

Veterans Committee Minutes
March 2, 2015 - 3:30 p.m.

Present: Vice Chairman Collyer; Supervisors Tollisen, Allen, Barrett, and Lucia; Ryan Moore, Deputy Administrator; Frank McClement, Veterans Director; Craig Hayner, County Clerk.

Chairman Collyer called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mr. Lucia, seconded by Mr. Allen the minutes of the November 3, 2014 meeting were approved unanimously.

Mr. Collyer was appointed as Committee Vice Chairman

Mr. McClement gave a brief overview of the 2014 Veterans Service Agency Annual Report highlighting the following:

- Over 1,600 rides were provided to Veterans with over 31,000 miles logged, providing transportation to the VA Medical Center in Albany.
- Assisted over 5,000 Veterans and/or dependents with benefits
- The Department of Veterans Affairs total expenditures for 2013 for Saratoga County were just under \$70 million. With approximately \$30 million cash benefit payments to Veterans and/or their surviving spouses and dependents. The remaining was for healthcare, education and insurance.
- Currently there are 100 participants in the Peer to Peer Program, with 50 mentors.
- Claims in the Veterans Office are done electronically, and the office is working with the Department of Veterans Affairs as they move toward a completely paperless claims system.
- Work continues with the County Clerk with regard to the Return the Favor Program. In 2014 280 Veterans were helped to get their proper discharge paperwork through the program. Since the inception of the Favor Program there have been over 1,500 records requests completed.

Mr. Hayner said currently the County Clerk's office has issued between 3,600 to 3,700 Favor Cards. He said in the last fifteen months his office has given out 352 Favor cards with a third of them issued in the last three months.

- Mr. McClement worked with the Department of Social Services, providing in-service training to all areas of DSS over the course of the year on available Veteran benefits and services.
- Worked with Employment and Training with regard to a hiring conference, and work is being done to put another hiring conference together for 2015. Mr. McClement said 10 Veterans received job offers after attending the 2014 conference.
- The Revolutionary Run raised over \$8,000 for the Veterans Trust Fund with double the runners from the previous year.
- Restructured the Deceased Veterans Ceremony schedule
- A new Veterans Van was purchased with grant funding through the Office for the Aging paying for 75% of the cost. The delivery of the new van is expected in April.
- The Peer to Peer Program presented the Comedy Warriors Event, and implemented the Incarceration Program at the Jail.

The following goals have been set for 2015.

1. Continue to push outreach and new and creative ways to get Veterans and their families connected to benefits.
2. Working to update office procedures to prepare for the changes in the VA Claims Submission Program, upgrading scanners and equipment.
3. Continue to find ways to increase the Veterans Trust Fund, i.e. Veterans Run
4. Look at ways to continue to train staff
5. Look at more efficient ways to run the Veterans Van
6. The current funding for the Peer to Peer Program is set to expire on June 30th. For that program Saratoga County was a part of the initial wave of funding in 2012/2013 that expired last June and then the second round of funding was received. The third round of funding was not received because all of the money had not been used. A request was made to the NYS OMH for reinstatement of the expired funds.

Mr. McClement said for January/February the Veterans Office submitted 42 new claims; conducted 59 scheduled appointments; served 17 walk-in clients; handled 31 Medicaid referrals and 16 referrals from the Department of Social Services, and provided 251 rides.

The Veterans Trust Fund current balance is \$30,027.31.

A lunch and learn was conducted on January 16, 2015 talking about education and IT opportunities for Veterans. Another lunch and learn was conducted on February 13, 2015 on tax preparation and issues for individuals.

Mr. McClement said there are two Trust Fund application requests; one in the amount of \$108.59 and a second request in an amount not to exceed \$350.

A motion was made by Mr. Barrett, seconded by Mr. Tollisen to approve two Trust Fund Applications; one in the amount of \$108.59 and one for an amount not to exceed \$350. Unanimous.

Mr. McClement said last year the committee had requested an inquiry be done to bring back the Veterans Military Band Concert. A list of regional Military bands has been compiled to contact for availability for a concert this year. Mr. McClement said by pursuing regional Military Bands there might be a cost savings to the county.

On a motion made by Mr. Barrett, seconded by Mr. Lucia the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Sansom