

Veterans Transcript 12-2-2021

SPEAKERS

Ed Kinowski, Steve Bulger, Mo Wright, Dan Pemrick, Michael Hartnett, Preston Allen, Benny Zlotnick, Frank McClement, Several Supervisors, Tom Richardson, Bridget Rider

Tom Richardson

Good afternoon. We'll call the Veterans meeting to order. And first thing welcome, everybody. And Bridget, you have attendance taken?

Bridget Rider

Yes, attendance has been taken.

Tom Richardson

Okay. Thank you. So we need the, we need an approval of the minutes of the November 1 meeting.

Ed Kinowski

I'll make the motion.

Tom Richardson

Thank you, Ed. We have a second.

Benny Zlotnick

Second

Tom Richardson

Benny, thank you for second. All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tom Richardson

Any opposed? Okay, that passes. We're gonna move on, Frank with the Veterans Office Report.

Frank McClement

Thank you, Supervisor just wanted to highlight to the Supervisors, our Veterans Trust Office report, I'm not going to go through the details this meeting for brevity's sake, we've got a number of things on the agenda. We are staying busy taking advantage of any training opportunities that we can and outreach opportunities that we can though some of those are limited. Continuing to move forward with our transportation service, conducting our coffee nights and staying busy with the Peer Program. Our new Peer Program Coordinator is working out very well, Christina Holst, who has been involved in the

program for many years, so we're really pleased with the way things are going there and if any of the Supervisors have any questions, we'd happy to, to answer those. We did start adding a third day to our van schedule this month so in December, we will be adding Wednesdays we'll be running. Since COVID and since we started back up with COVID, we've only been going two days a week because of demand and a lot of the clinics and activities at the VA hospital weren't happening. Slowly, but surely, we're seeing a little bit of demand increase, and we're trying to provide some flexibility to the veterans. So in December, we're offering three days a week. And if we have a need to add that fourth thing, get back to normal, then we'll do that. And I'll keep the committee and the board. abreast of any changes but right now, we're going to be Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday with our transportation to the VA hospital. And I think that's all for today.

Tom Richardson

Anybody have any questions for Frank? Okay, seeing none, we'll move along. Looking at the Trust Fund Report. Go ahead Frank.

Frank McClement

Yes, I'm sorry. Do you have a copy of that? Sorry, I can't find mine. So just an update on our Trust Fund, we have a balance on hand of \$117,604.41. Most recent activity, we had a couple of grant disbursements in assisting a couple local veterans. And we had a donation from the Town of Greenfield. We want to thank the Town of Greenfield, for the last couple of years, they've held a veteran's support golf event at Brookhaven golf course and have given us a significant donation last couple of years and they gave us a donation of \$3,000, which I accepted at the at their Veterans Day launch. And so I want to thank Supervisor Pemrick, and the Town of Greenfield and everybody involved at Brookhaven in that tournament, they usually split the proceeds between us in volunteer services at the VA hospital, a very worthwhile charity as well, so we're really grateful for their support.

Dan Pemrick

You're welcome, Frank. Thank you. We're happy to do it.

Tom Richardson

Dan, this is Tom. We all want to thank you, not just Frank, but the that's just a tremendous job on your part. So thanks, thanks so much. While we're talking about.

Dan Pemrick

Thank you.

Tom Richardson

Yup. While we're talking about the trust fund, I'd like to bring up a discussion in regards to changing the amount of money that we're able to distribute to a veteran in need, currently. Oh, I'll pass it to Frank, he's got all the numbers. Go ahead.

