

Veterans Committee Minutes
October 5, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Richardson; Committee Members Phil Barrett, Todd Kusnierz, Dick Lucia, Dan Pemrick, Mo Wright, Benny Zlotnick; Supervisors Tara Gaston, John Lant; Chad Cooke, County Administrator; Steve Dorsey, County Attorney; Frank McClement, Veterans; Michael Prezioso, Mental Health & Addiction.

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

On a motion made by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Lucia, the minutes of the August 10, 2020 meeting were approved. Mr. Kusnierz abstained from voting.

Mr. McClement distributed copies of the Veteran's committee report for September 2020. A copy of the handout is attached to these minutes. Mr. McClement said that the Tuesday night gatherings was moved to a tailgate event outside the offices, however Saratoga Coffee Traders is planning to be back up and running, and will host the event again beginning next Tuesday. The cafe will only be open to the Veterans Group at this time and they believe they can accommodate up to 25 people within the guidelines.

Mr. McClement said that he was in contact with the people at Death Wish Coffee last year trying to get them involved in the 5K race. A few months ago, John Swedish from Death Wish Coffee contacted Mr. McClement. Mr. McClement said that there is a Veterans Organization that does archeological digs at different historic sites and they were planning to do something at the Saratoga Battlefield, however it was cancelled due to COVID. Death Wish Coffee had a custom mug created to commemorate the Battle of Saratoga. Death Wish Coffee had intended that the proceeds from the sale of the mug would go towards local veterans. Mr. McClement discussed the Trust Fund with Death Wish Coffee and they put together a fundraiser for the online sale of the limited edition mugs. The mugs sold out in a week. The Trust Fund is going to be the beneficiary of the proceeds in an approximate amount of \$20K.

Mr. McClement said that he had a discussion with Mr. Richardson about possibly sharing the proceeds of this with some of the local non-profits that assist veterans such as the Veterans Community Housing Coalition for their food pantry efforts for the Men's and Women's shelters, Rebuilding Saratoga for home repairs. Mr. Wright said that the additional \$20K will push the Trust Fund to almost \$100K and its purpose is to help Veterans. If there are other service organizations that are struggling for funds, it should be shared. Mr. Wright said that Death Wish Coffee should be advertised and commended for the contribution. Mr. Richardson said that this is not a decision that needs to be done today, and suggested that committee members go out into their communities to see if there are suggestions for Veterans needs and bring it back to the committee next month. Ms. Gaston said that the program that was focused on the health and wellness of Veterans was very beneficial and suggested that some of the funds could go toward sponsoring another program for additional Veterans. Ms. Gaston said that especially during quarantine, this would be beneficial both mentally and physically. Ms. Gaston suggested that some of the funds for this program be spent at different gyms so that services can be utilized in the North of the

county, and therefore expanded. Mr. McClement said that he and Dr. Prezioso have discussed running another program and can further this conversation.

A motion was made by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Pemrick, committee approval to authorize a minor contract with Lyft for Veterans Transportation to the Stratton Medical Center. Unanimous.

Mr. McClement said that ridership on the van is down significantly. The VA is not running their adult day healthcare program and a lot of the groups that they normally run are still not up and running. Therefore, the van is currently only being utilized on a case by case basis for medical appointments only. Mr. McClement said that they are also down to one driver right now. Mr. McClement said that demand is down significantly, they only received one call in the last week and a half. Mr. McClement said that they have currently limited the use of the van to 2 days per week for appointments since the ridership is down so much. Mr. McClement said that normally the van accommodates approximately 10 people per ride and he is questioning the efficiency of providing the van for one person rides. Mr. McClement distributed a proposal to work with Lyft. Mr. McClement said that he talked to both Lyft and Uber about a service, however Lyft is preferable as it offers monthly billings. Partnering with Lyft would also accommodate those people that need a ride to the VA on the day the part time driver may not be available. Mr. McClement said that there are no fees or upfront costs in setting up an account with Lyft. This would allow two things: Lyft Pass would allow the agency to provide a voucher to an individual that could be used on the own Lyft account for the ride. The service would limit the use of the voucher to a certain amount, location, date and time as dictated by the Veterans Service agency; The other service would be Lyft Concierge, which provides a user interface that allows VSA staff to set up a ride for an individual who needs transportation. The rider would receive a text message or phone call advising them of the driver's estimated arrival and again, the parameters would be controllable by VSA staff. There is no minimum on the required amount of service calls per month and the VSA would be billed only for the rides used. The service can be discontinued at any time. As a comparison, Mr. McClement has roughly estimated the daily cost of operating the van for one ride from Ballston Spa to Albany at \$85-\$95 per day. This estimate includes wages, fringe, fuel, vehicle wear and insurance. The Lyft fare estimator for the same trip is \$45-\$55 one way. Lyft may be more expensive if the pick-up location is further away, or cheaper if the ride was from Clifton Park or Waterford.

