

West Suburban Veterans' Services District – February 8th, 2017

Location: Wellesley Town Hall, Great Hall

Present: Chris Coleman, Blythe Robinson, John Senchyshyn, and Donna VanderClock

Also present: Kate Fitzpatrick, Sarada Kalpee, Stanley Spear and Sally Rose

Call to order: Meeting called to order at 4:07pm.

Business: Blythe introduced herself as the new chair to the West Suburban Veterans' District. Mrs. Fitzpatrick announced Mr. Coleman as the new board member for the WSVD Needham.

1. Citizen Speak

None

2. Minutes

Upon a motion made by Mrs. VanderClock and seconded by Mr. Senchyshyn and Mr. Coleman, the Board voted (3-0) to approve the minutes of the October 13th, 2016 meeting. Mrs. Robinson did not vote as she was not part of the board for the October meeting.

3. FY 17 and FY 18 Budget Status

Mrs. Rose updated the board with the FY 17 budget in which the District had spent 58.4% of the allotted professional line budget, and 47% for the expense line budget, which shows enough in the budget to cover temporary staffing, if needed. There were no further questions on the FY 17 budget.

The proposed FY 18 budget shows a decrease in the overall amount requested. Initially no funds were going to be appropriated for health insurance, as both Ms. Kalpee and Mr. Spear utilize their own insurance and Mrs. Rose would have her benefits covered by the Finance Department. Mr. Coleman brought to the board's attention the need to keep the allotted money in the health insurance line just in case there is a qualifying event. All board members agreed to keep the amount in the health insurance line as it is easier to return the surplus than to add to the budget after the FY 18 budget is approved.

4. Director's Update

VetraSpec is a program that allows VSO's to file claims and track them. Similar to ebenefits, except with better updates and tracking. It will cost the District for the program and licensing and it is a yearly renewal fee. The board approved if it was beneficial for the district then it can be ordered.

Ms. Kalpee discussed an upcoming outreach with the VAMC for National Salute to Veterans Patient Week. Creative Warehouse in Needham MA has donated hand knitted items to be given

to Veterans. These items will be given to patients at the West Roxbury VA Medical Center on 16 Feb 2017 by Ms. Kalpee. Ms. Kalpee also discussed the updates on each towns Memorial Day progress. Wellesley Committee has their meetings weekly until 10 pm every Wednesday. Ms. Kalpee is reaching out to military organizations such as the USO and service dogs to bring more of a military feel back in to the Wellesley Memorial Day Parade. Flags for the town of Needham are in the process of being ordered. The Graves Officer for Needham was looking into doing a mass order for all 4 towns to save money. However, the other 3 towns have loyalty to the companies they have previously used. Mr. Coleman and Mr. Spear stated that bulk ordering had been previously attempted, but was unsuccessful as the company will deliver to only one town thereby requiring a representative for the other towns to drive and pick up their items or the receiving town would have to make the delivery.

Board approved temporary staffing of John MacGillivray for the first 2 weeks in June while Ms. Kalpee attends her two weeks of annual military training.

WSVD Proposal for FY 18 through FY 21. Ms. Kalpee is requesting the Department be changed to a Veteran Service Officer and an Administrative Assistant. The state requires the number of employees based on town population and not CH 115 clients. However, it does not state titles for the employees. The 4 towns making up WSVD are a little over 88,000 in population. In comparison, Somerville has a population of 80,000 with 70 CH 115 clients with a staffing of (1) VSO and (1) full time Admin. Mr. Spear stated that WSVD's clientele has always been mostly VA cases and not CH 115 cases. He stated that the letter Coleman Nee sent in 2012 recommended 2 VSO's and a full time admin. Matt Ching was hired part time and after a year went to full time. Mrs. Fitzpatrick had the 2011 handbook that stated a population of 70-90,000 required at least 4 full time employees, which we still do not have. Mr. Coleman stated that in the April, 11th 2015 letter there was nothing specified on who is full time and who is not. Mr. Spear stated VA cases are time consuming and require a lot of follow up and cases may last many years. He stated a few examples and that he finds it satisfying to assist veterans and he is currently working on 45 claims. Mr. Spear stated he spends 90% of his time on VA cases. Mrs. Robinson stated that under state law our obligation is with CH 115. However, according to MGL CH 115 Section 10, VSOs have many other responsibilities, among which are the requirement to assist with VA cases. Ms. Kalpee was asked if the district really requires 3 people or why she feels only 2 people are needed. Ms. Kalpee stated she needs a full time admin specifically for her department. The work is getting done, however she doesn't understand why a VA claim takes years due to the lack of authority the department has. The VA will not release information to VSO's as we are not recognized as an organization to be granted POA. Mrs. Vanderclark asked about the administrative side of the department. Mrs. Rose stated that her work has scaled back to answering phones, helping out with the financial items. Mrs. Rose was doing so much more for the department when Mr. Spear was out for medical leave and Mr. Ching left the department. Mrs. Rose stated to do much of the VSO work you have to be a veteran and complete the training. Mrs. Vanderclark stated no one is suggesting the admin do VSO work however Ms. Kalpee is doing more admin work and trying to do outreach so she would prefer a full time admin to do office work so Director can conduct more outreach. Mrs. Robinson stated the difficulty is the cost for Mrs. Rose is split between the Veterans and Finance Dept. so if she shifted to the Veterans Dept completely or someone new is hired altogether then there is an internal financial issue. Mr. Coleman requested a breakdown of the budget set aside for "clerical" on the Veterans Budget. Ms. Kalpee was asked for the breakdown of what she wanted out of an admin. She stated the admin handles CH 115 cases, not during new or recertification of cases, websites, appointments, calendars, answer phone and questions etc. Mr. Senchyshyn asked

if it would be more professional work than more veteran targeted work. Mrs. Fitzpatrick can envision the admin doing flyers, mailings etc. Mr. Senchyshyn asked if Ms. Kalpee envisions the admin being a culmination of the Deputy Director and Mrs. Rose's job. Ms. Kalpee stated it was. Mrs. Rose stated she is not a Veteran, not trained as a VSO and therefore is not supposed to be giving out information and the "admin" position Director is looking for should be a veteran. Mr. Senchyshyn stated there might be a hang out on the term admin support and Ms. Kalpee was requested to submit a description of what she envisions the admin role to encompass.

5. Old/New Business

The Board agreed that the next meeting will be decided pending the outcome of the WSVD Proposal to DVS.

At 5:00 p.m. the meeting was adjourned.