Frank McClement

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is something that we'd be offering under other business. As you are aware, our trust fund, as I just discussed, is solely funded by donations and some of our fundraising

efforts like our 5k Run, and we use that fund to do a couple of things. Primarily, we we provide grants to individual veterans who come to us in with a particular emergency or crisis and there's not another benefit or program out there that we can connect them to. So it's kind of a last ditch effort. But if there's something that we need to do quickly, like a vehicle repair or home repair or other type of activity, we'll leverage our trust fund and provide a grant to deserving veterans. We do have an application process and historically, what we've done over the last few years is, at my recommendation to the Veterans Committee Chair, the Veterans Committee Chair approves the expenditure and then we go ahead and take care of the grant. We typically don't reimburse, what we do is pay directly to the source. So if there's a car repair that's made, we require a quote, written quotation from the mechanic, and then we work with the mechanic to go ahead and get that repair, done, you know, we'll, we call them or we'll let them know, hey, look, we're gonna cover this expense, we're gonna cut you a check from Saratoga County, and then they go ahead and make the repair for the veteran. So that's typically how it works. What we found is with everything else, everything is more expensive. And \$750 was our limitation and as you just heard, we feel that we've got a fairly robust Trust Fund, right now, over \$100,000. And it doesn't get a whole lot done. We had an emergency situation recently that we had to work with Adult and Family Services where a veteran had significant disabilities and health issues and just had, I don't want to call it a hoarding situation, but just became overwhelmed on his property in his home. And working with Adult and Family Services, if we could get the property to a safe and baseline clean level, which would require a clean out from a company to come in and do that, then they could set up home housekeeping services through the county, and to take care of that veteran and help them take care of his household. And you know, \$750 wasn't going to get the job done. And it was a little bit more money. So I passed out some proposed changes. The last time we did this was 2017. When we did that, in that resolution 237 -2017. If you turn to the back page, the last paragraph reads resolved that the Veterans Committee of this board is hereby authorized to approve and adopt future amendments to the attached rules and regulation by committee vote only without further action by this board. So that's why we're offering up here to the committee. And what we'd like to do is increase our individual grant amounts. If you go to page three of the packet, we just discussed this, I had put \$1,250, the Chairman is asking to amend that to \$1,500 per veteran. And then I've also asked to increase support to individual organizations. Previously, it was \$2,000. If somebody makes an application, I'd like to increase that to \$2,500. And that's under item E. If you read the next sentence, the Veterans Committee shall have the discretion to exceed said limits for applications the committee deems to be particularly meritorious and deserving. So what this does is this allows us to act quickly. But if the veteran if there's something that comes up, the Veterans Committee does have the authority to alter this a little bit with a committee vote. The second change would be under item F. And we had voted on this in committee a couple of years ago but when I was looking at these regulations, it wasn't codified in the regulation, where in cases of emergency request by individual, the Chairman of the Veterans Committee shall have the authority to approve disbursements. So historically, waiting a month to replace a hot water tank isn't going to work for the next Veterans Committee meeting. So I like being able to make a recommendation, and then have the Chairman make the final approval, that process seems to work well. The board is stewards of this money just as much, if not more than I am and so I think it's appropriate to get the approval from the Chairman of the committee and also to keep the Chairman abreast of what we're doing. So the process seems to work well and allows us to react quickly. So that's just making sure that that's in the regulation there. Historically, any requests by groups for the

disbursements of \$2,500, those things typically aren't emergencies and they'll come before the Veterans Committee for a vote. So that usually works well as well.

Tom Richardson

Just one quick question, Frank. How many veterans did had emergencies this year or problems that we had to help,

Frank McClement

I would have to go back.

Tom Richardson

About, I don't need exact.

Frank McClement

Probably maybe. It depends, because probably only about a half a dozen in the last six months that we've worked with. But, you know, again, we look at this as a last ditch effort, we always try to go to a more appropriate funding stream mostly because usually something like HEAP, a HEAP grant or temporary assistance or a VA program, supportive services for veterans and families grant program, there's more money available. Those are, you know, federal and state programs so, you know, we try to go to those first and then this is more of a last ditch effort where something doesn't work. And you know,

Tom Richardson

That that was the point that I wanted to make that this only happens maybe 10 times a year. Approximately give or take one or two individuals. But this isn't something that we have many, many instances where we have to do this. So it's more of less than a dozen times a year that this takes place. And so it's not like we're looking to a drain this trust fund that we've that's been doing so well. We're just looking to help these veterans who are in great need. So, so I wanted to make the point that it's only it's only a few times a year that we have to do this. So thank you.

