



Middle Township Veterans Advisory Board Agenda

Township Hall

33 Mechanic Street

Cape May Court House, NJ 08210

E-Mail: Chairperson - mahardenlozier@aol.com

Phone: 609-602-9946 Fax: 609-536-2617

MEETING DATE/TIME: March 23, 2016, 7:00pm Sharp

LOCATION: Township Hall 2st Floor Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER: Welcome

Roll Call

Members Present:

Maureen Harden-Lozier, Nicholas Anzelone, Francey Burke, Ed Dillio, Joe Griffies, Bill Hawk, Allyn Penkethman, Fred Trasatti, Howard Trout, and Krystel Arana.

FLAG SALUTE

UPDATE CONTACT INFORMATION

GUEST SPEAKER: Robert McGeehan – Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Chapter 44 Service Officer

Robert “Bob” McGeehan:

- *Main job as Service Officer of the DAV Chapter 44 is to help veterans obtain benefits for themselves and their spouses as well disability, and basically, any problem that needs attention.*
- *Help veterans resolve bills mistakenly sent to them.*
- *Available one day a week at the DAV Chapter 44 on Wednesdays from 12pm–6pm and later if need be.*
- *An appointment is preferred.*
- *Asks veterans who wish to file a new claim to bring their DD Form 214, medical records, and old claim (if applicable) to create a firm, valid reason.*
- *If there is no evidence as to the claim being filed, he will still submit the claim, but odds are it will get disapproved.*
- *Handed-out flyers to be distributed to the public through the board members.*

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Received a call from an advocate in a nursing home located in Upper Township on behalf of a woman whose husband was a Vietnam Veteran and had just passed.*
- *The woman does not receive benefits and for some reason the advocate thought that she would eligible for some type of pension because of her husband’s time served in the Vietnam War.*
- *The veteran was not receiving any type of pension.*
- *Asked Mr. McGeehan to shed some light on the situation.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *If he served during a wartime period and if he received any type of disability at all, depending upon her age and her income, she can apply for a veteran's pension.*
- *It is income based.*

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Was unsure of what answer to give.*
- *Referred her to the Director of the Veterans' Bureau, Virginia "Ginny" Tomlin.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *My father-in-law was in World War II and he fortunately never received any wounds but I was able to obtain him a pension because of the fact that he served during WWII.*
- *Pensions are available, it also depends upon if a disability was incurred during active military service and time served.*

Joe Griffies:

- *Was the veteran registered with the VA?*

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Did not ask that particular question since there was uncertainty of exact answer.*

Joe Griffies:

- *If the spouse of a deceased veteran who was not registered with the VA applies for a pension, it's a nightmare.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *She would have to acquire all of his records.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *That's why we advise, especially the younger veterans, to apply to register as soon as possible because one never knows what kind of illness or disability one will occur in the future as a result of time served.*
- *For instance Agent Orange, an herbicide that was sprayed on trees and vegetation by the millions of gallons during the Vietnam War by the U.S. military that has caused concerns about the negative health effects those chemicals produced several decades later.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *I have veterans coming in to see me, telling me they need hearing aids and asking if the VA will pay for them but they never signed up for VA healthcare.*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *Registering for the VA should be one of the main objectives as soon as they return.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *In New Jersey, they have passed a law or are in the process of passing a law that requires residents who are being discharged to be automatically enrolled into the VA system.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *Asked Nicholas if was exposed to the burn pits in Afghanistan.*

Nicholas Anzelone:

- *No, that was a year before he deployed.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *Those men exposed have all kinds of problems now after having returned.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *The VA just made Legislation recognizing the burn pits.*

Bill Hawk:

- *Going to training in a month to be assigned as Post Legion Service Officer.*
- *VA Registration: Should obtaining a Veteran's ID card be one of the first matters discussed?*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *Yes, that's when you register with the VA healthcare system and once they return the proper paperwork, that individual can go to his or her local clinic/hospital and acquire their healthcare card.*

Bill Hawk:

- *What would be the next topic of focus?*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *The next step would be to file a claim if you come across any problems.*
- *Make sure you have substantial evidence regarding the claim being filed.*

Bill Hawk:

- *Helping veterans pay bills was mentioned earlier, what kind of reception do you receive from, for example, electric companies?*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *When I spoke of bills, I was referring to bills mistakenly sent from the VA.*
- *For example, you would act as a liaison for a veteran who receives a bill but is enrolled with the Veterans Choice Program and whose expenses should be covered by that program.*
- *When it comes to bills regarding electricity, etc., unfortunately, there is nothing I can do to help them.*

Bill Hawk:

- *So part of the job from what I get that you're saying is that you're a trouble shooter, acting as an informal liaison but there is only so much you can do.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *Right, I don't receive any monetary compensation from it either.*
- *The biggest problem I am experiencing now is retaining letters from the VA for 100% veteran approved property tax exemptions.*

Joe Griffies:

- *Middle Township's Tax Collector and Tax Assessor process veteran property tax deductions and exemptions.*
- *One has to personally go to the municipal building in one's hometown and apply.*
- *Ginny from the Veterans' Bureau helps veterans obtain their DD Form 214 which will be required to apply for a tax deduction/exemption.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *The township has to vote to approve it and then it gets forwarded to the Board of Chosen Freeholders to be voted on as well because then that individual wouldn't be paying county taxes either.*
- *It takes about five to six weeks to get through the whole process.*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *So when a claim is filed, the VA then obtains all of that person's medical records?*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *Yes but you can also get your own records if requested.*
- *Suggests building claim by attaining one's own evidence before applying.*
- *Standard claims can take up to six months and over, they want you to give up.*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *What about the Choice card that is automatically received once enrolled in the VA?*
- *Is the Choice card used as secondary coverage?*
- *I have primary healthcare coverage through my place of work.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *You receive the Choice Program card once enrolled in the VA but you have to call for prior approval before going anywhere and lately it has been a difficult process.*
- *The Choice card is secondary coverage and it is used for anything an individual is being treated for through the VA.*
- *For instance, if a veteran in Middle Township is being treated for chemotherapy and their appointment is in Wilmington or Philadelphia but there is doctor's office that offers the same treatment down the street, you have to call to get prior approval to utilize the office down the street rather than traveling.*

Joe Griffies:

- *If a veteran can't get prior approval and they are experiencing a problem with their health that should be dealt with immediately, he or she can visit the emergency room and upon specifying that they are a veteran associated with the Philadelphia VA, that individual will be treated.*
- *Asked Allyn if she is enrolled in the VA healthcare system.*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *Explained that she is not enrolled in the VA healthcare system because when she tried to enroll, she was told she was not eligible.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *Sometimes people will be denied enrollment because they make a specific amount of money unless they have a disability.*
- *Tri-care is accepted by every VA facility.*
- *Believes that if a veteran is 50% or more disabled, all medications are free and without co-pay.*
- *Obtain a 10-10EZ application form online to apply for VA health benefits.*
- *Reassured Bill that when he goes to training, he will be taught how to register people into the system and how to file a claim. All of the other stuff will be learned through experience.*

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *How can we help the veterans other than referring them and getting them in touch with you?*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *On www.ebenefits.va.gov you can do a great deal of things such as register, file a claim, examine status of claim, renew prescriptions, review upcoming doctor's appointments, reorder hearing aid batteries, etc.*
- *There is a wealth of information at your fingertips with the internet.*
- *Type in any keyword on Google.com and find information on local veteran advocates.*
- *Know who to refer veterans to regarding the type of issues they are facing.*

Bill Hawk:

- *For my personal information, does the website you just mentioned contain fact sheets or frequently asked questions?*
- *Or do you know of any other government sites that may have what I am in search of?*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *Yes, ebenefits.va.gov does contain frequently asked questions, most informational websites do.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.

- *It's a shame middle township doesn't have a government channel.*
- *We could be posting this information; transportation, VA benefits.*
- *Another person we could have a guest speaker is Jacquelyn Kinder.*

- *She specializes in training family members of veterans to be their primary care givers.*
- *Those family members get compensated through the VA.*
- *It is called the Caregivers Program.*
- *She is trying to get the program up and running in Cape May County.*

Krystal Arana:

- *Working on the informational pamphlet Ed suggested as a mean of distributing the information we have collected to the public.*
- *The pamphlet includes instructions as to how to navigate through Middle Township's website to get to the Veteran's Advisory Board's webpage to gain access to all of the information we have collected.*
- *Also in the process of putting Allyn's information on essential websites for veterans into a template for an index card to also be dispersed.*
- *Instead of a government channel our best bet of reaching the public with the massive amount of information we have collected is through our webpage.*
- *Constantly replenishing flyers and handouts on the front desk located at the entrance of the municipal building.*

Bill Hawk:

- *Even though the information is being spread that there are local services available, they are not being utilized.*

Joe Griffies:

- *Veterans are in denial.*
- *Many do not want to admit they have a problem.*
- *Some are very angry and bitter about the VA system.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *A lot of veterans get out of the service and they manage to get their own healthcare through building their own businesses, and when they hear about all of the problems veterans are experiencing through the VA system, it's much easier for them to use their own private healthcare.*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *Maybe one of our main objectives should be to focus on the benefits offered to spouses and relatives who take care of their family members that are veterans.*
- *If there is something available to the spouse or to the relative who is taking care of their family member that they weren't aware of or benefits for the spouse if the veteran is deceased, maybe that would gain some interest.*

