

Clark County Veteran's Resource Committee
An advisory board to the Clark County Board of Commissioners

Clark County Public Service Center
1300 Franklin St, 6th Floor, Ste. #679
Vancouver, Washington
February 12, 2014

Meeting Minutes

Chair: Morris Giesler

Vice Chair: Greg Whitson

Secretary: Mike Gibson

Meeting Called to order by Morris Giesler @ 1400

Roll Call: [Bold script indicates presence at meeting]

POST

40 et 8
American Legion #14
American Legion #27
American Legion #44
American Legion #168
American Legion #176
American Legion #189
American Legion #208
American Veterans #6
DAV Chapter #4
Korean War Vet Assoc #321
Marine Corps League #826
VFW #4278
VFW #7824
VFW #12028
Vietnam Vets #512

PRIMARY

Morris Giesler
Dixie Hotaling

Robert Nichols
Michael Gibson

Richard Alvarez

Thomas Dombeck
Lou Basté
John Raynor
Roy Billings
Skip Bengé
Greg Whitson

ALTERNATE

Jerry Keen
James Resleff

Richard Langenbach
Jonathan Frederick

Richard Gabriel

Robert Sumrill
Fiorin Zeviar
Stephen Stetson
Bruce Maas

Members at Large

Kevin Lawson

CLARK COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES

Samantha Whitley

GUESTS

Colleen Kuhn - HSC; Blaine Hensler; Justin Hensler; Mike Langsdorf - CCVAC; Marie Peterson – Hospice Southwest

January 8, 2014 Meeting Minute

Tom Dombeck moved to approve the minutes as written. Seconded by Dixie Hotaling and passed.

January 22, 2014 Special Meeting Minutes for Purpose of Contract

Bruce Mass moved to approve the minutes as written. Seconded by Tom Dombeck and passed.

Veterans Assistance Contract Update

Morris Giesler stated the County Administrator directed staff to extend the Human Services Council's Veterans Assistance contract through June 30, 2014. This will give Clark County and the Veterans Assistance Center time to complete the necessary work to manage the contract by July 1, 2014. Morris informed the group he had a copy of the contract modification that was signed on January 30. Cassandra Curry, with HSC, will provide veterans services at the Center for Community Health Monday through Friday. Morris explained it was imperative that services for indigent Veterans continue and this was the only viable way to continue the program. Morris thanked the Human Services Council for extending the contract so services for Clark County Veterans could continue.

Bob Nichols told the group he had been asked to help the CCVAC execute the contract. Bob said he planned to present the package to CCVAC Board of Directors on March 12 and will work out any details or problems at that time. Bob added that elections for new officers will be held in April and planned to have the contract negotiations complete by that time and ready to start providing services by July 1, 2014.

Sam told the group that the decision to award the contract to the CCVAC that was made by the VRC at the January meeting will still move forward; however, it is taking a little more time to put in place.

Committee Reports for 2014

Policies and Procedures Committee: Morris informed the group that Tom Dombeck had been elected chair for the Policies and Procedures Committee. The Committee had its first meeting today and will be meeting again to suggest changes to the policies. Morris said he had some issues that had been brought up last year that still need to be addressed. The board will be asked to review policy issues and changes at a future meeting.

Appeals Committee: The Appeals Committee will also meet for the first time on February 12. In the past month, there have been two appeals. Sam Whitley said one appeal required an RCW ruling regarding completion of service in the National Guard. Sam talked with the County attorney; however, she did not receive a clear answer. Sam told the group this veteran had been looking for rental assistance and had been linked with rental assistance through the Salvation Army. The other appeal was a veteran who was over-income and it was denied.

The group raised questions regarding Veteran eligibility and there were uncertainty of which rules to follow: Policies and Procedures Manual, the County Code, or the State RCW. The RCW references several definitions of qualifying veterans but the County Code says we follow the definition of a Veteran as defined in RCW 41.04.007, which is also what the policies and procedures reference. Sam explained that state law is broader than local law; however, we still need to follow local county code. However, the County Code needs to be updated and should be soon.

Veterans Assistant Fund 101

Morris introduced Bob Stevens, Clark County Office of Budget, and Mark Gassaway, Clark County Auditors/Financial Services to the group. Bob, who is a 15-year Vietnam Veteran, gave a brief summary of the County's biennium budget process. Bob explained there were several factors to the budget process: fund balance, revenue, budget, actual expenses, and ending fund balance.