Ed Kinowski

So, Mr. Chairman.

Mo Wright

I just in that section F, I would, I'd kind of like to see something to the effect of up to that \$1,500. If I think if you're going to exceed that \$1,500 for the emergency disbursement, it should come back to the committee and F really doesn't spell it out that great. It says the Chairman can, you know approved this disbursement, I think it should say disbursement up to the \$1,500.

Tom Richardson

Up to the 1500.

Mo Wright

Just, I mean, who knows? Not that we don't trust you Tom, but it just, I think it makes it a little more cleaner. You know, we give you the authority up to \$1,500 if there's an emergency more than that it should come to the committee. That's just my opinion.

Tom Richardson

And that makes good sense. Anybody else have, Ed did you have something you want to say?

Ed Kinowski

Yeah, because sometimes it has to be expedited does anybody have an issue with that? Approval through the committee is done by email?

Tom Richardson

Okay. Right, as long as everybody's informed if we go over the 1500. That makes sense.

Benny Zlotnick

That wouldn't be coming from you in an email then. Right.

Tom Richardson

That'd be coming from Frank. Very funny, Ben.

Ed Kinowski

One other item if I would.

Tom Richardson

Yes, please.

Ed Kinowski

Just one word in G, second line between must and improve, eliminate be, be the word be? Okay.

Tom Richardson

So can we have a motion on the floor?

Ed Kinowski

I'll make that motion. And with for the 1500 change.

Tom Richardson

Thanks, Ed. Second?

Benny Zlotnick

Second.

Tom Richardson

Benny. Everybody in favor.

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tom Richardson

Any opposed? If not, we'll go on to the next item. Thank you. Appreciate that, as well, our veterans. Honoring the Veterans Program, application we've got the Town of Stillwater.

Frank McClement

Yes, we have the Town of Stillwater submitted an application that was distributed with the with the minutes. And then since we have had three other applications come in, I noted those to the Chairman to enter in through other business. If you think it's appropriate, can we talk about all of them at once. So we've got the Town of Stillwater Supervisor Kinowski would you like to speak to the program,

Ed Kinowski

We took our monies, and we divided them between the two veterans' posts, the 1644 post and 490 post gave him 1250 each to say go and, and run a program in accordance with the letter and requirements from the county. And they both did, but they wanted to do it more towards a Veterans Day and later on in the year and but during that period, they would also seek ways to spend their money the best way they could and seek best pricing. And so they would have purchased it throughout the year and they did that. So I've submitted their role of how they spend it, how much they spent and then the programs they ran. And then we paid them and then I submitted the request up so they did good programs, both of them.

Tom Richardson

Thanks Ed. And we have we have a couple of other ones. So Frank, you want to?

Frank McClement

Yeah, so since so, just to be clear, Town of Stillwater requesting reimbursement of the full \$2,500. Since we've gotten an application from the Town of Halfmoon, the Town of Halfmoon granted \$1,000 stipend to assist VFW Post 1498, similar to Supervisor Kinowski's initiative with his local veterans' groups, and then also a \$1,500 stipend allocated towards the moving of a soldier's plot for the village cemetery in Halfmoon. So they're working on a project in the cemetery. So two separate projects but for a request for reimbursement of \$2,500. I do have copies of all of this for each of the Supervisors if anybody chooses to review the documentation, we do have that here for Halfmoon. The third application would be from the Town of Greenfield, and the Town of Greenfield is submitting for reimbursement for their veterans luncheon which I was able to attend with Supervisor Pemrick and very well attended luncheon at Brookhaven Golf Course, nice turkey dinner. They are requesting a reimbursement of \$1,650 for that expenditure. And I also have copies of the supporting documentation, if any of the members of the committee would like to review that as well. And then, finally, we do have one other application pending the supporting docs, they seem to be hung up in interoffice mail from the Town of Day, Supervisor Alan is here. I'll let supervisor Alan speak to his program.

