

THURSTON COUNTY VETERANS' ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

December 3, 2012

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sean Smith, Bob Thompson, Casey Wegner, Gary Walker, Mimi Fields

MEMBERS ABSENT: Russel Cron

OTHERS PRESENT: Linda Loyle, Staff; Deborah Allen, Staff; Thom Stoddert

Mimi Fields called the meeting to order.

PURPOSE OF MEETING

Mimi Fields overviewed the purpose of tonight's meeting: To reground following program review; and to prepare for the BoCC meeting on January 3.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes of October 22, 2012 was moved and seconded. Minutes were approved as submitted.

CITIZENS COMPLAINTS

Mimi asked whether VAB members are satisfied with the response of Thurston County staff to citizens' complaints on the program. She noted that audit report shows full compliance of Veterans Assistance Program with state law and internal policies. Members expressed satisfaction with the responses of county staff to concerns raised. Chair expressed thanks to the Health and Social Service Department and Veterans Assistance Program staff in repoding to the complaints. Members discussed on the most effective way to hear from the public on their concerns – in writing? Time limited public comment? Decision deferred to later meeting.

FUNDS FOR STANDDOWN

Members discussed the success of the WorkSource standdown. General agreement that the standdown was a good use of Veterans Assistance funds.

DEFINITION OF VETERAN

Members discussed the definition of "veteran" to be recommended to the BoCC for use by the program staff. The goal was to find a broad definition that stayed within the legal requirements established for the program. Questions of terms of discharge, service time minimums, National Guard or Reserves status "activated" vs "deployed" were considered. Members voted 4 to 1 in favor of the following definition:

“A Veteran is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard) who served on Active duty and was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. People who served in the National Guard or Reserves are veterans if they were ever called or ordered to Active duty other than for training.”

Linda Loyle will try to have the Prosecuting Attorney’s office at the County determine whether this definition stays within the RCW requirements for the use of the funds prior to the January 3 meeting with the BoCC.

BUDGET

The budget report presented to the VAB by Linda showed both a decline in annual revenue and a decline in reserve balance. Members discussed and recommended three options to address diminishing funds: 1) Request that the BoCC increase the assessed millage allowed under law to increase revenue. 2) Ask the BoCC and Public Health and Social Services staff to look for grants and/or opportunities for collaboration and integration with other funding sources and programs to expand services for veterans. 3) Follow up on the offer from the Department of Veterans Affairs to host a community coordination meeting among all of the veterans service organizations to make sure we are working together to meet veterans’ needs.

CONTRACTS

Linda noted that the Salvation Army may underspend their budget by as much as \$10,000. Unexpended funds will remain in accounts to help cover other expenses. Linda asked the VAB to consider whether to enter into contracts with Drexel House and Salvation Army next year for homeless shelter services for veterans. Members discussed whether other VA- or HUD-related support for housing could take some of that role. Some concern over the increase in per-night billing by Drexel House from \$20 to \$34/night. Suggestion that Salvation Army and Drexel House be invited to the community coordination meeting suggested in the Budget discussion (above). Concluded VAB supports the shelter contracts and that program staff should be empowered to execute continued contracts for 2013.

PRESENTATION FOR THE BOCC MEETING

Members finalized the Power Point presentation in preparation for the January 3, 2013 meeting with the BoCC.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by,

Deborah Allen