



## Kent County Veterans Services

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Minutes 5/19/2022

Committee present: Mary Johnson, Melvin Bauman, Michael Blundell, Trish Torres, Chris Kamps, Jill Wolfe

Committee absent: Reggie Howard

Staff present: Ryan Grams, Martha Burkett

Guests: None

1. Meeting called to order/ instructions-
  - a. The meeting was called to order by veterans services committee chair Mary Johnson.
2. Pledge of Allegiance – lead by Committee and KCVS Staff
3. Approval of the minutes from June Meeting-
  - A. Approved by Chris Kamps, Seconded by Michael Blundell
4. Success stories
  - A. Kent County Veterans Services Manager Martha- Arbor Circle saw 34 vets. Their groups are starting to grow with up to 7 people showing up for different activities. Overall the program is doing well. They are seeing for referrals from the Treatment Court, VA, Probation and other community agencies. The community is starting to realize the value of what's going happening there and starting to receive more community support.
5. Manager Report
  - A. KCVS Supervisor Ryan- We had a busy month, we had 2 more fully developed claims than the month before. So, we are always growing. (Month previous was )
  - B. Still doing Meijer food vouchers, numbers were high trying to keep people feed. The face to face interactions are going up to where they were a few months ago, so that's exciting.
  - C. Any questions?
    - a. None

## 6. Manager Report

### A. Current Budget Report

- a. KCVS Supervisor Ryan- So far everything is coming in under budget and we are starting to see the payments go out to different programs. Now you are able to see where the payments are going with stuff going on in the county and you can see the budget starting to move so you can see some progress in the numbers.

### B. Michael Blundell- Do we have any feedback from the cleaning people?

- a. KCVS Manager Martha- Yes, we have had feedback from the cleaning people. They have plenty of space. So, if you know of any veterans, have them reach out and apply for the program because we have plenty of money. So far, the families that we are working with, it is going very well. We have had some hiccups and glitches, but they are reaching out to us and letting us know. They are very respectful and reaching out to us if the veteran is possibly needing more assistance. So that we are able to reach out the veteran to see if there are other services that we are able to help connect them with. Overall, its going well and creeping along. We just need more participants.

### C. Mary Johnson- Do we have any feedback on the Acudetox?

- a. KCVS Manager Martha- Yes, we have it regularly scheduled. That was another thing out of the Arbor Circle report and said they have 4 or 5 people from their program that are actively taking advantage of it. There are sometimes that she comes and has one or two people, but it's catching on. It is slow catching on because we didn't get an opportunity to advertise it.

### D. KCVS Supervisor Ryan- Let me come back to the cleaning program. They were out working with a man who had broken windows. I was able to spend the week talking with Allison from Senior Neighbors, so they can get out to the home to fix the windows. It was nice to get out and work together with Senior Neighbors.

## 7. Old Business

### A. Melvin Bauman – So far, we have passed out 90 signs. I spoke with Steve at Grand Valley and he has some students who have agreed to hand out signs so I will meet with him. I did place another order for 100 signs so that we don't run out. I will be getting those from Tammy at the veteran's court, she also has some for the gun show to hand out. Tammy also has some handouts about the millage vote to hand out at the gun show.

### B. Mary Johnson- We are also doing the Sparta Beer and Brats, which is the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. We have some more activities coming up. We have the Grandville Parade which is July 4<sup>th</sup>.

### C. Jenny – There were a couple things that I've been asked about last time that I can talk about. There was a suggestion of putting a sign on the freeway pointing to veteran service this exit. I think I have tracked down a person with MDOT that I think can help with that, I tried to call but he wasn't available keep working on that. I also reached out to the Airport about putting part of the Art prize piece on display and about perhaps having volunteers in the military welcome room. I reached out to the Deputy airport administrator and asked him

who can I talk to about the program and the Spartan Nash room. Mell says his experience is he talks to airport and the airport says talk to Spartan Nash and Spartan Nash says talk to airport. Mary went to the Treatment court retreat and spoke to the alliance, they would very much like to help in the matter. Mike brought up an issue with the airport of parking to do this also. Jenny will check into that.

8. New Business

- A. SSR Policy Review – Ryan – I had a question of the verbiage in our SSR policy that we have never encountered before. It is about the eligible dependent part of the policy we have written, “The spouse or the un-married surviving spouse or child less than 18 years of age or permanently disabled before age 18 or parent as allowed by IRS of a veteran who meets the above criteria. The spouse or children of a service member during the continuance of present hostilities and prior to their discharge.” The exact question that came up was a surviving spouse called asking if she was still eligible off her first spouse. Her first spouse was a veteran he passed away then she remarried a civilian and he passed away then she remarried again to another civilian and he has passed away. I started looking further into this, went to the Public act that governs the SSR fund and it said see 38 CFR 3.215, then went there and printed it off for you. The CFR states, “On or after January 1, 1971, benefits may be resumed to an unmarried [surviving spouse](#) upon filing of an application and submission of satisfactory evidence that the [surviving spouse](#) has ceased living with another person and holding himself or herself out openly to the public as that person's spouse or that the [surviving spouse](#) has terminated a relationship or conduct which had created an inference or presumption of remarriage or related to open or notorious adulterous cohabitation or similar conduct, if the relationship terminated prior to November 1, 1990. Such evidence may consist of, but is not limited to, the [surviving spouse's](#) certified statement of the fact.” I wanted to bring this up for the committee to think about, we still need to set up our yearly review of the SSR policy for motion and approval, and this is one of the things to think about for that. Mary states we need to set a review date for the policy.
- B. Mary- Only other information I have is the federal government is closing 17 hospitals facilities in the United States and Battle Creek is one of them. I have been in that facility and it is terrible. There is a meeting next Wednesday at 10:30 am I have sent an email out to all of you about that meeting and believe it can be done by zoom also. I believe what they will be doing is building a new facility closer to Grand Rapids, and then a clinic down in the Kalamazoo Battle Creek area. I think we will keep our clinic also.
- C. Rachel – For your situational awareness since our last meeting Charlie has left and HR and Martha are in process of getting a pool together for applicants to fill that position. Also, Nelson has been let go and because that position is a contract position the postings are a little bit different, so we have put that out into the community. In the meantime, I have taken over the responsibilities of that position till we can get it filled feel free to keep giving out that number.
- D. Rachel – I just want to do a quick rundown of the things I was able to attend since our last meeting. We are doing Art Prize again at the Veteran's Memorial park she is doing a piece with motorcycle helmets this year. The same day I was able to go to Dwelling place and talk to them about our music therapy program. Our music therapy does stuff with textured objects which is good for memory care patients. From that I was able to meet Dylan Hescott from Careline they are a hospice care program, and they were able to come to our staff meeting yesterday, I am trying to get other organizations to come to our staff meetings so we can learn more about each other's services. I was able to go to the Campaign kickoff for Be Together at the Mental Health foundation. I was really cool to get to see the new Special Olympics Facility. Two days later Ryan and I went to the grand opening of the Disability Advocates of Kent County new office in the same facility. We were able to also get a tour of the entire facility from the facilities manager there Drew Nelson who also has done some music for us at different events. I went and did tour of the Dwelling Place, Regional and I got

- to go to one of their meetings and they have many different organizations under their one umbrella. There were six coordinator directors there and we got to talk about our services and claims also handed out r hats for them to take back. I met with a veteran who attends many of our events and he wants to start a non profit and wanted to pick our brains about what we do, and he has a meeting with the vet center next week. I did another meet and greet with Diversified Medical staffing. Ryan, Theresa, and I went to a Senior Neighbors meet your neighbor luncheon, where we got to meet and chat with a nurse from the VA clinic, and handed out our cards. I have a meeting with the social workers from the clinic next week to talk about if there are gaps and what we are doing, really just start a relationship. Found there are gaps for transportation and child care. Transportation is a large issue. It will help with the VA hospital being in Grand Rapids. We are hosting the stand down this year and we have been looking for a good place to store the surplus from the VA to hand out to homeless veterans. Mel was able to facilitate the reserve center on three mile to store everything till the stand down which is a huge help. Our facilities since it is during the week will help us transport and set up.
- E. Mary – I want to talk a little about the Accudetox that is a program that is running 4 sessions a week right now. Rachel said Martha has opened it up to walk ins, and partners also. Crystal is one of the most approachable ladies.
  - F. Reggie – Is it possible to have the surplus shipped right to the Facility on Three mile, problem I have is when it gets delivered I need to unload it by hand then reload it and transport it over there. Mel says we can make that work. Reggie says he will get with John and then will make contact with you.
  - G. Rachel – I was able to go to senior rally at Area Agency of Aging and connect with a few older veterans. I met with Jason from Davenport University, in the fall we will be able to have a presence there on campus monthly by their veterans lounge. This past week I went to a military appreciation event at Borsch Aerospace they love their veterans, this is the second time Ryan and I went there last year. They had a food truck there and was able to talk to veterans over taco's.
  - H. Jenny – asked if Rachel had a spreadsheet of all the organizations she has attended and Rachel does and get that to her.
  - I. Mary – I meant to say earlier that at the Leadership summit that basically told the group that Kent County Veteran Services is the benchmark, that we have started out with nothing and built it to what we have today.
  - J. Mel – We will be doing the retreat up at Rockwell Lodge again this September and if you have never attended you should it's a really great experience. One question did come up last time for do we have an Alcoholics anonymous chapter here? Mel had a volunteer that wont say his name that has been sober many years now and would be willing to run the chapter for us. Reggie also brings up that many veterans don't go to AA meetings in community with civilians and would prefer it only with veterans. Mary Brings up veterans find the meetings boring and that other don't understand where vets are coming from in these meetings.

9. Public comment: None

- A. Adjournment. Veterans Services Committee Chair Mary Johnson moved adjourned to the meeting.

B. Entered Closed Session.