



Winnebago County Veterans Affairs Commissioners Board Meeting

Monday, July 25, 2022 – 10:00 am
Courthouse Board Room

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Pledge

Present: Steve Bosma, Dave Peterson and Mary Lou Kleveland.

2. Review and Approval of Previous Monthly Meeting Minutes

The June monthly meeting minutes were reviewed. Bosma motioned, second by Peterson to approve the May minutes. All in favor. Minutes were approved.

3. Veteran Services Officer Report

- a. Monthly VA numbers: Mary Lou shared the statistics for June.
- b. Community Outreach –There was discussion about additional ways to reach the veterans of Winnebago County. All agreed that the KIOW ads are valuable and should continue. The commissioners suggested that Mary Lou do a quarterly news article and also an annual report and have those published in local newspapers. Mary Lou will look into getting this started as soon as possible. The commissioners also suggested that Mary Lou do Public Service Announcements (PSAs) when appropriate to bring more exposure to Winnebago County Veterans Affairs.
- c. Review Monthly Expenditure Report Approval – The June and the annual expenditure report was reviewed. Mary Lou has developed a form to be signed each month regarding approval of the previous month's budget/expenditures. Bosma motioned to approve the June expenditure report and the annual expenditure report and Peterson seconded the motion. All in favor. June Monthly Expenditure Report and FY 21-22 expenditure report were signed and approved.

4. Old Business

- a. Hancock County Issues Update – Mary Lou informed the Commissioners that Hancock County has refused to pay her for the work she has previously done on five cases from Hancock County. Karla Weiss, Auditor, spoke to the Hancock Co. Auditor and the Hancock County Auditor refused payment because there was no written agreement between Winnebago and Hancock Counties for the work to be done and then billed. Bosma and Peterson advised that Mary Lou should stop work on the five cases immediately and send them back to Hancock Co. Mary Lou reported that there would be a new Hancock VSO on August 1st so Mary Lou will start transferring them back. Bosma and Peterson also advised that they would like to have written agreements with Worth, Hancock and Kossuth Counties so this issue doesn't happen in the future. Mary Lou will talk to Kelsey Beenken, attorney for Winnebago County, about how she should proceed.
- b. VA Office Policy Change for financial assistance – After a short discussion about potential changes, it was determined that this issue should be tabled until the commissioner vacancy is filled so that everyone can discuss potential changes and/or approval for changes. Bosma motioned and Peterson seconded to table this issue. All in favor. Motion passed.

5. **New Business – VA New and Emerging Information**

- a. Commissioner Vacancy – Commissioner and Chairman Barney Rüter had a freak accident on Saturday, July 16th, and passed away from his injuries on Monday, July 18th. Since he was the chairman, a new chairman needed to be assigned. Dave Peterson was willing to assume this role since he had the most experience on the commission. In addition, there now needs to be a search for a new commissioner to complete Barney's term which was to end in 2023. Mary Lou is on the agenda tomorrow (7/26) for the Board of Supervisors meeting to share with them the vacancy notice and application for a new county commissioner. Mary Lou also shared that there is a gender equity law regarding the commission, and this law states that all efforts must be made to find a female commissioner BEFORE a male commissioner can fill the vacancy. After discussion, Bosma and Peterson suggested that Mary Lou send letters to female veterans in Winnebago County to determine if any of them would be want to apply for the commissioner position.
- b. Grave Marker for Deceased Veteran - Mary Lou shared a situation that she was made aware of in which a deceased veteran does not have a grave marker because his children are unwilling to apply for the marker and pay for installation of the marker. His mother is deceased. Mary Lou asked if this was something that Winnebago County Veterans Affairs could pay for. The cost for installation by Forest City Granite Works is \$224.70. Both Bosma and Peterson were concerned about whether this would set a precedent that would be difficult to maintain in the future as the Winnebago County Veterans Affairs budget is not huge for this kind of situation. They would like to discuss more at length and make a decision at the August commissioner meeting.
- c. State Grant Allocation Report - Mary Lou advised that she had successfully submitted the report for FY 21-22 and that once the report is approved, the \$10,000 for FY 22-23 will be sent to the Winnebago County Veterans Affairs office.
- d. Winnebago County Memorial Monument/Wall – Mary Lou shared that Barney did contact Jack Caputo about the wall and Barney had intended for the commissioners to continue this discussion at the August meeting. Bosma and Peterson suggested that Mary Lou contact Wayne Johns about this issue since he was a past commissioner and may remember how the monument was handled and financed. This topic will continue to be discussed at future commissioner meetings as more information becomes available.
- e. Winnebago County Issues – Mary Lou advised that she realized that she had not received her cost of living raise on July 1st because she had failed to fill out a form for it. Mary Lou didn't understand what she needed to do to receive the raise and this is what caused her to not get the raise. The commissioners recommend a cost of living raise for Mary Lou and advised her to talk to the Board of Supervisors about this issue.
- f. Next Meeting Date: August 22, 2022 @ 10 am

5. **Adjournment** – Bosma motioned; Peterson second. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

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