Joe Griffies:

- *Most WWII veterans are now starting to tell their stories before they die.*
- *I know a guy whose father was a veteran and had not told his son a war time story until he was an older man.*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *There's a saying "When you finally talk about it, you heal."*

Joe Griffies:

- *That's one of the problems with our country nowadays and the staggering amount of suicides.*
- *A veteran's spouse dies and they're home alone, their children have lives of their own and he or she has nothing to do but start thinking about what happened.*
- *It starts eating at their mind.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *Do you ever see any of the buddies you served with or keep in contact with them at all?*

Nicholas Anzelone:

- *Not really.*
- *A few texts every now and then.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *You have a wealth of information you can start talking to them about.*
- *They would much rather hear it from somebody they know or from someone in their peer group rather than hearing it from one of us older men or an outsider that they are unfamiliar with.*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *Host an "Information Night" for families who have children in the service or who will be entering the service about what they should expect upon entering the service and what they should do once they are discharged.*
- *Advertise the event.*
- *Keep in touch with those families who seek our information.*
- *We had a young woman who was going into the service and her mother was so nervous about her joining.*
- *In the long run, the daughter is enjoying her time in the service, stationed in North Korea, and her mother is so excited because her daughter is happy.*

Joe Griffies:

- *The men and women who retire from the service who have been trained and prepped in the VA system should be the first ones considered for job positions at the VA.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *Complimented the turn out of the Veteran's Appreciation Breakfast event held in March.*

Joe Griffies:

- *If anybody from the board wants to come, in the first week of May, there is a program called Our Community Salutes.*
- *National non-profit organization helping communities recognize, honor and support high school seniors who plan to enlist into the U.S. Armed Services after graduation.*
- *This year there will be twenty-seven families being honored in Cape May County.*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *Maybe we can get the schools involved in sharing information with us such as how many high school seniors will be graduating and joining the service.*

Bill Hawk:

- *How did you feel after you left the service and came home?*

Nicholas Anzelone:

- *The hardest part was coming back and feeling like no had a clue as to what he had dealt with or was dealing with.*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *Agreed with Nicholas, people discharged from service go home and notice a difference in lifestyle.*
- *The lifestyle of the military service is much more disciplined.*
- *Noticed the biggest difference in work ethics.*
- *I had a difficult time reintegrating with people I was friends with before joining the service.*

Howard Trout:

- *The work ethic of people in the military service is much more disciplined than that of a civilian's.*

Bill Hawk:

- *Transition meeting before leaving the Gulf of Mexico on reintegrating back into civilian social setting.*
- *One of the main differences of a person who has served in the military service and a civilian is having seen things and having to forget seeing things that you wish you had never seen.*
- *If we are going to plan a transition meeting for parents, one of the main goals should be to help parents understand that their young daughter or son is no longer going to be the same person they were before they left.*
- *They will develop and grow into adults while away.*
- *There will be a different experience and story for each and every person who joins the service.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *It helps to talk to somebody.*

Krystal Arana:

- *Are there any local support groups?*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *There's one on the Coast Guard Base.*
- *Run by a woman named Karen.*
- *Held on Tuesdays for people experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.*

Nicholas Anzelone:

- *Recently found out a few of his friends he served with went through a similar experience that he did when they arrived home.*
- *Does not know a single veteran close to his age within a wide range.*

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *They are in hiding and we have to encourage them to step forward.*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *Try organizing a Veterans Night Out.*
- *We could host bowling or some sort of event to encourage veterans of all ages to come out and get to know each other, share stories and experiences.*

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Get in touch with Dennis from the Belleview.*
- *Beef & Beer.*
- *Probably in early June.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *Might be able to get a DJ for free.*

Robert "Bob" McGeehan:

- *South Jersey Veterans Conference, May 20th, being held at the VFW located in Villas at 10am.*
- *It is a time to ask questions and share concerns.*
- *The guest speaker is Jackie, the lady who trains relatives on how to take care of family members who are veterans; she is with Hearts of Valor.*
- *We are getting the Director of the VA to come and speak but not sure on exact date or time.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *The new Commander at the DAV is Sam Carter.*

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Purchased business cards for her representation as Chairperson of the Veteran's Advisory Board.*
- *We will be attending National Night Out again this year.*

DISCUSS AND ESTABLISH BOARD OBJECTIVES – Individual Objectives Received

Establish Board Objectives

OLD BUSINESS

Fundraiser for DAV – Fins – Report

Francey Burke:

