

Veteran Services Advisory Board

Date: May 11, 2024
Time: 4:00 pm
Location: Freedom Community Center
7340 SW 41st Place, Gainesville, Florida 32608

Members Present George Cooper
Eric Sickler
Sandra Torres-Pintos
John Murdoch
Fred Judkins

Staff Present Troy Newsome, Veterans Service Specialist
Leslie McCurdy, Senior Office Assistant
Candie Nixon, Assistant Director

Members Absent Wayne Wooten, Nick Klein, and Nicholas McMillen

1. **Welcome and Call Meeting to Order**

Chair started meeting at 4:11 pm. Meeting Called to Order.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence**

All in attendance pledged allegiance to the United States Flag and participated in a moment of silence.

3. **Quorum Call of Members in Attendance**

Chair John Murdoch observed the members and Quorum as met.

4. **Call for Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting(s)**

- a. Chair tabled the approval of the Minutes of the last meeting dated February 12, 2024 until the next VSAB meeting due to missing minutes.
- b. Mr. Murdoch made a motion to approve the March 11, 2024 minutes with correction; Mr. Cooper seconded; unanimous approved with correction.

5. **Advisory Board Report**

- a. Board requests a flag at future meetings.
- b. Alachua County Human Resources is in the process of hiring the Veterans Director. A meeting will be scheduled with the VSAB Chair upon hiring.

- c. There is one applicant to be on the Veteran Services Advisory Board and is scheduled to go before the Board of County Commissioners May 28, 2024.

6. Staff Report

- a. Homeless Veterans Stand Down and Resource Fair on March 28, 2024.

Veteran Resource Fair and Homeless Stand Down went very well with 184 attendees. 34 homeless veterans attended and were able to get needed food and resources. There were 71 presenters from around the state. Another 113 attendees were able to contact resources.

The VSAB board would like the county to drop the Homeless from the title, so every veteran feels welcome. They would also like county to advertise it more and do more outreach to get homeless veterans to the event. The county will collaborate with the Honor Center for coordination of homeless veterans..

The event was covered by WCJB, WUFT, and Mainstreet Daily News.

- b. Vietnam Veteran Tribute on March 29, 2024

The Vietnam Veteran Tribute was held at the Community Freedom Center. 69 people attended the event. Two guest speakers were there to talk about the PACT Act and PTSD.

This event was covered by WCJB, WUFT, and Mainstreet Daily News.

- c. Memorial Day Ceremony on May 27, 2024

The ceremony is at Evergreen Cemetery and starts at 10 a.m. County staff is coordinating with the City of Gainesville, Milam Funeral Home, Gainesville ROTC, Chaplain Maynard and others regarding the program. More development forthcoming as planning occurs.

Citizen Comments

- a. County Human Resources department is starting a new program called Hiring & Maintaining Veterans that all supervisors are to attend.
- b. The VSAB chair was unable to present Annual Workplan Report at the March 28, 2024, meeting due to public comment. However, the VSAB Director presented the report.
- c. Veteran Services issued the April newsletter and requests information from VSAB to include
- d. County is planning to expand outreach to outlying small cities.
- e. Outreaches are occurring every two weeks at Santa Fe College. It is 9:30 to 12 in 30-minute slots to complete a POA and ITF forms and submitted.
- f. Staff will inform VSAB board members regarding terms and expiration dates.
- g. Discussion of VA processes including Optimum.
- h. Discussion of Veteran Office customer service and improvement related to return of phone calls.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4: 48 PM

8. Next Meeting

Next Meeting will be July 8, 2024 at the Freedom Center at 4:00 PM.