

Gratiot County Department of Veterans Affairs

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Gratiot County Veterans Committee
Ithaca, Michigan

February 20th, 2024

RE: Minutes, Gratiot County Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee Meeting February 15th, 2024

The regular meeting of the Gratiot County Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (VAAC) was held Thursday, February 15th, 2024, at the Gratiot County Courthouse Commissioners Room, Ithaca, Michigan, complying with current Michigan Department of Health guidelines. For members unable or prefer not to attend in person remote zoom was available. The meeting was called to order by Committee Member Tim Aplin at 1501 hours. Roll call was held with Ken Davis, Gary Hoffer, Tim Aplin, and Autumn Leonard. Also Present was GCDVA Director Monte Malek.

Approval of Addition/Modifications to the Agenda was motioned by Ken Davis and seconded by Gary Hoffer.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting December 21st, 2023 was motioned by Autumn Leonard and seconded by Gary Hoffer.

Director's Report

Director Monte Malek presented the 1st Quarter numbers for the Fiscal Year 2024. The current Pending Actions are currently at 92 due to waiting on Monte's accreditation. Awaiting VA Decision is at 50; of those, several were coming back within months after getting decision, of which were favorable percentage. Awaiting BVA decision is down to 18 claims. GCDVA Director Monte is hopeful that as soon as Kayla Webster is accredited, these numbers will be reduced in a timely manner.

Looking at the Closed claims in the 1st Quarter is coming in at 48, with a total of 28 approvals, 7 denials, and 13 others (Cancelled, Withdrawn, Transferred). The personal interviews/file reviews, status checks/misc. general contacts are at 915 as Director Monte Malek is still scanning and moving claims to digital. Support Services which include MVTF/Veterans Relief Fund/CBB/Champ VA/Health Benefits/COE/ITF/Evidence/Support Statements is currently at 64 Claims. Self Service is currently at 0. Outreach is at an 8, with Director Monte Malek still attending local service Organizations as much as possible. New Client intake is at 11 and growing. Of the 7 denials listed earlier, the VA stated no service connection was found, Director Monte has been finding consistent research showing relevant cases showing the service connection.

The GCDVA Committee welcomed the new Veteran Service Officer Kayla Webster as she started on January 8th, 2024. Current VSO Susan Edmunds is set to retire March 22nd, 2024. The GCDVA committee is wishing her a happy retirement.

"Duty, Honor, Country"

Currently in the process of linking the GCDVA Facebook page to other service organizations to improve communications throughout Gratiot County. If successful, this will help when organizations plan events, so they do not overlap and increase availability among Veterans.

Old Business

Current scheduled office closures, February 19th, 2024 (Presidents Day), March 29th, 2024 (Good Friday). The Office will also be closed April 16th-19th, 2024 due to Office personnel Training.

The CVSF Grant for Fiscal Year 2024 Final Check was received. The DVSO will submit Amendments Based on Current Priorities/needs.

The Monthly Veterans Breakfast at the Heroes Center is the First Saturday of Every Month between 9 am and 10:30 am, attendance has increased every month. February, 80+ Veterans had attended. The Heroes Breakfast has also received another sponsor from Commercial Bank and the Soaring Eagle Casino. Several Service Organizations and Businesses have been providing Support/Sponsorship.

New Business:

There is a review of the CVSF Grant for two Amendments currently. The first Amendment is for the DVSO Medical Coverages (\$11,390), the second amendment is to adjust Cost for Membership Dues.

The next scheduled VAAC meeting will be at 3:00 pm, Thursday, April 25th, 2024. Motion to adjourn by Tim Aplin, 2nd by Autumn Leonard. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 1545 hours.

Respectfully,

Autumn Leonard, Secretary
Gratiot County Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee