

## VETERANS' COMMITTEE MEETING

**February 1, 2010 – 2:30 p.m.**

PRESENT: Chairman M. Johnson; Supervisors Kinowski, Lucia, Wright, Yepsen; Hargrave; Spencer Hellwig, Mgmt. Analyst; Bob Mitchell, Veterans' Service Agency; Jen Ciulla, Publications Specialist; Gene Corsale, Veterans' Volunteer; Steve Williams, Daily Gazette

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order.

Ms. Yepsen moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 6, 2009. Mr. Lucia seconded. Unanimous.

Chairman Johnson appointed Mr. Lucia as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Corsale reported that the renamed "Saratoga County Veterans' Memorial Highway" is in bill form now. He said he was told by Senator McDonald's people that it may get passed this year. He distributed copies of the bill S.5874.

Mr. Corsale said we are in our tenth year of the Honor A Deceased Veteran program. It began on August 16, 1999, he said. It is used as a model by other counties. The program is held the third Tuesday of each month, he said. He stated to date, 198 deceased veterans have been honored. The County Historian's office has a file on each veteran who is honored, he said. He stated the programs are videotaped with copies furnished to the next of kin and to the NYS Military Museum in Saratoga Springs. The programs are televised on Channel 17 monthly. He mentioned we have never honored an African American veteran, and the City of Saratoga Springs does have one who just recently passed away. He stated in Mechanicville, there are 40 deceased World War II veterans who made the supreme sacrifice. Maybe a program could be considered for those 40, he said. Bob Mitchell and I would like to thank you all for participating in this successful program, he stated.

Chairman Johnson asked about the Iraq war. Mr. Mitchell said it does not matter what war the deceased veteran was in. Mr. Corsale pointed out that Brown and McKenna were honored from the Iraq war.

With regard to the Saratoga County Veterans' Memorial Highway, Mr. Kinowski said he was briefed by his 911 Coordinator, and they are ready to rename the street at the north end in Stillwater to North Hudson Avenue, and it will be officially renamed. Mr. Corsale stated symbolically, it will still be Route 4.

Mr. Kinowski asked if the deceased veterans' program shadows the ones the towns and cities do with the Elks or Legions. Mr. Mitchell stated they have their own programs. Mr. Corsale said the only special thing left to do is for the deceased veterans in Mechanicville. There are few places that lost 40 men in one community, he said. He said if one of the Supervisors cannot come up with a veteran for their area, we can use the deceased vet from Saratoga Springs.

Mr. Hellwig reported that due to the cuts made to this year's budget, the funding was cut for a veterans' concert at SPAC. A lot of the cuts were driven by the sales tax drop, he said. It was one of the tough decisions made during the budget cycle, he said. He said the cost last year was about \$44,000 for the concert, but the actual concert band does not charge. The costs are advertising and various other pieces to the program, he stated. He said there is money for the monthly recognition events and the videotaping, but money historically placed into the Tribute To Freedom account was removed. Mr. Lucia stated this is a bad time to do this with two wars going on. Chairman Johnson said it seems like a small amount of money for the good will it does. To just ignore this program for the year surprises me, she stated. Mr. Hellwig said this Committee could decide to revisit this, and if so, at what level should it be funded. Mr. Lucia said we all understand cutting back, but this is alarming. Chairman Johnson stated that just before the meeting, Ms. Ciulla gave her a copy of an e-mail from the Army Field Band stating they probably couldn't do the concert anyway.

Mr. Hellwig said this concert is the single largest event held throughout the course of the year. Everything else is in place, he said. Mr. Lucia suggested cutting some of the advertising for a concert. Mr. Wright said the fireworks could be cut out also. Ms. Ciulla stated that the Army Band's budget has also been cut, so they do not expect to be able to come up. We could research other bands, but they are not as free to change their schedules, she said. She mentioned the Navy Band is touring in this region in the Spring of 2011, and she can look into that. She said we have to use SPAC, so it may

have to be May. Mr. Kinowski stated there are multiple bands for every branch of service. If you know your date, even when budgets are cut, they are usually able to fulfill it, he said. Ms. Ciulla said the issue is we have traditionally used SPAC, and some smaller bands do not work for that venue. Mr. Wright said we should look into rescuing it for this year. Ms. Ciulla stated advertising is a large expense, and SPAC is \$11,500. Mr. Hellwig said we can get firm answers on the options and be better prepared at the next meeting. Mr. Kinowski said if we start to do a sizeable withdrawal, we could have an extravaganza next year. Chairman Johnson said we do not know what next year's budget will be. We will get the information from Mr. Hellwig and Ms. Ciulla. Ms. Yepsen said we should look at what a Spring concert for 2011 would look like. Chairman Johnson said we cannot commit money that we would have no authority to commit.

Chairman Johnson announced that Victor Isca, the Veterans' Service Officer for the past 6 ½ years, will be retiring March 25<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Lucia moved to authorize that a letter of appreciation be written for James Hallenbeck who was a driver for the Veterans' Agency for about 10 years, who passed away in August. Mr. Wright seconded. Unanimous.

Mr. Mitchell distributed copies of the Veterans' Service Agency 2009 Annual Report. He pointed out in 2008, for claims and pensions, they received \$1,504,000 for county residents. In 2009, this went up to \$2,470,667. He said the reason is because in 2008, they had 3988 contacts in their office, and in 2009, they had 4773. He said the Agency is important to veterans, businesses and everybody in the community.

On a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Lucia, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M. Sodemann