



## Veterans Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

- Meeting Date/Time/Location:** August 12, 2024 – 10:00 a.m.  
Hybrid Zoom Meeting – WCHD, Girard St & Zoom
- Committee Members Present:** Robert Wilson, Christopher Brown, Dick Conoboy, Andrea Vance, Brent Waggoner, Allan Jensen
- Committee Members Absent:** Lynne Graham, Wes Weston, Joe Shepherd
- Staff/Guests:** Liz Witowski, Whatcom County Health & Community Services  
Sean Dalgarn, Whatcom County Health & Community Services  
Ann Beck, Whatcom County Health & Community Services  
Amanda Burnett, Whatcom County Health & Community Services  
Beth Decker, Whatcom County Health & Community Services  
Trevor Mullins, Whatcom County Health & Community Services  
Jolynn Sullivan, Whatcom County Health & Community Services  
Paul Pelot, Worksource  
Ana Clark, Opportunity Council  
Cori Bryant, Opportunity Council

Agenda Item	Discussion
<b>1. Call to order</b>	Meeting called to order by Robert Wilson at 10:01 am
<b>2. Roll Call</b>	A quorum was present.
<b>3. New Business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. <b>Open Public Comment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. No public comment</li> </ul> </li> <li>II. Approve June 10, 2024 minutes                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Al motioned to approve the June minutes as presented. Andrea seconded the motion.</li> <li>b. June 10, 2024 meeting minutes were approved</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Aye: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0</b></p> </li> </ul>
<b>4. Reports &amp; Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Personnel Costs                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Liz introduced Jolynn Sullivan, to explain the breakdown of the personnel costs in the budget projection from the previous meeting.</li> <li>b. Jolynn explained the estimated personnel costs assumes a 12% annual increase. 4% COLA increase. 4% step increases per union agreements. 4% general cost increase</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>(insurance, health, wellness, payroll taxes). The estimate is conservative to account for long-term decisions and potential risks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Adjustments will be made as more accurate data becomes available over time.</li> <li>d. Liz, Jolynn and Ann also explained the indirect rate, the rate is currently 15% and tied to personnel costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The board was concerned about the indirect rate, which was unexpectedly high and impacted the budget planning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>e. Liz shared that in 2022, the VA contributed approximately \$113 million to Whatcom County, with \$74 million in compensation and pension (Comp. and Pen.) benefits.</li> <li>f. Al and Liz discussed the need to communicate effectively with the community about how funds are being used, especially when there is a significant fund balance.</li> <li>g. Bob suggested creating a talking points or FAQ to explain the costs and benefits of personnel and indirect expenses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Liz and Amanda will collaborate to develop these talking points, including financial projections and the impact of their work on the community.</li> <li>ii. Ann proposed creating two documents: one focusing on internal financial details and another on the veterans' program and its benefits to the community.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>II. ASR to increase VAF Direct Assistance Amount for 2024 passed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Liz reported that they requested an additional \$100,000 in funding authorization from the County Council for 2024 due to inflation.</li> <li>b. County Council approved the ASR, allowing a total of \$200,000 to be spent from the Veterans Assistance Fund in 2024. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. This fund covers mortgage, rent, utilities, and other direct assistance for local indigent veterans.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. Liz plans to monitor actual spending in 2024 to better forecast future budgets.</li> <li>d. A briefing was given to the County Council on the fund's status since 2018. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Liz will share the slides and briefing link with the board.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>III. VAF cash balance as of 8/8/2024: \$1,085,679.10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Liz shared on the VAF cash balance</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Good of the Order</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Al Jensen shared that the Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Council is doing county-wide road shows. October 22nd they are meeting with veterans and advocacy groups, elected officials. October 23rd is a general meeting open to the public at the VFWO.</li> <li>II. Liz announced a Whatcom County veteran provider meeting on September 5th, 3pm at the Bellingham Vet Center. The purpose is to streamline services and improve communication among providers.</li> <li>III. Paul mentioned that it's job fair season and there is an upcoming job fair at the Chief's Club on October 10. There is also a big job fair happening in Skagit Valley. There are also jobs available with Silfab Solar, they are focusing on hiring veterans. Janicki also have positions open.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Next Meeting</b></p>	<p>The next meeting will be held Monday, October 14, 2024 – hybrid.</p>
<p><b>7. Adjourned</b></p>	<p>The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 am.</p>