Bob explained that revenue is the Veterans' income which comes into the county budget system. The budget is the Board authorized appropriation to spend money. Bob added that all government agencies have to have an appropriation, which really means "permission to spend" from a legislative body. Actual expenses, is the amount you actually spend out of your biennium budget, and ending fund balance is the amount left after actual expenses. Bob continued to tell the group that any money left in the ending fund balance at the end of the biennium would be available fund balance in the next biennium.

Bob told the group that back in 1999, the revenue in the fund balance was \$250,000; however, only \$45,000 was actually spent. This pattern continued until 2004, and the revenue and property taxes continued to grow. In 2004, the VAF was only spending \$197,000 a year. By 2005, the fund balance had accumulated to \$1.8 million. At that time the CCVRC was looking to increase the revenue; however, the Board was concerned because they felt the CCVRC was having difficulties spending the money they already had. Starting in 2005, when the revenue reached \$338,000, the Board gave CCVRC a budget of \$644,000 and told them to start spending. For the first time, at the end of the 2013-2014 Biennium Budget, the CCVRC will have spent out their allocated budget.

Bob said there was \$395,000 left at the end of 2013. He added that there was \$395,000 left in the biennium budget; however, the remaining of the budget was committed for 2014 expenses. He explained that even though the levy had increased, the 2013-2014 Biennium Budget will still remain the same at \$643,000. Bob explained that in September 2013 the fund balance was greater than the minimum lawful levy. When that occurs, the Board of Commissioners isn't required to give the VAF anything at all. Bob told the group that now that the fund balance is going to be below the minimum amount by September 2014, the Board will be required to increase to the amount to the minimum lawful levy.

Bob explained that the VAF is general fund money. It's not a standalone levy, it is a subordinate levy. In other words, general fund gets \$100 million dollars and the Veterans Assistance Fund gets a portion of that. Bob offered to work with the CCVRC to determine a budget now that the fund balance is lower and the minimum lawful levy is triggered, which is about \$430,000 annually.

December Contractor Reports, County Fund Report, 2013 Annual Report

Reports were sent out to the committee members. Sam summarized the November reports: HSC provided \$12,719 in assistance to 63 veterans. Six veterans were seen in the dental program, receiving a total of \$1,885 in dental services. The CCVAC had 136 veteran visits with 613 hours of volunteer service for a total volunteer value of \$13,925. The Veterans Assistance Fund balance at the end of December 2013 is \$441,928. The 2013 Annual VAF Report was emailed to board members and is also available online, it is the same format as previous years.

Old Business

The item that was tabled at the January meeting (HSC contract) has been taken care of by the County Commissioners. Colleen mentioned that she wasn't sure the HSC would approve another contract extension at the end of June if the Assistance Center still isn't ready to go. Morris said that county staff and the Veterans Advisory Board would be working with the Assistance Center to get the contract in place. Jerry Keen recommended that the CCVAC reach out to original board members to help the organization.

Bob said that the County Code about paying for meeting spaces should be removed. Morris said that there were other changes to the code that needed to be made as well, such as County Service Officer vs. Veteran Service Officer.

New Business

Morris would like an ad hoc committee to update the county code. The ad hoc committee's recommendation will come to the entire Veterans Advisory Board for review and approval before it is submitted to the County Commissioners. Morris asked volunteers to contact him or Sam if they are willing to look at the code (Chapter 2.29). This committee would also be responsible for looking at the Bylaws and making recommendations for updates and changes. Bob Nichols said he would volunteer for this committee when he was finished working on the CCVAC contract for services.

Morris also would like some volunteers to start working on the Strategic Plan, which has not been updated since 2012. Alternate members from the posts can also serve on committees. Roy Billings nominated Bruce Maas to work on one of the committees.

Open Forum

Bob said that there have been four veteran suicides in the local area in the last month. Insurance policies and the VA will not provide any benefits to family members of suicide victims.

Anne Marie Murphy will be presenting about VA services at the OMSN meeting at the 40 et 8 at noon on February 13, 2014. Oregon Military Support Network meets once a month in Vancouver.

Bob said that the WDVA sends out emails regarding veteran legislation updates.

Marie Peterson with Hospice Southwest is starting a new veteran-focused hospice to assist veterans at the end of life. They are looking for veteran partnerships to learn more.

Meeting adjourned at 1550 hours.

Next meeting: March 12, 2014 @ 1400 hours