicide prevention for our various underserved veteran populations. We are currently working with a professional videographer to showcase some of our programs that we help promote. So, look for that soon. The transportation program, Feonix Mobility Rising applied for a grant through the MDOT and received \$1.5 million dollars for their program. This means that this will help enable the underserved populations access to transportation. There will be an initial meeting with Feonix on April 21st. I will pass along any information that we receive.

12) Meeting adjournment by Committee Chair Mary Johnson

13) Meeting Transcribed by Amanda Lake

