

**EASTERN ESSEX DISTRICT
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting of June 30, 2021**

The Eastern Essex Veteran's Board of Directors participated in a remote meeting utilizing Zoom in accordance with the governor's March 12, 2020 order suspending provisions of Open Meeting Laws and to promote public health and social distancing.

Board Members present: Robert Snow, Chair, Rowley; Linda Alexson, Ipswich; Douglas Dawes, Georgetown; Michael Doyle, Newbury; Michael Flynn, Essex; Robert Janes, West Newbury

Staff present: Karen Tyler, Veterans Services Officer; Kathy Collins, Assistant Veterans Services Officer

Also present: Karen Summit, Treasurer

Director's Review

Mr. Snow reported that Ms. Tyler's overall review score was a 4.3. The Board commended Ms. Tyler on her work throughout the pandemic in partnering with local agencies to address food, clothing, and housing insecurity, as well as continuing the administration of Chapter 115 claims. The Board asked that over the next year, Ms. Tyler attend a public speaking course.

Vote on Offices

The Board decided on nominating Mr. Snow for Chair, Mr. Doyle for Vice Chair, and Ms. Alexson for Secretary.

- *Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to approve the nominations. Mr. Janes seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Financials

Ms. Summit reported that with one day left in FY21, the District is anticipated to end the year with a \$8,000-\$9,000 surplus. The Travel/Education line came in under budget because of cancelations due to the pandemic. The Health Insurance line came in under budget due to an overestimation at the time of budget approval. Ms. Summit noted that the Board had previously discussed conducting a professional audit of the finances, and offered to gather quotes depending on the scope of the audit that the Board would like to conduct. In the past, Powers & Sullivan have been utilized. She added that although the books balance monthly and a warrant process involves signatures from herself, Ms. Tyler, and Mr. Snow, a regular professional audit would be in best practice.

Mr. Flynn stated that he has confidence in the work being done, but agreed that there would be no harm in conducting a professional audit as well.

Ms. Alexson asked when the last audit was done; Ms. Summit responded that it was before she herself had started with the Board.

Mr. Dawes stated that this would be a good time to conduct an audit regardless, as Wenham's recent departure from the District will present significant financial difficulties going forward.

Mr. Doyle asked that the next Board meeting be held in-person, as many communities have returned to a traditional meeting format.

- *Vote: Mr. Doyle moved to accept the financials as presented. Mr. Janes seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Director's Report

MEMORIAL DAY

Georgetown, Newbury, Rowley, and Ipswich all held in-person events for Memorial Day on May 31.

A local middle school teacher submitted a Power Point presentation by 311 students thanking “active soldiers” for their service in recognition of Memorial Day. Ms. Tyler met with the teacher to explain a few issues with this sentiment: first, that Memorial Day is not a day of thanks for active duty service members; and second, that not all service members are soldiers – they are marines, airmen, sailors, and more. Ms. Tyler also explained the differences between Memorial Day, Armed Forces Day, and Veterans Day, as well as some of the problematic impacts thanking an active duty member on Memorial Day could trigger, such as survivor’s guilt.

VOLUNTEER WORK

Ms. Tyler recently met with a high school student interested in interviewing World War II veterans. She will be connecting the student with veterans interested in sharing their stories.

Mr. Doyle volunteered to share tapes his stepmother made several years ago, in which she interviewed every World War II veteran living in Newbury at the time. Mr. Doyle stressed the value of these tapes, as all of the veterans interviewed passed away at least 10-15 years ago now.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Ms. Tyler has been working with the North Shore Collaborative to plan a family paddling event on the Ipswich River, in collaborative with the Ipswich River Watershed Association. The event is tentatively planned for August 15.

Ms. Tyler, Ms. Collins, Rich Barbatto, Senator Bruce Tarr, and Representative Brad Hill have been working together to dedicate Ipswich’s High Street bridge in memory of those who served in the Global War on Terror. Ms. Tyler is hopeful that the bridge will be dedicated on Armed Forces Day of 2022.

On July 3, lunch will be available via drop-off or pickup to veterans in Newbury, West Newbury, Rowley, and Georgetown, sponsored by the Newburyport Bank.

On September 1 at 10 AM, a veteran benefits presentation will be held in Newbury.

OFFICE HOURS

In-person office hours will resume over the next few weeks after shutting down due to COVID-19. The first set of hours were recently held in Essex, and Ms. Tyler is working with the new Council on Aging Director in Newbury to set up a regular schedule.

Miscellaneous/Other

Mr. Dawes noted that the Pride flag is currently being flown at schools in Georgetown, and asked for insight as to whether or not the flag is permitted to be flown on the same pole as the American and POW/MIA flags.

Mr. Snow responded that he believes the decision to fly the flag is up to the individual School Committee, and that flag code would only be violated if any flag were flown above the American flag.

➤ *Vote: Mr. Doyle moved to adjourn. Mr. Dawes seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*