



STATE OF WASHINGTON

**VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

*PO BOX 41150 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1150 • (800) 562-2308*

**VAAC TOWN HALL AND WOMEN VETERANS FORUM**

**June 26, 2024**

**8:30 am – 9:30 am Women Veterans Forum**

Elks Lodge 1937, Long Beach

**10:00 am – 12:30 pm VAAC Town Hall**

**Elks Lodge 1937**

110 Pacific Ave.

Long Beach, WA 98631

**MINUTES**

Welcome, Land

Acknowledgement, Introduction of VAAC Members, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance

- Ron Black called the Town Hall to order
- Acknowledged the Chehalis, Chinook, Cowlitz, Klickitat and Shoalwater Bay people and other Native peoples who have lived in the region.
- Gave an Invocation and led the pledge of allegiance.
- Introduced 3 VAAC Members in Attendance and one WVAC member.

Introduction Guests

Ron Black made introduction of guests:

- Jeremy Doyle – Commissioner
- Daniel Garcia – County Sherrif
- Jerry Phillips – CVSO
- Sarah Kohout w/Gluesenkamp Perez Office
- Sue Svendsen, City of Long Beach Mayor
- Solomon Gilbert, WDVA Deputy Director
  - Solomon introduced all of the WDVA staff in attendance.

Mayor Svendsen

- Introduced herself and welcomed all in attendance. Thanked attendees and WDVA for coming to Pacific County.

Deputy Director Solomon Gilbert

- Welcomed and thanked all for coming.
- Solomon introduced all of the WDVA staff in attendance

## WDVA Program Overview

### Leland Cooper – Outreach Program Coordinator

- Overview of Major WDVA programs
- State Veterans Homes
  - Spokane Veterans Home - Spokane
  - WA Soldiers Home – Orting
  - WA Veterans Home – Port Orchard
  - Walla Walla Veterans Home
- Transitional Housing Program (THP)
  - Port Orchard – 48 beds
  - Orting – 82 beds
  - The goal is to increase residential stability.
  - Increase their skill level.
  - Assist them in permanent housing.
  - Assist in obtaining employment.
- Armed Forces License Plates
  - Helps support the State Veterans Cemetery.
- Veterans Services
  - Contracts with 6 Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs)
  - Currently 23 county Veteran Service Officer (VSO) agreements with 30 out of 39 counties being served.
  - Have MOAs with 7 out of 29 federally recognized Indian tribes.
- Veterans Service Programs
  - Veterans Innovations Program (VIP) – assists post 9;11 veterans facing financial hardships.
  - Transitional Warrior Program (JBLM) – provides information about all available benefits.
  - Statewide Apprenticeship Coordinator – assists veterans in connecting with registered apprenticeships.
  - Veterans Estate Management Program (VEMP) – offers protective payee services for veterans and family members who are incapable of managing their own finances.
  - LGBTQ+ Veterans Outreach Coordinator – Robin Lang connects LGBTQ+ veterans to their benefits.
- Counseling & Wellness Programs
  - WDVA Counseling Program – contracted Licensed Mental Health providers serve veterans and their families.
  - Veterans Training Support Center – no-cost training provided each month on a variety of topics.
  - Brain Injury and Recovery Program – supports and represents every veteran in WA that has incurred a brain injury.

- Vet Corps – training through peer-to-peer support.
- Veterans Peer Corps – provides training to community members.
- Veterans Conservation Corps – opportunities for veterans to connect with nature.
- Veterans Farm at Orting – place where veterans can lease fertile farmland.
- Tobacco Cessation Program – helps connect veterans to resources.
- Transition, Readiness & Family Services
  - WA State Military Transition and Readiness Council (WSMTRC) - Partnership that supports service members and families to successfully transition into civilian careers.
  - Military Spouse Initiative – policy and program advocacy for military spouses.
  - Veteran Owned Business (VOB) Program – recruits and enrolls veteran and service members in VOB certification.
  - Women Veterans Program
- Definition of a Veteran – for purposes of state veterans' benefits.

## Portland VAMC

### Denise Fisher, Chief of Prosthetics

- Prosthetics and Sensory Aids
  - Gave a brief overview of their program and what is and is not included.

### Erin Kays, Program Specialist for Community Care

- Mission Act/Community Care
  - Explained what Community Care is.
    - VA allows in-network community providers to treat enrolled and eligible Veterans on behalf of the VA.
  - Overview of Urgent and Emergency room benefits.
  - Provided contact information and handouts.

## Women Veterans Advisory Committee (WVAC) Overview and Update

### Julz Carey, WVAC Vice Chair

- Town Hall has changed women attendance by adding the WVAC to the VAAC Town Hall agenda.
- Has created a forum in area for women to ask questions.
- Has created a space for women veterans.
- Mission is about being advocates in our community for Washington State Veterans
- 4 things the WVAC does:
  - Connect women to their identities as veterans.

- Change the perception of what veterans look like.
- Connect women veterans to benefits.
- Connect women veterans to the community.
- Doing a call out to all women veterans

Portland VAMC Women Veterans Program Video

Click [here](#) for view video presented at the meeting

County Veterans Assistance Fund

Mindy Young, Clerk, Pacific County Veterans Advisory Committee

- Assistance funds include:
  - Transportation
  - Vehicle Repair
  - Rent/Mortgage
  - Food
  - Spend Accounts (they can assist setting these up)
  - Misc. expenses
  - Misc. National Disaster Fund
- Maximum allowable per year is \$2,000.
  - Can use this all at once or in increments.
  - To date have used \$25k.

Pacific County Service Officer

Ed Crawford, Pacific County Senior VSO

- Veterans Disability Claims
  - Must submit a fully developed claim.
  - If not fully developed, will need to be resubmitted.
- PACT Act
  - Agent Orange exposure
  - Environmental health registry
  - Military exposures – burn pits
- Veterans Housing
  - Working with local community partners to house their homeless veterans.

WDVA Suicide Prevention & Awareness

Richard LaFrazier, SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Coordinator

- Suicide Prevention can be difficult to talk about.
- Suicide Prevention Peer Team
  - Four (4) regionally located Peer Specialists.
    - Northwest, Central, Southwest & Olympia
- Community workshops – include prevention training and combatting stigmas.
- For non-emergency questions and requests for assistance, [connect@dva.wa.gov](mailto:connect@dva.wa.gov)
- For immediate help, call 9-8-8 HOPE

Veterans Connect Transit System

Michael Wagner, Pacific County Transit General Manager

- Free transportation to Veterans in Pacific County
  - To schedule call (360) 642-9418

Closing and Meeting Adjourned

Solomon thanked the Elks Lodge and presented a WDVA Certificate of Appreciation and Challenge Coin.

Solomon presented a plaque to Chuck Wharton for his 8 years of service on the VAAC.

Adjourned – 12:30PM