

MINUTES
VETERANS SERVICE COMMITTEE/COMMISSION
August 17, 2009

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order by Committee Chairman, Lester Jantzen at 4:00 pm in the First Floor Conference Room of the Grant County Administration building, Lancaster, WI on this date.

Those attending were:

Committee Members

Lester Jantzen, Chair
Tom Taber, Secretary/CVSO

Commission Members

Louis Kaiser, Chair
John DuCharme

Commission member Gary Erickson & Committee member Robert Scallon had asked to be excused. Also attending was Nancy Scott, Grant County Finance Director.

Meeting Notice: Motion by Kaiser, second by Jantzen that the meeting was properly publicized and in compliance with the open meeting requirements. Carried.

Minutes of the joint meeting of January 5, 2009 were approved with correction to the spelling of Mr Jantzen's name. Motion by Kaiser, second by Jansen.

Taber suggested a change in the agenda to allow discussion of the budget as our first item. Approved by all attending.

New Business: Taber introduced Nancy Scott and explained that the Finance Committee has asked for a 0% increase in 2010. He pointed out that although he has not requested any changes, the proposal shows an increase of \$2,083 for next year. The increase is due to the increase in the Committee and Commission Per Diem effective in April 2010. The Service Officer salary and fringes show an increase as he was granted a "step increase" in July of this year. The current wage rate covers six months in 2009 and 12 months in 2010. It was noted that we did reduce the budget by over \$500 in last year's proposal.

After discussion of the proposal Taber suggested that rather than nickel and dime each line item we not request any new funds for the Flag and Marker account. He would then authorize a one-time transfer of funds from the Grant Carry-over Account to cover that need. It was noted that this option would reflect a decrease of over \$300 from the 2009 budget. Taber is satisfied that this will work for the 2010 budget, but cannot guaranty the same for 2011. Motion by Kaiser, second by DuCharme to recommend approval of the proposal as amended to the Finance Committee. Carried.

Old Business: Taber reported that there was not a lot of change in the State Budget that had an effect on state veterans programs. The one big change was in regard to the WI GI Bill tuition waiver program. The new Chapter 33 GI Bill will pay tuition and fees directly to the school and give the veteran a monthly check. Unfortunately, the monthly check will be only \$923 in Grant County. That will mean veterans who switch from the current Chapter 30 GI Bill to the new program may loose as much as \$500/monthly income. The Budget Bill initially would have required Chapter 30 veterans to switch to the new program. With the help of Rep Garthwaite, the budget was amended so that this requirement will not take effect until January 2010.

It was noted that the Veterans Trust Fund is still projected to be out of funds in 2012.

Taber updated the members on his intent to retire in 2010. He reminded the members that he has built a fund of \$50,000 to cover the cost of the hiring process and has not requested any funding in the just adopted budget proposal. He has spoken with the Grant County Personnel Directed about this issue and there is some disagreement. Taber suggests that a person be hired by August 1, 2010. This will allow the current and new Service Officer to work together on the budget for 2011. It will also allow the new person to attend the CVSO Fall Conference and obtain training necessary for accrediting by the VA. If hiring were done in October or later the new person would have to wait until May 2011 for that training. That would have a negative impact on that person's ability to assist Grant County veterans.

Motion by Kaiser, second by DuCharme that Grant County start the hiring process in January 2010 with the new person starting employment on August 1, 2010. It was further stated that both Taber and the new person should be full-time employees with the new person's salary, fringes and expenses coming from the Grant Carry-over funds. Carried.

New Business: Taber went over the mid-year office report. He noted that more and more veterans are using on-line capabilities to file claims and apply for benefits. This is making it more difficult to track benefits within Grant County. He noted that the new Chapter 33 would have an effect on educational benefits starting in August 2009 and that will have an effect on WDVA Grants as well. He is spending a lot of time just answering questions on this issue as veterans are not sure as to which programs they are eligible to use.

Other Business: Taber presented a communication from the State Association of Veterans Service Commissions. They were asking for membership and announcing their annual meeting in September. Grant County has not been a member for many years and there was no interest expressed for joining at this time.

There being no further business to conduct, Motion by Kaiser, second by Jantzen to adjourn the meeting. Carried. The meeting ended at 5:05 pm.

The next scheduled meeting will be in January 2010.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tom Taber, Service Officer
Recording Secretary