



STATE OF WASHINGTON

VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PO BOX 41150 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1150 • (800) 562-2308

VAAC TOWN HALL AND WOMEN VETERANS FORUM

May 16 & 17 2023

May 16th 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm Women Veterans Forum

May 17th 10:00 – 12:30 VAAC Town Hall

VA Clinic Union Gap (Women Veterans Forum)

VFW Post #379 (VAAC Town Hall)

Yakima, WA

MINUTES

Welcome, Introduction of VAAC Members
Invocation

Shellie Willis calls the town hall to order and Bob Wallace gave the invocation

Pledge of Allegiance

All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance

Introduction of Dignitaries
Welcome from Vancouver City or County
Official

Mayor Janice Deccio – Yakima Mayor
Rep. Bruce Chandler – Representative for 15th District
Both made their welcome remarks as well as share the services that is being provided for veterans and their families in Yakima

WDVA Updates

Terry Westhoff – Interim WDVA Deputy Director shared WDVA 2023 Priorities:

- Veterans, Service Members and their families suicide prevention and Awareness
- Focus on Veterans without homes and homeless prevention
- Recruitment and Retention of healthcare workers
- Military and Veterans Spouse employment, licensure and job portability

Walla Walla VA

- Director's Message

➤ Scott Keller, Director of Walla Walla Health Care
Director Keller gave a briefing on Walla Walla VAMC – he encourages veterans and service providers who attended the meeting to reach out to veterans they know and encourage them to apply for their earned benefits especially enrolling in the VA Healthcare Services

Link to Community Care FAQ

<https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/>

Link to Caregiver Program

<https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>

Yakima County Veterans Assistance
Center

Ray Hernandez
Yakima County Veterans Program provides various veterans programs/assistance for the over 13,000 veterans in their family members in the county. The office is the point of entry for veterans that are moving to Yakima. Information and referrals to different programs that are available to them – county, city, state and federal.

Website for more information:

<https://www.yakimacounty.us/273/Veterans-Services>

Steve Gill – Veterans Service Department Administrator
Below is the link to WDVA Program Overviews:

<https://vnet.dva.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/WDVA%20Overview%20Programs%20Services%20Nov%202022.pdf>

WDVA Program Overview

- 4 State Veterans Homes located in Bremerton/Port Orchard, Orting, Walla Walla and Spokane. The state veterans home provide long term care for eligible veterans and family members
- 2 Transitional Housing Programs – Port Orchard and Orting. The Transitional Housing Programs assist veterans who are experiencing homelessness and other issues related to their military service. Veterans who are accepted to this program can stay for 2 years and the ultimate goal is to be able to help them with securing a permanent housing as well employment in the respective community that they will ultimately reside
- State Veterans Cemetery – provides interment service to veterans and their families in the Spokane and various parts on the east side of our state
- Counseling and Wellness – provide mental health to eligible veterans and/or their family
- Aside from above, we also assist with benefits filing, estate management.

WDVA Digital Navigator Program

Shawna Harper, WDVA Digital Navigator Program
Manager

WDVA received a grant from the Department of Commerce to implement Digital Navigator Program – this program is targeted to veterans and/or their families who live in rural areas. This program would provide chrome book, smart phone and internet access as well as education on how to navigate the internet.



Yakima Townhall
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Break
WVAC

Shellie Willis, Chair, Women Veterans Advisory Committee

Shellie conducted a listening session May 16th and was held at the VA Clinic located in Union. Attendees shared the gaps in services and seek assistance in navigating US DVA so they are able to apply for their earned benefits

WDVA Suicide Prevention & Awareness

Mike Badgley, Suicide Prevention Peer Specialist



Yakima Town Hall
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<https://www.dva.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/Gov%20Challenge%20Report%2011.30.22.pdf>

Chuck Austin Place

Kimberly Roberts – Resident Program Coordinator
Chuck Austin Place is a 41 unit, permanent supportive housing development serving formerly homeless veterans and 12,000 SF supportive service center for both residents and the veteran and homeless community. It is located on the site of the former United States Marine Corps Armory located at S. 16th Ave. and W. Tahoma in Yakima, WA and is an adaptive reuse of the existing building along with new construction. The development includes 14 studios, 17 one-bedrooms, and 10 two-bedroom units. Amenities for residents include on-site laundry, community kitchen and lounge, as well as an outdoor garden and fenced doggie area. _

Question & Answer

Closing and Meeting Adjourned