Preston Allen

What we did on Veterans Day, actually, we sent out a form for, we did living veterans to honor them and we bought flags that we had hanging outside the town hall for about a month and a half. And on Veterans Day, we did a ceremony where we gave the flags, we also purchased plaques gave them all plaques, and the Northeastern Quilt Club, I think it was, made each one of them a quilt hand quilt. It was a very nice ceremony, very good attendance. I mean, it was, and we did it on Veterans Day.

Tom Richardson

Thanks, Preston. So we need a resolution to pass the spending of the money and reimbursement.

Mo Wright

I'll move all four of those.

Tom Richardson

Mo's going to do it all four.

Ed Kinowski

I agree. And you don't have to wait for theirs. Upon receipt of Day's package you can apply that expenditure. Correct. Okay.

Tom Richardson

Very good. Thanks Ed. You're second.

Ed Kinowski

I'll second.

Tom Richardson

Benny you have a? Okay. All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tom Richardson

Anyone opposed? Okay, that passes. We'll continue to move on. So thank you.

Preston Allen

Chairman.

Tom Richardson

Yes.

Preston Allen

Just so you're aware, I think, if I remember correctly, I think it was \$2,030, if I remember what the total was.

Tom Richardson

Okay. Wish you told me that sooner I could spend some more money in Mechanicville. The Christmas support, go ahead. Item number six, Frank.

Frank McClement

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So in the past we've, it seems to be trust fund day, in the past, we've leveraged our funds to assist veteran families for the Christmas season and as you know, many families have a hard time with finances. And you know, kids are kids and you know, every family wants to be able to give their children a nice Christmas. So, in the past, what we've done is allocated a certain amount of money for Christmas assistance for families. And we purchase gift cards and have them on hand in the office and as we identified families, we were able to allocate a certain amount of gift cards dependent upon what we had available to that family to help offset the cost of having a nice Christmas. Um, examples of what we did were gift cards for toys and clothes, and groceries. And so what I'd like to ask, and I open for discussion or ideas from the committee, we didn't do an allocation last year. Last year, we supported other organizations with different initiatives, and we allocated \$8,000. I believe the year prior, we allocated \$3,000. What I'd like to ask is for up to \$5,000, to allocate towards the purchase of gift cards to support veterans' families, I have a couple other ideas of some things that we might be able to do, and we may not spend the 5000. But if we decide that we're going to move forward with an initiative, I'd like that latitude to be able to use up to \$5,000 towards this holiday effort to support veterans and their families to share.

Tom Richardson

Anybody have any comments or any thoughts?

Mo Wright

I just have one quick question. I guess it would probably be first. I know, obviously, Preston's only used \$2,000 of his grant money and some other people not gone to the full 25. Is there any way we could leverage any of that money left out of the grant program towards this Christmas program? Also? Or is that? I mean, I don't know what how our budget was set up. I mean, there's obviously going to be some reserve funds out of that grant program. Maybe we don't need to take as much money out of the trust fund. But I don't I don't know. It's just a question whether we can do that instead of using Trust Fund money for this Christmas program, that's my only question.

Tom Richardson

Go ahead.

Steve Bulger

Yeah, the money so I think it was 50,000 was allocated, as long as this committee approves that spending before the end of the year, right, because it was appropriated for this year. So you may want to take action at this meeting and, you know, always defer to the County Attorney, if there's any thoughts, but I don't think there was any restrictions. Now, it may, it has to be a reimbursable. situation, right? Because that was the I believe that was the terms of the grant, is the municipality would submit and get reimbursed so there'd have to be, to comply with that, I'm thinking but I don't see where you couldn't repurpose it, we just got to make sure it fits the guidelines, right, of the repurposing.

Ed Kinowski

If I may Mr. Chairman, if I may add.

Tom Richardson

Go ahead Ed.

Ed Kinowski

To your point of repurposing, I don't think this committee as any other committee prior, ever thought of the money's all not being utilized, and what contingencies we would apply for remaining funds unused. And so, now that we understand that there could, that could occur so I would think it could be within the parameters of here, if the board approved, to take remaining monies and provide them to the veterans organization, Veterans Committee or veterans, excuse me, well, actually, not the committee but the organization itself, the department, and that could be a repurposing of it, because then he can use that for continuing veterans programs. And that was really the intent of it. It was a one time, but it's good programs, the thought.

