

# Clark County Veteran's Resource Committee

*An advisory board to the Clark County Board of Commissioners*

## Clark County Public Service Center

1300 Franklin St, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Ste. #679

Vancouver, Washington

January 8, 2014

## Meeting Minutes

Chair: **Morris Giesler**

Vice Chair: **Greg Whitson**

Secretary: **Mike Gibson**

Meeting Called to order by **Morris Giesler @ 1400**

**Roll Call:** [Bold script indicates presence at meeting]

### POST

40 et 8

American Legion #14

American Legion #27

American Legion #44

American Legion #168

American Legion #176

American Legion #189

American Legion #208

American Veterans #6

DAV Chapter #4

Korean War Vet Assoc #321

Marine Corps League #826

VFW #4278

VFW #7824

VFW #12028

Vietnam Vets #512

### PRIMARY

**Morris Giesler**

**Dixie Hotaling**

**Robert Nichols**

**Michael Gibson**

**Richard Alvarez**

**Thomas Dombeck**

**Lou Basté**

**John Raynor**

Roy Billings

**Skip Bengé**

**Greg Whitson**

### ALTERNATE

**Jerry Keen**

**James Resleff**

**Richard Langenbach**

**Jonathan Frederick**

Richard Gabriel

Robert Sumrill

Fiorin Zeviar

Stephen Stetson

**Bruce Maas**

### Members at Large

**Kevin Lawson**

### CLARK COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES

**Samantha Whitley**

### GUESTS

**Tina Hernandez, Cassandra Curry– HSC; Michael Langsdorf - CCVAC; Joe Fettig – VVA #512; George Golden- LINKS; Tom Kula – DAV; Darren Wertz – AL #44; Frank Hyatt – DAV Ch #4**

## **December Meeting Minutes**

Bob Nichols moved to approve the minutes as written. Seconded by Dixie Hotaling and passed.

### **2014 Veterans Assistance Fund Contract**

Dixie Hotaling moved to approve the 2014 Veterans Assistance contract. Seconded by Richard Alvarez. Michael Langsdorf requested a month to submit a proposal for the Veterans Assistance Center to administer the contract.

Discussion and questions regarding the 2014 Veterans Assistance Fund contract:

Bob Nichols stated he was told by Commissioner Mielke that the 2014 contract would be the same as the 2013 contract but the contract for 2014 show services to veterans at \$229,200 instead of \$250,000. It also appears that there are two service officers, one working out of the Human Services Council office, when the budget only allows for 1 and ½ staff. Bob also thinks that the services should only be provided at the Veterans Assistance Center. Bob questioned what outreach has the HSC done, per the 2013 contract.

Tina Hernandez discussed the HSC's proposed budget: The budget is based on projected costs and will be on a reimbursement basis only. The employee benefit will be going down, since one of the service officers waived medical benefits. The personnel budget is also less because of low unemployment insurance costs. The proposed assistance to veterans will change depending on how many veterans seek and are granted assistance. The current level of direct assistance to veterans is averaging less than \$20,000 per month. Samantha Whitley addressed the question regarding staff working out of the HSC. She said Cassandra Curry has been in training at HSC, but services are still provided at CCVAC 4 days per week and at the Center for Community Health one day a week. It has been proposed that the service officers look at getting out into the outlying areas of the county (Battle Ground, Camas, Yacolt, Ridgefield, Amboy and Washougal) on a regularly monthly schedule to assist veterans who cannot easily travel into downtown Vancouver for VAF assistance.

Tina said that the HSC attends outreach events on average twice a month, presenting all programs they provide, as applicable. Bob questioned why the part-time service officer used personal time to attend an outreach event outside the area, and then came back to work. Tina addressed Bob, referencing State law regarding personal time off and the HSC policy to allow make-up hours if the workload so demands. She said that internal events last year at the CCVAC created hours of additional administrative work and expense, which is one of the reasons they have requested two full-time staff in the 2014 proposal. Richard Langenbach requested that the posts and the CCVAC be given a schedule of outreach events the service officers will be attending so the CCVAC members can attend/assist. Morris Giesler reminded the committee members that they are also responsible to reach out to veterans via their local posts within their communities.

Question (unknown speaker): Who makes the decision to increase from 1.5 to 2 service officers and why? Samantha said that the increase was a request by the HSC based on the needs of veterans and staffing demands for 2014. In 2012, Columbia River Mental Health also had two full-time staff members. The HSC said that they could administer the contract in 2013 with 1.5 FTEs. They fulfilled the contract, but determined that staffing level was not sufficient to address the needs of the veterans and meet all of the terms of the policies and contract. Bob stated that increase in staff in the 2014 contract was done by county staff only, without the input of the VRC. Samantha replied that the change in the contract with the HSC was because the CCVAC withdrew their 2014 proposal on December 13th and county staff had to extend the contract with the HSC to avoid a gap in service to indigent veterans. The VRC was informed as soon as possible of the staffing change.

