



Kent County Veterans Services

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Minutes 02/09/2023

Committee present: Mary Johnson (Remote), Melvin Bauman, Reginald Howard, Chris Kamps, Mike Blundell, Phil Yeater & Jill Hinton-Wolfe (Remote)

Committee absent: None

Staff present Ryan Grams, Rachel Wustman, Amanda Lake

Public: Anthony Torres

1) Meeting called to order/ instructions-

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

2) Pledge of Allegiance – Lead by Phil Yeater

3) Approval of the minutes from February Meeting-

- a. Approved by- Mel Bauman, Seconded by- Mike Blundell

4) Success stories

- a. KCVS Rachel- We have had a few success stories from here in our office at KCVS. The first one comes to us from one of our online surveys that we recently implemented at KCVS. It was submitted from a veteran who was working with VSO Andrew LaPres. The veteran said that Andrew was very easy to work with and appreciated the communication he had with the veteran during the process of submitting his service-connected claim. Another successful interaction we had here at KCVS, required a few of our staff working together with a surviving spouse. The surviving spouse came in asking about some SSR Assistance through KCVS. KCVS Amanda Lake helped the surviving spouse with the application and gathering the materials needed for the application. During the initial interview, she noted that the surviving spouse's husband that passed was 100% disabled. She asked for advice from VSO Theresa Ergang about what the surviving spouse might be entitled to. After some research, Theresa found that she qualified for DIC. So, after she completed her paperwork for SSR assistance she went into speak with Theresa to get her DIC paperwork started. During her interview with Theresa, the surviving spouse made mention that she needed to get some dentures, so our Veteran Support Coordinator Kenyon Vickery helped get her set up with My Community Dental Center to be seen. The surviving spouse was also referred to Arbor Circle therapist Sara Patrick-Beard as she made mention of needing help controlling her drinking. So many

hands helped here at KCVS with this surviving spouse to get her back on track and ensure a better life for her.

- b. KCVS Ryan- A few weeks ago we were involved with Grand Valley State University and The Library of Congress doing a Veterans History Project. We had quite a few veterans come in to the office to share their stories. Mike Blundell and Mel Bauman from our committee came in to share their stories along with KCVS VSO's Andrew LaPres and Bradley Langerak. I was one of the veteran interviews. I believe that the content and turnout were great.

5) Monthly Impact statement

- a. KCVS Ryan- We have our first monthly report, so it shows our numbers being very low. We all know as the months go on; our numbers will continue to increase. As you notice on our monthly report, I removed bus passes and added the intent to file. I need to take count of that anyways, so I figured I would share it with the committee also.
 - i. Mary- How many Meijer Food Vouchers do we have remaining Ryan?
 - ii. KCVS Ryan- We just ran out on Monday, but I put in a new order for them about 2 weeks ago. They usually take 5-6 weeks for them to be printed and to arrive to us.
 - iii. Mel- Now is there a ceiling to the Meijer Grocery voucher program and how often can they get them?
 - iv. KCVS Ryan- Yes, there is a \$500.00 yearly limit and they are eligible after 30 days of the previous use.

6) Managers' Report

- a. KCVS Ryan- We are currently on track for the month, not much to show with this being the first Managers report of the year. There is a negative balance in one of the revenue lines, but this is from work that fiscal is currently doing moving money around. I was assured it will be fixed to show the correct amount next month.

7) Old Business

- a. Contract Status
 - i. KCVS Ryan- We have received most of the contracts back, signed and sent off to purchasing. We do still have a few out there that we are waiting on. Some of the contracts required a change in some of the verbiage within the contract. Kent County Deputy County Commissioner Jenny James was able to give you a better picture of what is going on within our contracts and what the money going out to these programs we have contracts with the report that she sent over for you.
 - ii. Phil- What is the connection with the marketing and ads? Is this used to push attendance or awareness to these projects and programs?
 - iii. KCVS Rachel- This is for the overall awareness on what we do here at KCVS and for advertising on our Social Media. I was just on Eight West yesterday speaking about what we do our office and raising awareness with the different

things we have going on through our office. We currently have segment spots with 3 news stations throughout the year. We are still working with GR Digital which includes billboards. Although, the billboards are currently pause due to Kent County Legal and the Board of Commissioners having a few questions about the literature. It's not what is being put on the billboards, but some of the wording in the contract that is being discussed. GR Digital is always more than happy to come in and present their quarterly report to us at any time and we can ask them questions directly when they present this data. I'd be very happy to arrange for her to come in again to present their findings and you can ask questions to them directly.

8) New Business

- a. Mel- There has been a change for the Veteran of the Year banquet. Unfortunately, there was some confusion at Post 154. Eric (Nelson) said that the date was locked in, but when I spoke with Gail the manager, she stated that there was a wedding that date. So, we are looking at moving it one day prior to take place on Friday the 23rd. That date is pending until we can confirm the date with the caterer.

9) New Activities

- a. Mary- Reggie, how is the AA program going? Just looking for an update to see how things are going with that new program.
 - i. Reggie- Things are going well. We are currently offering a hybrid option and having people join us from the comfort of their homes. Our attendance has gone up since offering that option. We did also receive a \$200.00 grant that will be coming in also. We have been getting good feedback from the surveys that have been returned.
 - ii. KCVS Rachel- I also spoke about the AA program when I was on 8 West, explaining that this program isn't specific to just Kent County residents. It is a MVAA grant funded project that is open to all veterans, non-county specific.
- b. Mel- I know that the Veterans home is currently looking for volunteers for the "No Member dies alone program". If you are interested in this, get in touch with Veterans home.
- c. KCVS Rachel- We have an event tonight in Rockford for an Arcade night hosted through Veterans Rising. We put this together for a night out with the family, in a kid friendly atmosphere. I also received confirmation from Amanda Briggs with the VA, that we will be the host of the 2023 Stand down. We don't have a date set yet but are leaning toward Mid-September timeframe. We have a planning meeting on March 16th at 10am, which will be hybrid if anyone would like to join.

10) Public Comment

- i. Anthony Torres- The Kent County Veterans Court is changing their dates from Fridays at 11am to Tuesdays at 3pm. All our information on our website is current and up to date for anyone looking for information on the program. We will be undergoing a complete state certification on June 6th, so we are getting ready for that and graduation. Court is going well; our numbers are up post covid. The test rate is still hovering at 90% and staying consistent.
- ii. Mike- I have a question about the housecleaning applications. I think that we need to know more about their limitations. If they say, they have diabetes, well

ok, but how does having diabetes limit you that you will need help with the cleaning. So, with that, we just need to know exactly how that limits you to needing a cleaner to come in to help. Also, we need to know if there are other able-bodied people in the house. We don't want to offer this to a veteran who has another adult living at home that can clean, but just doesn't want to.

- a. KCVS Rachel- There limitations are redacted from the application that we send out to the committee, I can change that going forward.

11) Meeting Transcribed by Amanda Lake