Steve Bulger

Yeah, no. So to the trust fund. Right. Okay. Thought's on how we could do that.

Frank McClement

If I could interject, Chairman, there are two caveats here. The first caveat is we don't know what the Town's who have not submitted applications, they have up until December 31, to use the money. So in theory, we could see a request for reimbursement into January, February, as discussed at last month's meeting, I do have a spreadsheet that Megan in my office is maintaining as to who has submitted grant applications and who has not. I think we're close to the halfway point right now. And so, unless we had a confirmation from the other towns now, if there was no objection from anybody who didn't use that, or if anybody didn't submit, it is in my budget line. That could be a transfer request, Steve, I'm asking you, to add another line item but I'm not sure you know how that would work. But we may see all of that money utilized in January with I'm not saying that we are but I don't know that we can count that the town's aren't going to submit for it.

Mo Wright

That was just a question. That's fine. I just. I mean, it's if but I just, I would hate to see if we have money left over out of this program, that I would like to at least see it earmarked for next year or something in that and that. I mean, we've got \$50,000 to spend that veterans, I would rather see that \$50,000 be spent on veterans, then spend, say \$38,000, take the other \$12,000, put it in general fund. I just, you know, so if we don't want to do it for this year, that's fine. I just I would rather see that that reserve used toward veterans than keep taking money out of the trust fund. And if we could, if we could use that money for something else instead of the trust fund, that's all I was asking.

Tom Richardson

Right. No, and it's a good point Mo, so let me just let me ask this question. Maybe Steve or Mike can help us here. So I guess what I want to say is taking Frank's recommendation for this year, the 10,000

bucks, or excuse me, \$5,000 for this year. But on the other hand, maybe these gentlemen to my right can find out if the money isn't used by some of the current communities, that it's still outstanding, if that money could be transferred into the trust fund. Right. Exactly. So well, I don't know, either. So Mike.

Michael Hartnett

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I believe that it could be but it would require a Board Resolution allocating that similar to the way a public benefit agreement would work, taking, resolving that any remaining funds or unused funds from the grant program be provided for a specific public purpose through the Veterans Services Agency trust fund or through the VA that can be done by resolution in my opinion.

Tom Richardson

Yes.

Michael Hartnett

I that may. I would echo Director McClement's, point on unused funds and outstanding applications. And it could certainly be something into next year to look at in the grant fund parameters in that resolution and what it looks like that it becomes an automatic or built into that process.

Tom Richardson

Go ahead, Steve.

Steve Bulger

So here's what I'm thinking, it might be worthwhile for this committee to pass a resolution recommending that to the board for the December meeting. Because we have until several months after the end of the year to reconcile right through the end of this year. So but there is a timeline, if, and I believe it is December 31, is the deadline that they have to that any municipality has to submit the information to be reimbursed. And so if say, come February, the end of February, no, no other towns have submitted anything, we have \$15,000 leftover, let's say, if this board has recommended that to the full board, full board approves that this year, because it is this year's appropriation right, in this month, then we could just do that transfer at an appropriate time in the first quarter next year, if that sounds reasonable.

Tom Richardson

Okay, so we need a resolution on the floor, if I'm correct. Saying that we'd like to have the

Mo Wright

Funds would be automatically put in the trust fund after whenever Steve reconciles the books. There's a certain date when you have to do that. It's all housekeeping stuff. So whatever that date is, is the resolution should say any reserve funds left over in the veteran's grant will be transferred into the veterans trustee Trust Fund.

Tom Richardson

That's it.

Ed Kinowski

But we also need to allow Frank to move forward with that

Mo Wright

With that 5,000. I think, it's gonna be a separate resolution for that \$5,000.

Tom Richardson

Okay. So let's do two resolutions here. First, you just you just made, I'm going to say, the first resolution saying that we're going to transfer the money, the unused funds and the grant into the trust fund. So that's

Mo Wright

I'll make that motion.

Tom Richardson

You're making that motion, we need a second.

Ed Kinowski

Second.

