

## VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

### MINUTES OF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING JUNE 27, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dudley

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS: Chairman Dudley

PLEDGE: Chairman Dudley

INVOCATION: Reverend Albert Kaidor

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Minutes of last meeting conducted May 30, 2024, presented by Chairman Dudley. Copies of the Minutes are available on the sign-in table and were sent to members electronically by the Secretary. The minutes were approved by voice vote with no changes.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer Mountcastle presented the Treasurer's Report to the Council. As of May 29, 2024, the cash balance was \$155,123.61. Cash balance as of June 26, 2024, was \$163,705.37. Treasurer Mountcastle went over the Treasurer's Report, explaining funds for the Dudley Foundation and Money Market accounts and amounts spent during the month to assist our Veterans. The Treasurer asked if there were any questions regarding the Treasurer's Report. The Report was approved by voice vote.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW GUESTS: New attendees introduced themselves and who they represent.

SPEAKERS: CAREY PICKLESMIER, CORPS STRENGTH Cary Picklesmier introduced herself and CorpsStrength, a 501(c)3 she represents. CorpsStrength is a non-profit organization whose mission is to help veterans and their families find the services that can help them thrive in life after injuries sustained in their military capacity. She provided handouts that give the background information on CorpsStrength and how to access their assistance. The motto of CorpsStrength is "More Good Days Together." The floor was open for questions and answers.

ANGALA RENNER, SUPV. VA SUICIDE PREVENTION 4 Angala Renner works for the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Administration with the Suicide Prevention Team. Ms. Renner spoke of the 11-member Suicide Prevention Team and the mission of their job and making all aware of how to talk with a Veteran in crisis. She discussed that suicide prevention can be a difficult topic to express and experience, but "a lot of us in attendance had probably dealt with it at some point." She provided a handout for VA S.A.V.E. Training different things to look for in a Veteran in crisis and how to help them. The acronym S.A.V.E. helps remember the important steps involved in suicide prevention. The flyer also provided

the additional resources available and contact information. The floor was open for questions and answers.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS:

**VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE UPDATE, JOSEPH McDERMOTT** Mr. McDermott spoke of the increases in service-connected disabilities and Veterans coming into the Veterans Service Office and asking for an increase in their disability. Mr. McDermott spoke of how the VSO meets with them to discuss what their disability may be, where they are at with the percentage in their disability and then discussing what medical evidence they may need to take them to the next level in their disability. When the claims are submitted, the VA is moving quickly on resolving the disability issue. Regular first submitted claims are still taking four to six months from the beginning to the end. There are many claims being submitted due to the PACT Act. The Veterans Service Office is estimated to be meeting with close to five hundred Veterans each month, including both new and existing clients. According to VA statistics, the St. Johns County VSO provides services for 23,000 to 24,000 Veterans. The numbers can be staggering for St. Johns County with the amount of money that comes to the Veterans with disabilities that live in the county. The Veterans Service Office is highly successful in their accomplishments in assisting our Veterans. The floor was open to questions and answers.

**VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, JOHN LESLIE** John Leslie, Mentor Coordinator for the Veterans Treatment Court, introduced himself and the VTC for St. Johns and Putnam Counties. The VTC has processed 157 participants across the 7-year timespan the VTC has been operating. In May, the 100th participant graduated through the program, three more have graduated since that time. There are currently 33 participants in-flow and 21 that did not make through the program and the varied reasons for the non-participation. All were encouraged to attend the next Treatment Court taking place on June 28, 2024. The floor was open to questions and answers.

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS:** Chairman Dudley spoke of the Veterans Day Program Committee Meeting that will be held next Tuesday, July 2, 2024. The Committee is in the process of starting to plan for Veterans Day on November 11, 2024. Chairman Dudley spoke of graduating the 100th participant in the Veterans Treatment Court program. County Commissioner Arnold suggested that the County Commission would recognize the success of the VTC and on July 16, 2024, the BCC will issue a Proclamation recognizing the 100th graduate, having the graduate speak on that day on how the VTC changed his life. On August 5, 2024, the St. Augustine Beach City Council will also present a Proclamation to VTC. All are invited to attend both meetings. Chairman Dudley also spoke of how the VTC was founded over seven years ago by himself and the organizations that are involved,

including the Judge, to successfully start the VTC. Mike Davis, President, Home Again St. Johns, spoke of the success and progress of The Veterans Village. Mr. Davis spoke of the need for help and volunteers to help assist the participating Veterans accomplish their needs. He provided a signup sheet for those wishing to participate. The floor was open to any new business to be addressed and any questions and answers. Next Veterans Council meeting will be held on Thursday, July 25th beginning at 7:00pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.,

Respectfully submitted,

William Dudley, Chairman