



Veterans Assistance Commission of Will County

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December 13th, 2023

Commission Meeting
VFW Cantigny Post 367
826 Horseshoe Dr Joliet 60435

6:04PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Invocation

II. ROLL CALL ATTENDEES:

POST	DELEGATE/ALTERNATE	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
AL 5 Harwood Joliet	D: Joseph Kelly A: Gary Califello	D		
AL 13 Marne Plainfield	D: Lisa McGlasson A: Raj Pillai	D & A		
AL 18 John Olson Lockport	D: Mike Meyers A: Frank DiGiovanni		X	
AL 52 Romeoville	D: Steven Daley A: Ken Griffin	D		
AL 191 Lester Smith Wilmington	D: Ken Watt A: Frank Mlyniec		X	
AL 392 Peotone	D: Robert Krueger A: Rick Bolanowski	D & A		
AL 935 Manhattan	D: Robert Angone A:	D		
AL 1080 Joliet	D: Tony Arellano A: Ricky Whitley	D		
AL 1200 Monee	D: A: David Batzek		X	
AL 1288 Bolingbrook	D: Larry Shaver A: Wayne Macejak	D & A		
VFW 367 Cantigny Joliet	D: Jim Clausen A: Dennis Havranek	D		
VFW 725 William Martin Mokena	D: James Hogan A: Paul Cravens	D & A		
VFW 2199 Stone City Joliet	D: Kevin Pomykala A: Ron Adamski		X	

VFW 5422 Malcolm J Mayo Wilmington	D: Wally Wink A:		X	
VFW 5788 Lockport	D: Keith Carberry A:		X	
VFW 5819 Lemont	D:		X	
VFW 5917 Bolingbrook	D: John Davin A: Gregory Palmer	D & A		
VFW 9545 Harry E Anderson New Lenox	D: Clarke Christiansen A: Donald Ibarra	D & A		

Quorum is 10: 11 delegates present.

III. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND/OR FIRST TIME ATTENDEES

- Robert Enright-Plainfield township collector
- Dale Fontana-Chair for Plainfield Republican Committee
- Katie Dean Schlottman-Will County Board Member
- Joel Johnson
- Greg Palmer Bolingbrook VFW 5917
- Daniel Ibarra Commander of Bolingbrook VFW 5917
- Chicago Warriors Veteran Hockey
- Aria Scott- New VSO
- Anna Lukasevich-Admin Assistant at the VAC

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Dale Fontana-
 - Budgets the will county board passed the budget VAC budget is less than .25% of the Will County Board Budget.
 - Renovation of the Copperfield Building in an open and transparent manner with vetting the contractors. The county already owns the building so renovation and improvement will only add value to the asset.
 - The county should implement 3 for 1 saving plan after recapture of the funds used for renovation. For every \$3 saved on rent, \$2 saved cost for taxpayers and \$1 is added to the top line of VAC budget. Taxpayers will save on the rent.
 - The County will benefit from using its own assets while increasing the value of the building. Taxpayers will save two thirds of the rent via rent elimination. VAC gets \$1 added to the top line budget. Vets get more needed services.
- Rick Todd-Member of AL 13 Marne Plainfield and CEO of Will4Vets.
 - The transformation over the last year has been the best. Will4Vets was able to help raise the money to provide money to K9 for Vets and Battle buddies as well as provide a freezer and the refrigerator to the VAC. Grateful for the VAC and the staff. We will help with Vet Fest next year. All our initiatives are to help reach out and serve the community.
- Chicago Warriors Hockey Program (William Lipke)-Disabled veterans hockey program.
 - The program helps to bring comradery with other veterans. The program has helped to prevent suicides. This is a NFP and has support from the Chicago Blackhawks. Just received a grant for mental health to assist the veterans get immediate help.

- Practices are on Saturdays at Mt Prospect ice rink. Always looking for new individuals to join the program. Will provide dates for upcoming games. Minimum of a 10% disability to be able to join the program. Experience is not required, and this is to help keep everyone physically and mentally fit.
- Chicagowarriors.org is the website for this organization.
- Larry Shaver- President of IL veterans helping veterans.
 - For the last 3 months have been helping at the VAC. Have been helping in various areas including filing as well as wherever is needed. Have taken the training to become certified to become a VSO in early 2024. Bridging the gap with using TV in Bolingbrook to help get the word out to the community.
 - Case load of approx. 100+ claims that are filed. Continues until the claim is resolved.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

- Commission Meeting September 26th, 2023.
 - Correction to the Executive Closed Session - update Motion to approve items discussed during closed session from Motion: Unknown to Bob Krueger
 - Under Section X: For the Good of the Commission - update Legal investigation to legal inquiry under the Discuss Establishing Event Committee.
- Legal Committee Meeting July 21st, 2023
- By-Law Committee Meeting March 22, 2023
Motion to adopt minutes as amended.
 - Motion: Jim Hogan
 - Second: John Daven
 - Minutes are approved as corrected.

