

County of Kent Department of Veterans' Affairs



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VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Paul Potter, Chair
Fred Chambers
Mary Johnson
Harold Mast
Mel Bauman

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

January 8, 2015 – 8:30 a.m.

82 Ionia NW, STE 380

MINUTES

Present: Mary Johnson, Paul Potter, Fred Chambers, Harold Mast, Mel Bauman, Carrie Roy, Richard Goodrich

Guests: Theresa Robinson, Bob Cransma, Elena Bridges, Simeon Switzer, Deb Downing, Dan Ophoff

Absent:

- 1. Call to Order** – Paul Potter called the meeting to order and lead the in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 2. Public Comment:** Elena Bridges spoke about transportation. She brought a company to the attention of the committee, Mast Transportation Company. She relayed that Mast is very interested in partnering with the Kent County Department of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Potter responded to Elena stating that he would like more information on the subject.
- 3. Approval of Agenda/Minutes** Harold made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 5th, 2014 meeting, Fred Chambers seconded. Minutes approved.

Report of Chair. Mr. Potter stated that the department is at a critical point. He stated that we need to leave as a team because there is a lot of work to undertake. He stated that we need to get this thing up and running within the next three months. He believes that there are thing that this department can do a little different than other departments and do it better. He commented that it is a good thing for us to challenge each other and there should be no hard feelings. He stated that we can not except mediocrity. He stated that we need community

involvement. He stated that he would like to use a team approach to getting things done.

New business: Mr. Potter stated that he and Mel Bauman visited the 836 Fuller building and reported that he and Mel both liked the building. He stated that the County gave a price of about a \$100,000. He also brought up the privacy issue and there was discussion on the floor plan. Ms. Roy pointed out that everything the department does with veterans is of a confidential nature. The team reviewed the floor plan for the building and the location. Fred Chambers made a motion that the committee approve the location of 836 Fuller, Mary Johnson seconded the motion passed.

AmeriCorps Personnel- Mr. Potter asked the status of the MOU with Americorps, Ms. Roy stated that she will follow up with legal on the status. Ms. Roy gave an overview of the Americorps volunteer position. She stated that Americorps mission for this position is to provide outreach. It was clarified that the County's would provide office space for this person.

Project Outreach: Mr. Potter expressed his thoughts on the impotents of an outreach plan. He mentioned stated that we should develop a plan using a team. He asked for thought from the committee. Harold stated that we have to know what we want. He stated that we should come up with a plan and then perhaps, do a request for proposals based on the plan of action. Mr. Potter stated that we need an outreach team and appointed Mel Bauman, Carrie Roy and himself to work on an outreach plan and bring a recommendation back to the county. Paul stated that he would like to have a plan in place in the next 30 days. Ms. Roy suggested that we build on the work already done. Theresa Robinson added public comment that there should be an effort to differentiate the County Veterans Affairs from the Federal Veterans Affairs. Richard Goodrich stated that it is our name that confuses people. The committee and general public agreed that the name Kent County Department of Veterans Affairs name is what confuses people. Dan Ophoff, suggested that Ms. Roy check with Kent County Corporate Counsel regarding the legalities of a name change.

Project Veterans Education and Training Grant: Simeon Switzer gave an overview of the grant program. He stated that he and Paul had met with officials

from Davenport University and Grand Valley University. Simeon reported that the meetings he and Paul had with Steve Lipnickie and Amy Kline where to seek information on what student veterans needs are. He provided a rough draft and overview of the scholarship program. Ms. Roy asked what other types of grant opportunities and scholarships are available to student veterans. Simeon stated that there are several National Scholarships, but nothing specific to Kent County. It was suggested by Ms. Roy that rather than looking a scholarship program for student veterans, the committee should consider looking at the current soldiers and sailors relief policies and relax them rather than making a new program. Harold Mast stated that he does not remember this issue as being a need raised by the two year investigation by the sub-committee. He stated that he felt the voters were looking at transportation and utilities and other areas of need. Mary Johnson moved to review the current Soldiers Relief Policies. Paul added to the motion that Carrie write the policies up and send them to the committee for review. Harold supported the motion, the motion passed.

Strategic Plan: Paul stated that the department needs benchmarks along the way in terms of long term planning. He suggested putting together a four year plan. He suggested that Wayman Britt, Carrie Roy and Dan Ophoff work on putting together a strategic plan. He described how he thought the plan should look. Paul moved to appoint a committee to work on the strategic plan, Harold seconded, motion passed.

Performance Measurements: Paul suggested putting performance measures on one page. Ms. Roy, stated that she will give the committee a one page summary going forward. It was agreed that the Performance Measures should be reviewed by the committee. Paul moved that Harold mast, Fred Chambers and Carrie work on Performance Measures as a group. Fred seconded, motion passed.

Operational Guidelines: Paul passed out a copy of Operational Guidelines. He asked the committee to review for the next meeting.

4. Staff Report:

5. Emergency Needs and Burials: During the month of December, \$13,036.72 was expended through the Soldiers and Sailors relief on food, utilizes and rent, totaling \$24,681.17 for the month of December.

B. Michigan Veterans Trust Fund: The Trust Fund awarded \$12,294.92 in grants during December.

5. Reports:

A. Claims and Recoveries: There were 43 Fully Developed claims submitted in December bringing the total annual recovery to \$2,217,587 a year.

B. Year End Report: Ms. Roy shared a one page report showing all expenditures for 2014. She reviewed the report with the committee.

6. Around the Table: Paul Potter brought up the Calhoun County Veterans Affairs scandal and asked how we can insure that type of activity does not happen in Kent County. Ms. Roy explained the process and training that takes place with accredited service officers to ensure ethics and standards of integrity and honesty are applied in the work done in this department.

Wood TV: Deb Downing gave an overview of the Marketing and outreach Plan that Wood TV has to offer.

7. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

8. Next Meeting: February 5, 2015.