

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Minutes of Meeting
November 9, 2010
Kenosha County Administration Building

Committee Members Present: Terry Rose, Jeff Gentz, Mike Goebel, David Celebre, David Arrington, Megan Jekot (YIG)

Committee Members Absent: Ryan Joseph-YIG (excused)

Staff Present: John Jansen, Laurie Staves, Derrell Greene

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Terry Rose.

2. Citizen's Comments - None

3. Approval of Minutes: 10/5/10, Jt. 10/13/10 HSC/HSB, 10/21/10

MOTION to approve minutes by Jeff Gentz, seconded by David Arrington. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Resolution to Approve County Executive Appointment of Charles Burmeister to the Veterans Service Commission

Derrell Greene stated that Mr. Burmeister has been on the Veterans Commission for the last 3 years and supports his reappointment. Terry Rose asked how often this commission met. Mr. Greene replied that it used to meet monthly, but now we just hold a meeting when we need one, for example to approve monetary grants to needy veterans.

MOTION to approve by David Arrington, seconded by Mike Goebel. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. Presentation: Veterans Services

Derrell Greene distributed packets of information on Veterans Services, reminding committee members that Veterans Day is this Thursday. He has previously forwarded information on this week's events to the members. Veterans Day started after WWI. This is a day to honor and celebrate the veterans who served in the wars. Our mission is to help veterans and their families to get the benefits they are entitled to and to help them file claims. We also investigate denials of claims. Senator Kohl and Rep. Ryan are very supportive when we contact their offices for assistance. There are organizations trying to get veterans and widows to use their services, but they charge for it. Our services are free.

The total expenditures in 2009 to run the Kenosha County Veterans Office was \$257,129. There are 3 employees in our office. Also in 2009, a total of 228 home loans to county veterans was guaranteed by the U.S. Veterans Administration for a total cost of \$42.6 million. The Wisconsin VA guaranteed 4 home loans for a total of \$960,000. No down payment is required for a US VA home loan, while the State requires a 20% down payment.

The VA paid \$21 million to disabled county veterans and/or spouses for disability or pension payments. A widow is also eligible for a pension based on the years of service of her husband. WDVA educational grants to help re-educate veterans were made to 55 county veterans totaling \$72,000. 16 personal loans were processed totaling \$75,000. A veteran can get up to \$3,000 per loan, with a maximum lifetime benefit of \$7,500.

Veterans who are 100% disabled are eligible for a property tax credit if they have lived in the state for 5 years, and they don't need to be 65 years old anymore. More veterans are learning of this benefit. In the tax years before 2008, there were only 26 claimants, totaling \$57,957. That number grew to 32 in tax year 2008 and \$92,503, but for 2009, there were 3,609 claimants, for a total credit amount of \$10.6 million.

The Post 911 GI Bill is a great bill. The school is paid directly, plus the vet gets an additional \$1,200 a month for living expenses and \$1,000 for books and supplies. This educational benefit can also be transferred to the vet's children or wife. Many young people have applied for this.

The VA added 3 more illnesses associated with Agent Orange for which Vietnam vets can now apply for benefits: B-cell leukemia, Parkinson's disease, and Ischemic heart disease. Vets who were on the ground in Vietnam, who have these diseases, and who previously were denied, can come in now and receive benefits. They will be reimbursed back to the date they filed the claim, even back to the 1970s and 80s.

The suicide rate is rising because of the increased number of deployments. Some people are being deployed over 3 or 4 times. The VA is looking into this problem.

The State of Wisconsin will fly WWII and terminally ill vets to Washington DC to see their memorials, free of charge. This is called the Honor Flight.

Over 1.1 million veterans have lost their lives fighting for our country.

Mr. Greene reviewed the Kenosha County Veterans brochure: "Are you aware of the VA Benefits available to you?" This lists all of the services that our office provides.

Megan Jekot stated that she is part of Key Club at St. Joseph's High School, and asked if schools could get involved with making things for veterans, or if they could do any small fundraising events. Mr. Greene replied that vets really appreciate a showing of support from the community, and asked Ms. Jekot to call him to discuss her ideas.

Mr. Greene said that veterans come into their office daily. They had 2,000 people in their office last year. Their main job is to help veterans file claims for benefits and services.

We have quite a few events during the year. We held a Stand Down in Union Grove for the homeless veterans this summer. We only had 2 people show up. Last year we had 7. No one knows how many homeless vets there are. But even though it's advertised on the radio, in the paper, etc., people still say they didn't hear about it. Jeff Gentz asked if Mr. Greene could get a list of those events to him.

There is aid for needy veterans, but they need to go through all of the different services offered in the County first. This is a State law. Most services are for families, while most of the veterans are single. So this is an issue.

6. Such Other Business as Authorized by Law - None
7. Committee Members Comments - None
8. Adjournment

It was moved to adjourn by Mike Goebel, seconded by Jeff Gentz. Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Davis
KCDHS Secretary

F:Sharon/HSCmin 11-9-10