VI. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. Award Log

- a Currently there are no reports that come back to the VAC once the veterans receive a decision from their claim. The veteran will need to call/email the VAC to let them know they received a letter back for the claim. This is applicable for all claims.
- b Every Friday the VSO's will be checking all claims within the VA database to keep up.
- c The veteran gets a copy of the claim, and a copy is retained at the VAC.
- d Remote claims are able to be completed without having a veteran in the office. There are roughly 3 veterans per day per VSO that are scheduled. The VSO's will send out a post visit letter with directions to the veteran.
- e There might be HIPPA issues if there were to be volunteers that would be able to go and help to do the follow up calls.
- f The backlog was 6 weeks about 4 months ago, but now it is down to under 2 weeks.
- g Calling the VSO after a decision is received will help the team to know when to go into the VA database to help action the claims.

B. Financial Assistance

- a The total assistance is \$38,082.26 up from last years \$23,719.88.

C. Veteran Problem-Solving Court

- a Work on mapping out the best course of action for the Veteran with the attorney's office. This is to help our veterans through the court system as a middle person and a liaison.
- b Map out the path to help the veteran that was incarcerated.

D. Motion to File Superintendent's Report

- a Motion: James Hogan
- b Second: Steven Daley
- c Motion Carries

VII. Old Business

A. VACWC Policies and Procedures in Accordance with 330 ILCS 45/Military Veterans Assistance Act

- a. Would like everyone to review the draft procedure and provide feedback.
- b. The draft copy will include all the amendments.
- c. Motion to Approve-Will gain the motion after everyone has a chance to review.

B. VACWC File Plan Update

- a. Each file must be gone through to determine what will need to be sent for archive or destruction. Preparing the files to send to the county to be processed. Once this is done will be about 90% paperless.
- b. The documents will be in a secure database. There is nothing that can be held indefinitely within the office.

C. 1300 Copperfield Building

- a. The Copperfield Building was purchased by the county in 2020 and was purchased with the intent of the VAC to use as well as other organizations. Spoke with the Executive to move into the building. A letter was sent on behalf of the commission and Jen expressing interest in moving into the Copperfield Building.
- b. The move would require some updates regarding electricity and plumbing and asked to get a quote on what the build-out costs would be. Current rent costs are about \$8,000 a month which is paid to John Bates who is a private landlord. That equates roughly \$100,000 a year. Future value could go from 2-5 million.
- c. Could save the taxpayer 2-4 million just by moving into the building. Heins hospital and K9 for Vets have expressed interest in the building. If we have other organizations joining it will be a split cost helping to reduce the taxpayer's cost.
- d. The current space is limited and we were able to retro space 3 additional offices. There is not enough space to account for the mental health program. The additional space would allow to expand the programs to help the veterans.
- e. The Copperfield building has gym equipment that was purchased with a prior grant for \$5200.
- f. Logistically this would help to service the veterans better.
- g. Work to levy taxes would be about up to .02% of the county assessed value which will be about 8 million.
- h. The letter was sent, the next steps are to receive a good faith estimate for the build out and organize a tour for the other organizations to do a walk through. After we would need to get into the county board meetings.
- i. Square footage of building 17,000 square feet per floor (1 floors and a basement would only be utilized by the VAC)
- j. We need to go through the committee process to help get the building.
- k. The county was looking at selling the building so interest was expressed in wanting to move in.
- l. We need people to lobby their county board representatives to help facilitate this faster.
- m. Call for the posts to have members reach out to the respective board members for their areas.
- n. Can a template be drafted to maintain consistency of what is being communicated to the county board members.

- o. Rent vs buy-Buy might be more costly than renting since you would need correct issues on your own budget.
- p. Concern was raised regarding the liability and insurance for having a gym in the building. We will also require to know what the utilities costs as well to make sure we have a cushion.
- q. Discussion on the liability of the gym should someone get hurt. The building is owned by the county, and they will need to give the resources for the VAC to run.
- r. A gym is not required but since the gym is in the building it would be a good addition. Other county buildings have gyms, and some do self-insure, but you should ask the executive office for an exact response.
- s. The county owns the building and would be listed as a lease back.
- t. Would there be any transportation to and from the building. 1201 Eagle Street and there is a bus route that drops off there.

