

THURSTON COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD (VAB)

MEETING MINUTES

October 17, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Josh Clark, Matt Huot, Keith Looker, Donna Lowery, Sean “Smitty” Smith, Thom Stoddert, Gary Walker, and Casey Wegner.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Daniel Miller

OTHERS PRESENT: Gary Aden, Bob Jones, Steve Kirkman, Sarah Luna, Rhonda Negard, Jack Potter, Derek Revisky, Patrick Seifert, George Sharp and Linda Loyle.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS

Josh Clark and Matt Huot introduced themselves and provided background information as the newest members of the VAB.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the July 18, 2016 VAB meeting were unanimously approved.

LACEY VETERANS SERVICES HUB

The grand opening for the Lacey Veterans Services Hub was held October 7th. A soft opening was held in August. To date 350 veterans have been served. The Hub is open Monday – Friday from 9am to 4pm. VAB members are assisting at the Hub. Donna is the volunteer coordinator, Casey and Thom are providing temporary operations management and Keith provides assistance as a service officer.

There were 250 to 300 in attendance at the grand opening. The Hub is seeing 30 to 40 veterans a week. There are 19 official agency participants. The City of Lacey is in the process of hiring for a 14 month, contracted, manager position at the Hub. The City of Lacey is funding the Hub until 2017.

Casey discussed the volunteer coordinator work that Donna has been doing at the Hub. The volunteer coordinator work is time consuming and takes a skilled individual. Currently the volunteer coordinator, front desk and navigator positions are filled. Casey recommended a volunteer coordinator position (.75 FTE) be paid by the county. Casey and Donna and a sub-group will prepare a recommendation for the Board of County Commissioners.

Gary explained that at the July 2015 service providers’ conference a one-stop shop for veteran services was discussed. It took 16 months from the conference at the National Guard Armory to the opening ceremony at the Hub. After a series of meetings the City of Lacey stepped up to provide initial funding. He thanked the City of Lacey and said the VAB would like to continue to work with the Hub.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR THE VAF

In June 2016 the law governing the definition of veteran for the VAF was revised. As a result of that change in definition and the need to update and revise the Thurston County Veterans Assistance Fund Policies and Procedures the VAB recommends the following revisions:

1. **The VAB as allowed by RCW 73.08.005(5)(b) moved and unanimously approved to recommend to accept general under honorable conditions in sections 73.08.005(5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv).**
2. Recommend to remove Section 2.3, VAF staff of PHSS in the absence of a representative of a veterans’ service organization or other provider the VAF shall assist veterans applying for the VAF and report to the VAB frequency of staff assistance.
3. Recommend to add assist applying for VA benefits and other relief programs to Section 2.4, Meeting Place Rental.

4. Recommend to retain six months WA State residency and 31 day Thurston County residency as currently required in Section 3.1.2.
5. Recommend in Section 3.3.1, Maximum Allocation to add: The maximum amount of financial assistance provided may be amended if recommended by a majority vote of the VAB and approved by the Director of Public Health & Social Services. This shall not be done more than once a year and shall be dependent on the availability of funds.
6. Recommend in Section 3.3.2, Limitations to add: The maximum number of years a veteran or eligible family member may receive assistance is two years. Depending on the availability of funds, the two year limitation may be amended if recommended by a majority vote of the VAB and approved by the Director of Public Health & Social Services.
7. Recommend in Section 3.3.3, A, Types of Financial Assistance, Rent or Mortgage Assistance to add: Eligible veterans or family members may receive assistance with rent and mortgage payments that are owing or first and last month's rent and nonrefundable deposits for an applicant's residence.
8. Recommend in Section 3.3.3, B, C, F, Motel Stays, Phone and Cable or Internet services to add: Motel stays to include eligible veterans who are victims of domestic violence who have a recommendation for a motel stay from an appropriate referral agency. Phone, cable and internet services to remain the same.
9. Recommend in Section 4.3, Program Activities to remove if approved by the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners and retain if recommended by the VAB and approved by the Director of Public Health and Social Services.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

The next suggested projects are homeless veterans, transportation and culture change. It was suggested that instead of a conference that three forums be held for each of these project areas. At the next VAB meeting homeless providers will present information regarding homelessness so that the VAB can recommend whether to include homelessness as a forum topic.

Long range planning for the VAB and VAF will be conducted at the January 23, 2017 meeting.

FINAL COMMENTS

The final comments included the following: Steve Kirkman thanked the VAB for all they have done for the Lacey Veterans Services Hub; Sarah Luna said that there is a Health Care Forum on October 26th from 8am-noon; Bob Jones said that Thurston County Veterans Services is donating \$500 to the Stand Down; Patrick Seifert provided information regarding the 22 Too Many organization; and Casey said that volunteers are needed at the Hub for navigators and front desk receptionists. If you know of anyone with social service background please let him know.

Without further business, the meeting adjourned.

Submitted By,
Linda Loyle, Community Program Manager
Veterans Assistance Fund