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Minutes: June 8, 2023

Present: Mary Johnson, Jill Wolfe, Mel Bauman, Chris Kamps,

Excused: Mike Blundell, Phil Yeiter

Absent: Reggie Howard

Staff: Martha Burkett, Andrew LaPres, Kenyon Vickery

1. Meeting called to Order by Mary Johnson at 0900.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Approval of minutes of May 2023. Motion by Chris Kamps, seconded by Mel Bauman. Approved.
4. Success Stories
 - a. Kenyon assisted a woman with obtaining magnifying glasses to be able to read. Jill Wolfe stated she works with the visually impaired team in Battle Creek and, if needed, would assist her with connections.
 - b. Kenyon is currently working on obtaining a walker for someone.

Mel: States is meeting with the West Michigan Alliance for Veterans regarding Mary Free Bed and equipment they no longer use. If we are able to receive unused equipment, it could be stored at Hero's Corner as they are moving into a larger facility. He also stated the United Veterans Council (UVC) has purchased two electric wheelchairs, with one already placed with a veteran.
5. Mel: Marge's Donuts has donated \$125 to the UVC Veteran of the Year Banquet in the form of a cake. Thanks, from the Committee.
6. Monthly Impact Report - Andrew LaPres
 - a. Regular requests: four
 - b. Fully developed claims: there is a steady influx.
 - c. Face to face contacts: We are on track.
 - d. Intent to file: We are on track.
 - e. Claims in development: 239 with 22 awarded. This is up from 2022
 - f. Monthly award of dollars is significantly increased.
 - g. Burials: four. VSO's are informing area funeral homes that this benefit is available.

h. Meijer vouchers: Requests for this are down at the moment; usually requested more frequently in cooler months.

7. Monthly Activity Report:

a. We are under budget with expenses.

8. Old Business

a. Staffing Update: Alison Marquard, USN, has been hired for the vacant Clerk position. She has a Master's in Criminal Justice and is currently working on a Master's in Human Services. She is looking forward to becoming a VSO.

b. Contracts and RFP Update: Cal Brinks is reviewing the proposals for all the grant contracts. All vendors have been notified of the change.

c. Service Dog Update: We currently have a budget of \$30,000 for support dogs. We have dissolved the contract with the Jaeger Foundation. We are currently looking at the possibility of a contract with a individual dog trainer who is credentialed. We have sent two veterans who were promised training (2021-22) to this individual. Since then, two more veterans have been added to her training roster. A training package costs between 12,000 and 16,000 dollars.

Jaeger Foundation has contacted us to possibly re-establish our business relationship. This was rejected.

Martha: Has set a meeting with the Kent County Animal Shelter's dog trainer, director, and the dog trainer we are currently working with. There may be a possibility of choosing dogs that are at the shelter to become service dogs.

Jill: Raised the possibility of finding dogs that have failed to become seeing guide dogs. They already have some training and may make good service or comfort dogs.

d. Kent County Veteran Treatment Court: Tony Torres, Program Manager

Tony: Currently are going through a program evaluation. First in eight years. Preliminary report is the evaluation is going very well. Should have an executive report in August. The SCALE fiscal grant is done. Is asking for additional monies for training and mentoring. SCALE certification visit going well. Were impressed with the interaction between team members and policies and procedures.

e. Bylaws

Mary: The following changes were made to the bylaws:

1. Page 2: Deleted the first paragraph and added "The KCVSAC shall consist of seven members, one of which must be a member of the County Board of Commissioners. It is preferable that the commissioner be a veteran who has served honorably in the United States Armed Forces, however it is not required."
2. Page 3: Under Officers of the Committee: deleted "with the intention that the vice chair is elected as chair when the current chair has completed his/her term."

Motion to approve and accept bylaws now as written by Chris Kamps, seconded by Mel Bauman.

f. Art Prize:

Martha: Michael Hyacinthe has been contracted for the art mentoring project and is working with Pam Alderman. There will be twenty-two veterans showing their art work during Art Prize. Opening day will be September 16th at Veterans Park in Grand Rapids. Committee members are needed to help this day at the Veteran Services booth. No Gala is planned this year due to finances, however, is budgeted for next year.

9. New Business:

a. 3rd Annual Women Veterans Appreciation Day will be held Sunday, August 27th from 1-3 p.m. at the John Park Zoo at the Tree House. This event is family friendly, and everyone receives a pass to see the zoo. It will be catered, and Martha is reviewing caterers available. We are budgeted for 100-120 people.

b. Upcoming events:

1. There is a one-day Women's Retreat at the equine center in Kentwood that we sponsor on June 24th.

2. Hidden Wounds of War at Grand Valley State University. Five hundred dollars was taken out of digital budget to donate to this.

3. Guitar for Vets is Wednesdays at the VA Center with Trish Torres. Would like to see this project go out into the community at different locations.

4. Jail corroboration: No action noted at this time.

5. Martha will be attending the Asian Pacific Festival on June 6th to hand out materials.

6. Martha will be attending the Pride Fest on June 17 to hand out materials.

7. Mel is working with Korean Veteran community, which is donating to the UVC.

Meeting Adjourned 1027

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Johnson
Chair, Advisory Committee