VIII. New Business

A. FY2023 Budget Review

- a. (Main Account 541090) Other Professional Services-Separate the funds and put them into another legal line items. Proposing to separate out the legal costs into a separate line item. This account currently accounts for dog costs, legal, etc.
- b. Most of the costs in this line item included legal costs.
- c. D365 (System) to Remove this line item to this one in the system. This is being more transparent with the county.
- d. Concern raised with break out to legal fees from Other Professional Services. This is in the parameters of what the county allows us to do.

B. FY2024 Budget Review

- a. New computers are required to ensure everything is up to date since their current computers are currently outdated. There will be a docking station that is required. Move 3,000 from furniture to desktop computers to account for the \$8,000 cost.
- b. All computers are outdated with the warranty so will need 7 laptops and docking stations.
- c. Other Professional services budget \$60,000 in legal fees this year. This is to anticipate legal fees. There have been a lot of calls regarding the need for cars, roofing. Taking money out of the Other Professional Services and putting it into direct assistance.
 - i. Salary and benefits you cannot move into other line items. We could move from other professional services without the county approval.
 - ii. Glasgow did state we could go back to the county and request money for an amendment to cover legal services should we incur legal services.
 - iii. We would need to request an amendment to the budget should we be incurring any legal services.

C. Financial Assistance Program

- a. In 2024 will be revamping and looking at new eligibility requirements which will expand the number of veterans that could be assisted. This is limited to helping pay rent/mortgage. There is an uptick and would like to review to ensure there is enough for reoccurring and emergency funds. Review for the reoccurring assistance as well as project for future increase.

D. 2023 Governor Report

- a. Would like to bring to the attention of everyone Page 14-Compare the productivity 2022 to 2023. The staff was able to do more with less. The awards log was increased and was able to bring more money back into Will County.

- b. The trend for veterans is decreasing in Illinois. We are working hard to retain our veterans in the state.
- E. 2024 VACWC Delegate Forms
 - a. These will go out in the mail on the 1st and will need to be back before March 1st. These need to be completed and signed off by the commanders.
 - b. Elections will be in March. We would need to have the forms back and need delegates to ensure there are an office.
 - c. Need the posts that are committing to come to this meeting so we will be able to have a Corum.
 - d. Motion to enter into close session.

VIII. Executive Closed Session:

- A. Motion to enter closed session:
 - a. 5ILCS 120/2 Sec2(c)1: The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific individuals
 - b. 5ILCS 120/2 Sec2(c)11: Litigation
 - c. 5ILCS 120/2 Sec2(c)21: Approval of closed Minutes, July 21st, 2023, September 26th, 2023
 - o Motion: John Daven
 - o Second: Jim Hogan
- B. Motion to return to open session (8:30 PM)
- C. Motion to approve items discussed during closed session.
 - Larry Shaver-Motion on the floor to bring the VSO on board with no experience with a base of 60,000 and moved to 65,000 after accreditation. Between the accreditation and the following 5 years moved up in the range between \$65,000 and \$80,000. This will be determined by performance, length in range. Effective December 1, 2023.
 - o Second: Steve Daley
 - o Roll Call Unanimous Vote
 - Lisa McGlasson-Motion on the floor to transfer funds to account for the pay increases. Move \$10,000 from other professional services and move \$13,000 for the VSO pay increases.
 - o Second: Jim Hogan
 - o Roll Call Unanimous Vote
 - Lisa McGlasson-Motion on the floor for confidential treatment of closed session meeting notes
 - o Second: Robert Krueger

X. FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMISSION

- A. Commission President Updates
- B. Introduction VACWC Staff
 - a. Aria Scott-Accredited in October. Seeing 2-3 veterans a day as well as walk-ins.
 - b. Anna Lukasevich-Administrative Assistant
- C. NACVSO Legislative Conference Washington DC February 2024
 - a.
- D. VACWC Monthly Newsletter
 - a. Eric will start a monthly newsletter. Updates with legislation, upcoming items in the community.
- E. Recurring Outreach
 - a. Every Thursday: Together We Stand Peer Support Group at VACWC Office Joe Martin

- b. Second Monday: VSO Papineau Outreach Manhattan American Legion 935 Breakfast
- c. Every Third Friday: VSO Papineau Outreach at Wilmington VFW 5422
- d. Every Thursday: Rotating VSOs Outreach at Joliet CBOC
- e. Every First Monday: VSO Georgakopoulos at Blueberry Hill Café Homer Glen
- F. VACWC Calendar: www.veteransassistancewillco.org
 - a. Let Eric know if there are any updates you would like to add to the calendar.
- G. Upcoming Events to post on VACWC Calendar from the posts.
 - a. Wreaths Across America is occurring this Saturday.

XI. MOTION TO ADJOURN (8:50 PM)

- Motion: Robert Krueger
- Second: Kevin Pomykala

**Next Meeting Will Be Held On
March 26th, 2024**