

# Veterans Transcript

## 4-5-2022

### **SPEAKERS**

Steve Bulger, Mo Wright, Sandra Winney, Michael Prezioso, Frank McClement, Several Supervisors, Tom Richardson, Eric Butler

### **Tom Richardson**

Attendance was taken. We need approval of minutes from the February 1st meeting.

### **Mo Wright**

I'll move those.

### **Eric Butler**

I'll second.

### **Tom Richardson**

Second. All in favor?

### **Several Supervisors**

Aye.

### **Sandra Winney**

Hi Tommy, this is Sandy.

### **Tom Richardson**

Thank you, Sandy for calling in I appreciate I appreciate the heads up today. Thank you.

### **Sandra Winney**

Okay.

### **Tom Richardson**

Okay, so Veterans Service Office report, Frank.

### **Frank McClement**

Good afternoon, everyone. Good afternoon, those online. A copy of the veteran's service officer office Report for the month, actually, it's for January through the end of March have been distributed to the committee. For brevity sake, I won't go through all the details, but you will notice some things, staying busy in the office with the number of claims assembled and submitted and our scheduled

appointments. You'll see our walk in clients have have gone up and increased. And as a matter of fact, this morning, someone asked me that not too long ago about walkins, I think the county administrator on their visit to the agency, and this morning, oddly enough, we had six within the course of an hour walk in. And sometimes we might not have six all week, but we did this morning. So it was quite the busy morning over at the agency but that's a good thing. You can see the number of events and the trainings that we're attending, there's a lot of virtual options out there, which is really nice, because it seems like once a week, we've got a new training or online information session to attend. So it's good because there's a lot of information out there and there's a lot of benefits and services out there and it allows us to stay on top of things. Our van transportation, though our numbers are still a lot lower than they were pre pandemic, that seems to be picking up a little bit. And hopefully the VA will start to open up some of the programs that we lost because of the pandemic. One of the big ones is the adult day health care program down at the VA, that was a great program. And it represented about 50 to 60% of our ridership on any given day. Still not open with that program but we hope that they will move in a direction where they can offer that to our veterans. Again, it's a big deal for the family members as much as it is for the veterans because it allows a little bit of respite for those who are caregivers for their either their husband or their veteran parent and they can go down to the VA and get a lot of things taken care of while they're down there. And then it gives those folks an opportunity to maybe do some shopping and have some time for themselves, maybe even just take a nap. So it's a good program and we really hope that the VA will bring that back. And when it does happen, we will see our ridership go up significantly. So we'll keep you abreast on that. Some of the activities in our peer to peer program, our coffee night remains a successful program, we've decided to start hosting our coffee night in house at the agency. When we first leased the space that was one of the ideas that we had and for a number of different reasons we kept it at the coffee traders location. But there was an interest within the group and with our new program coordinator to try some different things. We've got a grill at the office. So instead of just having coffee night, actually they're getting together we're doing pizza night, burgers and dogs, number of different things. We've got some technology in the room in the meeting space room to where if they want to watch and have a movie night, they can do that. So we've been gathering in house, it's been pretty successful and as the nice weather is upon us, they'll be able to move out into the yard space at our facility as well for overflow if they want to get some fresh air. So it's working out very well. And we're glad that the veterans who participate, most of them are regulars but we do have a lot of new folks that come in and out. But so far, they've really been enjoying it. So we're happy about that. And you can see some of the other events that our appear program has participated in, they didn't find the love contests a way to get everybody engaged on our social media pages, where veterans could go out and find hearts in nature naturally occurring in nature and they they submit a photograph to the Facebook page. And then our program coordinator put together a prize for the for the winner of the program. So just another way to try to you know reach out and get people engaged with the program. So another new program I'd like to point out is our our Guitar Club. One of our veteran mentors actually is a guitar player and teacher and she's partnered with a friend of hers who is also a guitar teacher and they're offering it once a month. They even have some extra guitars that they are bringing in, and any veterans who want to come in and, and experiment or learn on the guitar, they can come in, it's just the club, there's no cost. And they use our meeting space again. And and they do that on on a Thursday evening, once a month. And hopefully if if they build up some, if they build up some interest, maybe they'll move that to twice a month. So just another offering that we're trying to do

something different. I can't play the guitar, you know, not too good. I tried it about 16 different times. So I'm gonna lay off Guitar Club, but

**Mo Wright**

You sing along, at least?

**Frank McClement**

Maybe. And that's the Office report. Are there any questions from the committee or anybody here?

**Tom Richardson**

Anybody have any questions?

**Mo Wright**

The only question I mean, that's the next thing. I guess the trust fund. I see there was that was a pretty big deposit, we put unspent funds from last year from the veterans,

**Frank McClement**

if you'd like to move on Mr. Chairman, I can explain that to them.

**Tom Richardson**

Go ahead, yeah. Please do that.

**Frank McClement**

Yeah. So if, if, if you all recall, I know supervisor Wright was on that committee last year. We had the veterans grant program, the one-time grant program that the Board of Supervisors offered to the individual towns and municipalities. Towards the end of 2021, Supervisor Wright Proposed a resolution to reallocate any unused funds to the trust fund and that that allowed two things. One, it, it ensured that the funds would continue to go towards the benefit of veterans in the counties without getting re appropriated back to the general fund. And two it gave some of the town's that had not submitted their request by the end of the year a little bit more time and leeway because some events and offerings at the town level were canceled due to the pandemic and allowed for us on an accounting side of the house to go ahead and take care of any outstanding grants that came in. So you will see that there was a transfer of \$27,314.24 that represented the outstanding amount from that program. And as of this report, we have a balance on hand of \$142,043.66. That will be reduced because we had about five grants that were hanging out there at the end of the year, by next month, that number will be reduced by those outstanding grants. And there still will be some money left from that allocation in the trust fund. And we can use that for the betterment of our veterans in the county going forward. So

**Mo Wright**

just for accounting purposes, you put it in the trust fund, and then it's going to be paid on the trust fund. Oh,

**Frank McClement**

correct.

**Mo Wright**

Okay, I just, I just look like a lot of money that was unspent and I thought we had spent more.

**Frank McClement**

Right. So Right. So any town that wasn't able to take advantage, we can still take an application from those towns, and if not, the rest of the funds will remain in the trust fund will go towards veterans and their families in the county going forward.

**Mo Wright**

You're not going to offer it to towns that already took advantage though right, just the Towns that haven't.

**Frank McClement**

We have we been keeping track. Yes, that's correct. Just yeah. We have a spreadsheet that we've been maintaining, I've been sharing that with the county administrator's office as well. So we're all on the same page on who's taken advantage who hasn't.

**Mo Wright**

Good.

**Sandra Winney**

Frank this is Sandy Winney are we going to try to get this for another year. Another grant like this for the Towns?

**Mo Wright**

It's not in the budget.

**Sandra Winney**

Or will we skip a year.

**Frank McClement**

So it wasn't in the budget this year. But what we are promoting amongst the veterans' organization is the 2 million our county nonprofit program. So we've been promoting that heavily throughout the veteran community and in amongst the veteran nonprofits throughout the county, as I'm sure other counter my other counterparts have been doing their sectors, but that's the program that we're promoting this year is the \$2 million nonprofit.

**Sandra Winney**

Okay,

**Steve Bulger**

And just to that point if I may, Chairman,

**Tom Richardson**

Yes please.

**Steve Bulger**

We've got about a dozen as of today, about a dozen applications in the queue from veterans' organizations, VFW Post Legion posts, different types of veterans' organizations, and during the second quarter that will all be reviewed and the supervisors will make those decisions but they are coming in so thank you.

**Sandra Winney**

Okay.

**Tom Richardson**

Upcoming Honor Deceased Veterans, Frank. Everybody got the list for that?

**Frank McClement**

Yes, that went out with the that one out with the materials for the agenda. Our upcoming honor deceased veterans ceremonies will start back up this month here in April. We already had some folks in the hopper from pre pandemic. So the very first ceremony It will be a great ceremony, the Town of Malta, and a husband and wife, both veterans, Doris and John Principe and they served during the Korean War. So we'll be looking to honor them at two o'clock on the third Tuesday of the month before the board meeting. And then moving on to May is the Town of Stillwater, we have a name already and nominee, Lawrence Rex Carney. We did have a scheduling conflict with Mechanicville and Waterford was gracious enough to switch with Mechanicville for June. So Waterford is selecting their candidate at right now, Corinth in July, and then Mechanicville will be up in August. And we have an honoree, the late great Chris Scambati. So

**Tom Richardson**

I just I just want to mention the reason that I asked for a switch and the time and effort because of the pandemic things have been put off, put off in this Scambati family, which is really quite large. A good portion of the family was going to be away in June, and another good portion of the family is going to be away in July on vacations, whatever. So they asked me if there was anything we could do. So I had a conversation with Frank and with Jack Lawler in regards to that. So that's why that was and very gracious for them to be able to help me out. So I really appreciate that. So thank you. Thank you. Until the next six, the partnership with NYLEAP.

