



## Kent County Veterans Services

836 Fuller Ave NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Phone: 616-632-5722 Fax: 616-632-5723

[KCVS@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:KCVS@kentcountymi.gov)

Minutes- 10/13/2022

Committee present: Mary Johnson, Melvin Bauman, Chris Kamps, Mike Blundell, Reginald Howard, Trisha Torres (zoom), & Jill Hinton-Wolfe (zoom).

Committee absent: None

Staff present: KCVS Supervisor- Ryan Grams, KCVS Community Outreach Specialist- Rachel Wustman, & KCVS Clerk/Emergency Relief Coordinator- Amanda Lake

Guests: Paul Ryan, Eric Nelson & Peter Dickow

1) Meeting called to order

- a. The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee chair Mary Johnson.

2) Guest Speakers: Peter Dickow

- a. Mr. Peter Dickow is the West Michigan Regional Director for Senator Gary Peters. He came to the meeting to speak about the Pact Act and what Senator Peters is currently working in terms of veterans. He explained to the committee how the Pact Act is greatly expanding the health care eligibility for veterans who were exposed to the toxic burn pit and other environmental situations that military service had created. In turn, the Pact Act will up the testing and research for veterans so they may have more coverage for a lot of ailments that weren't previously covered. On October 25<sup>th</sup> in the morning, Senator Peters will be holding a meeting. He will have a panel of 4 speakers, including himself, a representative from the VA, A local Veteran Service Officer (VSO) and a Veteran. More information to follow about the meeting.

3) Pledge of Allegiance – Lead by Peter Dickow

4) Success Stories

- a. Mary- This one is for Jill, I recently saw her on TV.
- i. Jill- Yes, my dog Hannah won the National VFW Top Service Dog Campaign. Its is a national competition that I submitted her for. She was submitted as #still serving.
- b. Mary- Any other success stories?
- i. KCVS Rachel- Yes, I think our success here is our new Veteran Support Coordinator Kenyon. He is taking everything in stride and is starting to take tasks

from Mandi, Jim, myself and even some from our VSO's. He's been very eager to learn, and we appreciate that.

5) Monthly Impact Report

- a. KCVS Supervisor Ryan- We've had another good month, getting a little slower than the month previous. This is a usual trend for the office until after the holidays hit, then we ramp back up right after the holidays are over. Looking at our Monthly Activity Report, we have 188 fully developed claims that are currently processing these aren't all the claims we are doing. But ones that are processing. So that is actually a very high number. We are currently out of Meijer Food Vouchers, we ran out last week. We have placed another order and hoping to have them in the beginning of November.

6) Manager Report

- a. KCVS Supervisor Ryan- Looking at the budget, we are still on track. Everything is moving along smoothly. If you have a specific question, please email KCVS Manager Martha.

7) Old Business

- a. KCVS Rachel- I am going to let Eric talk about the Veterans Day Parade during the Public Comment. I am going to talk about Operation Green Light. We just got two new exterior lights here at KCVS, I am hoping you noticed them on your way in this morning. Eric Nelson also brought over green glow sticks for us to use during the parade. I just did a press release this week with Brian Sterling from WOODTV. He spoke to Eric and me during the interview which will air on WOODTV on October 20<sup>th</sup>. We were able to get the word out about the Veteran's Day parade and Operation Green Light. We also were able to get the "ok" to turn the Blue Bridge Green from November 10<sup>th</sup> through November 15<sup>th</sup>. Also, other Government buildings downtown will have green exterior lights as well.
- b. Reggie- I am going to reschedule a meeting I missed with KCVS Manager Martha soon. So, the 12 step is still in the works. We will come up with a start date when we sit down for our meeting. She was able to order the books, but we don't need them to start. I have enough for startup material until they arrive.
- c. Mary- Jill and I spoke putting in for the Veteran Service Provider Award. We decided that right now she is very, very busy. The deadline was coming up and we decided not to do it this year and just take our time preparing to do it next year. We will have another year under our belt with more projects we are involved with.

8) New Business

- a. None

9) New activities/collaborations/soliciting feedback/advice

- a. KCVS Rachel- We are working hard to visit our veterans who are currently in care facilities. We are bringing our art classes back from virtual in the evenings, to here in our facility in the late afternoons as well as one Saturday a month. Everything has been updated on our website for all those activities. Next Thursday, we are planning on doing coffee on the farm. Veterans will have more time with the horses as we normally only spend an hour at the facilities visiting. So, they will have extra time with the horses, and we will also have coffee available. This will be located at Equine Assisted Development on 32<sup>nd</sup> street. I am working with the VA to do a female veteran event. We don't have anything set yet, its just in the works.

## 10) Public Comments

- a. Eric Nelson- I became the Veteran's Day Parade coordinator a year or so ago, I really like it and I'm always looking for new ideas. We came up with this Green Light. The main purpose of the United Veterans Council is getting knowledge out about what is available to people and bringing our veterans to the forefront to the public. KCVS is going to be making bags to hand out during the parade this year. We also got glowsticks, all green. Rachel has also come up with a handout with one side explaining Operation Green Light and the other side explaining Veterans Day. We have decided that this year instead of doing speeches and such in the park after the parade we are going to have Voices of Freedom entertain. They will be singing in the parade and will be entertaining after the parade in the park.
- b. Paul Ryan- First, thank you to KCVS for participating in the Family Resource Fair that was on September 24<sup>th</sup>. I was unavailable to attend but heard there was about 100 people who were able to attend which was our goal. WZZM was also able to attend the fair and did a nice 3 min segment about it, which highlighted Jim Mccuan (sp). I was able to have a really nice conversation with his wife. November 5<sup>th</sup> is the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency's Gala. West Michigan Veterans Collation nominated co-nominees for the Veteran Friendly Volunteer of the Year award. This award is given out to people who have no military experience but do a lot of work to support veterans. On November 18<sup>th</sup> in Lansing is the Michigan Military and Veterans Hall of Fame induction ceremony for the Class of 2022. They nominate 12 people, 6 for their accomplishments during their military time and 6 for their civic, professional, educational, philanthropic accomplishments after they served in the military. There will be 3 West Michigan individuals that will be inducted this day in the military category.

## 11) Adjournment

- a. Mary- Meeting adjourned at 932am.

12) Meeting transcribed by: Amanda Lake