

Meeting - Veteran's Service Committee & Commission Minutes

Committee: Veteran's Service Committee & Commission

Date: Wednesday November 18th

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Place: Forest County Board Room #107

Call to Order

Chairman Chaney called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and read the agenda.

Roll Call

Members Present: Bocek, Papapetru, Chaney, Berg & Matuszewski

Others Present: VSO Robert Koplien & County Board Chair Cindy Gretzinger

Approve Agenda

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

Motion carried

Approve Minutes of the Meeting

Motion by Berg, to approve minutes of the Monday June 15th 2020 meeting, seconded by Matuszewski, all present voting AYE.

Motion carried

Tri-Care Open Enrollment Update

VSO reports that TRICARE Open Season and Federal Benefits Open Season for enrollment or changes is from Nov. 9 to Dec. 14, 2020 VSO states that active duty family members enrolled in TRICARE Select will experience no change, and won't pay enrollment fees. VSO states that this change doesn't apply to survivors of deceased active duty service members or medically retired retirees and family members. This also doesn't apply if you use TRICARE for Life, TRICARE Prime, or a premium-based plan.

At VSO advises that the Federal Benefits Open Season allows individuals to enroll in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). VSO states that this offers eligible TRICARE beneficiaries a choice between multiple vision and dental plans and carriers. VSO reports that If you're already enrolled in a FEDVIP dental and/or vision plan, your enrollment will automatically continue in 2021. VSO states that if individuals wish to make changes to the existing plan, you must do so during open season.

VSO states that the current 2021 TRICARE Select enrollment fees for Group A retirees and family members include: Individual plan: \$12.50 per month & Family (two or more) plan: \$25 per month & according to the website, the enrollment fee is waived for Active Duty family members, survivors, and medical retirees/family members.

Caregiver Support Expansion News Release

VSO reports that the VA has expanded the Caregiver Support and will roll out in two phases. VSO states that effective Oct. 1, 2020 the first phase includes eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975. Then effective Oct. 1, 2022, the second phase will include eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty between May 7, 1975 and Sept. 11, 2001. VSO reports expansion will open up the program to eligible WWII, Korean and Vietnam Veterans. In addition, eligibility will change to eligible Veterans who have a single or combined VA service-connected disability rating of 70% or higher. This applies regardless of whether the disability is the result of an injury, illness or disease.

Northwoods National Cemetery Update

VSO reports that on October 26, 2020, Northwoods National Cemetery, in Harshaw, Wisconsin, will begin providing burials for Veterans and eligible family members. The cemetery has a full array of interment options for both casket and cremated remains.

VSO states that the Northwoods National Cemetery, located at 4520 Lakewood Road in Harshaw. VSO states that to make burial arrangements at Northwoods National Cemetery, or at any VA national cemetery, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at (800) 535-1117, or go to www.va.gov/burials-memorials. VSO also states for more information about Northwoods National Cemetery you can contact Cemetery Manager Trevor Blake at (906)396-9276 or the Fort Snelling National Cemetery at (612)726-1127.

CVSO OFFICE UPDATES & 2021 Budget Updates

VSO reports that he has been in office on regular hours since Tuesday May 26th. VSO does state that he continues to be provided with (PPE) Personal Protective Equipment to include masks, disinfectant and a glass desk barrier. VSO is taking office visits but recommends phone appointments when able. VSO also reports that he attended the WICVSOA FALL Conference virtually this October and maintained all CEU (Continuing Education) to further his access into VA systems for claims management purposes.

VSO reports that several budget line items have been reduced for the year of 2021. VSO states that a few of his accounts have been reduced to assist the county in an overall county shortfall. VSO states that the accounts decreased were transportation from \$2000 to \$300, training from \$1,600 to \$1000, veteran's relief from \$1000 to \$750 & postage \$400 to \$200 for the year of 2021.

Forest County by The Numbers

VSO reports in a distributed handout that in 2019 there was 846 living veterans, or widows/widowers receiving Federal VA benefits in Forest County. VSO also states that there is \$5.38 million in the amount of compensation and pension benefits that the Forest County Veterans Service Office facilitated in 2019, from the federal Veterans Administration alone.

VSO also states that there is 476 Forest County Veterans who, in 2019, used the VA health care & \$6.44 million in value of VA medical benefits utilized by Forest County Veterans in 2019.

VSO reports in addition that \$117,919 of property tax credit refunded to severely service connected Forest County Veterans and widows (72 filers) of for fiscal year 2019.

VSO also reports that Forest County CVSO Office received 598 veteran related phone calls & had 365 office visits in 2019.

Public Comments

Board Chair Gretzinger advised that Jamey Flannery / Flannery Construction is donating approximately one-million dollars for upgrades to the Veterans Memorial Park. Gretzinger adds that plans are to fill in low land areas, upgrade the sites with more power, adding flag pole site and expand the paved drive around for bikes and walkers. Gretzinger reports that this will be done in conjunction with Forest County on other park upgrades in the year of 2021.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Motion by Berg to adjourn, seconded by Matuszewski, all present voting AYE. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.