

Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc. Minutes of February 23, 2017

Officers present: Chairman Bill Dudley; Vice Chairman Ray Quinn, Treasurer John Mountcastle

Chairman Dudley called the meeting to order at 1900 hours

Chairman Dudley led the Pledge to the Flag

Vice Chairman Quinn gave the Invocation

Last month's Minutes were approved as presented at the meeting.

The Treasurer's Report was approved as presented at the meeting (see attached report)

Speakers:

Brian Jacobson, Coordinator - Veterans Treatment Court, St. Johns County

Brian gave a short bio of himself. He was in the US Navy for 28 ½ years and retired as a Lt Commander.

He stated he was a "troubled youth without much help". He joined the ROTC at First Coast High School which is on the Northside of Jacksonville, FL.

Brian now serves as the Coordinator of the Veterans Court to serve our veterans that have gone the wrong way. Brian gave an update, February 23, 2017 was the first court session for St. Johns County and it went very well. Brian gave a detailed report of how the session went, what it takes for the troubled veteran to get into the "treatment court", what it entails, etc.

Today in court were all the key components and support groups. Twelve veterans were reviewed and 5 were accepted and are now participants. These five have now started their path to recovery. Judge Howard McGillin was in court today and was very fair.

When a person is arrested during the booking process the booking officer is now asking the arrestee "have you ever served in the armed forces.?" Charlotte (not sure of her last name) runs a check on all of the ones arrested and this gets them reviewed faster.

They are in need of mentors who are themselves veterans. Jim Crutchfield is in charge of the Mentor Program for this. Brian stated that the mentors are the veterans "battle buddies" and they are to provide a good role model. The mentors take a 2 ½ day formal training. Mentors and the networks are the key to all of this.

Bill Dudley and others are looking into some kind of Incentive items, such as gift cards, challenge coins, etc. to give to the veterans when they get to certain stages in the program and when they complete the program. They are currently looking for sponsors for these incentives.

Jim Crutchfield, Mentor Program Coordinator

Jim introduced three mentors that were in the room tonight and also in the Treatment Court room today, Blair Craig, US Army, John Lewis, US Navy, Bob Richmond, US Navy. There is currently a need for female mentors. Anyone interested in becoming a mentor needs to get with Jim.

Eric West – Military Deal\$ USA

Eric stated he will be adding stories in each issue and also a restaurant and job sections. He has a friend who will be starting with his magazine in the Tampa area in the very near future.

Committee Reports:

Joe McDermott, SJC VSO:

- 1) VA has been strict on forms being submitted for certain claims. There are 15 new forms to be used.
- 2) They are in the last stage and will finish scanning records for file retention in the office. Newer veterans to the office, their records are being scanned as they come in.
- 3) Appeals process – there are about 550,000 appeals out there in the appeals management center. There will be a **training session in May for the VSOs to learn what is changing in the appeal process. Joe stated that the people that are hired to do appeals are only to work on appeals and should not be working on anything else.**
- 4) Joe wanted to give a KUDOS to all who participated in the Veterans Treatment Court today, he was in the courtroom. He stated everyone worked very hard and things went smoothly.
- 5) Claims for compensation are running basically a year behind. One of the toughest Offices for hearing loss is the St. Petersburg Claim Office. Joe does not know why this is.
- 6) There are now 8 presumptive diagnosis for the veterans that were stationed at Camp LeJeune. These diagnosis should start getting approved March 14, 2017.

Ray Quinn:

Ray noted that nominations are needed for our next meeting for the Colonel Ed Taylor Award. This award recognizes

outstanding veterans or veteran organizations.

Chairman Dudley:

March 9th will be a CBOC meeting.

Bill spoke at the AUSA meeting last month. The bid package has been presented by the County to the VA. Damon Douglas is getting the RGQ ready to be reviewed by the County by March 7th. Changes are to be completed and submitted to the VA Washington by March 17th.

THE SOCK MAN:

Herb spoke of his history in the service and all the programs, AL, VFW, ELKS, etc. he has been involved in over the years. He has collected and handed out MANY socks over the years of doing his sock program. He himself has medical issues and he is currently taking care of his wife. He wanted to THANK EVERYONE for all the help he has always gotten. We all stood and gave Herb a standing ovation. Chairman Dudley, thanked Herb in return for all he has done over the years.

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 30, 7:00 pm at the St Johns County Health and Human Services building, 200 San Sebastian View, in the Muscovy room on the first floor.