

CLAYTON COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEETING
600 Gunder Road NE, Suite 6 Elkader, Iowa 52043
Clayton County Office Building/ Public Meeting Room
December 13, 2022

Veterans Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. on December 13, 2022, by Clark, at the Clayton County Office Building, Public Meeting Room.

Roll Call: Eilers, Clark, Torkelson, and Jordan.

Motion was made by Eilers and seconded by Clark to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2022 Meeting; motion carried.

Public Comments: Torkelson stated that she was glad to see Christopher Jordan in attendance at American Legion Post #388 monthly meeting in St. Olaf on December 6, 2022.

Old Business:

Discussion was held regarding Ken Seney's position (DAV Coordinator) with the Veterans' Transportation for Clayton County. Ken is currently unable to attend our meeting. Jordan stated that he had spoken to the DAV Chain of Command on procedures for the Transportation position. He would also be contacting them regarding the Driver Volunteer Services.

Jordan said that he had talked with Jennifer Garms and Frank Phippen about the list of veterans buried in the county. He said that the information has been entered. A final summary regarding this project along with the maintenance of the plots in county cemeteries will be updated when veterans are buried in Clayton County Cemeteries.

New Business:

The current budget for Fiscal: 2022-2023 Period Ending: 11-30-2022 was presented by Jordan. \$24,241.52 has been spent with \$59,685.48 remaining. 71.12% is remaining in budget. Motion was made by Clark and seconded by Eilers to approve the budget; motion carried.

Jordan shared a copy of the VSO Monthly Activity Report for November, 2022. 50 Total number of calls this month re: veteran related concerns, 12 total office visits from veterans, 1 veteran home visit, and 1 outreach/engagement event.

Jordan also shared the information received from Decorahnews.com regarding the new VA Outpatient Clinic in Decorah with expanded services available. It is hoped that the new clinic will be completed by the end of 2023.

Iowa Trust Fund: has not been funded by the state, so IDVA has temporarily stopped accepting applications. This has created an uptick in other type projects to identify other resources that Veterans may be eligible for (i.e., USDA grants, Upper Explorer Land grants, etc.) The Iowa Trust Fund has had a couple instances with Veterans seeking assistance with updating direct deposit information and/or updating information to obtain travel pay. That has also contributed to increases seen in other categories.

VA & State Updates:

1. Prioritization of Cancer Associated with the PACT Act. As of November 7, 2022, the VA will begin prioritizing the processing of veteran benefit claims for cancers associated with exposures. The VA will begin processing all PACT Act related claims on January 1, 2023.
2. Health Care Screening – Beginning November 8, 2022, the VA will begin to implement a new toxic exposure screening (part of the PACT Act).
3. Iowa Trust Fund November 14, 2022 Memo stated that the IDVA had shared that Commission has over obligated the fund which created a deficit. An informal audit will take some time and until resolved applications are suspended.

Clark made the motion to approve the November Report and contents, Eilers seconded the motion; motion carried.

Discussion was held regarding the Commissioner's terms. Clark indicated that he was completing one of the terms of a former Commissioner. Eilers made the motion to approve Clark for a full 3-year term beginning January, 2023. Torkelson seconded the motion; motion carried.

The Commissioners reviewed the information on the Mental Health Matters Event. Even though the attendance was low, the event was very well received. In reviewing survey results, there is a strong interest in continuing such programming. Discussion was held on how to go forward:

1. Increase the PR on the event.
2. Would it be more beneficial to have the event in the evening rather than during the day time hours?
3. Outreach needed to be increased through a dialogue with service organizations.
4. All presenters engaged yearly on Veteran concerns.
5. Possible suicide prevention event as Part II of the first Mental Health Matters event.
6. Patient Advocacy.
7. Navigating the VA System/Assessing Services.
8. Patient experience.
9. Benefits available and how to access them.

The total cost of the Mental Health Matters Event was \$897.72

Question was raised regarding Homeless Vets in our Community? Need to be proactive with dialogue. Referrals should be sent to Christopher Jordan.

Discussion was held regarding General Relief Funds and Veteran Funds. General relief is separate from Veterans funding. General Funding is used for emergency services by income threshold. General funding is not meant to supplement veterans.

Goals for 2023:

- 1) Event and incorporating structured dialog about the event (put on agenda for Commissioners to build on what we have done.) Invite interested persons to meeting and reinforce announcement to the public.
- 2) Higher speaker to discuss resources, assistance available for the men and women who served.
- 3) Purchase laptop needed for office.
- 4) To continue to see American Legion Posts on an annual basis
- 5) Possibility of adding another staff member for Veterans Office (internship for students going to school for social work or interested in this type of field, such as veterans to be reskilled).

The issue of the telephone system for the office was discussed. Jordan said that this issue is being reviewed with the new IT person. Problems will be addressed this Wednesday or Thursday, December 13 and 14, 2022. Hopefully, the phone situation will be solved.

