



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

<b>Meeting attended by</b>	Owen McCurty, Don Schack, Merl Gorton, Bud Compton
<b>Date</b>	June 26, 2014
<b>Time</b>	6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
<b>Location</b>	Columbia Basin College – 2600 N. 20 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Pasco, WA
<b>Call to Order</b>	Meeting was called to order by Don Schack. Invocation given by Don Schack and he also led the group on the Pledge of Allegiance.
<b>Welcome</b>	Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, WDVA Director – Alfie thanked everyone for coming and she shared WDVA Vision – “All Washington veterans and their families are connected to their earned benefits”. Update on the construction of the Walla Walla Veterans home – VA to hand over the title to the land on or about September 2014 and hoping to start breaking of the ground next year. WDVA is also hoping in the next 4 years of so to be able to have another State Veterans Cemetery constructed in the Tri-Cities area. She asked everyone to give our agency a call if there is individual(s), etc. interested in donating a land. Everyone present was challenged to be an ambassador by connecting to veterans and their families in their respective communities and referring them to our agency so that we will be able to assess if they qualify for any state or federal benefits.
<b>Areas Discussed</b>	<p><b>Vet Corps and Higher Education (Jason Schlegel and Erick Flieger)</b> Jason and Erick shared with the group that majority of veterans returning to college are post 9/11. Both try to connect with every veteran in their respective areas to assist them in their journey to getting their education and most importantly mentor them in staying in school and finishing up their courses. They also try to advocate to the veterans who are not currently using their educational benefits to utilize them – if higher education is not for them the post 9/11 GI Bill also pays for trades, apprenticeship, vocational training.</p> <p><b>Veterans Employment (Nick Erickson)</b> – Nick works for Employment Security Department and he is the current Local Veterans Employment Rep for Benton and Franklin Counties. He works closely with businesses in his area and he educates as well as encourages them on the benefits of hiring veterans. He also assists veterans in building up their resume/employment packet to be competitive in the job market. The unemployment rate for veterans is better than non-veterans.</p>

	<p><b>Veterans Housing Options &amp; Rental Assistance (Skip Novakovich)</b>  The Columbia Basin Veterans’ Coalition provides services to aid transitional veterans’ transition back to their respective communities. The coalition provides an intensive one on one assistance, coaching in helping veterans readjust to civilian life. After the veterans undergo this process the coalition, monitor the veteran’s progress towards the goals they set from themselves. The coalition also acts as a liaison between the veteran and various agencies (local, state, federal, etc) in applying for benefits they earned.</p> <p><b>Homeless Veterans Services (Ron Ops)</b>  Ron shared the goal and services that the Walla Walla Homeless Program provides for veterans in the community – provide outreach efforts to homeless veterans as well as providing them with transitional housing in the community, long term permanent community housing, and supportive employment opportunities as well as assisting them in their medical, psychosocial care, recovery support, etc. They also provide outreach to those veterans that are involved in the justice system and they work side by side with probation officers, law enforcements, courts and intervene on their behalf for the veteran to seek treatment as an alternative to jail when appropriate</p> <p><b>PTSD and Readjustment Counseling (David Bebe)</b>  The team at Walla Walla VAMC is already actively treating veterans through individualized care, readjustment counseling and immediate crisis service. Services provided to the veteran may include individual and group counseling in areas such as PTSD, alcohol or drug related assessments, suicide prevention referrals. All services are free of cost.</p>
<p><b>Issues Discussed</b></p>	<p>Possibility of having a Veterans Court in Benton or Walla Walla county (county funds is limited). What is the process of getting a vet court started – Alfie suggested that both counties should get together and pull their resources, find a judge that would be willing to administer the court as well as a prosecuting attorney that is aware of the physical, emotional issues that veterans have.</p> <p>Getting an Identification Card Issued with a Veteran designation on the ID. Homeless veterans are coming across this issue as a hindrance in them getting the assistance they need as they don’t have the necessary documents/ID to present when seeking assistance. Is there an easier way for veterans to get copies of their DD214 to prove veterans status. How can they get a VA Photo ID issued.</p>