

Veterans Advisory Board of Skagit County

Meeting Minutes: Tuesday, July 12, 2022, at 1300
1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA, 98273

Attendance – Total Attendees

1. Bob Stratton – VAB Board Chair / VFW 5056
2. Chris Diaz - Skagit County Veteran Service Specialist
3. Vernon Hunter – Community Action of Skagit County / Vets Connect
4. Martin Symonds - Member At-Large
5. Randi Bowman – Worksource / Veterans’ Employment
6. April Patterson – American Legion Post 91
7. Bob Garrison - VVA / American Legion Post 91
8. Ande Mitchell - American Legion Post 43 / Vietnam Veteran
9. Bo Watkins - Skagit Valley College Veterans Club
10. TJ Molendyke – Marine Corp League

Call to Order

- Bob Stratton called to order the regular meeting of the Skagit County Veterans Advisory Board at 1302 on Tuesday, July 12, 2022.
- We have a quorum and can continue with business

Meeting Minutes Approval

- June 2022 minutes were available for review
 - Printed copy available - all members should have received an email with these minutes for review before the meeting
- ***TJ motioned that we accept the minutes amended as follows: It was noted that Bob Stratton would be missing this meeting due to scheduling conflicts. This is not the case as the date of the convention was noted incorrectly. Bob Stratton is in attendance today.***
 - ***Randi Bowman seconded the motion***
 - ***Motion passed unanimously***

Reports

- Vernon Hunter – Financial / Vets Connect Report
 - Financial Report is attached as well as included in the earlier email
 - Board members requested the financial report be corrected to show a date and a comment for the \$50 charge missing this information
 - Board members would like an updated budget balance for the fiscal year
 - TJ Molendyk was concerned about the bus vouchers being placed in different categories, one being in transport and the other being labeled as miscellaneous

- ***April motioned that we accept the financial report as discussed with Carmina/Vernon providing the missing information by next meeting***
 - ***Bob Garrison seconded the motion***
 - ***Motion passed - one nay vote (TJ)***
- Chris Diaz (Skagit County Veteran Service Specialist)
 - We are still looking to add more service organization representation to the board
 - We now have an active website for veterans services throughout the county
 - Please send pics of veteran events you have from our area for the webpage
 - April will be getting pics/headshots after the meeting for those that do not have one for the board section of the county website
 - We also need bios from all board members - please send to Chris Diaz
 - The PACT act is making its way to the President's desk
 - The act hit a small speed bump due to some procedural and Constitutional matters that came up and are being fixed
 - 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
 - He can now advocate for more funding for veterans with special transport needs (wheelchairs, resources, other health issues, etc.)
- Raymond Irving - SSVF
 - Raymond is now at Vet Connect working with Susan, Kelly, and Carmina
 - VASH vouchers & transitional housing are full
 - Working with rideshare programs to get vets to appointments
 - Seems to be working fairly well...still need more time to evaluate

Old Business

- Issues sent to Commissioners for review
 - Commissioners will be reviewing Policy & Procedure updates, Gas Voucher updates, and Income Guidelines update
 - Board does not have any concern that these will not be approved

New Business

- Veteran Stand Down
 - Thursday, October 20, 2022, from 0900-1400, at the Burlington American Legion
- Skagit Job Fair
 - Tuesday, August 30, 2022, from 1500-1800, at the Northwest Career and Technical Academy in Mount Vernon (by Skagit Valley College)
 - All employers will be veteran friendly and looking to hire veterans specifically
- Welcome Home Vets Picnic - Ande Mitchell
 - Saturday, August 06, 2022, from 1100-1500, at 6254 Fruitdale in Sedro Woolley
 - Contact Ande Mitchell for more information or to help
- Vernon Hunter would like to request the board specifically address our 100% disabled veterans when it comes to how we can support them when they are being almost instantly disqualified based on their 100% disability payments

- This is specifically related to those vets in which the 100% disability payments put them over the income guidelines - How can we help this group?
 - An example is the Skagit County Property Tax exemption
 - This exemption considers income, but it does NOT include the VA disability payments when calculating “income”
- There is an appeal being brought to the board for review
 - Procedures say we need to choose some board members to discuss the appeal and come to a decision
 - Bob Stratton, Randi Bowman, Chris Diaz, April Patterson, and Vernon Hunter will be meeting to discuss the appeal

Good of the Order

- The American Legion in Burlington is 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***
 - ***Ande Mitchell seconded the motion***
 - ***Motion passed unanimously***
- Meeting adjourned at 1359

Minutes submitted by: April Patterson, Second Vice

Minutes approved by: