

West Suburban Veterans District – January 8, 2015

Location: Wellesley Town Hall, Great Hall

Present: Kate Fitzpatrick, Donna VanderClock, Hans Larsen, John Senchyshyn

Also present: Chris Coleman, Matt Ching, Dale L. Kurtz, Stanley Spear, and Sally Rose

Call to order: Meeting called to order at 4:00 pm.

Business:

1. **Citizen Speak**

None

2. **Minutes**

*The Board voted (3-0-1) to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2014 meeting. Ms. VanderClock abstained as she was not present at the meeting.*

3. **Director's Update**

Mr. Spear and Ms. Rose confirmed that all member towns are up-to-date with regards to Chapter 115 benefit status and are in good shape for the remainder of FY15.

Mr. Larsen reviewed the status of the proposed WSVD FY16 budget. *The Board voted (4-0) to approve the FY16 budget contingent on an adjustment in the budget line for Financial Support, which includes clerical, accounting and treasurer support.* (Note: On Friday, January 9, 2015 Mr. Larsen emailed a revised FY16 WSVD budget, totaling \$202,398, which is \$2,190 less than the \$204,588 budget presented at the meeting.) Mr. Larsen said that he is happy to further discuss the budget at the next meeting on April 2, 2015; otherwise the staff will move forward under the assumption that the Board is happy with the revised budget.

Mr. Spear briefly mentioned the Annual VSO training that was held in Leominster, MA on October 27-30<sup>th</sup>. Both Mr. Spear and Mr. Ching attended the entire conference; Ms. Rose attended for one day when Chapter 115 benefits were being discussed. They all found the conference informative and worthwhile. Mr. Spear described that all VSO's will soon be required to pass a three part certification exam on the computer. The three sections cover M.G.L. Chapter 115 Benefits, CMR 108 and Use of Resources (Shine, Medicare Parts B, D (Medigap), and Medicaid) In preparation for the exam Mr. Ching intends to attend, commuting daily, the winter training conference in Yarmouth on February 2-5<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Larsen mentioned that the District's state certification expires at the end of the current fiscal year and that we need to reapply by the end of May. Before the April meeting a draft of a request for recertification will be prepared for the Board's review.

Mr. Spear mentioned that Governor Baker has appointed Mr. Francisco Urena as the new Secretary of Veterans' Services. He replaces Mr. Coleman Nee. Mr. Urena is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and was the VSO for the city of Lawrence and the Commissioner in Boston. Mr. Ching was very positive about Mr. Urena saying that he had gone on an honor flight with him.

On separate occasions Mr. Ching met with Mr. Coleman and Needham's COA Director Jamie Brenner Gutner, and also with Mr. Senchyshyn and Wayland's COA Director Julie Secord to talk about the Valor Act. Mr. Ching has talked with Senator Mike Rush about the Valor Act and he will be meeting with him on January 21<sup>st</sup>. Questions still come up regarding whether or not this is a taxable benefit, i.e., is the impact on taxable income the same as with the senior work-off program? Currently Wellesley has no one covered by the Valor Act. To qualify you must be on the deed of a house, so younger veterans still living with their parents are ineligible. In contrast with the senior work-off program, the Veterans' program has no age or income restrictions. A veteran can participate in both a Senior program and the Valor Act.

#### **4. District Budget**

See Director's Update above.

Mr. Ching is now on a Town of Wellesley cell phone plan and the cost of this plan is fully funded by the District.

#### **5. Other**

Wayland and Weston are interested in evening office hours to be held one evening per month. This will start on a trial basis the last week of April (Monday April 27<sup>th</sup> in Wayland, and Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup> in Weston). The offices will be open from 5:00 – 7:00 pm each time. Sally will make up a notice and send it to Mr. Senchyshyn and Ms. VanderClock to distribute.

Mr. Kurtz talked about the State's desire to create more districts to better serve the needs of veterans. Mr. Spear mentioned that recently there had been 5 cases of Dover residents contacting the District regarding veteran services and for help applying for benefits. In the past Dover used to pay a small stipend to Natick and Needham to offset their assistance serving veterans. Ms. Fitzpatrick agreed to talk with Mr. David Ramsay, the Dover Town Administrator, about this situation. Dover is not in compliance with state law as they do not have a VSO available to adequately serve Dover residents. Their website currently lists Mr. Paul Carew, the Natick VSO; however both Mr. Spear and Mr. Ching have taken calls and met with Dover residents.

Mr. Spear distributed a brochure created by Mr. Ching informing residents about the WSVD. More brochures will be printed and 25-50 will be provided to each location.

#### **6. Old/New Business**

The Board agreed the next meeting will be on Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. in the Great Hall at Wellesley Town Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 pm.