

Thurston County Veterans Advisory Board
Lacey Veterans Services Hub
22 January 2018 Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Gary Walker, Casey Wegner, Sean “Smitty” Smith, Robert “Bob” Clark, Matt Huot and William “Bill” Adamson.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Josh Clark, Dan Miller

OTHERS PRESENT: Steve Kirkman, Keith Looker, Mark Moffett, and John “Moose” Moysiuk.

Meeting opened at 6:10 pm by Chair “Smitty” Smith

Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Approval of minutes: Matt Huot moved for approval, Casey Wagner seconded. There were no edits or changes. Minutes were approved.

Presentation by Salvation Army: Lt. Robbin Swales of the Olympia Salvation Army gave a presentation on their efforts in Thurston County and how they are starting to reach out to local veterans.

Rural County Veterans Summit Update: “Smitty” Smith gave an update on the summit. There was a meeting on 9 January 2018 at the Lacey Veterans Services Hub with attendance by representatives of Thurston and Lewis Counties, WDVA, and VA. VA GPD Director talked about reaching out to rural veterans. Summit started to target help for rural veterans. There was concern about WDVA talking at VA level at its 2017 conference and not targeting how to help rural veterans.

Veterans Assistance Fund Manager Recruitment Update: Mark Moffett shared with TCVAB that a candidate, Ashley Strass, was selected and had accepted the position. Ashley will start on 1 February 2018 and work full time at the Lacey Veterans Services Hub. She has worked for eight years at Madigan Medical Center and is the spouse of a 100% disabled veteran.

VAF Funding Priorities Going Into The Future: The Chair asked to move this agenda item to next meeting. The end of year funding levels have not been finalized yet and wanted to wait to board had a clearer picture before initiating the discussion. However, Mark Moffett did provide a very basic snapshot of the VAF. Board requested Mark provide the information at the next meeting.

Future Priorities of TCVAB: The Chair started discussion by asking board members what direction they thought the board should take going into the future.

- Matt Hout felt he was still learning about the board but that the board should why out what other needs that are not being met.
- Bob Clark stated that the board should look at things that are not being covered now.

- Casey Wagner added that he felt the Lacey Veterans Services Hub was the avenue for services and that the TCVAB should continue to be involved in some form with it.
 - He requested that the board develop a proposal to the County Commissioners to seek federal funding to pay for an FTE as a VA pilot project. This will be added as an agenda item for the next meeting.
- Bill Adamson felt that the board should explore behavioral health initiatives.
 - The Cohen Foundation is funding several behavioral health clinics around the country and this should be potentially be pursued.
 - Communication issues around behavioral health – his deputy, Sarah Luna, is putting together behavioral health first aid kits to be distributed in the area.
 - Bill also discussed several other issues that he is working on that could be pertinent.
 - The Chair asked Bill to make a presentation on his organization at the next board meeting. Bill agreed.
- Others in attendance were asked their opinion.
 - “Moose” Moysiuk felt that child care services were an issue. He also stated that there were issues with landlords concerning service animals as well. He shared that the housing group is developing at landlord liaison who could work with the various landlords in the area.
 - Mark Moffett saw a need around personal services and the use of the VAF to help pay for medicines, dental care, and car repair.
 - Keith Looker felt that there was a general problem around service animals. Even if the VA approved a service animal, the veteran still had to find one and train it. In addition, he felt that were behavioral health needs not covered by the vet center.

Lacey Veterans Services Hub Update: Keith Looker provided an update on what has been happening and shared some data on its services. The data is as follows:

- VA is opening a one stop center in Seattle for just VA programs.
- Combined, the Hub and Vet Center has had 3,999 clients in 2017.
- Hub to date (opening to present): 2,559
- Hub volunteers have donated 4,260 hours of service.
- 602 Veterans housed
- 946 VA claims have been processed.
- 387 Veterans employed
- 1,662 veterans have been counseling at Vet Center
- 135 veterans have been provided food from the Thurston County Food Bank
- There are 35 service providers working out of the Hub currently.
- Hub has received a seven-passenger van. First volunteers have gone through defensive driver training. It is hoped to have the van operating by the end of February 2018.
- The Hub is looking to expand its office space. It is outgrowing current capacity.
- The Hub is researching homeless causes and trying to be more proactive and is developing a coalition to identify available housing.

Finalize Veterans Assistance Fund Policies and Procedures Review: Gary shared drafts of revisions to sections 1.5 and 2.2. The board agreed to additional language for section 1.5. Regarding section 2.2, after additional discussion about the draft language and general purpose

of the section, the board agreed to remove the entire section. Review of section 3.3.3 B was deferred to after board had developed its priorities further.

Around The Room:

- “Moose” Moysiuk shared that his work studies are working the resource guide and have greatly expanded it from the old version on the VAF website. He is coordinating with Josh Clark on this as well. Discussion followed to replace old version on VAF website with his version and periodically update it.
- Keith Locker informed the group that the point in time count will occur at the Hub on 25 January from 10:00 am to 3:00 PM.
- Steve Kirkman shared that the City of Lacey is working with the South Puget Sound Community College on the sponsorship of business initiative with grants up to \$25k per individual. He also stated the City is supportive of expanding behavioral health services as well. Lastly, Steve stated additional space in the building was available and would be added to the Hub. IT services in the Hub are being updated as well.
- Bill Adamson shared that the State Representative for the 28th District is putting forward legislation to name the Nisqually bridge in honor of Iraq-Afghanistan veterans.
- Gary shared that two of the board members (Dan Miller and Donna Lowery) were stepping down and if anyone knew a veteran who would make a great addition encourage them to apply.
- “Smitty” concluded the meeting with stating that he wanted to get more involved in the community and do more community outreach.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 pm.