

Calhoun County Veterans Affairs Committee Meeting

Minutes: June 11, 2014

Veterans Affairs Committee meeting called to order by Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Rodger Seidel at 2:35 P.M.

Pledge of Allegiance–Moment of Silence.

Roll-call of committee members:

Chairman:	Rodger Seidel	Present
Vice-Chair:	Jack Hunn	Present
Secretary:	Sam Gray	Present
At Large Member:	Rob Beam	Present



Acknowledgment of Calhoun County Veterans Affairs office staff:

Director:	Scott C. Losey	Present
Service Officer:	Kristina Higgins	Not Present
Admin Assistant:	Luann Cape	Present

Citizens' Time:

Dr. Frank Lanuti shared a “sea story” or two pertaining to his period of active duty military service during World War II. Beginning with boot camp and ending with dog-fights over Italy, Dr. Lanuti shared inspired journeys of he in his Stinson L-5 Sentinel out maneuvering the German Luftwaffe during the latter stages of World War II. In recognition of his bravery under fire, Dr. Lanuti was awarded the Air Medal with one (1) Oakleaf Cluster as well as the Crown of Italy - Cavalier. Director Losey is currently investigating whether Dr. Lanuti qualifies for the Distinguished Flying Cross. Dr. Lanuti’s daughter, Deborah, insured his safe arrival to the office today and shared some words of appreciation for the entire Calhoun County Veterans Affairs office team. In reciprocation, both the office staff and the Committee members thanked Dr. Lanuti for his service to our country so many years ago. Dr. Lanuti was nothing short of an inspiration for which we would all like to hear more about his exploits as an aviator engaged in hostile dogfights with the German Luftwaffe over Italian skies.

Reading of the May 14, 2014 Calhoun County Veterans Affairs Committee (hereafter: CCVAC) Meeting Minutes:

Following review, Mr. Gray made a motion to accept the May 14, 2014 CCVAC Meeting Minutes as presented, Chairman Seidel seconded the motion. By a roll call vote of 4-0, the CCVAC Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

Applications for Emergency Assistance from the Calhoun County Veterans' Relief Fund:

14-02 Calhoun County Veterans Relief Application solicited for Utility–Electric \$909.98

Approved: Due to the **IMMEDIATE EMERGENT NEED** relative to the Utility SHUTOFF notification, initial solicitation for Committee approval was facilitated via the telephone. Director Losey contacted each Committee member; delineated the circumstances uniquely inherent to the Applicant and Application for Emergency Assistance; and requested each Committee member's individual vote. By a unanimous vote of 4-0, Application 14-02 was **APPROVED**, in full, for \$909.98.

Because Applicant 14-02 was dealt with prior to the regularly scheduled Calhoun County Veterans Affairs Committee meeting, the Committee took a few minutes to review the Application documentation. A few minor suggestions surfaced concerning procedural protocol, but nothing too critical that necessitated significant change.

Vice-Chair Hunn raised the issue pursuant to one-day period of war eligibility criterion necessary for those Veterans and Eligible Dependents who are in the midst of financial hardship(s) due to unforeseen emergent need(s) as delineated in Public Act 214 of 1899, 35.21 Veterans' Relief Fund; Levy and Collection of Annual Tax; Emergency Appropriation; Disposition. Vice-Chair Hunn recommended that a legal opinion regarding the matter might be well worth the time and effort. Consensus among the Committee members seemed to support Vice-Chair Hunn's contention.

