



Blount County Veterans Affairs
QUARTERLY COMMITTEE MEETING
January 11, 2023

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

Roll Call:

Members present: Ed Shore (Military Order of the Purple Heart), Cy Myles (Veterans of Foreign Wars 10855), Robin Ferschke (Gold Star Mother), Mike Kennedy (Disabled American Veterans Chapter 76), Frank Kusiowski (AMVETS Post 22), Denise Weston (At-Large)

Members Excused: Steve Mikels (Blount County Commissioner)

Members absent: TJ Henry (American Legion Post 13), Lloyd Hansen (VFW Post 5154)

Guests: None

VSO Nathan Weinbaum read the minutes from the October 13, 2022 quarterly Veterans Committee Meeting. Ed Shore made a motion to approve. Second by Cy Myles. Motion Passed.

Old Business:

- Nathan Weinbaum discussed progress on naming the bridge on Hunt Road over Highway 129 as the Sgt. Michael H. Ferschke Jr. Memorial Bridge. Blount County Commission passed resolution and it is now with the State of TN for final approval.
- Nathan Weinbaum discussed how the Pact Act has impacted the Blount County Veterans Affairs office with more office visits, claims and phone calls. The Pact Act added more than 20 presumptive conditions and new locations for exposures. Also provides healthcare benefits to Veterans who were previously not eligible. The Pact Act has also provided surviving spouses with DIC benefits that they may have been denied by the VA in the past.

New Business:

- Consideration to name the two bridges on US-321 over the Foothills Parkway near Walland, TN the Clayton Narveson WWII Iwo Jima Survivor Memorial Bridge. Clayton Narveson participated in the Battle of Tarawa in November 1943. He was injured in the West Loch disaster in Pearl Harbor on May 21, 1944. He then participated in the Battle of Iwo Jima in February/March 1945. Clayton witnessed the American Flag being raised at Iwo Jima. Clayton was very involved in our community speaking to school children and organizations. He was an active member of VFW Post 10855. Clayton Narveson passed away on January 20, 2023. **Motion by Denise Weston to name two bridges on US-321 over the Foothills Parkway the Clayton Narveson WWII Iwo Jima Survivor Memorial Bridge, Second by Cy Myles. Motion passed with full support of members present.**
- Nathan Weinbaum discussed need to add one office assistant/VSO to office staff to better serve Blount County Veterans and dependents and those from other counties that visit our office. Requesting an office assistant to relieve Assistant Director Donna Hatcher of those duties so she can focus on assisting Veterans and dependents and filing VA claims for benefits. The US Department of Veterans Affairs has made many recent changes in laws to provide more benefits for eligible Veterans and dependents filing those claims. An additional office assistant/VSO will put the Blount County Veterans Affairs office in a better position to assist with the following:
 - The Department of Veterans Affairs finalized a rule for presumptive service-connection of eight diseases associated with **contaminants in the water supply at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune** between 1953 and 1987 on March 14, 2017.
 - The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act** of 2019 extended presumption to herbicide exposure of Agent Orange to Veterans who served in the offshore waters in the Republic of Vietnam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975.
 - The Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act** signed into law on August 10, 2022. This law expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. The PACT Act added more than 20 presumptive conditions for service connection and additional locations for exposures to Burn Pits, Agent Orange and Radiation.
 - Increase in mental health awareness** due wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and other traumatic events in a military members service like Military Sexual Trauma.**Motion to ask Blount County Government to add one Office Assistant/Veterans Service Officer to the Veterans Affairs office to better serve Veterans and dependents with VA benefit applications for compensation, pension, DIC, healthcare, ChampVA, and other benefits and questions by Frank Kusiowski, Jr., second by Cy Myles. Motion passed with full support of all members present.**

Public Input not on the Agenda:
Announcements and Statements:

No further business.

Meeting adjourned at 5:08 pm.