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[Minutes: August 10, 2023](#)

Present: Mary Johnson, Jill Wolfe, Mel Bauman, Chris Kamps, Mike Blundell, Reginald Howard

Excused:

Absent:

Staff: Martha Burkett, Ryan Grams, Allison Marquard

1. Meeting called to Order by Mary Johnson at 0900.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Guest Speaker Kathleen Alsobrooks shared information about the campaign from January 2023-July 2023 for Kent County Veterans Services. To date, the campaign has delivered 669,000 impressions, reached 123,000 people, and received 630 clicks.
4. Voting on public comment to suspend the rules for Paul from West Michigan Veterans Coalition to be able to speak about the Healthcare Symposium. All were in favor.
5. Approval of minutes
 - a. Martha: There was an error in the cost of training the dogs. The numbers are actually between 4,000 and 8,000 dollars.
 - b. Motion to accept minutes. Motion accepted by Mel Bauman. All were in favor.
6. Success Stories
 - a. Ryan: One of the surveys received by Kent County Veterans Services pertained to Brad, one of the Veteran Service Officers. The survey stated that, "This looks like the place to be" and that he'll "get more done here than anywhere else".
 - b. Martha: Went to a commemoration for a Vietnam veteran that died while in Vietnam and some people came up to Martha and said that Kent County Veterans Services is a great place to get help.
 - c. Martha: Another success story is that Ryan has been working really hard on creating an Excel program for our data collection. Now a comprehensive report can be given on each of the programs for KCVS each month.
7. Monthly Impact Report – Ryan Grams

- a. Record Requests: Down from June 2023
 - b. Fully-developed claims: Slightly lower than June of 2023
 - c. Face-to-face contacts have increased
 - d. Intent to file: We are on track
 - e. Claims in Development: 264 with 22 awarded
 - f. Monthly award of dollars has significantly increased
 - g. Burials: Four which is up from June
 - h. Meijer Vouchers: 1 for the month but we have 214 for the year to date.
 - i. Burial markers: Zero for the month
8. Monthly Activity Report – Ryan Grams
- a. Served 575 veterans so far in 2023 with millage funded programs
 - b. Served 369 veterans so far in 2023 with the MVAA funds
 - c. New report for the Veterans Support Coordinator position to show the work that Kenyon is doing
 - i. Veteran support coordinator does a lot of outreach activities within the community. That is currently not reflected on the report.
 - ii. Potential for the veteran support coordinator to be a county position
 - d. Budget Review – Martha Burkett
 - i. A little bit under budget for investment income
 - ii. On track for revenue
 - iii. Highest expenditure: Community promotion
 - 1. Tv stations
9. Old Business
- a. Women’s appreciation day – Martha Burkett
 - i. Female Veterans Banquet on August 27 from 1-3pm. Free zoo pass from 3-6pm for those in attendance
 - 1. Family-friendly event
 - 2. Commemorative coins and t-shirts being made for the event
 - 3. Estimate for the event is 11,000 but we budgeted 15,000
 - b. Art Prize Grand Opening – Martha Burkett
 - i. September 16th at Veterans Memorial Park
 - ii. Funded by MVAA
 - iii. All artists will be there with their artwork
10. New Business
- a. Veteran Service Provider of the year award – Mary Johnson
 - i. Nominations are open and are for county Veterans affairs office or service organization that demonstrates noteworthy impact on its veteran population in the areas of benefit, connectivity, employment, education, healthcare, quality of life, and/or innovative programming. Application is due by September 1st.
11. New activities
- a. Ashley Foundation
 - i. September 24 from 12-4 at Hudsonville High School.
 - b. West Michigan Veterans Coalition Healthcare Symposium
 - i. Healthcare providers, hospitals, individual practitioners, senior centers
 - ii. All-day event on Friday September 22nd from 8am-3pm.

- iii. Different panel discussions
 - 1. Gail Whitham for mental health and suicide prevention
 - 2. Jonathon Garvey from MVAA
 - 3. Governor's challenge in regard to mental health and wellbeing
 - 4. Women's health and special populations
 - 5. Resources for the military connected family
 - 6. Veterans healthcare in the community
- iv. Keynote Speaker: Travis Snyder
 - 1. MVAA's Veteran of the Year last year
- c. Stand down – Martha Burkett
 - i. September 7 from 10am until 2pm at KCVS
- d. Luther retreat – Mary Johnson
 - i. West Michigan Alliance for Veterans
 - ii. September 11-13
- e. Women's Veteran Conference (MVAA) – Mary Johnson
 - i. October 19-22
- f. Family day at the ranch – Martha Burkett
 - i. August 19th through equine assisted development
- g. SSR yearly policy review – Ryan Grams
 - i. To be voted on next meeting
- h. Mel: went to the event with Senator Peters and it was the one-year anniversary of the passing of the PACT Act.
 - i. In Michigan alone, there have been over 18,000 veterans that have taken advantage of the PACT Act.
 - ii. Nationwide it's over 200,000 veterans that have taken advantage of the PACT Act.
- i. Mel: Young couple living out of a hotel because they have black mold and baby is in the hospital
 - i. Mel: motion to do something to help out the family. Seconded by Reggie Howard. Approved.
 - ii. Veteran in the National Guard that has a wife and one-year-old son. They bought a house and it had a leak through the whole house. Because of the leak, they have black mold in the house. They are trying to get the house back to being able to sell it. No one can live in the house right now. The Guardsman is deployed right now. Kenyon was looking for resources for the family as well.
 - iii. Martha was going to get in contact with Reggie and Kenyon about this family and get more information so the committee can vote on what to do for the family.

12. Public Comment

- a. Transportation Program
 - i. Mobility wallet: launched Monday.
 - ii. Working on a way for people that don't know how to use a smartphone or don't have a smartphone to be able to utilize this program.
- b. Freedom Cruise
 - i. September 8 at Cedar Springs High School

- ii. Just the honor ceremony
 - 1. Honoring Specialist Timothy Brown who was killed in Iraq in 2005 by an IED attack.
 - c. Peter Rupert died from a massive heart attack two weeks ago. He was the cofounder of Armed Forces Thanksgiving and co-chair.
 - d. Kent County Veteran Treatment Court: Tony Torres, Program Manager
 - i. Tuesday: double graduation from treatment court
 - ii. Kent County is the only county in the state that has had and serves females.
 - iii. Covid has caused issues for the criminal justice field and we are basically working with a clean slate and it is taking a few weeks to recognize veterans in the jail and by then, they have already taken a plea deal.
 - iv. Waiting on the final descriptive report from the evaluators.
 - v. Our recidivism rate is at 8 or 9 percent compared to the rest of the state which is at twenty percent or more.
 - e. Reggie Howard: Hero's Corner
 - i. Searching for a new director
 - ii. Soft opening on August 26
13. Meeting Adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Allison Marquard