Morris Giesler: Why was the proposed contract budget not the same as the previous contract (line items are different, but bottom line is the same)? Tina did not have the current contract, since it was being routed for signatures.

Morris Giesler: Why did the HSC did not want to renew their contract for another year when asked in November? The HSC did request to renew the contract in November, with 2 FTEs to meet the work load. There was no VRC meeting in November to approve the changes to the HSC contract.

Morris Giesler: Why are there two different titles for the 2 fulltime employees? Tina explained that they are trained to do the same job, but different aspects. Both of the service officers are honorably discharged from the military.

Question (unknown speaker, Morris Giesler and Bob Nichols): The contract states a survey must be done during the year. Is it being done, how and what is being accomplished? Tina responded that the contract requires a survey be given to those veterans who have received assistance. The surveys are sent directly to the county if veterans choose to fill them out. The HSC received other grant funds to set up a survey to help identify transportation barriers to veterans who are seeking services. This grant applies to five counties and is \$50,000 total. Those surveys will be used to determine how to better assist veterans in need. Survey results will be made available to committee members, as well as the data summaries, upon request.

Morris Giesler: How are the physical and electronic files being handled and has the HSC been audited, as required in the contract? The HSC is managing and retaining client files in accordance with the Washington State Records Retention law. The files are scanned, at no cost, and hard copies are kept at the HSC. The HSC is audited every year by an outside agency and the results are given to the county. That information is available to the board from either the county or the HSC.

Staffing question (multiple speakers): In September, the VRC board approved a contract with 1.5 FTEs. In October, HSC met with their governing board and determined that they could only administer the contract with 2 FTEs. However, this request could not go forward to the entire VRC because the November was cancelled. Bob Nichols, then Chair of the VRC, was informed that HSC required 2 FTEs on November 1. After discussion with Commissioners, it was determined that the 2014 contract would be administered by the CCVAC. At the December VRC meeting, the decision to give the contract to the CCVAC was presented and HSC was no longer considered for the contract. The CCVAC proposal included 1.5 FTEs. After the December meeting, the CCVAC withdrew their proposal to administer the fund. The county contacted HSC and asked if they could continue to administer the fund so there would be no gap in services. They agreed, with the increased staffing to 2 FTEs. The contract was written and sent out for signature. Cassandra Curry spoke regarding the need for 2 FTEs. She said the amount of work needed to assist the veterans, provide outreach, develop self-sufficiency plans, and follow up with veterans exceeds the abilities of 1.5 FTEs.

Morris Giesler: If the committee does not agree to increase the staffing level to 2 FTEs, would the HSC still want the contract? Tina, not speaking officially for the HSC board, said she believes they would refuse the contract and no longer administer the fund.

Morris Giesler: If the committee agrees to 2 FTEs, what would that second person be doing to support the contract? Tina said the second person would follow-up on client files and paperwork, develop self-sufficiency plans, conduct eligibility reviews for requests, assist with client intake, conduct outreach, staff the office 8-5, Monday through Friday, and assist with some administrative tasks.

**Motion:** Greg Whitson motioned to table the vote on the HSC contract, seconded by Frank Hyatt. Vote, 7 to table, 3 against. Motion to table contract recommendation until February 12, 2014 passed.

Samantha Whitley informed the committee that the contract, as is, has been signed by the county attorney and is on its way for signature by HSC. It would then be routed to the Commissioners to sign, with the note that the VRC voted to table the recommendation until February.

### **Appeals**

Morris Giesler appointed Roy Billings, Skip Benge and Mike Gibson to the 2014 appeals committee. There is one pending appeal waiting one more committee vote. Since Bob Nichols resigned from the committee, the appeal will reflect the majority.

### **Policies and Procedures**

Morris Giesler appointed Tom Dombeck, Richard Alvarez, Dixie Hotaling and Kevin Lawson to the Policies and Procedures Committee.

### **2014 Membership**

Five organizations have not submitted Letters of Appointments to the county and are currently not represented on the committee.

### **November Contractor Reports & County Fund Report**

Reports were sent out to the committee members. Morris Giesler summarized the November reports: HSC provided \$16,616.06 to 64 veterans; 1 veteran accessed three categories, 5 accessed two categories and 58 accessed one category. Thirteen veterans were denied assistance, three appealed and one appeal was granted. Five veterans were seen in the dental program. The CCVAC had 118 veteran visits, with an additional 152 visiting to seek assistance from HSC. The value of the CCVAC volunteer hours is \$13,689.62. The Veterans Assistance Fund balance at the end of November 2013 is \$472,425.32.

### **Old Business:**

None

### **New Business:**

None

### **Open Forum:**

None

**Meeting adjourned at 1545 hours.**

**Next meeting: February 12, 2014 @ 1400 hours**