**Frank McClement**

Yes. And I'm going to call on Dr. Prezioso to explain this a little bit further. But several months ago, Dr. Prezioso and myself were up in Glens Falls, with Assemblyman Matt Simpson and Senator Dan Stek, amongst others, and they had a town hall forum, essentially, regarding some pending state legislation and discussing PTSD and mental health amongst veterans and as well as law enforcement. And Dr. Prezioso, myself met a gentleman who is a Warren County Sheriff's deputy, as well as a surviving family member, a brother of a law enforcement officer who committed suicide. And he has started an organization called New York LEAP and they host are called post critical incident seminars, they're

weekend long seminars and we have discussed not only bringing a seminar and partnering with him on a seminar in Saratoga County to work with law enforcement, I'm going to let Dr. Prezioso talk about all of that, but also bringing veterans into the fold, and that it's a direct correlation. And we think that there's opportunity for us to serve a number of different folks in the county and Dr. Prezioso, if you could just expand a little bit.

**Michael Prezioso**

Sure. Thanks, Frank. Thank you. So this, this program actually as Frank mentioned, Deputy Jim Banish, began what's called the New York Law Enforcement Assistance Program. His brother, who was a state trooper, took his own life in 2008. And so this was an organization nonprofit developed to provide support to law enforcement, dealing with various kinds of struggles. They adopted a model that actually came out of the FBI and then sort of blossomed in South Carolina called PCIs, it's post critical incident seminar. It's a three day long seminar and really, I think one of the nice things about this is that it's entirely peer lead. So there are clinicians involved but you know, people like me, we all sit in the back, and the other folks there who facilitate our law enforcement officers themselves, military veterans, sometimes folks who have served in the military and currently on enforcement. It's a really tremendous program. They have large groups, small groups, they have access to clinical care, or at least contact with clinicians, psycho educational things, coping skills, just a host of things. So I had the good fortune of attending in Buffalo and Steve, thank you for, for the opportunity to observe out there it's remarkable the transformation folks come in and some as it was described, to me were voluntold, to attend others, you know, a little bit more volitional transformation from a group of people who really didn't care to be there very much at the outset. One on Monday morning, when things started by Wednesday afternoon, when things were breaking up, complete change in affect, openness, expression, with each other, willingness to be supportive for each other, but then seek additional help on their own, which is what I think was necessary for many people in many cases. I also thought another strength of the program was that there was participation by spouses, because families and family support systems are so critical for the exposures and chronic career related stress that that first responders, law enforcement encounter all the time. So in further discussion with Deputy Banish, we had the opportunity to go and speak with Frank about the possibility of maybe bringing one of those PCISs to Saratoga County coming up. It would be nice for the attendees to maybe have that crossover between law enforcement and veterans, but it's not critical that that be the case, this can actually be open to veterans without any prior law enforcement service. So you know, as this moves along, we're going to develop information and maybe some of the logistics around this and maybe do something that was very similar to what we did a couple years back. The Chairman will remember the program that we did at the gym?

**Tom Richardson**

Yes.

**Michael Prezioso**

It's a peer related program. We took some of the funds that were available through the Dwyer program and apply that for 100 Day program over at one of the local gym facilities, physical fitness, nutrition, wellness, and so forth. So, same idea, but rather than it being a gym program, a wellness program and that way PCIs program to sponsor so that there's no cost to the veterans themselves, the opportunity to participate in the program.

**Tom Richardson**

And if I remember that worked very well.

**Michael Prezioso**

I thought so.

**Mo Wright**

Even Frank lost a couple pounds.

**Tom Richardson**

I don't know what happened to Frank since then. Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Prezioso. Appreciate that. Thanks so much. Frank,

**Frank McClement**

Where Scot Chamberlain when I need him? the MOU with New York City? Yes, sir. So some of you may be aware, but New York State offers a program called Fresh connect checks. And essentially what these checks are coupons that can be redeemed at vendors at local farmers markets. So it's intended to promote local farming and agriculture, locally sourced food and healthy eating amongst two different populations. First, they're offered to seniors through the Office for the Aging and for many years, our county Office for the Aging could distribute these to our senior population, they began to be offered to veterans regardless of age several years ago. However, the only folks that could distribute them are the New York State Division of Veterans Services offices. We do have one New York State Division of Veteran Service office in Saratoga County, but they're only in their office two days a week because the full time person that they had Gentleman by name Paul Stoa, when he moved into another role, they only backfill this position two days a week, splitting the time with Queensberry. We did partner with those individuals to try to get fresh connect checks out to our veteran population, but we would have to do a one off event. And essentially, we invited them the coffee night, or we invited them to the office, and we did it that way. Otherwise, if folks called us we had to refer them over to that office. They've now opened it up to allow the county veteran's service agencies to distribute these checks to veterans, there's no cost to the county, there's not a whole lot of heavy lifting to my staff. There's very simply a one page form that needs to be filled out, we just have to record the numbers on the booklet that we give them and have the individual signed for them. And then we scan that documentation and provide it back to the state. But other than that, the only thing they're asking is to sign a memorandum of understanding. We don't need a board resolution for our county attorney's office. We I consulted with them. But I would just like the veterans committee's blessing to move forward with the program and offer this to our veterans in the county.

**Mo Wright**

I'll move that.

**Tom Richardson**

Absolutely.

**Eric Butler**

I'll second.

**Tom Richardson**

Eric, thank you. All in favor?

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Tom Richardson**

Just a quick question, Frank. Like how much is the value of one of these says \$2 or something? Right?

**Frank McClement**

Yeah, well, the individual but I think each veteran gets a booklet of \$20. Okay, I can tell you a couple of years ago, I got a booklet of \$20 from the New York State when they were in our office. And I went to the farmers market in Waterford and I couldn't spend them and they were, you know, I had like a pile of vegetables this big. You know, I mean, it goes a long way when you're buying fresh grown produce at some of the farmers markets. And I know that we have some really, really great farmers markets in the county. So if we can offer this, we're doing two things. We're assisting veterans, some of them who might that might be a big deal as far as their diet is concerned and being able to access food. But the other thing I think we're doing is we're promoting our farmers markets. And I know last year I attended Halfmoon's Farmers Market on several different occasions. We had a table there. So if we do we'll give them out right the farmers markets, you know, that we attend, so I think it's a win for everybody.

**Tom Richardson**

That's great. Thanks, Frank. Appreciate that. Any questions in regards to that? Anybody? Sandy you okay with everything so far?

**Sandra Winney**

I think it's a great idea.

**Tom Richardson**

Okay. Thank you. Thank you. So moving on under other business model, I want you to bring up your idea.

**Mo Wright**

All right. Yeah. It's actually not my idea stole from Sara Boerenkoo. She's a mental health and public health director of Montgomery county. Excuse me, she spoke at NYSAC and I went to one of her sessions for, it's actually a mental health session. And I don't know if anybody's heard her speak. She's a young girl. It's, she's a go getter. But she hadn't. She was given out bags. And in the bag, she had these coasters. And Montgomery County's put suicide prevention stuff on our coaster. And it just, I was sitting there thinking what a great way to get some information out to our veterans. During her what she was talking about, she was talking how veterans are real susceptible of suicide and 90% of veterans that had committed suicide had alcohol in their system. So I thought, if we can get some information out



to our VFW, and American Legions on a coaster, and we had a veteran sitting there and maybe thinking about suicide, having a beer of trying to get some courage up, and he gets to read this coaster and we put some information out there to help them whether it's, you know, a suicide prevention, the New York state hotline, or the our Veterans Service numbers or whatever. It's like, I brought the idea back to Steve actually, I talked to Steve down in Albany about it, he thought was a great idea. So I brought it to Frank, I brought it to Tommy and I believe between Frank and Christine had come up with a they've come up with a with an idea with for coasters and some prices for it. So I know Frank has a picture of what would go on these cultures. We just thought we can come out to the VFW, American Legions around the county and if we can save one life, we save a life. I mean,

**Tom Richardson**

Absolutely.

**Mo Wright**

The money we can we can order them I guess they are like \$700, or \$500 wasn't it Frank.

**Frank McClement**

Yes.

**Mo Wright**

The money can be paid for out of the Dwyer funding. I mean, it's not gonna be really County but it's just a way maybe we can get some information out to our veterans and I just thought was a great idea. But I can't really take the credit because I stole it from Sarah. So

**Tom Richardson**

I think one of the best things that happened in the world is plagiarism. I've always been good at that stealing other people's ideas and making them work.

**Mo Wright**

I told her I spoke to Sara about it afterwards and I told her I was gonna do this. So I'm really it's not really plagiarism. I got her blessing.

**Tom Richardson**

Okay, very, very good.

**Mo Wright**

Sara's my wife's cousin. So I've known her

**Tom Richardson**

You have to be careful. Okay.

**Frank McClement**

The Beatles, The Beatles in the Stones started out as cover bands.

**Tom Richardson**

Exactly. I mean, that's, that's where all good ideas come from. There's a lot of great ideas floating around. And it's, you're in the right place at the right time. And I think it's terrific. So Frank, anything else you want to add?

**Frank McClement**

If I could just provide an update, and maybe a little background on what we did so after the after the referral from supervisor Wright and in the county administrator's office, Christine and I started working on putting together something. Christine is tremendous job. She, she ran about six different versions of the coaster, and she really does a great job with the graphic design, that is something that I'm not talented at but she really is. And we came up with the design that that we passed out, we ran the design by Dr. Prezioso. Talked to him about content as far as the important numbers, we did include some of our contact or at least that we're sponsoring the coaster, but we wanted the crisis lines on there. So you know, based upon what our purposes and where we're going with this program, you know, these individuals might be in crisis at that moment. So we included the Veterans Crisis Line, which is a VA national suicide prevention hotline that is staffed by live folks, trained counselors and then we included the national suicide prevention hotline, as well as our own local office of mental health number, I believe is on there as well. I'm not even I'm not looking. Yes, right. But Dr. Prezioso, and myself, we just talked about what you know what contacts should be on there and we both felt that that was important. So I was happy to have his input on that. And then we ordered the coaster. So we'll have him the third week in April, and for 5000 coasters, which will be more than enough to get out to our local American Legions and VFWs I think we're spending just over 600 less than \$700 I apologize. I forgot to quote at the house or at the office. But for less, you know, for a voucher, we're getting 5,000 coasters essentially. So

**Mo Wright**

actually, this is the coaster that Montgomery county put out there. And Sarah did say that some of these coasters did disappear out of the so that's a good thing. You're hoping they do disappear, wind up in somebody's coat pocket, they're taking it home.

**Frank McClement**

We had done in the past, we did just simply like a business card an emergency contacts business card with the peer connection logo through our Dwyer program. And then also, the Suicide Prevention Coalition did coffee sleeves and when supervisor Wright brought the idea there was the perfect marrying of the two. So we thought it was a great idea as well and, and a real simple thing to do to get the message out. So we're hoping that it's successful. And if we can save one person, then all our time and effort well spent.

**Tom Richardson**

Well, thank you. Thanks so much.

**Mo Wright**

Thank you for Steve for following up.

**Tom Richardson**

Frank, come on back up for one second. I think before we adjourn, it just we're always talking about how our van takes people down to the VA hospital and everything. So you want to give us an update as to the new van. Sure.

**Frank McClement**

So I've been working with Shepard brothers actually, they are the state contract, I was hoping to try to see if we could source a new vehicle a little bit more locally, but for supply chain reasons and also the ease of utilizing state contract I've been working with Ed Gallagher was the gentleman we sourced our last vehicle from at Shepherd brothers and he just sent me a finalized revised quote, last week. So I expect this week to work with John Warmt's team and purchasing get a purchase order in and get the get the new vehicle on order. There is going to be a significant lead time but we will be on order. And we will issue a purchase order this month here in April that I expect to do that.

**Tom Richardson**

And just refresh everybody's memory why the new van is necessary,

**Frank McClement**

Well the new van is necessary, because I believe it's five years ago now when we upgraded to our current van. About 30 days in we had a driver at the time who thought it would be better served as a convertible. So we had have a new roof put on there, the current van not only is it got about 160-170,000 miles on it to this point, we are starting to experience a little bit of water leakage, things of that nature resulting from the accident that happened five years ago. So it's time to get an order. And by the time the new vehicle is able to be built and delivered. We'll have that much more miles on there. And then of course, you know, the only reason we don't have more mileage is because we weren't really using it a lot like we used to so because you know we'd probably be you know, we'd probably be close to 200,000 miles if COVID didn't happen. So it's time and ah, this service for the people that we provide the service for is a big deal to them. And so as I mentioned earlier, if more of these programs open up at the VA, it becomes an even bigger deal. And it's a small thing that we can do to take care of them. And so it's a great thing to do. And I'm looking forward to getting the new vehicle in service.

**Tom Richardson**

Very good. Thank you, Frank, for that update. Anybody have any other questions for Frank?

**Steve Bulger**

Very briefly, Mr. Chairman, I just want to thank Frank and Dr. P. They hosted my team and to Director Chamberlain this week on tours of their locations, which are extremely helpful for us to understand their operations, their situations and how we can assist them. Thank you on behalf of our team to you guys.

**Tom Richardson**

Thanks. Thanks for saying that Steve I appreciate it. Anybody have any other questions or thoughts or seeing none? Motion to adjourn?

**Eric Butler**

I'll make that.

**Mo Wright**

Second.

**Tom Richardson**

Very good. all in favor.

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Tom Richardson**

See you all next month. Thank you so much.