



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
*PO BOX 41150 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1150 • 360-725-2167*

**Meeting Minutes**

<b>Meeting attended by</b>	Richard Marcelynas and Don Schack
<b>Date</b>	April 16, 2015
<b>Time</b>	10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
<b>Location</b>	Hill Ray Plaza – 801 South Vista Point Drive, Colfax, WA
<b>Call to Order</b>	Meeting called to order by Don Schack Invocation by Don Schack Pledge of Allegiance by Richard Marcelynas
<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions:</b>	Don Schack made the welcome and introductions of VAAC Members present at the Town Hall Meeting  Gary Condra – WDVA Deputy Director gave an agency update. 1) Groundbreaking for the Walla Walla Veterans Home – July 1, 2015 – it will be an 80 bed facility and will be up and operating Fall of 2016, 2) Governor, House & Senate versions of the Capital budget includes funding to conduct a feasibility study for a possible second state veteran cemetery, 3) Collaborating with Department of Corrections to assist incarcerated veterans that are in the system – creation of veterans pod at two corrections facilities, 4) Collaborating with private and public sector and non-profit organization for prevention of homeless veterans and eventually ending homelessness.
<b>Presentations</b>	<b>Mayor, City of Colfax – G. Todd Vanek</b> Welcomed attendees and thanked the VAAC for doing one of their Town Hall meetings in his town. He is a Navy Veteran and he would like to work with WDVA so that he will be able to better serve his fellow veterans and their family members in his town.  <b>Whitman County Commissioners – Dean Kinzer &amp; Art Swannack</b> Both Commissioners thanked the VAAC and WDVA for conducting the town hall meeting in their county. Both have asked if we could send them samples of forms that different counties used for the veterans assistance fund and if there is any best practice that they can have as well. Whitman county would like to better serve veterans and their families that live in their county. The county works closely with local non-profit organization and veteran service organizations when it comes to assisting the needs of veterans and their families as the Veterans Assistance Fund from the county is very limited  <b>Behavioral Health – Brian Sharpless</b> He is the state contracted behavioral health counselor that service Whitman County. His office is located on the grounds of Washington

State University located in Pullman. Office hours are: Mondays – 8:00 – 6:00, Tuesdays – 8:00 – 7:00, Wednesdays – 8:00 – 5:00, Thursdays – 8:00 – 7:00 and Fridays – 8:00 – 3:00 p.m. Appointments can be made by calling 509-355-3587. The current wait time to access his service right now is between 1 week – 1 ½ weeks. He encouraged everyone present to share his information and not to hesitate to refer a veteran that is in need of his services.

### **Liza Narciso – Legislative Update**

Liza gave a legislative updates. The legislature is in session until April 26, 2015. Here are some veterans bills:

ESHB 1424 – Concerning Suicide Prevention - Delays the requirement that certain health professions complete one-time training in suicide assessment, treatment, and management. Requires trainings in suicide assessments, treatment, and management to meet minimum standards adopted by the Department of Health. Clarifies that a disciplining authority may not grant a blanket exemption from the training requirements to broad categories or specialties within a profession based on training and experience

HB 2040 – Initiates a campaign to increase veteran employment. Requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to maintain a database of campaign participants

HB 5633 - Creates a coordinator for the national Helmets to Hardhats program in the Department of Veterans Affairs

SB 5958 – Changes the membership of the Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee and designates liaisons from the Committee for each of the state veterans' homes

### **State Veterans Cemetery (Medical Lake) – Rudy Lopez**

The site was dedicated on May. 31, 2010 with the first interment taking place on Jun 7, 2010. Included in the initial site development was a committal shelter, over 1,000 pre-placed crypts, 2,080 columbarium niches, an unspecified number of burial plots for in-ground inurnments as well as a scattering garden. Also included in the initial development were an administrative building, with public and private meeting space, and a fully enclosed maintenance facility for storage and upkeep of grounds equipment and machinery. The cemetery averages 500 burials a year. Currently working on a first expansion grant. Eligibility for veterans and/or their family member is the same as the national cemetery standard. Pre-registration is highly encouraged. There will be a big Memorial Day Ceremony on May 25<sup>th</sup> – they expect 1200 attendees. The cemetery also participates in the Missing America Project – to date they have interred 173 veterans cremains and 1 spouse cremains.

### **Employment – Hannah Schoepp (Local Veterans Employment Representative)**

As part of Hannah's job she works closely with employers and

encourages them to hire veterans. Services provided by her office are: job referrals, employment counseling, job search workshops and referrals to training programs. Worksource also refers veterans and eligible spouses to specialized training programs through the Workforce Investment Act. If approved, limited vocational training is provided at no cost. Her office offers free classes every first and third Tuesday of each month – the class covers areas from resume writing, health care, education, financial, etc.

**Spokane Veterans Center – Eliseo “Joe” Dumlao**

The VetCenter offers an array of services to eligible veterans and family members. The center offers readjustment counseling services for individual, group, marital, family, and bereavement counseling. They also offer assistance in applying for VA benefits, employment counseling, guidance and referral, alcohol and drug assessments, information and referral to community resources, community education, etc. Joe also travels with the mobile vet center throughout Eastern Washington. He is very interested with partnering with rural communities to bring these resources in the community so that veterans and their family members do not have to travel to Spokane to access the services the center offers.

**Christine Haas – Mann Grandstaff VA Medical Center – Spokane, WA**

Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 known as the Choice Program and Health Care Collaboration. On 8/7/14, President Obama signed into law the above act for the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue to provide timely, high-quality health care to veterans. Section 101 of the act, requires VA to establish a temporary (Choice Program) to improve veterans access to health care by allowing eligible veterans to elect to use Non-VA health care providers for up to 3 years, based either on the distance a veteran lives from a VA facility or if they are experiencing wait times beyond the 30 day standard. This is referred to as the Choice Program. Veterans who meet certain eligibility requirements will be able to elect to receive care from eligible non-VA providers through this program. TRIWEST is contracted to administer this program. To learn more about this simply log on to:

<http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>

**Issues Discussed**

1. Possibility of a Local Veterans Employment Representative or Disabled Veterans Outreach Program that would travel to either Colfax or Pullman to offer employment services – this area used to have a LVER/DVOP that comes once a week to assist veterans in the employment arena.
2. Possibility of having additional behavioral health counselors – right now the state contracted counselor wait time is 1 – 1 ½ week before a vet could seek counseling services. Joe Dumlao from the Spokane Veterans Center offered to bring the Mobile Vet Clinic in the Pullman area once a week – he just needs to coordinate this with the community.
3. Possibility of a standardized form to use in administering the County

	<p>Veterans Assistance Fund. Also best practices in administering this fund – Don Shack will share both information with Whitman County Commissioners.</p>
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4. Possible training of service officers. Service officers in this area are retiring and they need replacement