

Thurston County Veterans Advisory Board
17 January 2023
Meeting Minutes

Members present: Bill Powell, Matt Hout, Brandon Frawley, Heather Miles, Ken Borque, Lisa Narciso, and Rhonda Sutton.

Others present: Mark Moffett, Laniece Milam, Kurt Hardin, Adam Dole, and Bob Jones.

Meeting opening:

The meeting was opened at 6:00 pm.

Bill welcomed all to the forum, including guests.

Brandon motioned to approve October's meeting minutes, and Ken second.

October meeting minutes were approved with no opposition.

Resignation and Member Recruitment

- Bill discusses recent resignations and asks for board members to recruit new members. Particularly a vice-chair.
- Ken inquired about Jorge's application with Bill.

Policy Review and New Initiatives

- Bill questions RCW 73.08.005 (Definition of a Veteran) pertaining to the National Guard.
- Mark adds that if the individual completed their first enlistment qualifies.
- Bill wanted to clarify so that if a National Guard individual/family needs assistance, the fund can provide it.
- Mark states that the RCW covers National Guardsmen as long as they complete their first term of enlistment under honorable conditions.
- Matt suggests discussing broader eligibility criteria for the VAF depending on the individual's discharge.
- Mark states that the VAF Policy and Procedures covers General under Honorable but not Dishonorable.

Drexel Shelter Contract

- Laniece discusses the Drexel Shelter Contract. \$45 a night, at most 90 days.
- There have been no specific changes that have gone on with the contract. There was no qualifying member last quarter due to individual discharges.
- Laniece states she will send the updated proposal to board members to review.

Bento Information Update

- Adam is welcomed to the meeting.

- Adam gives a brief update as to the future of Bento.
- Mark asks Adam for a brief synapse of the Bento program in general.
- Adam says Bento is a medically tailored meal platform that connects at-risk community members with meals curated based on their medical and dietary needs and disease risk factors.
- Furthermore, the meals come from local restaurants and grocery stores, all through text messages.
- The ultimate goal of Bento is to address food insecurities.
- Adam feels that Veterans, in particular, can benefit from this program.
- Lisa says she has yet to have a chance to review the Bento proposal because she has been busy.
- Lisa questions who Bento partners with inside Washington State.
- Adam states that Bento is an enterprise service that works with all partnerships pertaining to that individual.
- Mark discusses the difficulty the board has encountered with getting food vouchers.
- Mark says that the Board can limit what is bought precisely with Bento. I.e., no alcohol.
- Brandon inquires how the information on the individual would be collected. Adam responds that it would be managed through a text message survey. Also, baseline enrollment may be done through a direct phone call.
- Mark states that unused funds roll back into the budget.
- Mark is concerned about an exit strategy with the program. It may work out great and expand, or it may not.
- Rhonda recommends that if there are no more questions for Adam, have him drop off the Zoom so the board can have their dialogue.
- Adam appreciates the time and states that if there are any questions in the future to email him directly.
- Adam thanks everyone and drops the Zoom.
- Rhonda would like to get other perspectives. She is not particularly impressed with Bento. Their primary success story was keeping college kids with meals. Her concern is that it is a limited objective with a very different population group than we are dealing with. Veterans with complex needs linking restaurant meals in some way will improve their situations. Rhonda also has concerns about the cost.
- Bill states that what we don't use, we get back as far as costs.
- Mark feels that this is one step towards bettering the veteran community's needs. So they can address their more complex needs instead of worrying about where their next meal will come from.
- Rhonda inquires what taxpayers may think.
- Laniece mentions that the board can mold this program into what we see fit for the needs of our community.
- Bill suggests that individuals only have access to groceries.
- Heather mentions that only some have a place to cook or cookware.
- Bill says he is willing to take a motion on Bento.
- Brandon makes a motion not to move forward with Bento. Ken seconds.
- Bill states four not to move forward, and one is unsure.
- Bill states majority wins, and we do not move forward with Bento.

- Bill asks for ideas on programs and initiatives to get the funds into the hands of deserving veterans.

Around the Room and Adjourned

- Mark states that the next board meeting will be a breakdown of how the fund has been spent.
- Mark reiterates that we need to get the VAF budget down. Creating ideas on how to spend the fund is important.
- Kurt thanks Mark and Laniece for their hard work with Ashley being gone.
- Mark states that Kurt is retiring.
- Kurt appreciates all the hard work from the board.
- Bob Jones thanks the board for letting him sit in on the meeting.

Lastly

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm by Bill Powell. Brandon Frawley recorded the meeting minutes.