

STATE OF WASHINGTON

VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

**Meeting Minutes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Meeting attended by**  **(VAAC Member)** | Sharon Kirkpatrick & Bud Compton |
| **Date** | February 18, 2016 |
| **Time** | 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. |
| **Location** | VFW Post # 7392  3037 North Goldie Road, Oak Harbor, WA |
| **Call to Order** | Meeting called to order by Richard Marcelynas  Invocation by Bob Jones  Pledge of Allegiance by Richard Marcelynas |
| **Welcome & Introductions:** | Welcome and Introduction done by Sharon Kirkpatrick  Invocation by Sharon Kirkpatrick  Pledge of Allegiance led by Bud Compton |
| **Presentations** | **WDVA Update – Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, WDVA Director**  Implementation of Executive Order 13-01 – Washington Military Transition Council (WMTC) to provide transitioning veterans opportunities for employment, education, apprenticeship and entrepreneurship opportunities. This also resulted in the creation of 8 apprenticeships at JBLM and 600 jobs. Veterans unemployment rate reduced from 7.1% to 5.3%. Annual Military Transition Summit resulted in an average of 250 on the spot job offers.  **YesVets –** is a veteran hiring campaign created by HB 2040 during the 2015 Legislative Session. Washington State employer are recognized with a YesVets decal once they sign up and hire a veteran. Continued participated is recognized with annual year decals which are displayed next to the YesVets decal. An annual recognition ceremony will be held on Flag Day (June 14th) to highlight YesVets partners and also recognize businesses throughout the year that are going above and beyond to hire veterans.  Walla Walla Veterans Home – began construction last July 1st – this will be an 80 bed state nursing home facility with an estimated opening date of November 11, 2016.  **Community Update – Beth Munns, Oak Harbor Council Member**  Ms. Munns is serving her third term as a Council Member for the City of Oak Harbor and is vigorously involved in the community and various groups, i.e. United Way, Navy League, Help House Community Food Bank. The City of Oak Harbor does not have a program for active members of the armed forces, veterans and their families. She does encourage the community if they come across a veteran or a family that needing assistance to contact her office and she will do her best for referral. As a wife of a navy veteran she does understands the unique needs of veterans.  **Supportive Services for Veterans Families(SSVF)/Opportunity Council – Monica Lopez**  SSVF/Opportunity Council assist very low-income Veteran families residing in or transitioning to permanent housing. They also provide a range of supportive services to eligible Veteran families that are designed to promote housing stability. Their housing facilities in Island County include a short term emergency housing, transitioning housing and permanent housing. For Island County – they have Marjie’s House located in Oak Harbor – this housing facility provides both short term and transitional housing for women and children. Last year they were able to housed 40 veterans, 18 were practically homeless.  **Island County Veterans Services – Dana Sawyers & Jackie Henderson**  This Department provides emergency financial assistance, case management and other supportive services to indigent veterans and their families. Financial Assistance is also provided for rent/mortgage, utility bills. The office provides vouchers for food, fuel, specific work clothing, school clothing and supplies for dependent children. They also provides assistance in filing claims for compensation and pension, health care. In order for a veteran and/or family members to qualify for these services they have to qualify – i.e. a veteran have served under Honorable or General under Honorable conditions, Original Certified copy of DD214, if discharged prior to 1950 a Certificate of Discharge, has to be a continual resident of Washington State for one year immediately prior to application and a resident of Island County at time of application, be able to provide proof of identity and be indigent or have an income at 150% of poverty level.  **Legislative Update – Alfie Alvarado-Ramos**  HB1213 – Concerning the definition of “veteran” for the purpose of the county veterans assistance fund. Modifies the definition of “veteran” and “family” for the purpose of the Veterans Assistance Fund.  HB1351 – Concerning license fees for national guard members under Title 77 RCW. Requires the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to issue three types of recreational hunting licenses to resident members of the National Guard at no charge.  HB 2793 – Providing for suicide awareness and prevention for safer homes. Establishes a Safe Homes Task Force to develop suicide awareness and prevention education messages and training and implement advocacy efforts with key stakeholders to pair suicide prevention training with distribution of devices for safe storage of lethal means. Creates a Safe Homes Project to certify firearms dealers that meet specified requirements as Safe Homes Partners and establishes a business and occupation tax credit for firearms dealers who are certified as Safe Homes Partners. Requires licensed pharmacists to complete one time training on suicide assessment, treatment and management.  SB 6202 - Concerning the enforcement of employment rights arising from state active duty service by a member of the national guard.  SB 6405 – Addressing the civilian health and medical program for the veterans affairs administration. Supplemental insurance policies are available to offset some or all out-of-pocket costs. The supplemental insurance policies are sold by private insurance carries and a variety of carries offer policies across the country but policies are not currently available in Washington State. Current insurance law allows for supplemental policies.  **Behavioral Health – Bridget Cantrell**  Dr. Cantrell is one of 35 behavioral health providers of WDVA. She provides counseling service to veterans and family members with war-era and PTSD related problems. The other counseling service she provides is readjustment, bereavement, military sexual trauma.  **Employment – Sefarian Butler**  Sefarian is a DVOP that works for Employment Security. He assists veterans that have significant barriers to employment. He works closely with veterans in getting their resume polished, provides workshops for mock interviews, assist them in online job searches and filling out employment applications. He works closely with his counterpart Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) on possible job openings in the area as well as with local businesses. 16% of Island County’s population are veterans. Veterans unemployment rate for the county is 5.8%. Whidbey NAS is expected to acquire approximately 3,700 active service members. |
| **Issues Discussed** | 1. Choice Program – So much confusion about using the choice program. When calling the Call Center information given are not the same. Wait time to get approval for referral too long.  2. Transportation – Not enough free transportation from Island County to and from VA Puget Sound or VA American Lake available. Shortage of volunteer drivers.  3. Request a town hall meeting opportunity with the US Department of Veterans Affairs  4. Not enough stock of available housing and the increase of rent – In December 2015 average rent is $600 and in February of 2016 average rent went up to $800.00. (Shortage of HUD/VASH Voucher available in Island County |

|  |
| --- |
|  |