



Veterans Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: April 12, 2021 / 10:00 a.m. / Virtual GoToMeeting

Committee Members Present: Allan Jensen, John Mitchell, Lynne Graham, Paul Pelot, Richard Conoboy, Chris Brown, Bob Wilson, Wes Weston

Committee Members Absent: Andrea Vance

Whatcom Co. Health Dept. Staff/Guests: Ann Beck, Samantha Murdoch, Liz Harmon-Craig / Cheri Gleichmann, Teri Bryant

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
1. Call to order	Meeting called to order by Chair Lynne Graham.	<i>Lynne</i>
2. Roll Call	Roll call, quorum present.	<i>All</i>
3. Review/Approval February minutes	February minutes were reviewed. John motioned that the minutes be approved as presented. Robert seconded the motion. A vote was held and the motion passed.	Aye: 8, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0
4. Reports/Discussion VA Virtual Veteran Experience Action Center – Bob Mortenson, VA Seattle	<p>Bob Mortensen introduced Virtual Veteran Experience Action Centers, a pilot project currently active in Florida, Pennsylvania, Colorado, and Arizona, and starting in Alabama next week. The Action Centers is essentially a large-scale phone-based resource fair for veterans' services. These events could continue post COVID-19 as a means to reach more veterans who may not be able to travel for services.</p> <p>Last week an event was held in Arkansas with 761 registered. The previous record was around 500 registered. Arkansas has a relatively small veteran's population. As the project holds more events they learn more about how to engage with veterans and reach more individuals. They estimate if they had provided the same service in Florida the registration would have been around 4000 instead of around 300.</p>	<i>Bob Mortensen</i>



<p>VA Covid Vaccine Information</p>	<p>Veterans only need to register, the VSO engages to obtain documents needed, and the effective date will be established at that time if necessary. For technology barriers, veterans will go into a facility to assist in registration, after which only a telephone is needed.</p> <p>There is a system of applying about 20 measures to rank states by most under served. Currently there is one team to manage one event, but the goal is to develop two teams. One team would be planning an upcoming event while the second team is hosting a current event. The date has not been scheduled for Washington State.</p> <p>The VA Puget Sound Region has opened vaccine to everyone, which includes spouse and care givers. This is the first time the VA has extended benefits to beyond the veteran. You can access this service via this number 206.716.5716.</p> <p>Al Jensen reported there is an application in place for a pop-up clinic in Whatcom County specific to veterans.</p>	<p><i>Liz Witowski</i></p>
<p>VSO Implementation Planning Session</p>	<p>In June Liz Witowski will be the only VSO in Whatcom County. This needs to be addressed before there is a gap.</p> <p>Discussions have occurred about creating a paid position to augment what Liz is currently doing to support Whatcom County, which is currently reported to be about 95% of time spent on VSO claims. To get federal accreditation the position must be at least part time as a County employee, cannot be contract and cannot be per claims basis.</p> <p>Cara McCoy with Nooksack Tribe is in the process of becoming a VSO. They may have a second person in that location that is being credentialed. It is unknown if this will benefit veterans as a whole, or if this will be tribal support solely. Liz is also going to investigate if it is an option to contract allowing federally credentialed support.</p> <p>As the veteran's population ages, there is an increase in claims, and the lack of accreditation means claims are coming in from 4 other counties. A</p>	<p><i>Lynne</i></p>

WHATCOM COUNTY
Health Department



Erika Lautenbach, Director
Greg Stern, M.D., Health Officer

	<p>part time role would support increased need and provide a long-term solution.</p> <p>Paul recommends hiring a P/T VSO to help Liz with claims. Ann Beck recommends that the data on service area and cost be put together and sent out to the members of this board, and then a recommendation can be sent to Council.</p> <p>Chris makes a motion for collection of data on half time, full time and a forecast of projections impacting the fund balance. Second by John. All approved.</p> <p>Ann Beck and Liz Witowski will compile the data, it will be distributed via email for membership feedback. If a special meeting is needed it will be scheduled.</p>	<p>Aye: 8, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0</p>
<p>5. Good of the Order</p>	<p>Fund balance: \$856623.43, general relief fund use is down right now.</p> <p>Paul has access to tons of Army surplus items available for distribution. Seeking to get an 81-year-old Nooksack veteran needs employment, laid off. Wes has free service chair, it was sent out in an email.</p> <p>Dental care for veterans is not being offered at this time, but BTC and SeaMar still have the same available options.</p> <p>The Whatcom County Health Department is having discussions about reopening plans, but this has not been decided.</p>	<p><i>All</i></p>
<p>6. Next Meeting</p>	<p>The next meeting will be held Monday, June 14th, 2021 on GoToMeeting.</p>	<p><i>Lynne</i></p>
<p>7. Adjourned</p>	<p>The meeting was adjourned.</p>	<p><i>Lynne</i></p>