



Winnebago County Veterans Affairs Commissioners Board Meeting

Monday, May 20, 2024 – 10:00 am

Winnebago Co Health Department Board Room

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Pledge

Present: Dave Peterson, Troy Thompson and Mary Lou Kleveland; Absent: Steve Bosma

2. Review and Approval of Previous Monthly Meeting Minutes

The April monthly meeting minutes were reviewed. Thompson motioned, seconded by Peterson to approve the April minutes. All in favor. April minutes were approved.

3. Veteran Services Officer Report

a. Monthly VA numbers: Mary Lou shared the statistics for April 2024.

b. County Outreach Efforts – Mary Lou reported that the 2nd family that has moved to Winnebago County received the Home Base Iowa incentives. The incentives were presented to the family at Mary Lou's office with the family, Mary Lou, Shawn Keeper and Melissa Michaelis present. Mary Lou reported about a new addition to the PACT Act which now qualifies any veteran from the Vietnam War to the present to be eligible for VA Healthcare if the veteran was exposed to any kind of toxin. This makes VA Healthcare easier to access for these veterans. The Commissioners would like Mary Lou to put ¼ size ads in the local newspapers to inform veterans about this new benefit.

c. Review Monthly Expenditure Report for Approval - The Commissioners and Mary Lou reviewed the expenditures for April. Thompson motioned and Peterson seconded to approve the April expenditures. All in favor. The April expenditure report was approved and the Commissioners signed off on the report.

4. Old Business

a. Financial Assistance from Winnebago Co VA – issue with previous assistance -Mary Lou advised that she had received a charge on the Winnebago Co VA Visa credit card which was from Cobblestone Inn & Suites for missing items and damage that the veteran and his wife had caused on the night that Winnebago Co VA paid for emergency housing at the hotel. Mary Lou advised that she had talked to the veteran's wife and she had agreed to come to the office and write a check for the damages. However, she failed to show up. There was much discussion but ultimately, Thompson motioned and Peterson seconded to pay the Visa bill for the damages. All in favor. The bill will be paid by Winnebago County VA. Thompson asked if this veteran could be "flagged" with the other county VSO offices as it seems to be a pattern for him to county jump and attempt to access charitable help from churches as well as county VA offices. Mary Lou advised that she would consult with the President of Iowa Association of County Commissioners and Veteran Service Officers to see if flagging the veteran would be possible given the constraints of confidentiality. The Commissioners and Mary Lou also discussed whether there needed to be a new policy regarding the decision to approve emergency housing, especially if the request was made late in the day. The Commissioners advised that they were comfortable with Mary Lou's judgment in determining if the request was appropriate for assistance and encouraged Mary Lou to gather as much information as possible before making a decision.

- b. Door sign for VA office – Mary Lou reported that the new door sign was installed by Bison Graphics. It looks great and really helps identify the office.

5. New Business – VA New and Emerging Information

- a. VA New and Emerging Information – Mary Lou presented an application for review and possible approval for financial assistance from Winnebago Co VA. Mary Lou explained the needs of the veteran and shared the information from his application. The veteran is in need of assistance with his rent of \$600.00. Peterson motioned to pay the \$600 rent for June. Thompson seconded. All in favor. Winnebago Co VA will pay the June rent for the veteran.
- b. Report on Virtual National Training; upcoming District 5 training – Mary Lou reported that she had completed National Virtual Training the week of May 13th. It was a 5 day training. Mary Lou reported that some of the information was new and extremely relevant. There were some obstacles with doing the training virtually so Mary Lou would like to strongly consider attending the National Training in person next year. Mary Lou advised that there would be District 5 training coming up in June (6/21/2024). In addition, Mary Lou shared about a new law that had just passed providing an additional \$3,000.00 each fiscal year to be used for VSOs to attend training with a special emphasis on attending National Training which is much more expensive to attend.
- c. Current workload for VSO – Mary Lou reported that her current workload of 70 cases continued to be extremely challenging. She stated that it was difficult to meet the many, many needs of this number of veterans/survivors and that it was often difficult for veterans/survivor's to accept the realistic time frame given to them for the completion of their claim. Mary Lou advised she would be on vacation over July 4th.
- d. Next Meeting Date: June 24, 2024 at 10:00 am at the Winnebago County Courthouse

Adjournment – Thompson motioned; Peterson seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

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