



## **Kent County Veterans Services**

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DRAFT minutes 9-10-2020

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

Committee Absent:

Staff Present: Martha Burkett, Ryan Grams, Rachel Wustman

Guests: Theresa Robinson

1. Meeting called to Order/Introductions –
  - a. The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson at 8:30am
2. Pledge of Allegiance –Committee Chair Mary Johnson led those in attendance to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Approval of Minutes –
  - a. Committee Member Harold Mast had a few clarification questions regarding the minutes and the budget. There had been MVAA grant money for new lobby furniture. That money was reallocated to the Equine Retreat, due to the fact that money from the millage for the renovation will cover the cost of new lobby furniture.
  - b. Committee Member Harold Mast made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee Member Mel Bauman seconded, UNANIMOUS
4. Success Stories-
  - a. Veterans Services Administrative Specialist Rachel Wustman shared about the viral social media post that incorrectly stated that any veteran in Michigan could receive \$300 because of COVID. It increased the daily amount of calls exponentially. Instead of feeling overwhelmed, the staff took it as an opportunity to connect with veterans that they otherwise might have not had a chance to speak with.
  - b. Veterans Services Supervisor Ryan Grams told of the new program the department is using, and how it is saving him and the other service officers so much time due to a direct upload option, and electronic signature. Meaning veterans claims can be started and completed via phone/email.

## 5. Monthly Impact Reports

- a. Veterans Services Supervisor Ryan Grams provided an update for the monthly numbers. While the office is still closed for face to face appointments, the VSOs are still able to start and complete claims virtually. Phone call numbers are holding similar to last year at this time. As previously stated still able to do claims. Next month will have a line item for food voucher tracking for next month.
- b. As of 5:15 on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, the report isn't entirely accurate. The report shows no payment to Degage Ministries, but that isn't true. Working with fiscal services to correct report.

## 6. Managers Report

- a. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett gave an update on Veterans Services Budget
- b. As of 5:15 on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, the report isn't entirely accurate. The report shows no payment to Degage Ministries or Veterans Treatment Court, but that isn't true. Working with fiscal services to correct report.
- c. Martha Burkett also sent out copies of her Grant Proposal to the MVAA. Committee Member Harold Mast inquired that this is a request for new money. Martha Burkett replied yes, as long as Veterans Services hasn't had a line item in our millage in the past.
- d. Martha Burkett shared that there are requests for initiatives for radio ads, bus ads, SWAG, a Gala of sorts for our Art Prize piece because of the cancellation of Art Prize this year. Committee Member Harold Mast inquired if there had been a date set yet, Manager Burkett advised that yes June 11<sup>th</sup> and 12 of 2021, with many more details to follow as the event neared. Committee Member Harold Mast also requested that the support of the Veterans Services Advisory Committee for this initiative be reflected in the minutes.

## 7. Old Business

- a. There is a Clerk II position available. With Elena Bridges resigning, that left an open VSO position, Reginald Farris applied for that position and was promoted. Manager Martha Burkett had hoped to go back to the pool of candidates for our previous hiring of a Clerk II, but there was no availability from that pool. Position was reposted, but the application is closed. Currently waiting to hear back from HR on the next steps in hiring.
- b. As of the afternoon yesterday (9/9/2020) there were 4 applicants for the 2 vacant positions on the Kent County Veterans Services Advisory Committee. Martha also shared that she spoke with an employee in the Commissioners office and let them know that there are certain demographics that we are looking for and would like to give some input.

## 8. New Business-

- a. Manager Martha Burkett shared that new hires Bradley Langerak and Jacob Calvert, along with recently promoted VSO Reginald Farris will be travelling to Illinois for their accreditation training next month.

## 9. Around the Table-

- a. Committee Member Mel Bauman shared a flyer from Ashley Furniture, they are having an event for veterans at 5<sup>th</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> ball park and give away furniture, it's a great event.

b. New events-

- i. 9/20- Kayaking event for women veterans.
- ii. 9/17- Dental Day at Sarah Palmer Dentistry.
- iii. Week of 9/20- Reclaim Retreat with WINC
  1. Martha asked for feedback from the Committee regarding a donation of \$3,000 for female veterans living in Kent County that would like to attend this event, it would pay for their food/lodging/activities. Positive feedback/support was received from the Committee

10. Public Comment –

- No public comment

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

12. The next Veterans Services Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 12th, at 8:30am place is TBD due to the Governors orders.