



Kent County Veterans Services

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Minutes 01/12/2023

Committee present: Mary Johnson, Melvin Bauman, Reginald Howard, Chris Kamps, Mike Blundell & Jill Hinton-Wolfe (remote)

Committee absent: Phil Yeater (excused)

Staff present: Ryan Grams, Rachel Wustman, Amanda Lake and Jennifer James

Public: Paul Ryan

1) Meeting called to order/ instructions-

- a. The meeting was called to order by Veterans Services Committee chair Mary Johnson.

2) Pledge of Allegiance – Lead by KCVS Rachel Wustman

3) Approval of the minutes from January Meeting-

- a. Approved by-Chris Kamps, Seconded by- Mike Blundell

4) Success stories

- a. KCVS Rachel- I have a few from us here in the office. Through donations from local companies and organizations we were able to help 6 families celebrate Christmas this year more robustly than originally planned. There is one organization that really went above and beyond this year. That organization is Post 179, out of Saranac. They not only wanted to help some families with gifts, they did some meal prepping for these families also. Providing almost 2 weeks of meals for the families. They also dropped of hundreds of socks, some sweaters and coats to donate to veterans in need. We've already donated some of these items to Community Rebuilders and will continue donating to other organizations. We were also able to connect with senior veterans thought Christmas caroling at some local care facilities every Tuesday in December. Another success story.is from one of our clerks, Jim Thompson. He has gone above and beyond to help with a few veterans' families in search for their fathers DD-214 for their funerals. He was able to locate them in a fast and efficient way so that the veteran was able to be honored for his military service.

5) Monthly Impact statement

- a. KCVS Ryan- We are still doing well from the years in the past. The biggest thing is that we have helped many families with Meijer Food Vouchers and our face to face contacts are way up. So that makes us very happy to see so many veterans and their families coming into our office.
- b. KCVS Rachel- VSO Theresa Ergang and I have been doing a few presentations, one to Council on Aging and another to the Area Agency on Aging. We have been presenting what KCVS has to offer to our veterans their surviving spouse. We have gotten a lot of great feedback and have set up a few more visits to spread the information to other organizations and facilities in Kent County.

6) Managers' Report

- a. KCVS Ryan- This is the last budget report for 2022. Everything is currently on track for us and we just rolled everything over for our New Year that is coming up.

7) Old Business

8) New Business

a. Contract Status

- i. KCVS Ryan- We are currently working on finalizing and proofreading all our contracts for the year, to get them out the organizations. We just received some of the contracts back from general council and would like to get them out to the organizations to sign and back to us as soon as we can. We have quite a few contracts signed and returned and are just waiting on a few still.

b. Projects for 2023

- i. Mary- I would really like to get a handle on what KCVS has going on for 2023 and possibly a list of events. We can handle the small events as they come, but we need to know about the larger events and the costs associated with them. We recently had a dispute going on about a payment. I went through all the minutes of past meetings and were really confused about what this invoice was for, but it was paid and taken care of regardless. So, Rachel if there is anyway to write the larger events down and a dollar amount next to it so that we have something to reference if something like this comes up again it would be helpful. We don't want groups out there submitting invoices and we must deny it. We really don't want to get a bad reputation with not paying invoices.

- ii. KCVS Rachel- Just last week we found out that we will be doing some sort of Art Prize again this year. We thought it was cancelled all together, but the City of Grand Rapids is going to be picking it up and running it. This will be MVAA Grant Funded activity, so it will be little to no cost for us. We didn't request funds for an Art Prize Gala this year, but I do have a line item of everything we have applied for through the MVAA Grant to pass on to the committee. We will be hosting the Stand-down again this year, this is something that didn't cost us any money as everything was donations. Operation Green light was also something that didn't cost us anything in outreach. For Grant programs this year, we have the house cleaning program, Acudetox, Recreational Therapy and Art Prize.

a. Mary- How is the Acudetox doing?

b. KCVS Rachel- We had to cancel the last two sessions due to Crystal having Covid. But we have moved the Acudetox sessions to right before

our AA meetings on Thursday so that people can do both programs if they'd like to. Also, veterans aren't having to make multiple trips to our office and make it more convenient for them.

- iii. KCVS Rachel- If anyone is available on February 2nd from 11am-1pm we are hosting a PACT Act informational meeting here. The VA reached out to us to host this event. They will have VA representatives here answering questions and handing out information about the PACT Act. We will also have all our Accredited VSO's here to answer questions and be available for veterans to touch base with.
- iv. Reggie- We are doing well with AA. We just started using Zoom and for our first time using that we had 6 people online with us during our meeting. So not a bad start for our first time offering that to our local veterans.
- v. KCVS Ryan- One quick question, we have had Bus Passes on our KCVS Monthly Activity Report for a long time, but we no longer provide this service. Can I change that to showing our numbers for intent to file?
 - a. Mary- Yes, of course.

9) New Activities

- a. Mel- The West Michigan Veterans Alliance is going to be holding a retreat again up in Luther. There will be no formal speakers this year and will be held February 1st-3rd in Luther. Secondly, the State Committee for ESGR is holding their annual Ice Breakers cruise. That will take place February 13th and 14th. This will be in St. Ignace.

10) Public Comment

- a. Paul Ryan- I was wondering if Rachel can send me a summary of the donations from Post 179. I would like to let the United Veterans Council of Kent County know about this and how different organizations have been working together to help these families. One of our West Michigan Veterans Collation board members learned about a deployed unit, Task Force Viking that is an element of the 125-infantry regiment of the Michigan National Guard that is currently deployed to Syria. They are requesting assistance in getting 30 3ft x 5ft American Flags to put in their service vehicles. This request is coming from Unit leadership, so I am not sure if they will all be used in their vehicles or not. I have priced the cost of the flags out at Flags Unlimited here local on 29th street. It is going to cost about \$1,200.00 at \$40.00 a flag and with postage we are looking at closer to \$1,400.00. We aren't looking for someone to foot the entire cost, but a few different organizations to go in together.
 - i. Jill- Paul, the Grand Valley Veteran Students will help with a donation of \$500.00. I also wanted to let you all know that I am going to be stepping down from my position here at Grand Valley as of January 30th and going on permanent medical leave. With that, I am hoping to spend more time being involved here at KCVS.

11) Meeting Transcribed by Amanda Lake

