

Clark County Veterans Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
An advisory board to the Clark County Council

August 8, 2024

Chair: Bob Nichols

Vice Chair: Megan Anderson

Secretary: Bruce Maas

Meeting called to order.

Roll Call: [Bold script indicates presence at meeting; *italics indicates excused*]

POST

40 et 8

American Legion #14

American Legion #44

American Legion #168

American Legion #176

American Veterans #6

DAV Chapter #4

Korean War Assoc. #321

Marine Corps League #826

VFW #4278

VFW #7824

Vietnam Vets #512

Members at Large

PRIMARY

Bob Brennan

Gene Couture

Darren Wertz

Bob Nichols

Michael Gibson

John Lovejoy

Bruce Maas

Steve Slegers

Shannon Roberts

Greg Gilbertson

Greg Whitson

Kelly Jones

Bryan McGillis

Tonya Wark

Tamara Elam

Megan Anderson

Eli Gonzalez

Michael Langsdorf

Lloyd Bowman

Buck Marr

ALTERNATE

Steve Slegers

Charles Ingalls

Jonathan Frederick

Vanise Pratt

Tom Cousino

Ron Brandon

Dana Difford

Nick Herber

Clark County Representative: Abby Molloy

Guests: **Michael Torres** (Clark County Community Services), **Lori Pugh** (Clark County Veterans Assistance Center), **Judy Russel** (Clark County Veterans Assistance Center), **Kathleen Otto** (County Manager), **Emily Zwetzig** (Clark County Budget Office), **Jill Blair** (Clark County Assessor's Office), **Michael Fish** (Clark County Assessor's Office), **Rebecca Holton** (Veteran/ citizen), **Rich Plumber** (Veteran/ citizen), **Patrick Locke** (Veteran/ citizen), **Mike Burton** (Veteran/ citizen) **Terry Phillips** (Veteran/ citizen)

Approval of June 13, 2024, meeting minutes

The minutes were approved following a motion by Megan Anderson that was seconded by Kelly Jones.

Committee Reports

Appeals: None

Policies and Procedures: None

Nominations: None

Clark County Assessor's Office and Budget Office Discussion

The role of the Assessor's Office is to identify and determine the value of all taxable real and personal property in the County. These values are then used to calculate and set levy rates for the various taxing districts in the County, and to equitably assign tax responsibilities among the taxpayers. Washington State uses a budget-based system of property taxation. Taxing Districts are responsible for certifying their own budgets to the County Council every year. The

Clark County Veterans Advisory Board Meeting Minutes **An advisory board to the Clark County Council**

August 8, 2024

Assessor's Office Levy Specialist ensures the budget request fits within statute limits and the district is NOT collecting more than legally allowed. The Assessor's Office role is to administer these functions and has no opinion upon how budgets are established and for what purposes. That is the responsibility of each individual taxing district and its authorized decision makers. The Budget Office facilitates the budget adoption process for Council approval, but does not make policy decisions.

Questions

1. What is the current levy rate for the 2024 Veterans Assistance Fund budget allocation?
 - a. The levy rate for 2024 Veteran's Assistance fund is 0.00758, which resulted in \$797,223.16 of property taxes levied.
2. Why isn't the levy rate set at the 1.125% minimum (RCW 73.08.080)?
 - a. The 1.125% minimum placed in statute for WA Counties created and established Veteran's Assistance Funds per RCW 73.08.080 (1). The following subsections describe conditions in which other amounts may be levied as follows:
 - i. RCW 73.08.080 (2) states that when the Funds on Deposit in the Veteran's Assistance fund, less outstanding warrants on the first Tuesday in September exceed the lesser of the expected yield of one and one-eighth cents per thousand of assessed value OR the expected yield of a levy determined as set forth in subsection (5) of this section, the county legislative authority may levy a lesser amount than would otherwise be required under subsection (1) or (5) of this section.
 - ii. RCW 73.08.080 (4) specifies the Veteran's Assistance levy may be reduced by the same proportion as the regular (General Fund) property tax levy of the county is reduced.
 - iii. RCW 73.08.080 (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii) further prescribe the conditions in which the amount of levy allocated may be modified from the amount required by subsection (1)
 - (i) If the certified levy is reduced from the preceding year's certified levy...
 - (ii) If the certified levy is increased from the preceding year's certified levy...
 - (iii) If the certified levy is unchanged from the preceding year's certified levy...
 - b. Clark County has a budget-based system. The levy rate is calculated/adjusted to meet the proposed budget based on the assessed value.
 - c. Clark County Community Services receives funds through fund 1019 (levy amount and general fund \$). 1019 funds are allocated into contracts which are paid on a cost reimbursement basis. Contract allocations are based on previous and projected spending and approved by VAB. "Emergency fund balance" is part of this fund which ensures that we are able to pay contracts in case of shortages or increased need.
 - d. Increases to the fund are a policy issue, not a budget issue. Clark County office staff cannot participate in policy advocacy. The VAB and CCVAC can advocate to the County Council for changes in policy.
3. As shown in the Taxable Assessed Value History Report for Clark County, from 2016-2017 to the most current years 2023-2024, the increase in property taxes collected is \$52,874,420,426. The increase in the Veteran Fund for the same time frame does not meet the required tax levy according to RCW 73.08.080: Tax levy authorized. (wa.gov). Why?
 - e. All amounts levied for the Veteran's Assistance Fund have been proportionate to the County General Levy as described in RCW 73.08.080 and further explained in question #2 above.
4. What is the process for increasing the levy rate? How can we increase the amount available to Veterans?
 - a. Work with DCS, Budget Office, and County Council
 - b. Start with a budget: what is needed that is not currently covered by the funds in 1019? Show the why and demonstrate the need for increased funds (data). Show how expenditures and delivery of services shows need for more funds.
 - c. Does the intended use of these funds comply with statute? The CCVAB may work with the County Prosecuting Attorney's Office to ensure compliance with the statute.
5. A larger number of Veterans are in need due to cost of living increases. Have cost of living estimates been increased by Feds to justify an increase in benefits to Veterans and families in need?
 - a. These are policy and legislative questions outside the purview of the Assessor's Office.
6. If we were to increase the levy rate to 1.125%, what would the Veterans Assistance Fund budget be?