In addition, Vice-Chair Hunn pointed out the inequity in eligibility inherent to the Calhoun County Veterans Relief Fund. Specifically, Vice-Chair Hunn questioned why the veteran must have served at least one (1) date during a federally defined, recognized period of wartime service or received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal. Mr. Hunn supported his contention by stipulating that a veteran who served during recognized periods of peace are seemingly "discriminated" against in terms of eligibility for the Calhoun County Veterans Relief Fund. Director Losey indicated that this question has surfaced many times during his near 15 year tenure. In addition, Director Losey informed the Committee, at large, that the former Calhoun County Legal Council did, in fact, author a legal opinion pertaining to the eligibility requirements necessary for veterans soliciting emergency assistance through the Veterans Relief program. Vice-Chair Hunn requested a copy of that legal opinion. In addition, Mr. Hunn stated that he would make contact with his litany of community and state contacts to see if there was any possible way to change the language in the state statute that governs the eligibility criteria that must be satisfied for Veterans Relief Fund consideration. Mr. Hunn's contention is that a veteran is a veteran no matter when the veteran served.

Segued from the conversation relative to the eligibility criteria inherent to the Calhoun County Veterans Relief Fund, Director Losey did stipulate that all payment vouchers relative to those veterans and eligible family members are made out to the vendor, **NEVER TO THE VETERAN OR ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBER**. This methodology assures fiscal accountability of County Tax Payer Dollars coupled with the avoidance of any possible fraudulent activity on behalf of the veteran or eligible family member—fraudulent activity implying that an approved amount of dollars for emergency assistance would be used for purposes other than the intent of the payment vouchers.

Chairman Seidel emphasized that the office needs to devise a much better way of protecting the privacy of information relative to not only those veterans soliciting emergency financial assistance, but, also, those veterans who have solicited the CCVA officer for advocacy. Director Losey chimed in and agreed wholeheartedly with Chairman Seidel and acknowledged that the procedural protocol to insure that every effort to protect the information of those veterans seeking advocacy through the CCVA office needs to be drastically improved. Director Losey did state that the addition of the new file system will create a much more secure way of protecting and preserving the integrity of the privacy of information relative to all veterans who seek the CCVA office staff's advocacy for any number of purposes.

Correspondence:

None

Old Business:

The Calhoun County Veterans Affairs office modification updates have been completed. In addition to the CCVA portion of the Calhoun County website, the new office hours have been posted in the local media, namely the Battle Creek Shopper and Battle Creek Enquirer (provided that the CCVA office will not be financially exploited, and the Calhoun County website).

Chairman Seidel did state that a brief overview of the office by way of Powerpoint will provide a “snapshot of the important statistical analysis referred to by Chairman Seidel as office at each ensuing Committee meeting. Chairman Seidel indicated that, perhaps, the CCVA office budget should purchase our own Powerpoint Projector to be mounted in the conference room. Because the CCVA pays an annual sum of money for services provided by Calhoun County, both Director Losey and Service-Officer Higgins should coordinate with the Calhoun County IT Department to assist with this endeavor.

The question was raised, what the next step was for the strategic plan. Chairman Seidel stated that we need to do the basics first and then tackle issues brought up in the planning time. Chairman Seidel emphasized looking at plans realistically. Administrative stuff will get under control and then we can tackle more items. Putting notices on the website will help cut down on mailings.

New Business:

Director Losey commented that Admin Assistance Cape was working on a nice, colorful brochure and that we needed a tri-fold large presentation piece that would fold up to the size of a briefcase. Chairman Seidel shared that we are looking at a two-piece card for outside the door. Mr. Gray brought up the need for new furniture for the conference room. Admin Cape's work station and the rolling file have, both, arrived and been set up.

Vice-Chairman Hun stated that the Veterans Service Organizations should be notified that there is currently an opening on the Calhoun County Veterans Affairs Committee. Chairman Seidel requested information as to the most prudent way to disseminate this information relative to this opening on the Committee relative to the Calhoun County Veterans Service Organizations. Vice-Chairman Hun stated that he would investigate through his litany of community and Veterans Service Organization contacts.

Adjournment:

Rob Beam made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Gray seconded that motion. By a roll call vote of 4-0, the June 2014 Calhoun County Veterans Affairs Committee Meeting was adjourned at our about 4:39.

Rodger Seidel
Chairman, Calhoun County Veterans' Affairs Committee

Scott C. Losey
Director, Calhoun County Veterans Affairs