

Kalamazoo County Veterans Affairs Committee

Meeting Minutes

October 14, 2015

- I. Call to order by Vice Chair, Bill Becker at 8:04 AM

- II. Roll Call:
Members Present: Bill Becker, Mike Jones, Mike Quinn, Tom Burton
Absent: Chad Dillon
Others Present: Lucinda Stinson, Mike Hoss, Brien Brockway, Beth Ridge, Courtney Davis, Sue Darling, Mike Seals

- III. Review of previous month's minutes from September committee meeting
Motion made by B. Becker to approve the minutes as presented for September 9, 2015
Second by M. Jones
Motion Carried by a unanimous voice vote

- IV. Citizen's Time
Vice Chairperson Becker opened the floor for citizen's time. No comments, questions, or issues were brought forward. Citizen's Time was closed.

- V. New Business
Veterans Court Overview
Circuit Court Administrator, Suzanne Darling provided a brief overview of current treatment court programs. Currently Kalamazoo County operates four specialty treatment court programs; all are supported through grant funding:
 - Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Program
 - Juvenile Mental Health Court Program
 - Family Dependency Treatment Court
 - Men's and Women's Drug Treatment CourtsMs. Darling reviewed the current success of the treatment courts and the impact they have made in the community and then shared information about other MI counties that have already established Veterans Treatment Courts. Reasons why a Veterans Treatment Court would be beneficial to Kalamazoo County were outlined:
 - Veterans have unique needs, stressors
 - Have experiences not commonly shared w. non-military peers
 - Respond well to other veteransBrief overview of what would be included in a veteran's treatment court was provided and discussion of upcoming steps being made to secure a grant for the purpose of Veterans Treatment Court Planning. Grant deadline is October 31st.

Committee members and Service Office staff are very supportive of the Courts willingness to apply for this grant. Discussion ensued about resources the office and committee could offer in support of the grant application and what the planning period would entail (training, identification of gaps in current system, identification of resources and partnerships). Funding amount that could be awarded is unknown at this time.

Veterans Service Office Report

M. Hoss addressed why last names are not included on the burial benefit report provided to the committee; this is part of protected information as outlined by the VA

Update on use of gas cards from the past month was provided. Request made to allow for a similar use of gas cards moving forward.

Motion was made by B. Becker to extend the Service Office's ability to distribute up to 10 gas cards per month at the discretion of the Veterans Service Officer and to have committee review monthly allotment on an annual basis.

Seconded by T. Burton

Motion carried by a unanimous voice vote.

The Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Committee will allow the veterans office to use a verbal approval & acknowledgement in-between bi-weekly meetings to better address emergency assistance requests for veterans. Requests up to the amount of \$1500 may be approved in this manner.

M. Hoss completed training for attaining accreditation as a service officer during past month; B. Brockway maintained office during that time.

M. Hoss led committee discussion about current office hours; shared plans to change appointments scheduled per day and per officer to 4 which will allow for more attention and time to be given to each veteran who comes in the office and for veterans who still show up for walk-in needs. Monday will remain a walk-in day only for now.

VI. Commissioner's Time

Commissioner Seals shared updates from the last meeting of the Board of Commissioners. Board approved funding for an Administrative Assistant position that will work with both Community Action and the Veteran's Service Office. This position will begin in FY2016. Board also discussed increasing the Soldiers and Sailors Relief Fund by \$5000.00; the Board would like justification from the VSO and HCS Administration as to how the increased funding would be used.

Veteran's Service Office will need to schedule a time to share plans with County Board in upcoming months.

Committee discussed relevant assistance numbers and statistics that would be beneficial for the Service Office to present; M. Hoss will identify numbers in next few weeks and will work with committee to address possible questions that would be asked by the County Board.

VII. Financial Review

B. Ridge reviewed financial statements for the office and reviewed the changes to the burial benefit policy. Changes have just been deemed effective so there is no budget impact at this point; changes are consistent with State Law.

VIII. Adjournment

Motion made to adjourn meeting of the committee. Seconded and carried. Meeting was adjourned at 9:42 AM