Clark County Veterans Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

An advisory board to the Clark County Council

August 8, 2024

- a. Based upon the 2023 assessed value for 2024 taxes: \$105,135,874,081 (Taxable AV) / \$1,000 * .01125 = \$1,182,778.58
7. The RCW (73.08.080) states, “direct and indirect costs... must be computed... no less than annually.” Has this been done and is there open record of this?
 - a. This is computed monthly and shared with the VAB through the contractor and fund reports.
8. It does not appear that we are doing all we can to support our Indigent Veterans and their families. What can change at the state and the county levels? How can we make these changes happen?
 - a. These are policy and legislative questions.
9. How is the Assessor’s Office going to help establish the separate Veteran’s Fund in Clark County? At the inception of the Veteran’s Fund it was supposed to be set up as a separate account not put in the Community fund as it is now. (Please refer to RCW 73.08.080: Tax levy authorized. (wa.gov))
 - a. A separate fund already exists for the Veteran’s Assistance Fund, Fund 1019. It is not part of a “Community fund” as stated in the question above. The Assessor’s Office levy process is audited by the Washington State Department of Revenue, typically every 2 years. There have not been any findings or substantive corrections recommended pertaining to the Veteran’s Assistance Fund.

May 2024, Contractor & Fund reports

- CCVAC: 54 Veterans served in May, services totaling \$36,461. 43 male veterans, 8 female veterans, 3 widows, 0 other veterans. 7 denials, 0 subject to appeals. 639 visits to the center for essentials and food, 947 sack breakfasts/lunches provided and 33 food boxes provided. 2,305 total pounds of food. 813 volunteer hours, totaling \$32,748 in value.
- Free Clinic: 27 Veterans served in April. Services totaled \$3,627 in value; billed \$673.04
- VAF Fund: May revenue: \$88,695.08; expenditures: \$20,570.90; fund balance: \$784,598.10

June 2024, Contractor & Fund reports

- CCVAC: 38 Veterans served in June, services totaling \$15,261.47. 30 male veterans, 7 female veterans, 1 widow, 0 other veterans. 5 denials, 0 subject to appeals. 521 visits to the center for essentials and food, 817 sack breakfasts/lunches provided and 31 food boxes provided. 2,742 total pounds of food. 762 volunteer hours, totaling \$30,693 in value.
- Free Clinic: 26 Veterans served in April. Services totaled \$2,964 in value; billed \$715.70.
- WDVA: 778 claims, 91% batting average, \$1,332,756 VA payments
- VAF Fund: June revenue: \$11,069.05; expenditures: \$100,369.33; fund balance: \$695,297.82

Clark County Veterans Assistance Center Update

- Last month’s Gala was very successful. Thank you to everyone who came. Stand Down is coming up on September 27th. Already have received a donation for the DVA. Now asking for donations from other organizations.

Old Business

New Business

- Room 680 will not be available for September meeting due to IT upgrades. Abby has reserved room 698 and meeting will be recorded using Webex.
- Two letters of intent from Members at Large: Buck Marr and Mike Burton. Mike Burton withdrew application. Buck Marr was approved to join the board following a vote by the board.
- Will be requesting focus group volunteers for affordable housing report.

Open Forum and Public Comment

- Further conversation about VAF budget.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned. Next meeting September 12th, 2024.