



CLACKAMAS COUNTY  
 VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL  
 January 25, 2024 Meeting Minutes  
 2:30pm – 3:30pm via Zoom

FACILITATOR	RB Green
NOTETAKER	R.E. Szego

VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL						
P	RB Green	A	John Budiao	E	Janet Braman	
A	Paul Edgar	P	Betty Fish-Ferguson	P	Tawnya Lege	
A	Laurie Kimmell	P	Don Hedlind			
P	Tracy Bogard	P	Thomas McAlarney			
E	Carol Bernhard	P	Gregory Freetage			
CLACKAMAS COUNTY STAFF						
P	Brenda Durbin	P	R.E. ("Ari") Szego		Joey Johns	P Aubrie Balkwill
P	Ken Bietschek	P	Aaron Henry	P	Gus Bedwell	P Commissioner Paul Savas
GUESTS						
P	Allen Anderson	P	Mike Manske			

P-Present, A -Absent, E-Excused, O-Other Attendee

ITEMS / ISSUES	DISCUSSION	FOLLOW-UP
<b>Meeting Called to Order and Introductions</b>	<b>RB</b> called the meeting to order at 2:31pm Quorum (majority) could not be established until 3pm.	R.E.: Connect with Allen to make sure he can apply R.E.: Does Allen really want his number sent out?

ITEMS / ISSUES	DISCUSSION	FOLLOW-UP
<b>Adoption of Minutes</b>	Tracy motioned for approval of the November 2023 Minutes. These were approved.	
<b>Membership</b>	<p><b>Review of Member List and Contacts List.</b> Tracy stated that she has contact information for a number of people on the contact list and will call and ask them if they want to continue to be on the list. Many of them are former members. Gus: we're getting kickbacks when we send out messages.</p> <p><b>Recruitment flier.</b> The Council looked at the updated recruitment flier. Tracy asked if it is okay to display the flier at upcoming conferences. Yes, please display the flier and get it out to social media outlets.</p>	R.E.: Identify County Employees on the additional contacts list.
<b>Officer Nominations</b>	RB nominates Betty to be Vice Chair of the VAC. Tracy seconds. Approved.	R.E.: Add Betty to VAC Exec.
<b>Draft Work Plan</b>	<p>The Council discussed the draft Work Plan.</p> <p><b>Expo.</b> RB shared that Clackamas Community College (CCC) wants to host the Expo. CCC has a veterans club that can support the event. He will contact the Events staff at the college. The week of November 18 is open.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication with and within the college has been delayed due to a cyber attack. All servers were shut down and classroom instruction just started this morning.</li> <li>• <b>Date Selection:</b></li> </ul>	<p>Email RB, Gus, or R.E. if you thinking of anything else related to the Expo.</p> <p>If you're interested in coordinating the Outreach Committee or Recruitment and Retention of VAC</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gus proposed that RB take first available date that week, Monday through Thurs and that we hold a VAC meeting at Student Veterans center at CCC.</li> <li>○ Tracy noted that a lot of young veterans work and have families. She offered to stay later to support their participation and recommended that we think of a timeframe that works for everybody. A lot of veteran-owned businesses would like to participate.</li> <li>○ RB added that the vision is beyond just an event for homeless veterans. There are so many veterans we don't see and interact with. We could start later and let the resource part of the event extend.</li> <li>○ Don wondered if we have thought of having this on a Saturday.</li> <li>○ Gus replied that it is doable for the VSO (Veterans Service Organization) if we plan enough in advance. The VSO has to budget for staff time outside of the regular schedule. He could plan for that far enough in advance with his team.</li> <li>○ RB suggested that we might lose some service providers.</li> <li>● <b>Vendor Education and Networking.</b> Gus shared the vision that he's been presenting. He brings this from his background as a trainer with ODVA (Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs) and from his work with the veterans housing and community services. Stand Downs are great, but if you start talking to vendors, they really don't know who's in the room and haven't had a chance to connect. At the Washington County Stand Down Gus went around to see who was in the room. For the first part of day</li> </ul>	<p>Members committees</p>

