



STATE OF WASHINGTON

VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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VAAC TOWN HALL AND WOMEN VETERANS FORUM

August 2, 2023

8:30 am – 9:30 am Women Veterans Forum

American Legion (Lighthouse Post)

10:00 am – 12:30 pm VAAC Town Hall

American Legion Post 10

208 N Wenatchee Avenue

Wenatchee, WA 98801

MINUTES

Welcome, Introduction of VAAC
Members
Invocation
Pledge of Allegiance

Introduction of Dignitaries
Welcome from Wenatchee

WDVA Updates

Shellie Willis called the Town Hall to order and Bob Wallace gave the invocation.

Chuck Wharton led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance

Congresswoman Kim Schrier

- Made welcome remarks as well as shared the services that are being provided for veterans and their families in Wenatchee.
- Thanked veterans and their spouses for their service.
- Serving half million veterans and families in Washington State
- Spoke on the PACT Act.
- Spoke on the American Aviators Act
- Asked for any Vietnam Veterans that have not be welcomed home yet to please see her or a staff member.

David Puente, Jr - Director

- Thanked the American Legion for the use of the facility.
- Thanked Chelan County for meeting with WDVA on Tuesday and for the work they are doing.
- Visit to Vet Hall – WDVA listened to veterans and spouses during their visit on Tuesday.
- Wants to visit with Advisory Boards and Committees
- Shared information on WDVAs Strategic Plan
 - Goals and objectives
 - Save and transform lives

- Respect, empower and inspire everyone
- Be the leading state in Veteran service delivery and outcomes
- Operate effectively and efficiently
- Each goal has objectives

Wenatchee VA Overview

Ron Lockman, Clinic Manager – Wenatchee CBOC

- Gave a briefing on the Wenatchee CBOC and the current challenges they have been facing with the phone system.
- Even though the system was upgraded there were many automated options that were broken.
- Hope to have it resolved with updates at the Serving Those Who Served conference.
- Will ask for feedback once the system is up and running.

Chelan County Veterans Program Douglas County Veterans Program

Trent Mortensen, Chelan County VSO

- New VSO for Chelan County
- Recently hired a new Admin Assistant.
- Working on PACT Act claims

Sarahbeth Simonson, Douglas County VSO

- VA claims including PACT Act is the bulk of her work.
- Located at 110 2nd St. NE, Wenatchee (old Sherrif's office).

WDVA Program Overview and PACT Act

Steve Gill, WDVA Veterans Services Administrator:

Gave an overview of the WDVA Program and PACT Act.

- Four State Veterans Homes located in Port Orchard, Orting, Walla Walla and Spokane. The state veterans homes provide long term care for eligible veterans and family members.
- Two Transitional Housing Programs – Port Orchard and Orting. The Transitional Housing Programs assist veterans who are experiencing homelessness and other issues related to their military service. Veterans who are accepted to this program can stay for 2 years. The goal is to be able to help them with securing permanent housing as well as employment.
- State Veterans Cemetery – provides interment service to veterans and their families in the Spokane area and various parts on the east side of our state.
- Counseling Program – provides mental health counseling to eligible veterans and/or their family. Including suicide prevention
- Aside from above, we also assist with benefits filing, estate management, and many other programs.
- PACT Act
 - While there is no deadline to apply for PACT Act-related benefits, there is urgency. Most Veterans and survivors who apply for benefits or submit an “Intent to File” by

August 9, if granted, will have their benefits backdated to August 10th of last year – the day that President Biden signed the PACT Act into law. Claimants can still apply after this date, but payments would not be retroactive.

- In some cases, spouses of veterans who have passed can apply for Dependent and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC)..
- Shared the “Serving Those Who Served” Conference information.
 - Aug. 24-25, 2023 in Wenatchee.

Break and Networking

WVAC Overview and Update

Shellie Willis, Women Veterans Advisory Committee Chair

- Shellie hosted a Women Veterans Forum prior to the VAAC meeting.
- Shared the importance of the Town Hall and Serving Those Who Served Conference.

Women Veterans Programs Overview

Dr. Megan Chandler, Lead Physician and Julie Liss, MSN, RN – Women Veterans Programs

- Gave an overview of the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center Women Veterans Programs
- Service Act
 - Full range of services for women
 - Serving 4,000 women and families
 - Child care benefits – for any appointment they supply child care services.

WDVA Suicide Prevention & Awareness

Mike Badgley, WDVA Suicide Prevention Peer Specialist

- Gave an overview on WDVAs Suicide Prevention program including:
 - Suicide data
 - Myths/Facts
 - Veteran Suicide Data
 - Why people die by suicide.
 - Battermind to Homemind
 - Four Dimensions of Identity
 - Protective Factors
 - LEARN Model for Suicide Prevention
 - Look for signs
 - Empathize & listen
 - Ask about suicide
 - Reduce the danger
 - Next steps

VA Caregiver Programs

Teresa Bailey, Supervisor – Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center, VA Caregiver Support Program

- Teresa gave an overview on the VA Caregiver Support Program
- Program started 16 years ago.
- Open to any caregiver
- Comprehensive Assistance
 - Eligibility requirements
 - Will pay for in-home care

- How to apply – access and download the application (VA Form 10-10CG) mail to local CSP Team.

What's On Your Mind?
Closing and Meeting Adjourned

12:15PM