

Clark County Veterans Advisory Board
An advisory board to the Clark County Board of Commissioners

Clark County Public Service Center
1300 Franklin Street, 6th Floor, Room #680
Vancouver, Washington
September 11, 2014

Meeting Minutes

Chair: Greg Whitson

Vice Chair: Bob Nichols

Secretary: Mike Gibson

Meeting Called to order by Greg Whitson @ 14:00 hours

Roll Call: [Bold script indicates presence at meeting]

POST

40 et 8
American Legion #14
American Legion #168
American Legion #176
American Veterans #6
DAV Chapter #4
Korean War Vet Assoc. #321
Marine Corps League #826
VFW #4278
VFW #7824
VFW #12028
Vietnam Vets #512

Members at Large

Kevin Lawson

PRIMARY

Sam Grooms
Dixie Hotaling
Robert Nichols
Michael Gibson
Richard Alvarez
Frank Hyatt
Thomas Dombeck
Lou Basté
John Raynor
Roy Billings
Skip Bengé
Greg Whitson

ALTERNATE

Jan Wojciechowski
James Resleff
Richard Langenbach
Jonathan Frederick
Benjamin Long
Thomas Kula
Robert Sumrill
Ron Brandon
Steve Stetson
Bruce Maas

Joseph Fettig

CLARK COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES

Samantha Whitley

GUESTS

Judy Russell and Barb Archer -CCVAC; Tim McPharlin – Clark College; Mike Wilson – CDM; George Raynor – Korean War Veterans

August 13, 2014, Meeting Minutes

Richard Alvarez moved to approve the minutes as written, Dixie Hotaling seconded. Passed.

State Proposed Changes to RCW Definition of Veteran

Bob Nichols reviewed the WDVA's proposal for changes to the RCW veteran definition. A copy of the WDVA's proposal was sent to board members. Bob was concerned about the proposed change to align the State definition with the Federal definition requiring 180 days of active service. Bob reviewed some of the other proposed changes and suggested the Advisory Board discuss the new definition and make recommendations to provide to the WDVA at the October CCVAB meeting. Sam mentioned that the

proposed changes to the RCW would allow counties the flexibility to expand the definition and eligibility for the fund as they see fit.

Veteran's Assistance Fund Proposed Funding

The 2015 funding memorandum proposed the same contract funding as 2014. However, the Veteran's Assistance Center contract amount and location needs to be discussed and considered. Last year, the contracts totaled \$420,725.

Sam said that Bob Stevens in the Budget Office was estimating that the VAF would receive the legislative minimum in 2015, but it is unknown until after the Commissioner's vote in November whether this will be increased. Bob Stevens was invited to attend the October VAB meeting and provide an update and answer any questions.

Judy Russell presented a letter requesting increased space for the Veterans Assistance Center. The current Assistance Center is inadequate. Rent is \$2,044 per month for about 1,800 sf plus the Center must pay an additional monthly cost for six parking spaces at \$36 each, and storage at \$145.80/month. This totals about \$1.34/sf. The space is tight with veterans standing in the hallway and disturbing the upstairs lessee, and several volunteers have to share a single desk. The storage area is also not sufficient for the food boxes, clothing, sleeping bags, rain ponchos, etc. that the Center keeps for the annual Stand Down but also hands out to veterans throughout the year.

There is currently space available to rent next door to the Assistance Center. It has 3,325 sf with a large reception area, 6 offices, large kitchen for the conference room, 2 ADA restrooms, a 1,000-sf two-level storage unit with drive-in access, and includes 13 parking spaces. It was last rented for \$3,500/month a year ago, but the landlord seems willing to negotiate and Judy believed he would take \$2,800/month + taxes. This equates to \$.96/sf.

The Center is intended to be central location for all services to veterans. Social workers, HUD-VASH, and others have expressed interest in helping veterans in a larger facility. No rent would be charged to them for providing these services. The landlord said he is willing to work with Assistance Center if they could sign a 2- or 3-year lease agreement. No up-front money would be needed, the building is move-in ready. The current lease ends 12/31 and the Center would like to get in to new place January 1. The county no longer pays rent for the Veterans office that was at CFCH.

After John Raynor called for a motion to pursue the move, Dixie Hotaling seconded the motion, and the vote unanimously approved the recommendation.

Judy will negotiate the rent with the landlord and provide Sam with a new proposed budget for the 2015 contract. Sam will bring this proposed budget and contract before the VAB for approval before it is forwarded to the County Administrator for execution.

Sam requested a vote on the other contract on the memo: the Free Clinic Veteran's Dental contract with a budget of \$22,825, the same amount they were provided in 2014. **Bruce Maas called for a motion to approve the contract, Bob Nichols seconded the motion, and the vote unanimously passed.**

Sam recommended that Judy provided an all-encompassing budget for 2015 that would include the Assistance Center lease, the Veterans Assistance program, the Stand Down, and any other funding needed for operations at the Assistance Center.

Information Updates

Yakima Summit: State would like to have all counties meet every 3 months to make legislative recommendations, but logistics are too difficult. Instead, regional groups are getting together to network

best practices.. Clark County is included with Oak Harbor, Cowlitz, Lewis, Skamania, Thurston, and Pacific, and will meet in Centralia. Sam & Bob will represent Clark County. Other issues discussed at the Summit included counties attempting to get younger veterans involved in posts and assistance programs, and to let them know what services are available to them, including outreach at county fairs. Other counties have provider taskforces set up to meet with veterans and discuss emerging trends and needs.

Lewis County effectively uses a Facebook group to help veterans. For example, a veteran who needed his roof repaired was able to obtain assistance through this medium. Facebook attracts younger veterans.

Data of veteran population in the state was presented. It compares Clark with other counties, and projects out to 2020. It is also broken down by male/female, age groups, and number of veterans in Clark County receiving benefits from the State. This information is also available online at www.va.gov/vetdata.

Strategic Plan: Sam will be out in October, November, and December. Morris was leading the strategic planning process and two meetings had previously been held. Notes from these meetings show that currently, housing is a priority. The CCVAB doesn't necessarily have to have its strategic plan in place by January. The Board can keep working on it and have it ready before an RFP is released in summer 2015.

County Code Change: The hearing will be October 14, at 10 a.m. covering changes approved by the Advisory Board and reviewed by Chris Horne. The time of the meeting will be confirmed.

Committee Reports

Appeals: Four appeals were received. Three were asking for gas money, but the individuals live on the bus-line.

Policies/Procedures: Bus-line policy may need to be revisited. It is difficult for disabled veterans. C-VAN has a 3-hour wait window, often leaving individuals on the roadside for long periods or causing them to miss appointments. The Human Services Council transportation system is more reliable. DAV also has transportation, but individuals have to call 3 days in advance.

Nominations: A nominating committee was established to provide names of board officer nominees next month for a December vote. These people will take office January 1. Nominees must come from within the group, according to the by-laws and must be primary members of their post. Bruce Maas agreed to be the nominating committee chair; Ron Brandon and Dixie Hotaling will assist.

July Contractor Reports & County Fund Report

July monthly reports: The Assistance Center served 75 veterans in their first month of service. Of these, 75% received food assistance. Currently, veterans receive a Fred Meyer gift card for food and hygiene products. Fred Meyer is not the least expensive place for shopping, but in the past, other grocers could not restrict the purchase to specified products (food, hygiene).

By contract, Sam is required to monitor the Center after months 1, 3, and 6. In the first month, she found zero mistakes in reviewing 63 of 75 client files, and found the documentation clear and accurate.

Assistance Center Other services provided: 342 volunteer hours; 127 veterans seeking assistance above those using the fund; 27 veteran visits to DAV, and 19 visits to the American Legion.

The Free Clinic Dental program served 9 veterans, for a total of \$2,056 in costs, but only billed \$897.

The Fund Revenue and Expense report net balance was \$485,539 at the end of July. This has decreased in August and September.

Open Forum

October 9, Joint Base Lewis McCord is hosting a Welcome Home event to honor Vietnam-era veterans. It is open to the public.

The Stand Down went very well. There were 143 veterans, 45 providers, and 50 volunteers.

Tim McPharlin reported that a Women's Warriors Symposium will be held in Clark College's Gaiser Hall, room 213, on October 29, from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The keynote speaker is Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, the director of the Washington DVA. A film will be shown called, "Service: When They Come Marching Home," there will also be a women veterans discussion panel.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day is September 19th. At the Armed Forces Reserve Center, there will be a ceremony at 11:00 to unveil the new POW/MIA monument. On September 20, at 11:00, a dedication and POW/MIA Observance will be held.

Meeting adjourned at 15:30 hours.

Next meeting: October 9, 2014 @ 1400 hours in the Commissioners' Hearing Room