

STATE OF WASHINGTON

VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*PO BOX 41150*  *Olympia, Washington 98504-1150*  *360-725-2167*

**Meeting Minutes**

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| **Meeting attended by**  **(VAAC Member)** | Charles Wharton, Bob Wallace, Jim Sims and Doug Pfeffer |
| **Date** | October 3, 2019 |
| **Time** | 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. |
| **Location** | American Legion Post 17, 111 W. Main Street, Centralia, WA |
| **Call to Order** | Meeting called to order by Charles Wharton  Invocation by Bob Wallace  Pledge of Allegiance led by Charles Wharton |
| **Welcome & Introductions:** | Welcome and Introduction – Charles Wharton   * Informed the guests of the role of the VAAC and introduced VAAC members. |
| **Presentations** | **Community Leader Update – Mayor Lee Coumbs**   * Welcomed attendees * Gave a brief history of Centralia and also the town is ready to assist veterans and their family that lives there. He thanked the VAAC for choosing his town to host the Veterans Town Hall. * Traffic, homelessness is among the top issues that the town has. The City Council conducts a forum every Tuesday and it is open to the public   **WDVA Update – Gary Condra**   * **WDVA Vision – “**All Washington Veterans and their families are connected to their earned benefits * WDVA have a dedicated individual who conduct outreach and participates on veterans/military events * Hired a Suicide Prevention Coordinator whose responsibility will be to create a statewide plan on suicide prevention specific to veterans, service members and their families as well as conducting training and work with government, non-government, for profit and not for profit organizations to establish best practice for suicide prevention and awareness * Groundbreaking ceremony for a Veterans Village on the grounds of Washington Soldiers Home – 35 units tiny homes that will be providing permanent housing and completion of project is projected for 2020 * WDVA was awarded a grant from US DVA for Veterans Farm at Washington Soldiers Home * WDVA Director, Alfie Alvarado-Ramos and ESD Commissioner, Suzi Levine has been travelling to various military bases in the state conducting spouse listening session * WDVA Hired 2 new State Veterans Home Administrator for Spokane Veterans Home and Walla Walla Veterans Home. * WDVA needs community assistance in getting the word out that we are hiring Certified Nursing Assistants for our 4 State Veterans Home – current vacancy can be found at our website at: <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/washington/?keywords=wdva> * WDVA also received a grant from US DVA National Cemetery Administrator for the expansion/improvement of our State Veterans Cemetery located at Medical Lake * WDVA is in search of a parcel of land in the Tri-Cities areas for the location of our 2nd State Veterans Cemetery and the possibility in the future for another cemetery to be located in the Bellingham area or somewhere in the Northside of the I-5 Corridors. Current cemetery on the west side of the state is the Tahoma National Cemetery which is still 3 or so hours away from Vancouver or Bellingham   **VA Puget Sound Medical Center – Kathryn Sherrill, Deputy Director**   * The Mission of the VA Puget Sound (VAPS) is to provide world class care for our veterans. * To date for the year 2019, VAPS provided 25,000 Mental Health Care, 7,500 surgeries, various outpatient referral * With the MISSION Act implementation this has streamlined the process and have improve veterans access to care using both the VA system and non-VA source * For more info – below is quick guide:   <https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/VA-FS_CC-Eligibility.pdf>  **Employment – Steven Severson, WorkSource Thurston**  **WorkSource Website:** [**https://worksourcewa.com/**](https://worksourcewa.com/)   * Veterans have can ask assistance from the Disabled Veterans Outreach Coordinator (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) in the WorkSource Office. The LVER/DVOP can assist the veteran in resume writing, job seeking, the veteran can also get assistance with transportation, wardrobe, work-required tools or other gear. * WorkSource also partners with WDVA to provide the Veterans Innovations Program and Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program benefits to veterans who qualify. (more info at [www.dva.wa.gov](http://www.dva.wa.gov)) * Other programs include the YesVets hiring initiative – [www.yesvets.org](http://www.yesvets.org) – to date there are 4,400 veterans hired under this program   **Veterans Relief Fund – Heidi Palmer, Lewis County Public Health & Social Services**   * Veterans and spouses of veterans may be eligible for assistance thru the Veterans Assistance fund. Assistance can be for: funeral expenses, rent, utilities, food, gas and medical emergency expenses. More information can be found at: <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/public-health/veterans-services/> * Four times a year a dental van comes to the community to provide dental cares for veterans – they are usually parked at the Veterans Museum. They will be providing dental care on November 15th from 8:00 – 2:00 * Partnered with Catholic Community Services to provide transportation for veterans from Centralia to American Lake   **WDVA Outreach – Rafael Lozano, DVA Vet. Services Outreach Coordinator**   * WDVA recently appointed Rafael as the agency’s outreach coordinator. He will be participating veterans events in the state providing information from claims and benefits information and the services that our agency provides. Information can be access at [www.dva.wa.gov](http://www.dva.wa.gov)   **WDVA Counseling & Wellness and Peer to Peer – Bryan Bales, Peer Mentor Program Coordinator**   * WDVA maintains a one of a kind state funded counseling program for veterans and families in our state. * List of our counselor can be found at: <http://www.dva.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Combined%20Provider%20List%202019_0.pdf> * Veterans Peer Corps program info: <https://www.dva.wa.gov/program/veterans-peer-corps>   **Contact Bryan Bales at:** [**bryan.bales@dva.wa.gov**](mailto:bryan.bales@dva.wa.gov) **or via phone at 360-725-2237**  **Veterans Corps Navigator – Connie O’Brien, Veterans Corps Regional Coordinator**   * Vet Corps Navigator are mentors on college campus to assist veterans navigate the school system and help them stay in school – they are considered their battle body. They provide training on: Suicide Prevention and Awareness, MST, TBI, PTS   **Certificate of Appreciation Presentation to American Legion for hosting.**  **Meeting adjourned.** |
| **Next VAAC Town Hall Meeting** | **November 7, 2019 from 10:30 – 1:00 pm at American Legion Post 155, located at 1250 12th Avenue, Longview, WA 98632** |