Christopher Jordan requested to place an order for flag holders to be placed in Clayton County cemeteries. He determined the order by the number of veterans in the county and conflict named. He needs 76 Vietnam War flag holders, 24 WWII, 30 Persian Gulf War, 22 – Korean War, 16 standard veterans flag markers. He would also need to purchase the rods for the aluminum and brass holders. Eilers made the motion to approve, Clark seconded the motion; motion carried.

Claims were approved.

Next meeting to be held on January 10, 2023 at 7:30 a.m.

Eilers made the motion to adjourn, Clark seconded the motion; motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

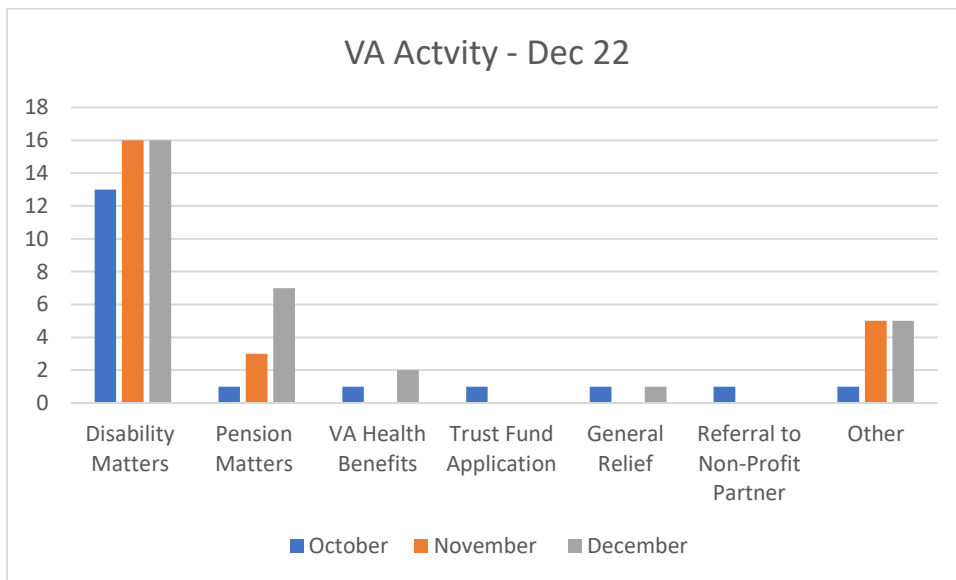
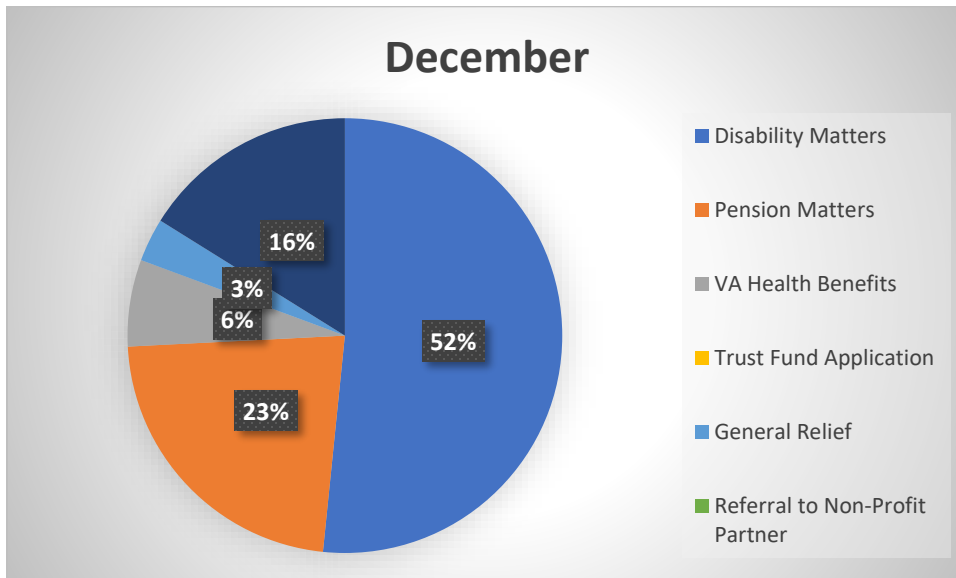
Respectfully submitted by Geralyn Torkelson

December Report

53 total number of calls received this month re: Veteran related concerns

16 total office visits from Veterans

1 veteran home visit



Notable Inquiries:

Veteran Crisis Line: I leveraged this approach to assist a veteran that was homeless and did not find the services that they referred me/Veteran to particularly helpful. Not sure if this is unique to the area. I was able to take partners locally and see that steps are underway to assist locally. The initial experience was disjointed and hardly aligned with how I would imagine a crisis response would be.

VA & State Updates:

1. Application for Disability Benefits – The 526EZ application now has a new section that specifically asks questions regarding toxic exposures and/or experiences. This helps to quickly assess the applicability of Agent Orange/PACT Act.
2. [VA Environmental Health Registry Evaluation](#) – the registry evaluation is free and is an assessment to determine toxic exposures. Veterans may contact an [Environmental Health Coordinator](#). I have used this recently for Veteran who believes condition may be the result of exposure to Agent Orange.