



## **Kent County Veterans Services**

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DRAFT minutes

Present: Mel Bauman, Mary Johnson, Shane Scherer, Randy Tharp, Fred Chambers

Absent: Harold Mast

Guests: Paul Ryan, Matthew VanZetten

1. Meeting called to Order – The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee Chair Mel Bauman
2. Pledge of Allegiance – Committee Chair Bauman led those in attendance to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Public Comment – Paul Ryan from the United Veterans Council, working with the City of Grand Rapids to replace monuments in Kent County due to overly restrictive rules. He has written a letter to the assistant city manager, he will send letter to Elena Bridges who can send it out to the committee.
4. Approval of Minutes – Committee Vice Chair Mary Johnson made a motion to approve the June 7th, 2018 Kent County Veterans Services Committee minutes, committee member Shane Scherer supported. UNANIMOUS.
5. Old Business –
  - a. Matthew VanZetten wanted to let the committee know that Carrie Anderson resigned somewhat unexpectedly. Ryan Grams and Elena Bridges have stepped up as lead workers during this time of transition for Kent County Veterans Services. Ryan will be doing the metrics, handling managers reports, handling SSR approvals if it is under the threshold and Elena Bridges will be focusing on outreach on behalf of Veterans Services. Elena will be working with Veterans Treatment Court to tighten the relationship with Kent County, she will also be reaching out to Degage Ministries, as their RFP was recently approved. Elena will be reaching out to all committee members as well, to see what they are wanting in the next person to occupy the position. Matthew VanZetten also wanted to praise all of the staff at Kent County Veterans Services for stepping up during this transitional time for the department. VanZetten is reviewing the job description, proposing to make the position a director, instead of a manager, increasing responsibilities to leadership in the community to find more partnerships and opportunities to use the funds that come in from the community. Once the position is posted, and narrowed down to two or three candidates,

- then VanZetten would like to involve the committee before hiring. VanZetten is also looking to post a manager/supervisor position once the director gets settled, and another VSO (Veterans Service Officer) position. Ryan will be reporting VSO hours to Mathew. Vice Chair Johnson inquired if Ryan Grams and Elena Bridges would be staying in their current internal lead roles. VanZetten answered with no, but the upcoming available positions are open to all VSOs and the public.
- b. Scholarship voting- Chair Bauman does not have a problem with offering a scholarship, but he needs more clarification. Committee Member Chambers voiced that he'd like to see it be for veterans whose home of record is Kent County. Matthew VanZetten commented that it's a very vague description and wants to know how it's administered and approved. VanZetten also thought Kent County Veterans Services should tighten up advertising and put together a new structure that's dependable, he will review program and take a comprehensive look at the scholarship and put a real plan together. Elena Bridges will bring up the scholarship as she meets with committee members individually. Chair Bauman added that he'd like to see a subcommittee put together for the scholarship moving forward.
6. Managers, Monthly Operational Update Reports – Carrie Anderson provided an update to the committee of fully developed claims, informal claims, number of record requests and appointments, along with number of phone calls and the dollar amount of federally awarded claims.
  7. New Business- John Baxter has been appointed as the new member for Kent County Veterans Services Committee. He has years of experience in strategic planning and is a veteran himself. Rachel will send out a copy of his resume to the committee.
  8. Around the Table –
    - a. Matthew VanZetten wanted to extend his thanks to the committee and staff during this transitional time and acknowledged that there is some work to do within Kent County Veterans Services moving forward. Committee Member Tharp wanted a briefing on the structure of the office currently. Matthew reiterated. Committee Member Tharp shared that he was working with Carrie Anderson on Veterans Services digital footprint, he will continue working on that, and coming up with ideas to engage veterans digitally.
    - b. Vice Chair Johnson shared that after the last meeting, Dan Ophoff with the Veterans Treatment Court approached her about becoming a mentor for Veterans Treatment Court. Vice Chair Johnson has applied.
    - c. Elena Bridges wanted to share that she is excited for her new role and reaching out to the community. She will still be working on her existing claims as well.
    - d. Committee Member Chambers requested that the names of the committee members who do not approve Soldier and Sailor Relief applications to be omitted from the minutes moving forward. All committee members agreed.
    - e. Chair Bauman would like a clock in the Kent County Veterans Services Conference Room.
  9. Public Comment – Paul Ryan from the United Veterans Council wanted to thank the committee for their time, he also wanted to remind the committee that the Veteran of the Year dinner will be the first week in November, and they are still taking applications.

10. Adjournment –Vice Chair Johnson moved to adjournment the meeting at 9:24am. Committee Member Chambers supported. UNANIMOUS.

11. The next Veterans Services Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, August 2nd, at 8:30am