

**EASTERN ESSEX DISTRICT
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES
Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting of September 15, 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, Rowley, Char; Linda Alexson, Secretary; Douglas Dawes, Georgetown; Michael Flynn, Essex; Robert Janes, West Newbury

Board members not present: Michael Doyle, Newbury

Also present: Eileen Page, Recording Secretary; Karen Summit, Treasurer; Karen Tyler, VSO

With a quorum present, Mr. Snow called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

Minutes

- I. February 17, 2021
- II. April 7, 2021
- III. June 30, 2021

- *Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to approve the February 17, 2021 minutes. Mr. Dawes seconded. The motion carried 4-0, with Mr. Janes abstaining.*
- *Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to approve the April 7, 2021 minutes. Mr. Dawe seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*
- *Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to approve the June 30, 2021 minutes. Mr. Dawes seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Guest Speaker: Donald Jarvis, SAVE Team

Donald Jarvis gave a presentation to the Board on the SAVE Team, an acronym for State-Wide Advocacy for Veteran Empowerment. The SAVE Team falls under the Massachusetts Department of veteran Services. The SAVE Team was formed in 2008 as a suicide prevention team, and has grown to support veterans experiencing trauma or difficulty of any kind. Mr. Jarvis specifically supports Middlesex and Essex counties.

Staff on the SAVE Team provide crisis response, but are not clinicians. Most of their work is providing referrals to veterans experiencing homelessness, suicidal thoughts or actions, and accessing State benefits.

Mr. Jarvis also works with local law enforcement agencies to provide training and insight into veteran struggles when they are not properly assimilated into civilian life. The goal of this training is to assist officers in diffusing calls that involve veterans.

Mr. Jarvis reported that the majority of support provided throughout the pandemic relates to mental health struggles and alcohol misuse.

Ms. Alexson asked how the SAVE Team connects with veterans separating from service. Mr. Jarvis responded that the Team is able to work directly with Massachusetts Guard units, and guard members are required to contact them during the separation process. Active duty is much harder, however, as there are no formal separation events. The SAVE Team works to have representatives at as many veteran events as possible, and every courthouse in Massachusetts has their contact information in the probation office.

Veterans seeking services from the SAVE Team can call Rob Saucier at (617) 336-6553 Monday through Friday during normal business hours, or contact the 24/7 line at (617) 571-7587.

Financials

Ms. Summit reported that the District finished FY 21 with a surplus of \$8,908.85. The total amount in retained earnings is currently \$74,641.70.

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

Discuss and Vote on New Office Help

Ms. Tyler presented a job description to the Board for a 19-hour per week administrative assistant. The position would provide office coverage while Ms. Tyler is conducting field work and assist in the administration of Chapter 115 benefits. The proposed pay is \$19.00 per hour.

Ms. Alexson asked if a senior volunteer might be utilized for the position. Ms. Tyler stated that a volunteer could be helpful in covering phones, but a dedicated employee is necessary for Chapter 115 administration, as the laws are very complex and consequences of mistakes could be detrimental to veterans.

Mr. Flynn asked how this position would fit into the budget. Ms. Tyler responded that the now vacant Assistant to the VSO position would fund the administrative assistant.

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

Chair Report

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Snow reported that Ms. Tyler will be taking an Effective Public Speaking course.

STATEMENT FROM GEN. DAVID H. BERGER AND SGT. MAJ. TROY E. BLACK, US MARINE CORPS

Mr. Snow read the following statement:

“Marines: As each of us tries to comprehend the speed and scope of events in Afghanistan this week, some may be struggling with a simple question: ‘Was it all worth it?’ We see videos and photos, we read stories that bring back memories for some of us, and it becomes intensely personal. We value human life and we want to believe that what Marines have done in Afghanistan made a difference. While Sergeant Major Black and I don’t presume to speak for you or your family, we would like to offer our thoughts so you know where your senior leaders stand. We both believe - without question - that your service was meaningful, powerful, and important. You answered the call to serve, proudly carrying the torch of so many generations of Marines before you. You put the good of others before yourself. You fought to defend your country, your family, your friends, and your neighbors. You fought to prevent terror from returning to our shores. You fought for the liberty of young Afghan girls, women, boys, and men who want the same individual freedoms we enjoy as Americans. You fought for the Marine to your left and the Marine to your right. You never let them down. You never, ever gave up. You lived with purpose, with intention. Whether you realize it or not, you set an example or subsequent generations of Marines - and Americans - by living our core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. Was it worth it? Yes. does it still hurt? Yes. Since 2001, Marines have served honorably and courageously to bring peace to the people of Afghanistan. You should take pride in your service - it gives meaning to the sacrifice of all Marines who served, including those whose sacrifices were ultimate. Over the coming days and weeks, we encourage you to connect with your fellow Marines and their families - particularly those you served with overseas. This is a time to come together and give further meaning to our motto, Semper Fidelis. Let us remain faithful to our fellow Marines, faithful to our Marine families, and faithful to the memories of all who have sacrificed. We are intensely proud to serve alongside you as your Commandant and Sergeant Major. Semper Fidelis, David H. Bergner, General, U.S. Marine Corps, Commandant of the Marine Corps and Troy E. Black, SgtMaj, U.S. Marine Corps, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps.”

Director Report

RECENT MEETINGS & EVENTS

The Merrimack Valley Veterans Collaborative met on August 18 and heard a presentation by Home Base.

The North Shore Veterans Collaborative recently hosted a paddle event on the Ipswich River.

Ms. Tyler held a benefits presentation on September 1 at the Byfield Arts Center. The Vet Center and Bedford VA also gave informational presentations.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The dedication of the Ipswich High Street bridge to veterans of the Global War on Terror is planning for Armed Forces Day 2022.

The Town of Georgetown will be holding their regularly scheduled Veterans Day event.

Powers & Sullivan

Ms. Summit reported that after speaking with Powers & Sullivan, they have quoted the District \$2,000 to conduct a financial audit. The last audit was completed about five (5) years ago. The audit will consist of a QuickBooks review, analyzing warrants, and checking to ensure that the District is utilizing best practices in all financial matters.

- *Vote: Mr. Janes moved to authorize Powers & Sullivan to conduct a financial audit, up to a total cost of \$2,500. Ms. Alexson seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Vote on Donations

An Ipswich resident passed away, and the family requested that donations be made to the District in lieu of flowers. A total of \$440 was received.

- *Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to accept the donation. Mr. Dawes seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

New Business

The next Board meeting will be held in December.

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

The Board adjourned at 7:59 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page
09.28.2021*