

# Veterans Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date/Time/Location:** August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019/10:00 a.m. /Veterans' Conference Room, Whatcom County Health Department

**Members Present:** Wes Weston, Allan Jensen, Richard Conoboy, Ward Nelson, Paul Pelot

**Members Absent:** Andrea Vance, Robert Hines, John Mitchell, Lynne Graham

**County Staff:** Elizabeth Harmon-Craig, WCHD Veterans Specialist; Anne Deacon, WCHD Human Service Manager; Emily West WCHD Coordinator;

**Guests:** Gene Goldsmith, DAV; Nathaniel Davis, OPPCO; Mike Parker, OPPC

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
<b>1. Call to order</b>	Meeting called to order by Chair Paul Pelot	Paul Pelot
<b>2. Roll Call/ Introductions</b>	Roll call, quorum present.	All
<b>3. Review/Approval April, 2019 minutes</b>	Minutes of April, 2019 reviewed. Motion made (Ward) and seconded (Wes) to approve minutes as presented. A vote was held and the motion passed.	<b>Motion:</b> To approve the April, 2019 minutes as presented. <b>Aye: 5, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 4</b>
<b>4. New Business</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>• Community Clergy Training Program (CCTP) Overview by VA Chaplain Cowden</b></li> </ul>	Chaplain Cowden with the VA presented and overview on the Community Clergy Training Program (CCTP). The programs goal is to educate clergy, stakeholders, and mental health professionals together to bring mental health tools into the local community. There are four modules; 1. "Military Culture and Wounds of War" 2. "Pastoral Care with Veterans and their Families" 3. "Mental Health Services and Referrals," and 4. "Building Community Partnerships". The first module is meant to primarily educate pastors who may not be Veterans themselves to become more comfortable identify those men and women in their congregation who are Veterans and are dealing with some of these issues. The 2 <sup>nd</sup> module helps the community mental health professionals and clergy gain handles on how they can best serve Veterans. A survey was done among mental health professionals and only 17% agreed with the statement that they were comfortable with dealing with the mental health issues of Veterans. The 3 <sup>rd</sup> module is about making referrals and connecting Veterans to mental health services; after giving pastors and mental health professionals some tools a lot of the early mental health services can be provided locally and then as the Veteran gains comfort they can be referred to centers for help. The last module is all	<i>Chaplain Cowden</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Veterans Experience Office Network Opportunity</b></li>   <li>• <b>2019 Veterans Survey Link Update</b></li>   <li>• <b>Program Updates</b></li> </ul>	<p>about building community partnerships.</p> <p>The modules are in an interactive video format and usually take about half a day each; two days of intensive training or they can be broken down into different training segments based on preference or needs and can be adapted to who the training is for. The training mission is to give pastors, clergy members, and community stakeholder’s awareness and a degree of comfort to handle these situations and also to provide communities with the tools to create action boards to be more proactive in reaching out to Veterans who are reluctant to engage in seeking help. Ultimately this training is a tool for suicide prevention.</p> <p>Chaplain Cowden would love to come to Bellingham and use it as a natural base to start working with different communities in the county and has asked for help with local outreach. The board will try to get connections and some solutions to Chaplain Cowden for outreach.</p> <p>Bob Mortensen with the Veterans Experience Office invited the board to join their network of Community Veteran and Engagement Boards. Essentially it provides a means to communicate through government delivery on an array of issues in the Veteran realm. The requirement to join the network is having the boards website published on their website, along with the contact information of the chair and co-chair.</p> <p>Motion made (Ward) and seconded (AI) to put this as a discussion topic for the October meeting. A vote was held and the motion passed.</p> <p>The survey link is up and has been emailed out to the board in the agenda. The survey will be open through the end of October. The focus of the survey is health care and accessibility for Veterans.</p> <p>VSO claims are well over 100. As a federally accredited VSO, Liz’ time is spent dramatically different. She has been seeing the results of the claims from last fall and the results have been incredible; a lot of former long term clients are receiving the 100% disability rating which is \$3200 for a single person and \$3600 for married couples a month tax free. Liz is looking for a volunteer VSO or VSOs to work with her under her WDVA federal accreditation to help with the workload.</p> <p>Doris no longer has her federal accreditation so she can be a claims advisor but she cannot speak to the VA on the Veterans behalf. Jim Pace is having some</p>	<p><i>Bob Mortenson</i></p> <p><b>Motion:</b> To add Veterans Experience Office network invite to the October agenda for discussion. <b>Aye: 5, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 4</b></p> <p><i>Liz</i></p>
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	<p>political issues so he is not doing claims either. Pam and Richard at the Vet Centers accreditation ends at the end of the year and potentially will not be renewed due to the VVA gradually fading away.</p> <p>The state passed the legislation that counties under 100,000 could receive state funding for VSOs. Whatcom County is too big. Liz is working with fellow board members in San Juan County to get the funding with the goal that the State will eventually broaden the funding to larger counties. Washington State is the only state without paid federally accredited services officers at the county level.</p>	
<b>5. Reports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fund Balance</b></li> <li>• <b>Veterans Specialist Report</b></li> </ul>	<p>The veterans fund balance is \$687,010.80</p> <p>55 VSO Claims March 1 thru May 29, 2019 61 VSO Claims June 1 thru August 7, 2019 The Veterans Specialist has WDVA and Federal VA VASO Accreditations</p>	<p><i>Liz</i></p> <p><i>Liz</i></p>
<b>6. Good of the Order</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liz and Doris are doing a walkthrough at Lairmont Manor for a large event tentatively on August 31 for Blue Water Veterans because they are now eligible for Agent Orange service connections. Donations for breakfast or lunch supplies are welcome.</li> <li>• As fall approaches there will be hiring events throughout the area and there is a huge push for census work; send Veterans interested in census work to Paul.</li> <li>• The American Legion Act was passed by congress so they no longer have limitations on time of service. Al will send the information to Liz to distribute.</li> <li>• The Coast Guard Authorization Act is a two year appropriation and if it passes it includes authorization to pay the Coast Guard in case there is a government shutdown.</li> <li>• The last Friday of every month Northwest Hearts United (equestrian therapy) offers a free breakfast.</li> <li>• Project Homeless Connect went well and there were around 35 people that visited the Veterans room. Great items were donated for people such as tents and sleeping bags.</li> </ul>	
<b>7. Next Meeting</b>	<p>Next meeting will take place on October 14th, 2019</p>	
<b>8. Adjourn</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Paul</i></p>