

THE EASTERN HAMPDEN COUNTY VETERANS' SERVICE DISTRICT MEETING
REGULAR SESSION MINUTES
Wednesday, January 12, 2022

Members Present: Richard "Rick" Green; Mary McNally; Michael Valanzola

Others Present: Michelle Barrett, VSO; Rodney "Rod" Kincaid, District Treasurer; Pamela Leduc, Town of Wales Executive Secretary

Mr. Green called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

"Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting will be conducted via remote means. Members of the public who wish to access the meeting may do so by following the Zoom instructions below. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, for reasons of economic hardship and despite best efforts, we will post on the Town of East Longmeadow, Town of Hampden and Town of Wales municipal websites an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting."

REORGANIZATION

Motion by Mr. Valanzola; seconded by Ms. McNally; to nominate Rick Green as Chairman. Mr. Green accepted the nomination. Ms. McNally – yes; Mr. Valanzola – yes; Mr. Green – yes.

NEW BUSINESS

District status: Mr. Valanzola provided a summary of the approval process. Ms. McNally questioned the temporary/conditional versus permanent status of the district. Mr. Valanzola confirmed that permanent approval is contingent upon VSO Barrett's certification. Mr. Valanzola advised that once the district receives permanent status from DVS there may be an opportunity to expand (Brimfield and Holland).

Michelle Barrett, Veterans' Service Officer: VSO Barrett advised that she is currently receiving OnBase training assistance from DVS staff. She has begun hosting monthly coffee hours in each community. She's attended court proceedings as an advocate for a homeless vet in the district. New clients have been vetted, processed and approved for Chapter 115 benefits in Wales and East Longmeadow. VSO Barrett is certified in the federal veterans' benefits process and plans to become a SHINE counselor. She maintains a daily activities log that is on file in her office. Outreach has been expanded and is ongoing.

Rod Kincaid, Treasurer: Mr. Kincaid discussed the implementation of financial best practices. He advised that there is no unemployment insurance account on file with DUA and he will be applying on behalf of the district as a newly created entity. The condition of the district's files was discussed. Mr. Kincaid proposed an annual stipend in the amount of \$5,000 as compensation for the district treasurer.

Review and vote to approve payroll from 07.01.21 to 12.31.21: Action postponed until February 9, 2022.

Review and vote to approve accounts payable from 07.01.21 to 12.31.21: Action postponed until February 9, 2022.

February and March 2022 meeting schedule: District meetings will be held on the second Wednesday of each month at 12:00 pm.

FY 2022 BUDGET

Ms. McNally provided an update on the location and cost of establishing office space in East Longmeadow. Ms. Leduc recommended that the board review the current budget and approve the reallocation of funds between line items as deemed appropriate. VSO Barrett requested that the emergency fund line item be increased.

FY 2023 BUDGET

Mr. Valanzola recommended that VSO Barrett, Mr. Kincaid and Ms. Leduc meet to establish a proposed budget. Ms. McNally discussed her budget timeline, assessment expectations and her concerns relative to the legitimacy of prior budgets' line items.

Motion by Mr. Valanzola; seconded by Chairman Green; to authorize Ms. McNally to represent the board relative to contract negotiations with VSO Barrett. Mr. Valanzola – yes; Chairman Green – yes; Ms. McNally – yes.

Motion by Mr. Valanzola; seconded by Ms. McNally; to direct Ms. Leduc to work with district staff members to finalize an overall budget that will be proposed to the board for review and approval. Mr. Valanzola – yes; Ms. McNally – yes; Chairman Green – yes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Green thanked Ms. Leduc and Mr. Kincaid for their guidance and assistance during the district's recent transition. He also thanked VSO Barrett for her commitment and efforts to enhance support provided to the district's veterans. Chairman Green advised that he has prior meeting minutes that he will submit for approval at a future meeting. Chairman Green provided an update on the location of office space in Hampden. The establishment of a donation account was discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Valanzola; seconded by Ms. McNally; to adjourn the meeting at 1:16 pm. Mr. Valanzola – yes; Ms. McNally – yes; Chairman Green – yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Leduc

Secretary Pro Tem