

WOODBURY COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA ITEM(S) RE



Date: October 1, 2015

Weekly Agenda Date: October 6, 2015

DEPARTMENT HEAD / CITIZEN: Supervisor Jeremy Taylor / Danielle Dempster and Veterans Affairs Commission

SUBJECT: **Veterans Affair Commission Update and Information**

ACTION REQUIRED:

Approve Ordinance

Approve Resolution

Approve Motion

Give Direction

Other: Informational

Attachments

WORDING FOR AGENDA ITEM: Presentation by Veterans Affairs Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: This is an exciting opportunity to hear from our Veterans Affairs Commission and get to know all five members. We will have refreshments (all are welcomed), a presentation to a Veteran who assisted having the flags made for Veterans Court, and a short presentation from the Commission.

BACKGROUND: The Veterans Affairs Commission has three new members and exists to serve Woodbury County Veterans. They have some exciting updates and will share them with the Board.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: None

RECOMMENDATION: Receive information

ACTION REQUIRED: Gain awareness, raise the profile of this important group, and express appreciation.

What does the Woodbury County Commission of Veteran Affairs do?

The most important thing we do is to improve the lives of our Veterans by obtaining and maintaining Federal VA Benefits, including compensation, pension and medical benefits.

FY 2003: \$24,201,000.00 paid to Woodbury County residents. (1st year of Directors employ)

FY 2011: \$34,823,000.00 paid to Woodbury County residents. (1st year of Directorship)

FY 2014: \$49,033,000.00 paid to Woodbury County residents. (Most recent data)

In the 13 years Director Dempster has been filing claims for Woodbury County Residents, VA dollars paid to our taxpayers have more than doubled. Since moving to the Triview location, business has tripled and held at the increased level. There is no way to sustain this growth without increased staff, which is impossible at our current location. Our current caseload is about 4000 clients with only 2 County Veteran Service Officers, Director Dempster and Kelly Hansen.

The following is a summary of some of the things we do on a daily basis:

Federal Programs

Service-Connected Compensation and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

- Apply for compensation following medical or mental injury during service; we have seen a significant increase in PTSD claims every year for at least the past 7 years
- A Veteran can file a claim for any condition any time after discharge. (We do claims for service-connection for WWII Veterans.)
- Some claims are denied and can involve multiple appeals that can span several years.
- As conditions worsen, we apply for increases in compensation.
- DIC is compensation for survivors of Veterans whose death was caused by a service-related condition

Non-Service Connected Disability Pension and Survivor's Pension

- Needs based pensions for war-era Veterans and their dependents
- For eligibility, we must determine total net worth, all income sources and out-of-pocket medical expenses
- If eligible, we must submit application and all supporting materials.
- Benefit must be maintained and may increase when claimant becomes homebound and/or enters a care facility

Healthcare – using the VA medical healthcare system

- Eligibility, enrollment, annual reporting, scheduling, transportation, billing, social work and more

Other Federal Work

- Funeral/death benefits, obtaining military discharges, personnel records, service medical records, adding/removing dependents, home loans, education, life insurance, funeral/death benefits, homeless programs, and other programs

Please contact our office with any questions (712)279-6605 or DDEMPSTER@woodburycountyiowa.gov

State Programs

- Property: Military Property Tax Exemption, Disabled Veterans Tax Credit and Homeownership
- Lifetime Hunting/Fishing License for service-connected Veterans/POWs through DNR
- Veteran License Plates (currently one at no charge)
- Iowa Trust Fund Applications – emergency financial assistance, submitted through our office
- Pre-applications for burial at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery, as well as arrangements
- Veterans status for Drivers License must be verified by our office
- Iowa Veterans Home – Applications submitted through our office; verify Iowa Veterans status
- Obtaining allocation to improve our service to Veterans and reporting usage back to the state of Iowa
- On a monthly basis, we obtain the names of new patients of each nursing home, assisted living or other facility, who may be eligible for pension benefits. We mail out information to the Veteran, dependent or point of contact. Upon contact, we screen for eligibility.
- Yellow ribbon events, employment programs, Home Base Iowa and other programs

County Programs

- Sponsor DAV van program to co-ordinate transportation to and from Sioux Falls VA Hospital, to include:
 - Recruitment and submittals to maintain volunteer drivers
 - Annual appreciation dinner for volunteer drivers
 - Set up monthly schedule, according to driver availability
 - Set departure time and passengers for 3 trips per week
- Annual Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11th at 11:00 a.m.
- Outreach events to educate about our office and Veteran benefits. These include benefit fairs, annual stand down, Woodbury County Fair, Clay County Fair and others
- Emergency assistance is a very small part of what we do, but does involve a significant amount of time for our clerk to receive applications, follow up, submit claims and associated paperwork, quarterly reports (all of which is virtually paperless at this point)

Staff also takes direction from the Commission on a variety of issues, especially emergency assistance.

Director Dempster is a member of the Veterans Treatment Court, which adds to the workload.

Constant updates to our database as Veterans/dependents move away or pass away.

CVSOs need constant education and research to stay updated on many changes to all programs. We must obtain Continuing Education Credits through the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers in order to continue accreditation. These schools are held at state (Des Moines) and national levels.

CVSOs maintain working relationships with federal, state and local agencies to provide all of the above.

In addition to all programs and related issues, when a Veteran visits our office, the CVSOs do their best to assist the Veteran with any issue they may have, including many things that have nothing to do with any of the above. So, in short, we try to be everything to every Veteran.

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