

Kalamazoo County Veterans Affairs Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 11, 2015

- I. Call to order by Chair, Michael Quinn at 8:04 AM

- II. Roll Call:
Members Present: Bill Becker, Chad Dillion, Mike Quinn, Tom Burton, Mike Jones
Others Present: Mike Hoss, Brien Brockway, Beth Ridge, Courtney Davis, Gillian Stoltman,
Commissioner Michael Seals

- III. Review of previous month's minutes
Motion made by T. Burton to approve the October minutes as presented
Second by C. Dillon
Motion Carried by a unanimous voice vote

- IV. Citizen's Time. Chairman Quinn opened the floor for comment.
Dr. Gillian Stoltman, HCS Director/Health Office, thanked all committee members and veterans present for their service to the Country and now to the County.

- V. Financial Review
B. Ridge reviewed the financial report for the Veteran's Service Office; budget amendment has been requested of the Board for moving \$4000 from burial benefits to the soldier and sailors relief fund; budget is on target otherwise. No further questions or comments were presented.

- VI. Old Business
B. Becker inquired about a concern of the committee from earlier in the year in regards to customer feedback and surveys; requested information on how the office is tracking service provided to veterans and service satisfaction. Service Officers shared that a comment box has been placed in waiting area and early in 2016 Customer Satisfaction Surveys will be implemented across the department; discussion about the possibility of providing exit surveys to veterans ensued. This would be something to revisit following the hire of the new administrative assistant.

T. Burton expressed gratitude to M. Hoss and B. Brockway for passion in regards to serving veterans and encouraged as much office transparency as possible; committee would like to see minutes and meeting notices posted for veterans. These items are shared on the Department webpage and service officers will work on ways to increase awareness of this in the future. Suggestion was made to send invites and notices to area veteran's service offices and organizations on a more regular basis.

M. Hoss provided a brief update on the issues with Consumers Power. He is working to have the family meet with the State office. Commissioner Seals expressed ability to assist with contacting CE should need arise in the future.

M. Hoss provided a brief update about the Food Voucher Fraud. The individual received the voucher for the first time and used it at 2 different stores; this will be counted for the 2 vouchers one would be eligible for in a year. Work is being completed to identify new ways to provide food assistance to veterans, including using pre-paid cards.

VII. New Business

Veterans Service Office Report

Administrative Assistant to be added after the first of the year; this will move the Veterans Service Office to the 3rd floor on the 2nd wing; there is more waiting room space and office space. Committee discussion ensued about roles and requirements they thought would be important in an Administrative Assistant. Individual will be trained to answer the basic questions that will allow for immediate assistance to veterans. Dr. Stoltman expressed thanks to Commissioner Seals for making sure the position was voiced during the County budget process.

Updates were provided as to how the new appointment structure was working; it has helped greatly with diminishing the paper backlog and for completing necessary paperwork.

Committee structure was discussed. Two members terms expire the end of December, 2015. M. Hoss asked B. Becker and T. Burton to reapply if they are interested in continuing to serve on the board. Reapplication will need a letter of recommendation from a service organization. Interviews may happen after the first of the year; but you serve in the interim.

Committee asked about Grant proposal submission for Veterans Court; follow-up with the Court will take place for future updates. M. Hoss shared about a second grant opportunity for this same purpose that will be available from the State in the spring.

Committee and VSO Officer had a brief discussion about what the committee can do to make the operations of the office easier or more efficient; M Hoss encouraged more office oversight and advocacy for the office. Outreach at Veteran Job Fairs was suggested by the committee.

VIII. Commissioner's Time

Commissioner Seals acknowledged that M. Hoss and the Community Action Agency Manager, Ms. Smith, work well together which will help the success of the new Administrative Assistant Position.

Brief discussion about HCS move to a new building; Service Officers were encouraged to think about office needs and space to accommodate their work.

Updated was provided about the search for a new County Administrator. Interviews are currently underway; hopefully will be announced in the upcoming week and will start by the end of the end of month.

IX. Other

Discussion about timing for readdressing the veterans millage; now seems like a good time to begin more planning. A clear plan for how a millage can be used needs to be identified and developed before asking the commission for it. Thoughts were shared on how current assistance, specifically for food assistance is not adequate; \$200 a year is not enough for a family in need to purchase groceries. The process to update the policy would require that the committee make a recommendation to the County Board that outlines the requested change and new policy.

Committee discussion of how the office should look to service veterans and asked where gaps may be. Service Officers shared that there is need to address veterans who are in the middle in relation to financial assistance. There is a group who frequently struggle, but are just over the threshold of assistance programs from the State.

X. Adjournment.

Motion was made to adjourn by B. Becker. Seconded by C. Dillon. Motion passed. Chairman Quinn adjourned the meeting at 9:22 AM