Tom Richardson

Ed is second it. Anybody have any questions? If not,

Benny Zlotnick

Just for some clarification, Tom.

Tom Richardson

Go ahead.

Benny Zlotnick

I thought the money had to be spent by the end of the year.

Tom Richardson

Yes.

Benny Zlotnick

The submission didn't, the submission could come in January or February.

Tom Richardson

That's correct.

Benny Zlotnick

The money from the village or town had to be spent by December, just so we're clear.

Tom Richardson

That's correct.

Benny Zlotnick

If someone turns paperwork at January, we're not going to say no, no, you missed the deadline.

Tom Richardson

Right? Just as long as the money was spent

Benny Zlotnick

As long as the expenditures were spent in 2021.

Tom Richardson

Exactly.

Benny Zlotnick

Okay. Thank you.

Mo Wright

All right. That's why we put in the resolution, whatever the date is for Steve to reconcile the 2021 books that's the date we do the transfer.

Tom Richardson

Okay.

Frank McClement

If I could just interject, Steve and I have already discussed, this is where the spreadsheet came to, you know, we're keeping track of who submitted and then at a time that the Administrator's office feels appropriate, we can send out a reminder to the board saying, by such and such a date, please submit any outstanding applications for grant reimbursement, so that we can rectify the books and I'll work closely with the Administrator's office on when that date is appropriate. And then once we have that drop dead date, we know then, sort of the last call is taking place, is that appropriate steam, and then the last the last call will have taken place and then the board would know, okay, this is the remaining funds that will in turn allocate to the trust.

Tom Richardson

So I think we should, this probably should be mentioned at the full Board meeting next week. Right. Then so we have a resolution on the floor. We have a second. All in favor.

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tom Richardson

Anybody have any other thoughts before we move on? Okay, so now we need a second resolution, which is for Frank to spend up to \$5,000 out of the trust fund for this Christmas for veterans.

Benny Zlotnick

So moved.

Tom Richardson

Benny's floor. Yes.

Preston Allen

Second.

Tom Richardson

Preston, Second. Any questions in regards to this? If not all in favor.

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Tom Richardson

Anyone opposed? Okay, we're both resolutions passed. We're good to go. The next item is number seven deceased veterans ceremonies.

Frank McClement

Yes, Mr. Chairman, our upcoming deceased veteran ceremonies. We are not having a ceremony here this month in December, as you all are aware, and then our upcoming ceremonies will begin again in January. And that was also distributed. And we would just ask that the chairman read that under committee reports at the full board meeting and I am scrolling through the list, but our upcoming ceremonies in January will be the Town of Malta. We have a veteran and, husband and wife both veterans, that served during the Korean War. In February, we have the Town of Stillwater, we already have a name veteran by the name of Kearney, World War II veteran. And then of course, March, City of Mechanicville, and we all know Chris Sgambati has already been nominated for the City of Mechanicville. So these were names that were brought forth pre pandemic, we're going to continue on with that the towns are all in agreement to maintain those nominations so we'll move forward with executing those ceremonies in the beginning of the year.

Tom Richardson

Thanks, Frank. Anybody have any questions regards to those, if not, we're looking for any other items that anybody might want to discuss.

Ed Kinowski

It's not a necessarily committee thing. For members who call in and they want to hear the vote, to the people present here have to press their button in order for them to hear because I never hear the committee votes or board votes when I'm calling in.

Bridget Rider

For the public line, they can hear what's in the room, for the supervisors and department heads, you have to speak into your microphone for people to hear you.

Ed Kinowski

The people here in order for us to hear. Very good. Thank you.

Tom Richardson

Okay, so do we have any other items come before us today? If not, we're looking for a motion to adjourn.

Ed Kinowski

I'll make that motion.

Tom Richardson

Thanks, Ed. We need a second.

Benny Zlotnick

Second.

Tom Richardson

Thanks, Benny. All in favor.

Several Supervisors

Aye

Tom Richardson

If I don't see you have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Thank you all for listen, thank you all for the, this year's activity and I think we did some great things this year. So I appreciate it. Thanks so much.