Mr. Richardson asked the committee what their thoughts were on this proposal. Mr. Wright and Mr. Pemrick said that he would like to see a trial of the service. Mr. Wright suggested a monthly report to see what the costs are. Mr. McClement said that they have a fare estimator so they can check the cost of the ride prior to setting it up. If it's an exorbitant amount of money, they can use the van resources first. Mr. Richardson said that a back-up plan is always good to have. Mr. McClement added that with the Lyft Pass, some Veterans are travel pay eligible and are able to receive a mileage rate from the VA if they are going to either service connected disability appointments or if they are below a pension rate or above a certain disability rating percentage. If a person is travel pay eligible, they can get a Lyft voucher to offset the costs that are not entirely covered. These are items that can be polished if the committee believes this service is worthwhile.

A short video was played for the committee. Mr. Prezioso said that this video is a product of the Saratoga County Suicide Prevention Coalition. Grant support came from the Suicide Prevention

Center of New York which is State Funded through the Office of Mental Health. Mr. Prezioso said that work had begun on this video prior to the virus and the plan was to stream the video at local movie theaters as part of the lead into upcoming movie attractions. Mr. Prezioso said that they are looking at different ways to get it out to people. It is part of the overall State's initiative to address suicide in various populations throughout the State. Mr. Richardson said that the video will be available on the County website. Ms. Gaston thanked Mr. Prezioso for including a Submariner in the video. Ms. Gaston said that in the military Submariners and Aviation have some of the highest rates of difficulty in both accessing services and unfortunately completion. Ms. Gaston suggested using social media as an outlet for the video. Mr. Prezioso agreed and said that Public Health has been instrumental with the Suicide Prevention Coalition, in particular Rachel Maxwell from Public Health. Ms. Gaston also suggested reaching out to Gramercy.

Mr. Richardson said that the Honor the Deceased Veterans Ceremony is currently postponed until further notice, however he reminded everyone that if Supervisors would like to honor a live Veteran at their own municipality, that Mr. McClement and his staff can aid with information retrieval, work with the County Attorney's office for Proclamations, provide the thank you for your service coins, etc. Mr. Richardson said that Mr. McClement is currently doing this for the Town of Wilton. Mr. Richardson said that when the Honor the Deceased Veterans Ceremony starts up again, it will pick up where it left off. Mr. Wright suggested that if this shutdown goes on too long, possibly putting something on the website monthly honoring the Deceased Veterans, and follow up with the live Ceremony at a later date. Mr. Wright said he does not want this program to be forgotten if this shutdown goes on for a long time. Mr. Richardson agreed and said he will bring it up at the full Board meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board

September 2020 – Veterans Committee Report

1. Veteran Service Officer Summary Report

- a. 28 New Claims assembled and submitted
- b. 2 In person/ 18 Phone Conducted scheduled appointments
- c. 0 Walk-In clients
- d. 3 DSS Referrals
- e. 2 Medicaid Referrals

2. Veterans Events

- a. 9/10 Assisted with Senior Picnic

3. Saratoga County Veterans Transportation

- a. 1 Van transportation provided Rides.

4. Veterans Trust Fund

- a. Balance on hand of \$ 79,559.94 (only change is interest earnings)

5. Peer to Peer Summary

- a. Tailgate Tuesdays (gathering outside our office, with their own chairs and drinks, complying with the social distancing rules)

6. Honor our Deceased Veterans

- a. Postponed all events indefinitely due to Covid-19

VETERANS TRUST FUND

DATE	TRANSACTION DESCRIPTION	DISBURSEMENTS	DEPOSITS	ACTUAL BALANCE
6/18/2020	The Oliviere's Donation		\$ 500.00	\$ 78,855.17
	In Memory of Thomas Nadeau		\$ 495.00	\$ 79,350.17
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	MONTH TOTAL: JUNE 2020	\$ -	\$ 995.00	\$ 79,350.17
7/10/2020	In Memory of Thomas Nadeau - Blake/Gainer		\$ 50.00	\$ 79,400.17
	In Memory of Thomas Nadeau - Marie Salvati		\$ 100.00	\$ 79,500.17
	McInerney Donation		\$ 50.00	\$ 79,550.17
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	MONTH TOTAL: JULY 2020	\$ -	\$ 200.00	\$ 79,550.17
8/1/2020	2nd Qtr Interest		\$ 9.77	\$ 79,559.94
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	MONTH TOTAL: AUGUST 2020	\$ -	\$ 9.77	\$ 79,559.94
	MONTH TOTAL: SEPTEMBER 2020	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 79,559.94
TOTALS		\$ 91,787.41	\$ 171,347.35	\$ 79,559.94