

THURSTON COUNTY VETERANS' ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

March 17, 2014

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mimi Fields, Thom Stoddert, Robert Thompson, Casey Wegner, and Gary Walker

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sean Smith and Robert Nakamura

OTHERS PRESENT: Joseph Worsley, Cesar Morales, Lou McElroy, Michael Wilson, Samantha Adams, Mary Huff and Linda Loyle

Gary Walker called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS

Cesar Morales of Catholic Community Services is the Case Manager for Supportive Services for Veteran Families at Catholic Community Services, Drexel House. Clients may be referred directly to him instead of going through the VA screening line. His telephone number is 360-753-3340x28. The program serves homeless or about to be homeless veterans. He also contacts landlords and immediately advocates for clients. The services provided include rent, utilities, mental health treatment, assistance finding jobs and referrals to VA. He issues rental assistance to veterans attending school whose benefits are reduced due to partial school months. Transportation to American Lake is a problem since there is a lack of drivers.

Mary Huff, City of Lakewood, South Sound Military & Communities Partnership discussed the partnership and areas in which they are working. She said that Thurston County has an influence in their system.

Lou McElroy, Chair, Thurston County Veterans Council explained they have events planned for Memorial Day, Flag Day and Veterans Day. Service provider luncheons are being held on the second Wednesday of the month at 11:00 a.m. at Nickelbys' restaurant in Tumwater. Anyone interested in discussing veteran issues is welcome to attend. The April topic is transportation.

Samantha Adams with the Northwest Justice Project provides services to veterans through the Veterans' Project.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of January 13, 2014 were unanimously approved with the addition of Gary's plan included in the minutes.

OVERVIEW AND MEETING DISCUSSION

Gary Walker explained that in July the advisory board will be making a presentation to the BoCC. The work being done at this meeting and previous monthly meetings is to prepare for this presentation.

Gary reviewed what was accomplished at the February 19th advisory board meeting. The advisory board is preparing recommendations to the BoCC. The Veterans Assistance Fund has been expending about \$400,000 per year. Earlier this year the advisory board began discussing issues related to program funding. The purpose of the advisory board is to advise the BoCC regarding indigent veterans, resources and programs. The board has been discussing how to advise on these issues including how to expend the resources; how to maintain staffing levels; how to perform outreach to veterans; how to tell folks what resources are available; how to identify gaps and how to build communication with others including veteran organizations and other programs.

The advisory board has discussed direct and indirect services. The direct and indirect services are listed in last month's minutes. Discussions have included how to assist indigent veterans and their families; how to hold individuals accountable; and how to expand awareness, community partnerships and collaboration.

Program goals could be picked out all in this meeting. The struggle, however, is defining the role of this program. Following the broad discussion of the last few meetings the advisory board will begin to look at identifying a narrower scope for the program. This will include discussing a client profile that includes what clients are requesting from the fund and who demographically is applying. Five hundred soldiers a month are being discharged from JBLM. With the limited time available the board will decide what reductions need to be made. There will need to be reductions in the Veterans Assistance Fund if additional funds are not obtained. If funds are received, then reductions in the budget can be ignored.

Lou McElroy indicated that service officers are not seeing many younger soldiers in need of assistance with benefit claims. Robert Thompson expressed the concern that no matter the age, people have trouble paying utilities. Joseph Worsley discussed the possibility of assisting veterans with setting priorities and making sure they are aware of resources. He suggested evaluating any assistance provided over a period of years.

Priority: (Information included on the writing board)

1. Housing – Who, What, Time Frame, Conditions
 - A. No Inc of Energy \$ or # of Beds (Housing safe and secure \leq 90 days)
 - B. Utilities (Cap '1' time, TBD. See service off apply appt.)
 - C. Rental “ “

Where is there duplication of services and how do we identify the gaps? Can someone else fund the type of assistance? Who is turned away? Housing and employment may be the most important. Perhaps someone else take care of housing. Limit who is accessing.

2. Food & Personal Hygiene

Submitted by,
Linda Loyle, Community Program Manager