

Kalamazoo County Veterans Affairs Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 12, 2015

- I. Call to order by Chair, Michael Quinn at 8:02 AM
- II. Roll Call:
Members Present: Bill Becker, Chad Dillon, Michael Jones, Michael Quinn, Tom Burton
Others Present: Mike Hoss, Beth Ridge, Brien Brockway, Michael Seals, John Faul, Courtney Davis
- III. Review of previous month's meeting minutes. from July Committee Meeting
Motion by Mr. Jones to approve minutes as presented for the July 8th meeting.
Seconded by Mr. Becker.
Motion carried by a unanimous voice vote.

Motion by Mr. Jones to approve minutes as presented for the July 27th meeting.
Seconded by Mr. Becker.
Motion carried by a unanimous voice vote.
- IV. Citizens Time
Chairperson Michael Quinn opened the floor for sharing. Deputy County Administrator, John Faul, welcomed Mr. Mike Hoss as the new Veterans Service Coordinator and to the office and County. Mr. Faul also acknowledged and thanked the committee for all of their work and dedication over the last few months.
- V. Financial Review
Veterans Service Specialist, Brian Brockway, reviewed funds awarded to Veterans during the previous month. There are a few outstanding applications for the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund – just waiting on State decision from applications submitted.

July 2015 Financial Report was review by Beth Ridge, HCS Financial Analyst. Recent budget changes include purchase of a second scanner for Coordinator's office. No major budget changes elsewhere took place since last meeting.

Committee discussion ensued as to training budget and other upcoming needs. Veteran Service Officer Accreditation process was reviewed – accreditation is required to file claims with the state or VA on behalf of a veteran. Brien currently accredited and Mike will be at the next available training. Training offer in spring 2016, but office is searching for a sooner possibility.
- VI. New Business

Veterans' Service Office Report – Mr. Mike Hoss shared briefly about first week and half in the office; He is getting to know HCS and County processes – Veterans Service Specialist, Brien Brockway has been a great resource for training; one of first office goals is working on the message backlog. Beginning to look at future needs of the office - need for a receptionist to field calls and provide immediate assistance when possible, also need to educate all veterans to benefits available.

Volunteering in Office

Committee members expressed interest in volunteering time to office; Email with HIPAA information and next steps to be sent to all committee members.

Committee member Mr. Mike Jones shared briefly about being a certified peer support specialist. This is a State certified role for working with veterans who are suffering from mental/emotional health issues.

Hiring Procedures and Process

Committee members expressed concern that notification letters were not sent out to candidates for Veterans Service Coordinator position. Discussion ensued that in future letters should be sent out to all candidates post interviews, immediately following hiring decisions as a professional courtesy. Mr. John Faul also shared that County HR would be looking at ways to better incorporate this into hiring procedures and reminders.

Veterans' Millage

Committee discussion about next steps in working towards a veterans' millage. Would like to see a budget presented for ways to spend millage funds and have veteran needs identified; millage can be up to .1 mil – most likely will be under .05mil; Committee and Veterans office staff need to identify mission for the office and what key services are needed. Millage identified as committee focus for next meetings, will target a completed proposal and plan for November; consensus that a solid and thorough plan is the most important component of presenting request to County Board.

Next Steps identified: Committee request that HCS Administration and Veterans Service Office staff begin to identify office needs, create a budget and present needs to committee in September. Information on research already complete, experiences operating a millage from neighboring counties and related laws to be sent to committee members for review.

Veterans' Court

Establishing a veterans' court in Kalamazoo County is a committee priority; this would be a partnership with the County courts as much of the obligation and funding would fall under their oversight. Committee discussion about next steps. This can be addressed following millage; would like to set up a time to hear from the courts about how the process works and what Kalamazoo needs to do to implement this system for veterans; will also look at structures in neighboring counties.

Veterans Burial Benefits

Brien Brockway discussed impending changes to this policy; some veterans will no longer qualify due to eligibility changes; letter that is sent out to families notifying of benefits has been revised to identify that benefits are available upon determination of eligibility.

Planning Next Steps

Committee discussion in regards to process and content of upcoming meetings; as millage is identified as priority committee is open to additional meetings as needed to complete and contribute to plan and work. Committee will review related laws and plan to hear a more detailed plan from HCS administration and Veterans Office staff at September meeting. Would like to have responses from questions addressed to other counties use of millage funds shared too. September and October will be dedicated to work on the millage, strategic planning and working with partners to identify needs and next steps.

VII. Other

Committee discussion about process for scheduling special meetings; chair may call a meeting with 24 hour minimum advance notice or any 2 committee members. All meetings must be publically posted as well. HCS Administration will assist with public posting and meeting space as needed.

VIII. Adjournment. Motion made to adjourn the meeting; seconded and carried; chairperson Quinn adjourned the meeting of the committee a 9:56 AM