

Meeting - Veteran's Service Committee & Commission Minutes

Committee: Veteran's Service Committee & Commission

Date: Tuesday June 11th 2019

Time: 3:00 P.M.

Place: Forest County Board Room #107

Call to Order

Chairman Chaney called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M. and read the agenda.

Roll Call

Members Present: Bocek, Cundiff, Berg, Chaney & Savard.

Others Present: VSO Robert Koplien

Approve Agenda

Motion by Savard to approve agenda as presented, seconded by Berg, all present voting AYE.

Motion carried

Approve Minutes of the Meeting

Motion by Savard, to approve minutes of the Thursday February 7th 2019 meeting, seconded by Berg, all present voting AYE.

Motion carried

Veterans Benefits Expo - 2019

VSO reports that the multi-county Veterans Benefits Expo that was held on Friday April 26th from 0800 – 4:00 p.m. at the Rhinelander National Guard Armory was very successful with approximately 200 that attended. VSO reports that he had approximately a dozen Forest County residents attend.

Blue Water Navy Update

VSO reports The Department of Veterans Affairs will not appeal a January court ruling that ordered it to provide health care and disability benefits for 90,000 veterans who served on Navy ships during the Vietnam War, likely paving the way for "Blue Water Navy" sailors and Marines to receive Agent Orange-related compensation and VA-paid health care benefits.

VSO report that VA Secretary stated in March 2019 that he will recommend the Justice Department not fight the decision, handing a victory to ill former service members who fought for years to have their diseases recognized as related to exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange.

VSO explains that this new turnaround by the VA could allow service connected compensation to be paid to tens of thousands of veterans who served on Navy ships during the Vietnam War

VSO also explains that Veterans and their advocates had argued that the ships' distilling systems used Agent Orange-tainted seawater, exposing sailors on board to concentrated levels of dioxin.

VSO reports that he is already submitting articles to local media as well social media in regards to this recent update.

VA Mission Act

VSO reports that Last June of 2018, President Trump signed landmark legislation, known as the VA MISSION Act of 2018, that makes dramatic improvements to how Veterans receive community care—health care provided outside of VA. VSO explains the VA's goal is to give Veterans greater choice over their health care, allowing VA to deliver world-class, seamless customer service either through a VA facility or community provider.

VSO states that Veterans can expect to continue to have access to community care under current programs and then transition to the new program when regulations are final and published

VSO explains this new benefit provides eligible Veterans with access to urgent, non-emergency care for non-life-threatening conditions in VA's network of community providers to include improved care coordination as VA transitions to a single information technology system that better links together VA and community providers to include timely payments for bills as VA transitions to better claims processing systems.

VSO states that this new program started June 6th 2019

VHMS

VSO reports on April 5th 2019 he met with Veterans Handy Man Service.

VSO report that this nonprofit provides a directory of local, skilled veterans who are available to supply handyman services to residents, organizations, and businesses in Forest, Oneida, and Vilas counties.

VSO explains the goal of Veterans Handy Man Service, Inc. is to keep it local - connect prospective customers with skilled veterans residing in the tri-county area. VSO shows joint committee & commission via laptop the website.

DAV Chapter 43

VSO reports that the local Crandon DAV Chapter 43 is on verge of ending the chapter due to low numbers, lack of volunteers and members passing. VSO states he received this info from the current acting DAV Treasurer Vernon Dvorak who also no longer wants to be on the Forest County Veterans Commission. VSO states that Dvorak reports that dues are paid for this year only and will see if current members step up. He will decide on maintaining the charter next year depending on member/volunteer help this year.

WDVA Grant

VSO reports that on March 4th 2019 he received the \$8500 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA). VSO explains the grant help offset wage and office expenses .

Public Comments

VSO reports receiving a detailed thank you letter from a veteran. VSO reports that this letter will be brought to the full county board next week. VSO also reports that this last February he received a twenty-year service award from the county.

Committee board Chair Chaney states that the county is looking into erecting flag poles at the Veterans County Park. Chaney asks if there's any potential grants out there to alleviate costs in regards. VSO

reports nothing that he's aware of but will look into any available grants. VSO asks that if this does happen could there be something made at one of those sites for a flag retirement / ceremony site.

VSO states that currently he doesn't know of any organization within the county other than maybe the American Legion Wabeno Post that does the proper flag retirement. Savard comments in regards to potentially having a school fab lab fabricate a disposal container.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Motion by Savard to adjourn, seconded by Berg, all present voting AYE. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 3:29 p.m.