

West Suburban Veterans District – May 13, 2021

Location: Remote Zoom Meeting

Present: Kate Fitzpatrick, Leon Gaumond, and Meghan Jop

Also present: Nancy Blanchard, John Bugbee, Katie King, Pam Dukeman, Sally Rose, and Kristin Scoble

Call to order: Meeting called to order at 1:32 pm.

Business:

1. Citizen Speak

None

2. Minutes

The Board voted (3-0-0) to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2021 meeting.

3. Director's Update

Meghan began with Westwood's status: As of April 1, 2021 Westwood was approved to join the district. Nancy and the Westwood staff transferred the Ch115 cases and all Ch115 clients were notified. Chris Coleman was not present for the meeting.

Nancy commented that VSMIS, a web platform used to manage veteran Ch115, will no longer be operational as of May 14th, 2021. As of June 1st, 2021 the State will be using a new comprehensive software platform, OnBase,

The SAVES LIVES Act passed which allows all veterans and their spouses, regardless of whether or not they are registered with the VA, to be eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination at available VA Walk-in Clinics.

Because all towns are holding their Memorial Day Ceremonies on Monday, May 31st, and Nancy is unable to attend all ceremonies, she will not be attending any. Instead, she plans to help with each town's Dressing the Graves.

Outreach-Needham Coffee Hour Series conducted monthly meetings informing the veteran community on various veteran topics. Nancy presented at Regis College: Operation Moneywise Series (providing student veterans with educational, financial, and state/federal programs) Upcoming: 16th Annual Women Veterans Network Appreciation Day will be held on June 11th. In September Boston will host the 2021 Medal of Honor (MOH) Convention.

Nancy described her planned office hours. She will be at the COA in Westwood on Mondays, the Weston Town Hall and COA on Tuesdays, the Needham COA and Town Hall on Wednesdays, the Wayland Town Building on Thursdays, and the Wellesley Town Hall on Fridays. Once the buildings open up to the public and the office hours are set, notices will be placed at each location.

Nancy has been keeping in touch with Veterans and their families, both remotely and by making home visits. She is gathering documentation for the biannual recertification that takes place in July. FEMA COVID-19 Funeral Assistance- covers the funeral expenses from COVID-related deaths that occurred after Jan 20, 2020. Individuals are encouraged to apply for FEMA funds before burial allowance.

Kate pointed out that Westwood has more CH 115 recipients than the other 4 towns combined. Nancy has been very busy with the addition of Westwood. She has created a letter that will be sent to all Westwood Veterans introducing herself and how the District can help them acquire services.

Meghan commented that Nancy has done a terrific job serving the District. Sarada is scheduled to return this summer. Originally it was thought that once Sarada returned Nancy would go back to working 25 hrs. a week. With the addition of Westwood, it is thought that two FT VSOs are warranted. That will be discussed at the next District Meeting. Meghan said that Sarada inquired about carrying forward her vacation time to use some this summer since she has been deployed and away from her family for the year. That request was approved by the Board.

4. Old/New Business

Nancy asked what each town does, if anything, to honor Veterans who are turning 100. John Nimmo, a Wellesley Veteran recently turned 100. The Select Board did a proclamation, but Meghan said that was difficult as some of his children felt that opened him up to scammers. Kate suggested that the Select Board write something. It was mentioned how active Veterans tend to be in their communities between coaching sports, serving on Town Boards and in church groups, etc. Meghan said that up to 10 resolutions are done for Town Meeting honoring individuals. Meghan said that perhaps Stephanie Hawkinson, Wellesley's Publicity Director, could create something for the District that paid tribute to Veterans upon their 100th birthday.

The Board did not schedule a future meeting. It was thought to be in September so Sarada could attend.

The Zoom meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.