

Veterans Advisory Board of Skagit County

Meeting Minutes: Tuesday, August 09, 2022, at 1300
1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA, 98273

Attendance – Total Attendees

1. Bob Stratton – VAB Board Chair / VFW 5056
2. Bob Garrison - VVA / American Legion Post 91
3. April Patterson – American Legion Post 91
4. Chris Diaz - Skagit County Veteran Service Specialist
5. Carmina Villalobos - Community Action of Skagit County
6. Vernon Hunter – Community Action of Skagit County / Vet Connect
7. Randi Bowman – Worksource / Veterans’ Employment
8. Ande Mitchell - American Legion Post 43 / Vietnam Veteran
9. Bo Watkins - Skagit Valley College Veterans Club
10. Other Attendees - See sign in sheet

Call to Order

- Bob Stratton called to order the regular meeting of the Skagit County Veterans Advisory Board at 1302 on Tuesday, August 09, 2022.
- We have a quorum and can continue with business

Meeting Minutes Approval

- July 2022 minutes were available for review
 - Printed copy available - all members should have received an email with these minutes for review before the meeting
- **Bob G. motioned that we accept the minutes as presented**
 - **Pete Sill seconded the motion**
 - **Motion passed unanimously**

Reports

- Bob Stratton - Board Chair Report
 - We are looking for anyone that is interested in joining our board. They can represent a veteran organization, a veteran owned business, or any veteran that wants their voice heard.
 - Current terms expire on October 31, 2022
 - Bob Garrison and April Patterson are good for two years - all others expire on 10-31-2022
 - We are looking for a two year commitment to attend our monthly meetings
 - We would like to send all the new people’s names to the commissioners at one time so we can save everyone from endless paperwork
- Carmina Villalobos – Financial / Vets Connect Report
 - Vet Connect has a new staff member - Janelle Brock - Welcome to the team!

- She is on a nine (9) month contract - came to us through WorkSource!
 - Vet Connect will be having an all staff retreat on Thursday, September 08, 2022
 - Chris Diaz will be at the office, but the doors will not be open as no Community Action staff will be available
 - Financial Report is attached as well as included in the earlier email
 - We have spent approximately 51% of the annual budget
 - Carmina reports approximately \$62,300 spent as of July 31, 2022
 - ***TJ motioned that we accept the financial report as presented***
 - ***Pete Sill seconded the motion***
 - ***Motion passed***
- Chris Diaz (Skagit County Veteran Service Specialist)
 - We are still looking to add more service organization representation to the board
 - We would like to add several people all at once for two year terms. This would help the commissioners from having to sign documents every time we add someone new
 - We now have an active website for veterans services throughout the county
 - Still looking for pics of veteran events you have from our area for the webpage - this can be from any event that veterans were involved in.
 - Still need some people to submit bios for the website. These will be creatively written if not received soon....
 - The PACT act will be signed this week
 - This will open the door for 3.5 million veteran claims related to burn pits, agent orange, and other Vietnam stuff - See Chris for more details
 - Chris Diaz now sits on the Special Needs Transportation Committee
 - If you have not completed the transportation needs survey, please do so with the needs of veterans in mind. The more people we have filling out this survey, the more amplified our voice

Old Business

- Commissioners Signed Paperwork
 - Commissioners have reviewed Policy & Procedure updates, Gas Voucher updates, and Income Guidelines update
 - Commissioners unanimously approved and signed the above items as well as the new board members/positions
 - Be sure we are getting the word out about the new income guidelines. Veterans can not benefit from these changes if they do not know about them!
- American Legion Post 91 October Stand Down
 - Pete Sill will be assisting Bo with the stand down preparation
- EDASC Regional Job Fair August 30, 2022, from 3:00pm - 6:00pm, at the Northwest Career and Technical Academy next to Skagit Valley College
 - Includes employers from Skagit, Island, and Whatcom Counties
- Welcome Home Vets Picnic - Ande Mitchell
 - Event went great. The Skagit Valley Herald covered the event.
 - It was reported the attendance was between 600-1,000 people!
 - Was able to get a helicopter out to his property from Idaho. He now has the ability to bring the helicopter out for parades and events in the area.
- Coffee for Veterans on Wednesdays - TJ Molendyke

- We have flyers for the American Legion Post 91 coffee time on Wednesdays. Please feel free to post these flyers wherever veterans might be found in your area

New Business

- First Responders Breakfast - Sunday, September 11, 2022, Burlington Senior Center
 - Still awaiting verification to hold the event at the senior center
- CVMA - Pete Sill
 - The CVMA is having a rough time getting supplies - they are very expensive
 - The average ramp costs anywhere from \$4,000-\$7,000 to construct
 - Please only refer veterans in the most dire situations (meaning they have significant issues getting in and out of their home at this time)
 - They are currently doing two ramps in east county and one pressure washing/painting in Sedro Woolley
- Behavioral Health Professional
 - Vet Connect will be getting a part time behavioral health professional
 - Will be coming once a month
 - More details to come
- Getting the word out about services in east county
 - Chris Diaz is working diligently to connect with veterans in east county
 - Pete Sill suggest posting signs/flyers at the Chevron
 - Word of mouth is still the most effective way to get information out to individuals in east county
 - Find places where they hang out - Chevron, the diner, services building, etc. - that is where you put your information and where you make sure your face is seen
 - Chris has gotten lots of support and tends to be booked the entire day with appointments every time he goes to east county
 - This shows the immense need in that area
- Mount Vernon Parks and Rec is looking for a veteran in need
 - The city of Mount Vernon would like to find a veteran they could help by cleaning up their property including yard work and things like that
 - Please see April if you know of a veteran that fits this criteria
- Task Force Tribute
 - Yvette Dwonch is the regional coordinator
 - Huge veterans event at the Skagit fairgrounds
 - Gathering material for a virtual wall
 - Will have a booth at the fair for veterans to submit video stories
 - Will have honor guard, motorcycle rides, police escort, and more
 - Any veteran non profit organization can have a table/booth at no cost
- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)
 - This is also a veterans employment program
 - It provides employment services, tools/supplies for work, etc.
 - All justice involved veterans are considered homeless in this program
 - Veterans only need one (1) day of service to qualify for HVRP services
- Helping Hands
 - Thanks for the invitation to the board

- The Sedro Woolley location has opened their doors again!
 - They have services in Sedro Woolley and several east county locations
- Veteran in need - special circumstances but over income guidelines
 - Bob Stratton, Bob Garrison, and April Patterson will be meeting with this veteran and making a determination for how we can help
 - Board discussed the specific situation and talked about solutions for continuing to support this veteran with other services
 - The board wants to ensure veterans are getting connected with services to continue to thrive, grow, and be successful

Good of the Order

- The American Legion in Burlington is still serving free coffee and donuts to veterans on Wednesdays from 10:00am - 12:00pm at the legion on Fairhaven Avenue
- The Sedro Woolley American Legion is serving coffee on Fridays from 8:00am - 11:00am at the legion on Ferry Street

Adjournment

- ***April Patterson motioned for the meeting to adjourn***
 - ***TJ Molendyk seconded the motion***
 - ***Motion passed unanimously***
- Meeting adjourned at 1412

Minutes submitted by: April Patterson, Second Vice

Minutes approved by: