

## **VETERANS' COMMITTEE MEETING**

**AUGUST 11, 2010 – 3:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Chairman M. Johnson; Supervisors Barrett, Kinowski, Lucia, Thompson, Wright, Yepsen; Wood, Collyer, Southworth, Jenkins, Sausville; Spencer Hellwig, Mgmt. Analyst; Andy Davis, Veterans' Service Agency; Jennifer Ciulla, Publications Specialist; Gene Corsale, Veterans' Volunteer; Press

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order.

Mr. Wright moved to approve the minutes of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Mr. Kinowski seconded. Unanimous.

Mr. Davis distributed a handout on the NYSDVA-Saratoga County Partnership. He explained there are approximately 18,000 veterans receiving benefits in Saratoga County. A significant portion of the workload done by his office is that of assisting veterans in the filing of claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA). His office assists approximately 40 veterans per month. In order to represent veterans before the VA, a veterans' service officer must be an accredited agent of a veterans' service organization or an accredited government agency, he said. We are one of only two offices providing veterans services in all of Saratoga County. We share the workload at places such as Saratoga County Rural Preservation Company's Vet House, Empire State and Skidmore Colleges and various assisted living and nursing home facilities with the NYSDVA counselor based in Saratoga Springs, he said. Currently, due to accreditation and Power of Attorney restrictions, veterans serviced by one office or the other do not have portability of services. In these times of economic uncertainty and increased responsibilities, it is imperative that our agency, and the County, partner with trustworthy organizations to continue serving the veterans of Saratoga County. The NYSDVA is a taxpayer-funded government entity that is one such potential partner.

Mr. Davis said through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the Saratoga County Veterans' Service Agency has an opportunity to partner with NYSDVA in the use of the NYS Veterans' Common Operating Picture software system. The VETCOP software and system technical support is free of charge through NYSDVA. In exchange for this software system, the Saratoga County Veterans' Service Agency may only use this system for veterans claims filed under NYSDVA Power of Attorney. He said it is his recommendation that the Board of Supervisors, in conjunction with the Saratoga County Attorney, agree to a MOU with the NYSDVA to expand our services and ensure we are prepared to interact with impending changes to VA claims processes. This MOU would allow his office to acquire the VETCOP system from NYSDVA and use our active POA to represent veterans. These veterans would have portability of services with the only other accredited Veterans' Service Officer in the County, he stated.

Mr. Thompson asked if this was something new. Mr. Davis said he believes it is. New York State started this about a year and a half ago. We are the fourth county to do it. Mr. Thompson asked how Bob Mitchell did this. Mr. Davis said he isn't sure. We have the Veterans' Information Management System, and we are OK with the upgrades we have to make, he said. A veteran can only allow one accredited organization to represent them at any given time, he said. Mr. Thompson asked how did we do this before. Mr. Davis said we didn't. We didn't hold the Power of Attorney component with New York State, he added. **Mr. Barrett moved to approve entering into this MOU with the NYSDVA. Mr. Lucia seconded. Unanimous.**

**Mr. Thompson moved to have the name of PFC David Taylor Miller, of the Town of Wilton, to the County's Monument at the Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery. Mr. Barrett seconded. Unanimous.**

Mr. Barrett said he believes there was somebody last year to be added. Ms. Ciulla said it was John Pryor, and his name was added to the monument. Mr. Barrett suggested having a ceremony sometime in the fall for both of these veterans. Mr. Thompson suggested honoring them at the band concert also.

Ms. Ciulla distributed copies of the details for the U.S. Air Force Band of Liberty concert at SPAC on September 25<sup>th</sup>. She mentioned we have cut the media ads from last year, and she worked with newspapers to do on line ads as well as print ads. The ambulance contract is all set. She said attached to the handout is a copy of the invitation that will be going out August 23<sup>rd</sup>. We will have the Stillwater High School student players in the program this year, she said. She said information will be going out to the senior centers and assisted living communities, and we will have extra invitations if Supervisors would like more. We will need volunteers to help hand out programs that day, she said.

Ms. Ciulla reviewed the three options given to her for the catering by Glen Sanders. It was the consensus of the Committee to go with the option of cheese, crackers and beverages at \$766.90. Mr. Barrett stated that Adopt-A-Soldier will be there; are there any other groups we want to reach out to? Ms. Ciulla said State representatives were invited, and we will have two tables set up for Adopt-A-Soldier. She said Mr. Davis will contact the National Cemetery's Honor Guard for the beginning of the program. Chairman Johnson said Roy McDonald requested to speak at the concert. Ms. Ciulla mentioned last year, we introduced the chairman of the committee and then the Chairman of the Board. Chairman Johnson said we will work that out. I want to introduce Marcia White of SPAC and Carol Hotaling, the yellow ribbon lady, she said. Mr. Barrett said it would be nice to invite the Miller family and recognize them during opening remarks. Mr. Thompson commended Chairman Johnson for her work on this concert. Mr. Hellwig mentioned it will be a minor contract for the food.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M. Sodemann