



## **Kent County Veterans Services**

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DRAFT minutes 6-10-2021

Committee Present: Mary Johnson, John Baxter, Mel Bauman, Michael Blundell  
Committee Absent: Jill Wolfe, Shane Scherer, Trish Torres  
Staff Present: Martha Burkett, Andrew Lapres, Rachel Wustman  
Guests: Michael Hyacinth (Veteran Entrepreneur), David Marquardt (Director of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation), Allison Sirpilla (WoodTV)

1. Meeting called to Order/Introductions –
  - a. The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson at 8:30am
2. Pledge of Allegiance – KCVS Staff Rachel Wustman led those in attendance to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Approval of the Minutes from Previous Month
  - a. Committee Chair Mary Johnson motioned to approve the minutes. Melvin Bauman motioned to approve. Michael Blundell seconded.
  - b. Minutes approved.
4. Success Stories
  - a. KCVS Manager Martha Burkett shared that the last-minute driver that was found for the men's retreat, was also able to participate in the retreat as there was an open slot.
5. Monthly Impact Report
  - a. Veterans Services Officer Andrew provided an update. 16 fully developed claims were submitted, 64 claims are in development, and 16 claims were awarded, 1 SSR claim was awarded, and 2 burial claims were awarded.
  - b. Committee Chair Mary Johnson asked if an opening date for the office had been determined yet. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett stated that it's not confirmed yet, but the plan is for it to open July 1.
  - c. Martha stated that calls have almost doubled over the last year, with an increase of almost 200 between April and May, as a result of the advertising and outreach.
6. Manager's Report
  - a. Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett stated that KCVS is on track with everything.

- b. Martha Burkett stated that the enterprise collaboration with Pamela Alderman is on track. Pamela was able to secure 25 artists at the Has Heart Venue.
- c. Martha Burkett shared that the women's banquet at the Bolton Canoe Club, to be held July 31, is on track. A band has been hired, WINC women are creating the decorations, and things are being worked out with the American Legion. There is still work to be done in figuring out approval of the cash bar with the Legion.
- d. Committee chair Mary Johnson asked whether it would only be open to women veterans or if there will be plus ones, and if so, could they be male or only female. Martha confirmed that there will be plus ones of any gender.
- e. Martha stated that Art Prize is still on track.
- f. Martha also stated that Nelson Soto has been fulfilling his role and stronger relationships and alliances are being built with community partners.
- g. The women's retreat is coming up on June 24-7. Committee chair Mary Johnson and Veterans Services Manager Martha Burkett will chaperone. There was a dropout so there is one space still available.
- h. Martha stated that staff is back to working in office, with a county approved hybrid schedule allowing for up to two remote work days per week. A new schedule with later evenings and some Saturday mornings is in the works.
- i. Martha shared that the budget report is on track.

#### 7. Old Business

- a. Committee Chair Mary Johnson brought the Has Heart donation proposal up for discussion. Committee member John Baxter asked whether Meijer's office had been contacted for a presentation. Martha Burkett shared that Meijer's office had been contacted.
- b. Committee member Melvin Bauman asked whether Has Heart would be making a profit off the coffee shop. Martha stated that they are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.
- c.

#### 8. New Business

- a. Michael Hyacinthe introduced himself and shared a video about Has Heart.
- b. David Marquardt, the Director of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation, introduced himself and shared the Parks Departments partnership with Michael Hyacinthe. The city of Grand Rapids has committed a little over half of the project costs for restoration of the Veterans Park building for permanent use by Michael and his team.
- c. Michael shared his vision for the space, his fundraising goals, and current funds raised.
- d. Allison Sirpilla, from Wood TV, gave an update to what Wood TV has been doing with the ad campaign since January, including the TV flights, EightWest segments, Ask the Expert page, as well as page view insights.
- e. Committee Chair Mary Johnson stated that the committee could go back to meeting in the office. She asked if the committee would like to start that in July. The committee voted to plan on meeting in the office at 8:30 for July's meeting.
- f. Committee Chair Mary Johnson stated that John Baxter had to drop off of the Millage Subcommittee, but stated that there isn't really a need for the subcommittee at this point.
- g. KCVS Admin Socialist Rachel Wustman shared details about the Wellness Day activities planned at the KCVS parking lot, including an art workshop, a yoga class, and live music.

9. Public Comment

- a. Paul Ryan shared that Finish the Mission and the West Michigan Veterans Coalition will be represented at the Wellness Day event. Paul also shared that there are some new volunteers taking committee leadership roles at the Freedom Cruise.
- b. Paul Ryan also shared that West Michigan Veterans Coalition's transportation project in Kent county is still light on drivers, so they are soliciting volunteers. Phoenix Mobility Rising is helping with grant requests for the program.

10. Adjournment –Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson moved adjourned the meeting at 9:36 am.