



## Kent County Veterans Services

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DRAFT minutes 7-9-2020

Present: Mary Johnson, Trish Torres, John Baxter, Harold Mast, Shane Scherer, Mel Bauman  
Absent: Randy Tharp  
Guests: Mary Sumner, Linda Rensland, Anthony Torres, Mary Scott, Nancy DuBois, Alison Sirpilla

1. Meeting called to Order – The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson at 8:31am
2. Pledge of Allegiance –Committee Chair Mary Johnson led those in attendance to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Approval of Minutes –
  - a. Committee Member Harold Mast made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee Chair Mary Johnson seconded, UNANIMOUS
4. Presentations
  - a. Linda Rensland of Kent County gave a presentation on the building renovations to come. Some of the included a canopy over the front door, office renovations, an activity room, and a window in the back office. The money will come out of the Veterans Millage.
  - b. Nancy DuBois and Mary Scott from Hope Network presented on a possible employment service. They currently have a re-entry to workforce program that is only out of the Kent County Jail. As of right now they do not have a program specific for veterans, but would be excited about the opportunity to create one. After review this initiative was rejected for now.
  - c. Allison Sirpilla from Wood-TV gave a presentation on a recap of June from how many commercials aired, to how many clicks their website received. Committee Members Mel Bauman and John Baxter both commented on how good the numbers looked. Chair Mary Johnson shared she was glad to see good numbers in regard to links about women veterans because there is such a need for female veterans.
  - d. Veterans Services Supervisor Ryan Grams gave a proposal presentation to ask for a vote for 2 temporary exceptions to the Soldier and Sailors Relief Policy.
    - i. Asking to use Soldier and Sailors Relief funds (approximately \$30,000.00) to continue the Meijer Emergency Voucher Program, it is a much quicker process for staff and veterans, especially for those affected by COVID-19. Committee Member Mel Bauman made a motion to approve, Committee Member John Baxter seconded. UNANIMOUS vote.

- ii. The second exception Supervisor Ryan Grams is asking for is in regard to the rental freeze expiring July 31<sup>st</sup>. Ryan Grams is asking for an exception of the amount the office can approve. Currently the biggest amount the office can approve is \$1,500.00, Ryan is asking to increase the amount to \$8,000.00 for a six month review. Committee Member Mel Bauman made a motion to approve, Committee Member John Baxter seconded. UNANIMOUS vote.

#### 5. Success Stories-

- a. Administrative Specialist Rachel Wustman wanted to share two stories this month. First, Supervisor Ryan Grams has been coming in early everyday to screen all employees before they come into the Veterans Services Building to ensure a safe and healthy workspace for all employees.
- b. Veterans Services Clerk II, Reginald Farior used resources and worked with other organizations, and county departments to help a veteran who was facing homelessness and was able to get him into a new place before his eviction was to happen.

#### 6. Monthly Impact Reports

- a. Veterans Services Supervisor Ryan Grams provided the past 4 months of reports per the committees request.
- b. Per Veterans Services Manager, Martha Burkett- the biggest change to be seen is the money coming out for the MVAA Grant initiatives.

#### 7. Managers Report

- a. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett is proud that even though artprize has been cancelled, we have still continued with the other workshops and have the final workshop in Veterans Services Parking Lot on Saturday August 15<sup>th</sup> from 9am-noon. Martha wants to keep the momentum going that we have gained and somehow wants to honor the piece and all of the efforts, perhaps around Veterans Day and invite the Committee, the Commissioners and the community.
- b. The WINC Womens retreat is this month and currently there are 5 participants signed up. Committee Chair Mary Johnson and Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett will be chaperones of the event.
- c. An update on Service Dogs from the Jaegar Foundation, there is a social worker from the Veterans Treatment Court that would like to have a dog of their own, but have the ability to bring it to work to service veterans in the program. All around the committee agreed this was a good thing.
- d. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett shared the DRAFT spend plan for 2020/2021. She also shared that the department is looking into working 4, ten hour days, and a few hours on Saturday, with a rotation.

#### 8. Old Business –

#### 9. New Business-

- a. The newly hired positions of Clerk II and VSO employees start on July 13<sup>th</sup>. Veterans Services Supervisor Ryan Grams and Administrative Specialist Rachel Wustman are working on training implementation.
- b. There is a new Committee Contact Sheet- Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett sent out to committee and asked to pass them on to staff.

10. Survey Responses –

11. Around the Table-

- a. Administrative Specialist Rachel Wustman, asked that all Committee Members, that haven't already, please send in their affiliations, she is putting together a list to send out to the Committee to compare and see what organizations we might not be reaching. She will also look into getting the Committees term dates, so that they can start thinking about replacements to suggest to the Board.

12. Public Comment –

- Tony Torres from Veterans Treatment Court wanted to thank Veterans Services, with out their support the Treatment Court would not exist. Tony Torres also wanted the Committee to know that the Treatment Court supports Manager Burkett in her endeavors to expand the services for veterans, both in the community and at the Veterans Services office. Currently the Treatment Court has 14 veterans in the program, 4 pending admissions, and in June they had the first female graduate.

13. Adjournment –Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson moved adjourned the meeting at 11:35am

14. The next Veterans Services Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, August 6th, at 8:30am place is TBD due to the Governors orders.