- *Big article on Facebook.*
- *Jeff the owner had the idea to do fundraising every Sunday for local groups.*
- *He contacted me and asked me if I would be interested and I said yes, of course! So, I chose one of the dates available.*
- *They featured an interview of him in a magazine in Cape May and on Facebook.*
- *I thought it was a very successful day with the National Guard in attendance, DAV groups, and the staff from the dealership.*
- *It was the largest Sunday Social the entire period that they were held which was during many months.*
- *\$3,600 donation.*
- *Remaining money raised just under \$4,000.*
- *Already reserved for next year.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *The staff was great; they couldn't do enough for everybody.*
- *National Guardsmen were outside greeting people.*
- *The manager of Fins is in the National Guard.*

Francey Burke:

- *Car show on July 9th which will benefit the DAV.*
- *Allied Bank and Cape Bank will sponsor again this year.*

Veterans Appreciation Breakfast – Report

Ed Dillio:

- *Fun and successful event.*
- *Two drivers signed up to work for the DAV.*
- *An old member renewed his membership.*
- *Three new members.*
- *All of Township Committee was present.*
- *At least half a dozen police men who are veterans attended.*

Bill Hawk:

- *Mr. Mariner seemed to be frustrated with the system.*
- *Asked Bill what he was going to do for him.*

Ed Dillio:

- *It should be an annual event.*

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Twice a year.*

Terms of Members – Follow Up (Reappointments/Changes)

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Krystal and I are following up on that.*
- *Spoke with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and they weren't sure how to proceed.*
- *Trying to resolve the issue to get Howard reassigned from an alternate to a member.*

Fundraising – No Further Information

Contact Other Veterans Organizations to Attend Meetings – AARP

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Hoping she'll finally be able to attend the meetings of different veterans organizations now that things have calmed down in her personal life.*
- *Will send out an email if she will be attending any meetings in case if anyone else wants to join.*

Brochure with Consolidated Veteran Information – Information Received From Fred – Still Retyping

Maureen harden-Lozier:

- *Once complete, we will scan and post on the webpage for the public.*

Memorial Day Participation – Follow Up

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Wanted to make sure everyone was available to participate in the parade held by Middle Township.*
- *Joe will not be able to make it, has dedicated his time to another event.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *Will have to double check since he is no longer the Commander and vans may already be committed to different activities that day so it may be tough.*

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *At the American Legion meeting last night, the project of replacing the American flags at all of the cemeteries was mentioned.*
- *Wanted to know if anyone was interested in helping.*
- *If one of us went with each group that partakes in the event and lent a hand, it would make a difference.*
- *Assist with all the cemeteries in Middle Township.*
- *Put up a sign-up sheet.*
- *The Friday before Memorial Day, which is on a Monday.*

Retirement of Flag Ceremony – Schedule Date

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Holding off on the retirement of the flag ceremony until the fall.*

- *Will be held somewhere locally.*
- *Trusts people will be interested.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *There is whole ritual that goes along with each stripe of the flag.*

Howard Trout:

- *Would certainly be able to get the Boy Scouts to help because they do it all of the time.*

Any Other Unfinished Old Business – None

NEW BUSINESS

Joint Base McGuire-Dix – Retiree Appreciation Day

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *Going to be held on April 30th at the Timmerman Center in Lakehurst, New Jersey.*
- *The event will provide the latest information concerning retirement rights, benefits and privileges.*
- *Opportunity to get ID cards renewed, they just ask that you bring any documentation that is required.*

Retired Flag Notes

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *A retired admiral friend of mine had received a note on his car and with the note was a star that had been cut from a flag and attached.*
- *The note read “I am a part of an American flag that was flown over a home in the United States of America. I can fly no longer, the sun and wind have caused me to become tattered and torn. Please carry me as a reminder that you are not forgotten. Thank you for your service to our country.”*
- *I thought this might be a future project of ours.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *They don’t burn the stars.*
- *At the end of the flag ceremony, they cut the stars and keep the very first star located at the top upper left corner, date the flag and the first star, and bury it.*
- *Every year we, at the DAV, bury it somewhere on our property; it is usually near our memorial stone.*
- *Over the years it deteriorates like it’s supposed to.*
- *People drop off flags at the DAV all of the time.*

Joe Griffies:

- *In Dallas, they are putting up veteran parking spots.*

Maureen Harden-Lozier:

- *What better way to advertise the Veteran’s Advisory Board?*

Allyn Penkethman:

- *Visit the veterans in the hospital and give the stars to them.*
- *Make business cards with the stars on them.*

Fred Trasatti, Jr.:

- *Some of the guys sow the star on their vests.*

Other New Business – None

Next Meeting Date

Wednesday, April 27, 2016

QUESTIONS N/A

ADJOURN 8:52pm

ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES:

Minutes – Krystel Arana

Time Keeper – Allyn Penkethman