



**Blount County Veterans Affairs
QUARTERLY COMMITTEE MEETING
July 10, 2024**

Veterans Committee Meeting called to order at 4:30 pm.

Roll Call:

Members present: Steve Mikels (Blount County Commissioner), Cye Miles (Veterans of Foreign Wars 10855), Frank Kusiowski, Jr. (AMVETS Post 22), Robin Ferschke (Gold Star Mother), Larry Grant (American Legion Post 13), Ed Shore (Military Order of the Purple Heart), Lloyd Hansen (VFW Post 5154)

Members Excused: Mike Kennedy (Disabled American Veterans), Denise Weston (At-Large)

Members absent:

VSO Nathan Weinbaum read the minutes from the April 10, 2024 quarterly Veterans Committee Meeting. Ed Shore made a motion to approve. Second by Frank Kusiowski, Jr. Motion Passed.

Highlights:

- HonorAir Knoxville Flight #34 was held on April 10, 2024
- The United Veterans of Blount County held their annual Memorial Day program at RIO Revolution on May 25, 2024 with Major Jeff Tegzez, USMC-Retired as the guest speaker
- VFW Post 5154 Memorial Day events at Sherwood Cemetery and Flag Retirement Ceremony
- American Legion Post 13 July 4th Flag Retirement Ceremony

Old Business:

- Resolution naming the eastbound bridge toward Townsend on U.S. Highway 321 in Blount County, TN the "PFC Clayton E. Narveson Memorial Bridge". No update at the time of the meeting on plans to dedicate bridge in a few weeks.

New Business:

- Frank Kusiowski, Jr. discussed a committee has been working to create guidelines for any future requests for new monuments or plaques to be placed at the Blount County Courthouse. From these guidelines, a form would be created for anyone or group that wants to put a new monument or plaque at the courthouse. Once the form and information are provided then The United Veterans of Blount County and the Veterans Affairs Committee would consider the request before sending the request to Blount

County Mayor Ed Mitchell and the County Commission. Also discussed placing new monuments and plaques at alternate locations like on the grounds at American Legion Post 13 or VFW Post 5154. It was also discussed looking into an area on the greenway that could be designated for memorials and plaques to honor service members or Veterans.

- VSO Nathan Weinbaum discussed quarterly training from the Tennessee Department of Veterans Services which educates our staff on VA benefits and forms, new laws and best practices.
- VSO Nathan Weinbaum reported that the US Department of Veterans Affairs recently released their annual statistics for VA expenditures. They paid \$79,618,000.00 to Blount County Veterans and dependents in 2023. This is an increase of \$5,895,000.00. This money is a tax-free benefit and helps our local economy if the Veteran or dependent spends it locally.
- HonorAir Knoxville will be hosting a virtual flight on August 17, 2024 in Knoxville for Veterans who are unable to fly to Washington, DC. A few months later, Flight #35 will return to Washington, DC with Women Veterans on September 25, 2024. Each flight to Washington DC has many Blount County Veterans.
- VSO Nathan Weinbaum discussed speaking in the community about VA benefits. He recently spoke at a Kiwanis meeting, a Veterans group at the MLK Center in Alcoa, a Veterans Support Group at Foothills Church and a Vietnam Veterans reunion in Townsend of the 1st Bn, 8th Inf, 4th Inf. Division. VSO Weinbaum also speaks at monthly Veterans organization meetings that he is able to attend. He hopes to continue to speak to groups to share information about VA benefits for Veterans and dependents.

Public Input not on the Agenda:

Announcements and Statements:

No further business.

Meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm.