



Winnebago County Veterans Affairs Commissioners Board Meeting

Thursday, January 20, 2022

10:00 am

Courthouse Board Room

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Pledge

Present: Barney Ruitter, Steve Bosma and Mary Lou Kleveland. Absent: Dave Peterson

2. Review and Approval of Previous Monthly Meeting Minutes

The November monthly meeting minutes were approved. Bosma motioned, second by Ruitter.

3. Veteran Service Officer Reports:

- a. Monthly VA numbers: Mary Lou reported that there continues to be lots of phone calls and office visits from veterans who are realizing there is a new VSO and they are ready to file claims or get assistance with other issues. Each month during 2022, Mary Lou will be sharing the Winnebago County VA statistics from the previous month – phone calls, in person visits, new cases, active cases, etc.
- b. Community Outreach –Mary Lou shared that there have been several issues with the HyVee bag program benefitting Winnebago County Veterans Affairs in January. Mary Lou contacted the corporate program director and she has offered us another month to be the beneficiary because of the issues this month. Mary Lou reported that she chose November as the month to piggyback on everything planned for Veterans Day. There will be two new ads running on K10W during the month of February. Mary Lou will be doing the voice overs for them and each ad will run once a day Monday through Friday. Mary Lou reported that they continue to be effective in reaching veterans in the community. Mary Lou also reported that she contacted Dave Anderson about attending the Lake Mills American Legion breakfast to have information available to veterans and is waiting to hear back from Dave about a date. Steve Bosma shared that Buffalo Center does a big waffle feed at the fire station on Sunday, March 13th and that might be another good opportunity for Mary Lou to have information available to veterans. Mary Lou stated she would contact them and ask about attending the waffle feed.
- c. Review Monthly Expenditure Report Approval – Mary Lou provided the budget report of VA expenses for December 2021. Mary Lou reported that the previous month's negative balance on the office supplies line item was due to an error. The engraving on the memorial monument had been taken out of the office supplies budget instead of the line item specified for the monument engraving. The office supplies line item no longer has a negative balance. Barney Ruitter and Steve Bosma approved the expenditure report and Barney signed it to show approval.

4. Old Business

- a. VA Office Locks: Mary Lou reported that she and Barney Ruitter had a meeting on 12/30 with Winnebago County Attorney Kelsey Beenken regarding a possible HIPAA violation involving the Veterans Affairs Office the summer of 2021 before Mary Lou was hired. Mary Lou gave Steve Bosma and Barney Ruitter a copy of an email from Attorney Beenken regarding the possible HIPAA violation. Attorney Beenken concluded there was not a HIPAA violation. However, the situation was not handled properly and legally so she recommended that a policy be put into place to prevent any incidents like this one in the future. The policy will be that if there is an emergency or vacancy in the Winnebago County Veterans Affairs office, Chris Oliver, VSO for Wright County, will have a set of keys for the Winnebago County Veterans Affairs office door as well as the two locked cabinets containing all the veterans' files so that she can step in to handle any issues. Bosma motioned to approve this policy. Ruitter second. New policy is approved.

5. New Business

- a. VA New & Emerging Information - Mary Lou reported that she had attended the 2023 budget meeting with the supervisors and Karla Weiss on 1/18/22. It was a difficult meeting. The 2023 budget will be much bigger since the VSO position is now full time and includes benefits. Mary Lou noted that the commissioners are supposed to recommend the salary of the VSO and will need to do so in January 2023. Mary Lou will be providing quarterly reports during 2022 to the commissioners to aid them in evaluating the VA office and Mary Lou as the VSO. Also, at the meeting, Mary Lou stated she had been made aware that the VA budget should include a line item for burial of indigent veterans per Iowa Code 35 and the current budget did not have that. The Board of Supervisors informed Mary Lou that Sandy Mirales in Social Services takes care of providing the funds for the burial of indigent veterans so the county is in compliance with Iowa Code 35. Mary Lou informed Steve and Barney that the board of supervisors suggested that the commissioners may be due for an increase of the stipend paid to them for attending monthly meetings. Both Steve Bosma and Barney Ruitter adamantly said they do not need the stipend increased as they are satisfied with the current stipend.

Mary Lou asked for approval to purchase more ads from K10W. The ads are still available at the July contract price of \$9.06 each. To run 2 ads a day Monday through Friday, February through June would be approximately \$1,800. There is budget money and state grant money available to pay this. Bosma motioned and Ruitter seconded to approve this expenditure.

At the February meeting, Mary Lou will have a draft of a policy handbook for the VA office. After discussion on all that is happening in the VA office, it was decided that Mary Lou and the commissioners should attend the Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, February 15th to give them an update.

- b. Next Meeting Date: February 17, 2022 @ 10am.

5. Adjournment – Bosma motioned; Ruitter second

Veterans@WinnebagoCountyIowa.gov

641.585.5736 office

641.585.5737 fax