

THE MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF THE 7/26/2011 MEETING

The meeting convened at 1:00 pm.

Those attending: Mary Chakales, Jan Banks, Debra Collington, Lana Greer, Gayle Sovinee, Mary Albert, Ron Kennedy, Jason Martin, Andy Clark, Michael Reich, Josh O'Conner, Ken Vasilik. Guests: Mel Joines, Karen Eccleston, Rhiannon Banks

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Introductions were made by the attendees.

Motion made, seconded and passed that the minutes of the 6/28/11 meeting be accepted.

No changes to the previous Treasurer's report. No expenditures reported. For this new year, Josh requested that a formal list of planned expenditures be submitted to the Treasurer.

Old Business

Christmas in July: It was again confirmed that the County will not be doing the event this year, but will most likely commence planning in November/December for next year. Biltmore Baptist church will have an event in this next month and it was discussed that our committee can assist in the packing and advertising through the City Channel. Josh will stay in contact with Jan and Debra on this.

Bele Chere Subcommittee Report: Gayle reported that all actions in preparation for our committee's participation are on track. The bus shuttle services will not be available to our first shift-of-the-day volunteers as the service will not begin that early. Michael advised that the Veterans Quarters/ABCCM parking lot just below the bus terminal on Coxe Ave. will be in operation at a cost of \$5 for the day. Ron advised that his Legion Post will be doing the initial setup. Gayle has sent out an instruction sheet to all the volunteers detailing the parking options, location, supplies, and responsibilities.

Road Naming for the Veterans Cemetery : Josh will discuss further with Andy.

November Potluck: After some discussion, a "Holiday Potluck" social for our committee was set for Tuesday, December 13th at noon. Michael graciously offered the dining area at the Veterans Quarters for the event. This will not be a regular committee meeting, but a social gathering. More on details later.

Women Veterans Wellness Fair: Debra and Gayle reported that the function was well attended, agencies well represented and the event was very successful. MCVA gained some good exposure.

Committee Business Card Template: Reported by Gayle and Ron that the template was still being worked on and should be finished in the very near future. The development and printing cost is being covered by Legion Post 526.

New Business

Because of business/work commitments, Alisa Hamilton's committee membership application has been withdrawn for the time being.

Membership application for Amber Banks was requested to be tabled until next meeting so she could attend. This was accepted by the Committee.

The membership application for Mel Joines has been received and will be reviewed for acceptance at next month's meeting.

Veterans Forum: There was discussion and concern that for the amount of work that was put into the last Forum, we did not get a good enough turnout by the veterans themselves. The panel members who were there as well as the agencies were well-represented and provided a very good cross-section for topics and issues for veterans. It was agreed that better advertising of the event could have been done.

Andy suggested that more emphasis on providing a services-oriented event in the form of including a Service Van and agencies' service officers covering specific areas and issues for veterans could be a better and proactive approach.

Josh further discussed the point that it appears we may be having "scope creep" of our committee with the number and type of ceremonies and events we've been taking on; that these may be more than we can effectively handle. Also, that there may possibly be overlaps with other organizations doing similar events.

Mary made a proposal that a Veterans Forum type of event be done by our committee on a Veterans Day rather than we doing a typical Veterans Day ceremony. The proposal was adopted by the committee and Josh advised that he would discuss it with the Mayor.

Veterans Day Ceremony Planning: Josh advised that he will be setting up a meeting with Sandra Travis of Parks & Rec Dept. for the 2nd week in August and will send out an email announcement for those interested in attending and participating.

Veterans Small Business Forum: This Forum will be held on August 16th by the SBA of NC. They would like a representative from our committee at the Forum. Gayle and Andy volunteered to represent the MCVA.

Annual Report: Although our committee is not required to submit an annual report to the City, Josh will be developing and providing one which will include who we are and the activities we've accomplished this past year (1 July, 2010 to 30 June, 2011). Josh will have this ready in a week or two for our committee review. Submittal is planned for the first week in August.

Announcements, Comments and Closing

The U. S. Army Wounded Warrior (AW2) Program: Karen Eccleston, a recent arrival to Asheville is the Army's AW2 Advocate in this area for the Program. She gave a short presentation of the Program and provided each MCVA member a folder with several brochures and sheets explaining the Program. AW2 is the official Army program that serves severely wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers. As this areas Advocate, Karen provides personalized support for AW2 Soldiers, Veterans, and their Families to ensure that they receive the appropriate benefits and entitlements. Karen's contact info: tel. 980-406-8940; email: kareneccleston@us.army.mil.

11th Annual Veterans Appreciation Day: Gayle announced this event being sponsored by the Concerned Bikers Assoc. The VA Poker Run will take place on August 20th beginning at the Tractor Supply Co. 14 Monticello Rd, Weaverville 28787.

DAV Virtual March: On July 27th; protesting the VA-based Federal Budget cuts.

USS ASHEVILLE SSN 758: Ken announced that the nuclear-powered submarine, ASHEVILLE is off on deployment to the South America area of operations this month for several months. The Commanding Officer and 3 of his crew visited the city this past November, meeting with the Mayor among other activities. Four boxes of paperback books, card and board games and city mementos were sent to the ASHEVILLE before she left on deployment. It's a bit difficult to get things sent to the ASHEVILLE while on deployment, but anyone wishing to do so can contact Ken.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 23rd at 1:00 pm at the City of Asheville Recreation Division Office, 72 Gashes Creek Road, East Asheville (same property as the Nature Center).