

VETERANS' COMMITTEE MEETING

February 6, 2007 - 2:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Chairman Lucia; Supervisors Hunter, M. Johnson, Raymond, Richardson, Trottier; David Wickerham, Co. Administrator; Bob Mitchell, Veterans' Director; Gene Corsale, Veterans' Volunteer; Tom Harris, Employment & Training; Christopher Sgambati, Peter Purcell Post 21, ITAM-Mechanicville; Cliff Darfler, Disabled American Veterans; Gene Rutigliano, VFW, Saratoga Springs; Jim Coyne, Veterans' Advocate; Steve Williams, Daily Gazette

Chairman Lucia called the meeting to order.

Chairman Lucia appointed Mr. Trottier as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Mr. Trottier moved to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2006 meeting. Mr. Hunter seconded. Unanimous.

Mr. Mitchell said they are trying to bring the Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) people into the system. He said besides newspaper columns, he wrote to all of the reserve units. He has also put out a brochure. The National Cemetery also has connections with them, he said. He mentioned Stewart's will do a milk carton logo in September and October. We couldn't put our phone number on this because they go into Vermont, so the web site will be on there in order to bring up this information, he said. Chairman Lucia stated posters on this have gone out to the town halls, and if more are needed, let us know.

Mr. Mitchell reviewed highlights of the Veterans' Service Agency 2006 Annual Report. He stated they were responsible for a substantial portion of \$15,500,000 in recurring federal VA payments made directly to veterans and dependents in the County; they transported 2,300 veterans to the V.A. Hospital and back; About

20,000 to 25,000 people visited the Vietnam Veterans Moving Wall. He mentioned the Department of Public Works did an outstanding job with that. We had very good feedback on that, he added. Chairman Lucia said that was a tremendous event and couldn't have come together without everyone's help. People are still talking about it, he said.

Chairman Lucia said the Army Field Band Concert will be held at SPAC on Friday, September 21st at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Lucia said the Veterans' Assistance Night will be held Tuesday, October 30th at 6:00 p.m. at the City Center. Mr. Mitchell said a lot of providers will be there. He said they are not presenting medals this year. He said if anyone has suggestions on what type of ceremony to have, please let them know.

Chairman Lucia stated John McKenna, IV, of Clifton Park, will be honored at the February 27th Deceased Veteran Ceremony.

Ms. Raymond said all of our events are good and valuable, but unfortunately, we do not have anyone now to help do these. She asked how soon it will be before Kate Jeanson's replacement is hired. She said it goes to the Vacancy Review Committee and from there a recommendation is made, but the Personnel Director is on vacation for two weeks. We could be talking the end of March before anybody is on board, she said. Mr. Wickerham stated that he will be working with Barbara Plummer's office, and we will see that these events are done.

Ms. Raymond moved to have the position of Publication Specialist in the Clerk of the Board's office filled as soon as possible. Mr. Richardson seconded. Unanimous.

Chairman Lucia congratulated Mr. Mitchell for getting a \$5,000 grant from Senator Bruno. Mr. Mitchell said this money is earmarked for an upgrade to his computer system and for handouts for the County Fair.

Chairman Lucia said Mr. Mitchell has invited veterans' organizations to come to today's meeting with ideas they may have for this year. Mr. Darfler asked when the County was going to upgrade the Monument at the National Cemetery for the deceased veterans of the Iraq war and have a rededication. Chairman Lucia said it is an on-going program. Ms. Raymond said Nathan Brown's family was notified, and they preferred to have a private ceremony. She said she believes the Committee had directed that there not be a lag for the names to be added to this Monument. Mr. Darfler said any changes to a memorial should have a rededication.

Mr. Corsale requested a special day to have a ceremony to honor a deceased WW II veteran from each town and city. He stated June 6 was D Day, and we could time it with that date, and that would be very significant for those veterans.

Mr. Darfler said Gavin Park in Wilton holds an Armed Forces Day. He suggested that the County could do something in Saratoga Springs or Ballston Spa for the Armed Forces. He mentioned Armed Forces Day is May 19 or 20. He said his group has been approached to participate at Gavin Park. Ms. Raymond suggested possibly doing something at the County Fair with fireworks or discount admission tickets.

Mr. Rutigliano asked if the agenda for the Veterans' Assistance Night was always the same. He suggested having an ID card station and possibly a survivor benefit seminar there. Mr. Mitchell said the ID's were done before, and we could do that again. Mr. Rutigliano said there should be some sort of presentation on documents that should be gathered now and things survivors should have on hand long before anything ever happens. He said a lot of people are hesitant to ask questions. Maybe this could be done in a small seminar or workshop, he said. Mr. Mitchell said they will have the City Center for the whole day, and workshops could be done in the afternoon. Ms. Raymond suggested having a workshop dealing with the National Cemetery with a handout packet.

Mr. Coyne thanked the Supervisors for raising the property tax exemptions for the veterans. He suggested keeping the focal point for all veterans, and not fragmenting. Let's put it under one umbrella and each year have a theme, he said. Mr. Sgambati mentioned that is what is being done with the Deceased Veterans' Honors. Mr. Coyne said he is not complaining, but sometimes when we advertise for a particular group of veterans, the other ones kind of stand off. Mr. Mitchell stated the Veterans' Assistance Night is always total force. Mr. Coyne asked the Committee not to lose focus on the total force.

Mr. Corsale reported that the video program for the Deceased Veterans' Honors is very successful. They are aired on Channel 17. A copy of the DVD is given to the Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, a copy is given to the Saratoga County Historian and copies are provided to the family. We have a good rapport with the videographer, he added. Chairman Lucia said that was a brainstorm of Mr. Corsale's, and people have told him they enjoy seeing these on t.v.

Chairman Lucia said ideas from today will be tied into the County Fair.

Chairman Lucia said the Veterans' Float is not available to be reserved until April 1st on a first come first served basis. The applications can be obtained from Barbara Plummer or Elaine Sodemann, he said.

Chairman Lucia thanked the veterans' representatives for taking the time to be here today with ideas. He also thanked the Committee members for their participation. My door is always open, he said.

On a motion by Ms. Raymond, seconded by Mr. Trottier, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine M. Sodemann