



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
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**Town Hall Meeting Minutes**

<b>Meeting attended by</b>	Dick Marcelynas, Don Schack and Merl Gorton
<b>Date</b>	October 23, 2014
<b>Time</b>	10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
<b>Location</b>	Tonasket Community Cultural Center,
<b>Call to Order</b>	Meeting was called to order by Merl Gorton Invocation given by Don Schwartz and he also led the group on the Pledge of Allegiance.
<b>Welcome</b>	<p>Alfie Alvarado – gave the welcome and thank the audience for their attendance and she gave WDVA update. She shared the vision, mission and goals of our agency. There are approximately 602,000 veterans in our state and Washington is home to 75,200 active duty members and 2,000,000 family members. These numbers constitute 30% of our state's population. She emphasized the services that are provided by WDVA and that holding this type of meetings is our way of finding out veterans issues and concerns and finding respective solutions.</p> <p>Patrick Plumb – Tonasket Mayor – also gave welcome and thank the VAAC for bringing the town hall meeting to his city. The City of Tonasket and Okanogan County is doing their part in supporting and giving assistance to veterans and their families. The mayor recognizes the big sacrifice that each veteran did while serving their country and wants to emphasize whatever the town can do to assist veterans and their families his door is open for any suggestions.</p>
<b>Areas Discussed</b>	<p><b>State Veterans Cemetery – Medical Lake (Rudy Lopez – Cemetery Director)</b> The state cemetery opened in 2010. To date they have 2,200 interments. 40% Columbarium capacity has been used so far. WDVA is working on applying for a grant to build an additional columbarium walls. Eligibility for interment is outlined on WDVA website. Pre-registration can be done by visiting the cemetery and providing the necessary documentation. Funds from the purchase of Armed Forces License Plates pay for the maintenance and operation of the State Veterans Cemetery.</p> <p><b>Spokane Veterans Center (Andrew Rowley &amp; Will Sampson)</b> Andrew is currently the PTSD counselor for the Vet Center. He covers part of NE Washington, Northern Idaho and Montana. He travel to Okanogan county once a week to meet with veterans in the county and provides counseling such as: individual, group, marital and family, bereavement, drug/alcohol abuse, sexual trauma, etc.</p>

	<p><b>Veterans Resources (Shane Burton)</b>  He is currently a Veteran Service Officer for the Tonasket, Okanogan and Omak area. Shane assists veterans in these areas in filing both federal and state benefits for veterans and/or their families. He also provides valuable information for other services that is available in for veterans in his county i.e.; assist homeless veterans, accessing the county veterans assistance fund, etc.</p> <p><b>Counseling Services (Jodie Field)</b>  Jodie is a contracted counselor for WDVA – her office is in Omak. Her office is open: Wednesdays – Saturdays from 8:00 – 7:00. So far she had seen a total of 36 individuals. She provides the following type of counseling services: disaster, MST, PTSD, one on one, etc. Unfortunately she does not provide a group type of counseling. For most that was in attendance at the meeting this was the first time that they know of the services that she provides.</p> <p><b>Employment (Lisa Hathaway)</b>  Lisa works for the Employment Security Department. She outlined the services that her office provides for veterans that lives in Okanogan County. Her office assist in: resume writing, interviewing skills, filling out job applications, filing for unemployment, job vacancies, etc. She announced that her office currently have a critical vacancy that needs to be filled which is for the veterans employment representative. She asked that audience if they know of an individual to encourage them to apply for this position. There are currently 200 open positions in Okanogan County. Additional information can be found at <a href="http://www.go2worksource.com">www.go2worksource.com</a></p> <p><b>North Valley Hospital</b>  A representative from the hospital gave a brief. The hospital was contracted by the Department of Veterans Affairs in July 2010 to provide primary care service to veterans in Okanogan County. The challenge they came across when they started seeing veterans is that – majority of the veterans that they have seen have not had any preventive/physical done in years. To date they have 733 veterans that is accessing the hospital for their primary care needs. The hospital is currently negotiating with the VA to provide other medical services, i.e. colonoscopy, endoscopy, etc. The hospital contract with the VA is ending in July 2015 and they hope that their contract will be renewed to continue to provide this critical care for veterans in the county as they have to travel 3-4 hours to Spokane to seek for their care.</p>
<p><b>Issues Discussed</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation – Currently the Spokane VA Medical Center provides dates and times that transportation is available for veterans in the Okanogan County that would take veterans to their appointment at the facility, however the dates and times that the medical center provides does not coincide with the majority of appointments that veterans have at their facility, they are requesting that before the Spokane VA schedules this meeting that they would coordinate this with the Patient Rep at the North Valley Hospital</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Possibility of renewing North Valley Hospital contract to provide primary care for veterans in the Okanogan County – contract will expire in July 2015</li></ul>
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