

LaSalle County Veterans Assistance Commission

MONTHLY REPORT

January 2023



Prepared By:
Christa Hammers
Superintendent

AGENDA

MEETING

2/22/2023

- I. Call to Order & Salute to the Colors
- II. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Chaplin's Prayer
- IV. Roll Call of Officers
- V. Reading & Approval of the Meeting Minutes
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Superintendent's Report
 - a. Office Activity
 - b. MVAA Trailer Bill Update
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
- X. For the Good of the Commission
- XI. Closing Prayer
- XII. Adjournment

Meeting

MINUTES

1/23/2022

Call to Order & Salute to the Colors

President Chuck Erb called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Delegates & Alternates Present

Greg Stock - Am Legion- Marseilles / Bill Luther - VFW - Ottawa / Paul Siembab - MC League - Oglesby / Lance Sires - Am Legion - Marseilles / Mike Mallie - MC League - Oglesby / Elton Murphy- VFW - LaSalle/ Mike Harden - Am Legion - Ottawa / Ron Sisco - VFW - Mendota / Gary Graffis - AmVets - Ottawa / John Duback - AmVets - Ottawa / Other: Andy Ruggerio- Peru Memorial Group / Todd Volker- Habitat for Humanity

Officers Present

President – Chuck Erb
Vice President – Harold Olsen
Guard – Bill Paterson - Excused
Chaplin – Jim Ebner

Employees Present

Christa Hammers – Superintendent
Lissa Olson - Assistant Superintendent
James Sturtevant- VSO- In-Training
Emily Hackler- VSO - In-Training
Kelli Rietgraf - Administrative Assistant

Meeting MINUTES

Meeting started at 5:00pm. Followed by a brief presentation from Todd Volker from Habitat for Humanity. Todd discussed upcoming projects and wanted to share that he is looking for a team of volunteers to put together a home for a Veteran. Todd shared a bit about their processes and asked if anyone had any Veterans looking for a home or would like to volunteer, to reach out to him or Lissa Olson as she sits on the Veterans portion of their board.

Approval of Meeting minutes as presented:
Motion by Elton Murphy and seconded by Harold Olsen. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report

Christa discussed Events that we did the past few months:
Operation Green Light- a nationwide event for bringing awareness and support to our Veterans- Green lights were given to our Veterans/Families and we gifted about 150 total. Hoping to make this an annual event.

Christa also discussed the Christmas for VA Home Event. With the help of the community- our office made sure every Veteran at the LaSalle VA Home had a present this year. We also had decorated the windows for the holidays for the 3rd year in a row and plan on doing both again this coming year.

Lastly, the Christmas for Kids event- We had a few kids turn out, but hopefully we can have more next year as our Veterans are getting younger and hopefully will want to partake in this event.

Christa discussed the New Event: Veterans Expo 2023 and partnership with TBM Avengers. Lissa informed the Board that it will be the Thursday before the airshow and hoping that due to being during the week- we will have better opportunities for vendors since some can't do any overtime. Thursday, May 18th from 11AM-3PM. Flyer attached to packet and found on the office website.

Christa discussed James passed his Basic Benefits course and now waiting for PIV Card access. Emily is next in April and Kelli will be taking pre-benefits course to help understand what Veterans are referring to when they call.

Christa made everyone aware that she had passed her CVA course and will be getting her certificate at National Conference in Wisconsin in June.

Christa then went over the update to the conference room and shared the quotes they received for doing it through a vendor and how much the office paid by doing it ourselves.

Meeting MINUTES

The numbers for just December are putting us on track for having another fantastic year for our Veterans and Families. We are over \$100,000 in payouts for our Veterans so far.

Emily and Kelli were introduced officially and both gave a bit of background- Emily, Husband is currently in the Army Reserves, she serves as their Soldier and Family Readiness Group Leader for his unit. Kelli, lots of family that are Veterans, her uncle was a VNM Veteran that unfortunately did not make it back. Her step-dad was also in the Navy.

Superintendent's report was motioned for approval by Harold Olsen and seconded by Lance Sires. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

OMA Certificate Reminder: Need to be a copy in office by March 1st.

New Business

President Chuck Erb stated he will not be running again. Chaplain Jim Ebner stated the same.

For the Good of the Commission

Jim Ebner stated that he filled out the AARP funding request even though he's not expecting anything. Told Commission to take the lead if there is ever a next time- do the application yourselves.

New members who will be attending meetings introduced themselves.

Ron Sisco- Mendota VFW

Mike Harden- Ottawa VFW

Roscoe Mazur- Oglesby AmLeg

Paul Siembab- Jonesville Marine Corps League

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Elton Murphy and seconded by Harold Olsen.

Motion passed unanimously at 5:32pm.

JANUARY:

Veterans Expo 2023:

We received some vendors and sponsors for our event and are excited to try and make this the largest one so far.

Training:

James received his PIV card today and we are looking forward to finishing up training with him and getting him going with clients. Emily will be taking Basic courses in April and Kelli will be taking the intro course in March.

Office Updates:

Christa is working on the updated General Assistance Program. Looking into how we can help more Veterans/Families in their time of need.

We did use the Our Patriots group for any needs of our Veterans we did not cover as an office. Due to issues, we are looking elsewhere and other counties have invited us to instead use PHAT (Project Headspace and Timing). They would essentially be doing the same thing as Our Patriots (grants of up to \$1000/one time)- the Superintendents will be in charge of approvals still so there is no PI being passed to someone that doesn't hold our credentials.

OMA Certificates need to be in our office no later than March 1st. This is an ABSOLUTE need. Posts need to get with us if they don't have the means to achieve the certificate from a personal computer- we can help.

Group Numbers:

PTSD: 23 Flutes for Vets: 10 Senior Resource Group: 13

January Office Activity			
Office Visits	103	Initial Claims	45
Phone	869	Appeals	27
Outstation	28	Board Appeals	1
Mendota	11	VA Healthcare	7
Streator	17	VA Pension	5
Intent to File	6	Other	117

OFFICE OVERALL TOTALS:

We have made an amazing leap in just one month- we are over \$1million for total compensation through the end of 2023. With James going to be taking clients soon and Emily close second- we are hoping for another record year.

We continue to strive to do all that we can for our Veterans & Families.

Chuck/Jim last meeting as their positions. We appreciate their service and wish them all the best. Thank you for all you have done for our office and our Veterans.

Elections are being held next meeting. Please make sure everyone has turned in certificates/DD214's and is in attendance to be elected.