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	<p>vendors will set up tables. Then we will bring into a room and educate them on who veterans are and why it's so important. There will be a vendor group icebreaker to get them connected and to know who each other are so they can do a warm handoff is someone comes to them needing a service they do not provide. The hope is that the vendor relationships will transcend the event. The Expo will not focus on just one demographic of veterans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Don wondered if the VAC can ask the coordinator from the Washington County Stand Down for a list of the vendors. He was amazed at how many vendors and organizations there were at that event.</li> <li>○ Gus has already discussed this with Sean from Washington County VSO.</li> <li>● Gus noted that we can get as many people as possible to attend the Expo by selecting date and location now. We can work backward from the event date and start communicating, creating media, create website for registration, and energizing folks.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building a Strong Advisory Council.</b> Tracy wants to be able to send recommendations on new members to BCC by March.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Subcommittees:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ RB is looking for someone to be responsible for each subcommittee. Let RB, Gus, or R.E. know if you're interested.</li> <li>○ Gus noted that we are trying to reestablish the subcommittees and don't have a defined numbers at this time. The Outreach</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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	<p>Committee will mainly work on the Expo. Recruitment &amp; Retention will connect with members who haven't been able to attend and identifying the barriers.</p>	
<p><b>2024 Meetings</b></p>	<p><b>VAC Meeting Date and Time.</b> Don stated that this meeting on the fourth Thursday conflicts with the National Paralyzed Veterans of America board meeting. RB suggested running a Doodle poll and then voting on the results of the poll at February meeting. Items to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date</li> <li>• Time</li> <li>• Length</li> <li>• Frequency</li> <li>• Food, if onsite</li> <li>• What committee you might be interested in / other ways to redesign this work</li> </ul> <p>A motion to do the Doodle poll was approved.</p> <p>The Paralyzed Veterans of America tri-state chapter is hosting the <b>Portland Roadster Show</b> in March (<a href="https://tristatepva.org/">https://tristatepva.org/</a>). Don sought permission to give out fliers for the Expo at this event. Gus has swag. Let him know if you need it for this or other events.</p>	<p>RB? Doodle poll for date / time selection</p>
<p><b>Member Updates</b></p>	<p>Tawnya asked if we get numbers from the VSO about how <b>many veterans are served</b>. Gus answered that as the Supervisor for the VSO he delivers a</p>	

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	<p>presentation once a year to BCC (Board of County Commissioners) on our previous year’s work on behalf of veterans. Clackamas County VSO served almost 1900 veterans in interviews from the end of September 2022 to the beginning of October 2023. He also reports to ODVA every quarter. The VSO brings in about \$10m into the County and operates with a historically understaffed Team. There’s typically a 6-8 month process to hire new staff.</p> <p>Gus does not recommend “<b>success rate</b>” claims. How do you define this? There are no criteria to define it. Gus considers a success that you walk in the door, want some level of benefits, and walk out with some level of benefits, education, clarification, or navigation through the process. Each situation is individual. Please contact Gus for more info about VSO services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tawnya asked if the VSO helps a spouse, especially widowed spouse.</li> <li>• Gus stated that he uses “veteran” in a generic space – service member with VA benefit, family member with VA benefit. Not just the individual who served, but all the other layers, as well.</li> </ul> <p>Commissioner Savas noted that the \$10m goes within the county directly to the veterans, not to the county. Gus added that the VSO also helps with education benefits and healthcare benefits. RB’s team also helps with education benefits. There are also VA Home Loan benefits. The \$10m is a small part of the picture of benefits available to veterans to improve their quality of life.</p>	

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	<p>Tracy shared that it's not finalized yet, but in May in the Portland Area there will be a large yellow ribbon event for soldiers preparing to deploy. She will have the details at next meeting.</p> <p>Don sat in on a meeting in December with <b>Habitat for Humanities partnering with VA</b> to provide housing for homeless veterans, including Clack Co, or remodeling to make homes more accessible. Commissioner Savas added that beyond the \$10m for the VSO, there's even more money coming in for housing to serve Clackamas County veterans, such as vouchers for housing. The County is constantly building housing, including high-density housing, and housing for veterans is often part of that.</p>	
<b>Public Comment</b>	No public comment.	
<b>Adjourn</b>	Meeting was adjourned at 3:39pm.	
<b>Next Meeting</b>	<b>Veterans Advisory Council</b> <b>Thursday, February 22, 2:30-3:30pm via Zoom</b>	