

Veterans Committee Minutes
February 11, 2019 – 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Richardson; Committee Members Preston Allen, Ed Kinowski, Dick Lucia, Dan Pemrick, Sandra Winney, Mo Wright; Spencer Hellwig, County Administrator; Frank McClement, Veterans; Michael Prezioso, Mental Health & Addiction; Craig Hayner, Christine Rush, County Clerk; Press.

Chairman Richardson called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance. Mr. Richardson said that he is honored and appreciates being Chair of this committee.

On a motion made by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Pemrick, the minutes of the December 10, 2018 meeting were approved unanimously.

Mr. Richardson announced the appointment of Mr. Wright as the Committee Vice-Chair.

Mr. McClement distributed a copy of the Veterans Service Agency Annual Report and gave a brief overview. Highlights of the report include the following:

Office Space – The move has been a successful endeavor. They have hosted several trainings, workshops and programs. They also host the County Suicide Prevention Coalition quarterly meetings.

Staff Training – NYS division of Veterans affairs brought back in person training, held in Saratoga Springs last year. Also, Mr. McClement and Mr. Mosseau attended the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers Annual Training and Conference in June.

Honor Deceased Veteran Ceremonies – August 2019 will be the 20th anniversary of this program. Last year the Veterans display case was built. Staff work with the families of the Veterans to obtain photos and mementos for the monthly display and the County Historian puts together the display.

Veterans Transportation Service – The service continued to run smoothly. The van has been in service since 2015 and has 105k miles on the odometer. The transmission was replaced this year but DPW is very helpful in keeping in good running order.

Electronic Claim Development – The NYSDVA case management system VetOps has been used since 2017. The NYSDVA has required all new County partners to pay a licensing fee to use the program. Saratoga has been told that they are grandfathered in at no charge.

Concert – The event was very successful despite the extreme high heat index the day of the concert.

Revolutionary Run for Veterans – The annual run was successful in 2018 and the number of registrations increased from 2017 despite the bad weather the day of the race. For 2019 the race has applied to be part of the United States Track and Field Association Adirondack Regions Grand Prix, whereby club members can accumulate points throughout the year for participation in the events. As of this month, there are already 50 people registered for the November 2, 2019 run.

Veterans Legal Clinic – The VSA Partnered with the Saratoga County BAR Association to host a free legal clinic for Veterans in November. Veterans were able to make an appointment to speak with an attorney at no cost for consultation on legal matters.

Media Relations – The VSA Director worked with the County Administrator's office and Gramercy Communications to publicize the events and initiatives throughout the year.

Mr. McClement said that in 2017 VA expenditures in Saratoga County totaled over \$81M. \$42M of these expenditures were direct cash payments to beneficiaries of VA benefits. These expenditures include disability compensation, pensions, insurance benefits etc.

The Veterans Trust Fund had a balance on hand as of the end of December of over \$61K.

Mr. McClement said that they will be hosting another comedy night during the 3rd week of March 2019. Mr. McClement will email the details to all Supervisors.

Mr. McClement said that DD214 can be obtained with the help of the Veterans Office. Last year they conducted 184 official requests for records.

Mr. Richardson said that the Deceased Veterans Ceremony in February will be honoring the Shaw Brothers from the Town of Hadley. March is scheduled for Town of Greenfield and April for Town of Ballston. Mr. Richardson said that on occasion there are communities that cannot provide the name of a veteran and suggested letting the Veterans office know this as soon as possible if this occurs so that another community can fill in the spot.

Mr. Prezioso said that they have decided to run an integrated training program for Veterans. The program is geared to build resilience, which helps veterans, post their period of service, to readjust and recapture their sense of mission and sense of purpose if necessary. The 100-day transformation program will be a joint program with a gym in Clifton Park, Mental Health, Veterans and the Peer to Peer Program. Potential veterans will be screened for the pilot program and up to 10 participants will be offered functional movement, assessments, nutrition programs, access to chiropractic care as well as some additional training with items like focus, breathing, leadership. The program will run on Saturdays and the veterans will be required to participate 3 times a week. Mr. McClement said this is a program that is currently not held anywhere in NYS. Mr. McClement said that a lot of Veterans cannot afford such a program and will benefit greatly from it. This will promote health and wellness in their lifestyle and also provide an opportunity for veterans to get together and socialize as a group. The funding for the program will be used from the Peer to Peer grant. Mr. Hellwig said that both Mr. Prezioso and Mr. McClement will be using their own personal time on the weekends to run this program, going above and beyond their regular work requirements. Mr. Lucia commended Mr. Prezioso and Mr. McClement on creating the program.

Mr. Richardson read a thank you letter from a recipient of the Veterans Trust Fund. The recipient commended Frank, Paul and Megan for their tireless efforts. The funds allowed the recipient to have a serious electrical issue repaired in his home.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board