



## Kent County Veterans Services

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DRAFT minutes 2-7-2020

Present: Mel Bauman, Mary Johnson, Trish Torres, John Baxter, Harold Mast, Shane Scherer

Absent: Randy Tharp

Guests: Dan Ophoff, Tony Torres, Theresa Robinson, Eric Nelson

1. Meeting called to Order – The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson at 8:30am
2. Pledge of Allegiance – Committee Member Trish Torres led those in attendance to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Approval of Minutes –
  - a. Committee Member Harold Mast made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee Member Trish Torres seconded, UNANIMOUS
4. Committee Chair Mary Johnson asked that Mary Sumners from Kennari Consulting go over guidelines and expectations. The guidelines are what will be submitted to the County, so they know how the Kent County Advisory Committee will be operating, and the expectations are more internal, though Mary Sumner did suggest sending both documents to the County so they are aware.
  - a. Committee Chair Mary Johnson called for a vote of approval. Committee Member Trish Torres made a motion to approve, Committee Member Shane Scherer seconded. Committee Chair Mary Johnson asked for discussion, Committee member John Baxter did ask about the 4 year term and if there was a pool of other candidates, Chair Mary Johnson did say she thought the amount of interested veterans had grown. Vote was UNANIMOUS.
5. Success Stories-
  - a. Veterans Services Employee Andrew LaPres shared a story of getting a homeless veteran awarded 90% service connected disability rating. He came in initially for Soldier and Sailors relief.
6. Public Comment-lit has decided there would be a public comment at the beginning of the meeting, pertaining only to what was on the agenda. There would also be a public comment at the end, for comments only and a 3 minute allotment. Committee Member Harold Mast moved to approve, Committee Member Shane Scherer seconded. UNANIMOUS approval.

7. Introductions- none

8. Monthly Impact Reports

- a. Veterans Services Employee Andrew LaPres went over monthly reports.
- b. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett shared that she thought it was the Soldier and Sailors Relief that made the biggest impact, especially in these cold months.
- c. Committee Member Trish Torres asked if there were people that didn't qualify for Soldier and Sailors Relief and how we handled that and if we could keep track of that, Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett said that we could, and also wanted to talk about a Branch of Hope Network that helped with employment and filling some of the gaps with assistance of budgeting and importance of maintaining employment.

9. Presentations- none

10. Managers Report

- a. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett went over the art workshops for the artprize piece with artist Pamela Alderman.
- b. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett shared with the Committee that Veterans Services Employee Andrew LaPres is working remotely at Healthcare for Homeless Veterans
- c. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett went over Quarterly Budget
- d. Recently met with Community Rebuilders, they have a program specifically for veterans. They have a mission to find a place for veterans to live, but it is not furnished with appliances or beds. Community Rebuilders then purchases beds for \$200 per bed, and also try to reimburse volunteers who go and pick up needed items, so they need money for space and money for items. Martha stated that she would like to give them some money for this year, she said that she could ask them to give her some outcomes to help keep track of where the money is spent. Committee Member Shane Scherer inquired if we could see a preliminary report on the number helped, to help gauge how much money we would give. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett will take under advisement all of the committee members recommendations before moving forward.

11. Old Business –

- a. Committee Chair Mary Johnson nominated Committee Member Shane Scherer for the position of Vice Chair and he did accept. Chair Johnson asked for any discussion, there was none, approval was UNANIMOUS.
- b. Committee Chair Mary Johnson nominated John Baxter for the position of Secretary, he did accept. Chair Johnson asked for any discussion, there was none, approval was UNANIMOUS.
- c. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett gave an update on hiring of administrative staff. On March 12<sup>th</sup> the position will go in front of the Board of Commissioners for approval.
- d. Veterans Services Administrative Specialist Rachel Wustman gave an update on software information. There has been a demo seen, and one to be scheduled with IT and Purchasing to take place with in the week to find the best fit for Veterans Services
- e.

12. New Business-

- a. MVAA Grant- Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett spoke on how she had thought in the past she wasn't going to apply for the MVAA Grant.

- i. The items that Martha is possibly asking for Grant money for is to get service dogs for service members, some sort of a 5k event, and equine therapy for female veterans

13. Survey Responses – 6

14. Around the Table-

- a. Committee Member Mel Bauman asked that Veterans Services bring some of the “Help” resource cards to the next United Veterans Council meeting and set them out on a front table.
- b. Committee Member Mel Bauman also wanted to share more information about the hearing impaired phone. Veterans Services Employee Rachel Wustman will provide brochures.

15. Public Comment –

- Eric Nelson from United Veterans Council- This is his 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting he has attended, he commented that he thinks Veterans Services should spend the money now on service dogs to get them trained right now.
- Anthony Torres from Veterans Treatment Court- update, will be having 4 veterans volunteer at the artprize workshop this coming Saturday. Flyers for the workshop will be distributed. 2 veterans will be graduating next month from treatment court.
- Theresa Robinson from Rockford Michigan- She wanted to suggest that during artprize keeping track of how many veterans are participating vs. how many family and friends. She also wanted to suggest the committee look into who governs the mileage money. Also suggest suggested the committee look into the directors discretion on spending the mileage money, is there an amount the director is allowed to go up to, and also wanted to suggest looking into where the money is coming from for renovations.
- Dan Ophoff from Grand Rapids Township- has thoughts on sharing about the possibility of service dogs at the Veterans Treatment Court. Secondly, there is a legal pro bono group that meets at 620 century twice a month, and is using the last of the internet of theirs, Dan thought having a discussion on using the counties hotspot for those sessions would be nice. Also appreciated the new report format, and would like to see the balance of the unpaid mileage amount from year to year and what rolls over

16. Adjournment –Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson moved adjourned the meeting.

17. The next Veterans Services Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, March 5th, at 8:30am in the Veterans Services front conference room.