



**Veterans Advisory Board**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date/Time/Location: February 8, 2021 / 10:00 a.m. / Virtual GoToMeeting

Committee Members Present: Allan Jensen, John Mitchell, Lynne Graham, Paul Pelot, Richard Conoboy, Andrea Vance, Chris Brown, Bob Wilson, Wes Weston

Committee Members Absent:

Whatcom Co. Health Dept. Staff/Guests: Ann Beck, Ashley Geleynse, Liz Harmon-Craig / Teri Bryant, Cheri Gleichmann, William Adamek, Robert Mortensen, Fia

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/Who
<b>1. Call to order</b>	Meeting called to order by Chair Lynne Graham.	<i>Lynne</i>
<b>2. Roll Call</b>	Roll call, quorum present.	<i>All</i>
<b>3. Review/Approval November 9 minutes</b>	November 9, 2020 minutes were reviewed. Wes motioned that the minutes be approved as presented. Paul seconded the motion. A vote was held and the motion passed.	<b>Motion:</b> To approve November 2020 minutes as presented. <b>Aye:</b> 9, <b>Nay:</b> 0, <b>Abstain:</b> 0, <b>Absent:</b> 0
<b>4. Reports/Discussion</b>  <b>VA Virtual Veteran Experience Action Center – Bob Mortenson, VA Seattle</b>	Bob Mortensen introduced Virtual Veteran Experience Action Centers, a pilot project currently active in Florida, Pennsylvania, Colorado, and Arizona, and starting in Alabama next week. The Action Centers is essentially a large-scale phone-based resource fair for veterans' services. These events could continue post COVID-19 as a means to reach more veterans who may not be able to travel for services. Schedules for other future events are still being developed for 2021 and 2022; the program may eventually come to Washington. The board discussed increased barriers to	<i>Bob Mortensen</i>

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<p><b>VAB Member Introductions</b></p> <p><b>OPMA Training</b></p>	<p>services for rural veterans, including transportation, lack of technology, and health reasons.</p> <p>Chris Brown and Bob Wilson are new members to the board. Members of the board took turns introducing themselves.</p> <p>The board reviewed the Open Government Training slides together in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.</p>	<p><i>All</i></p> <p><i>Liz</i></p>
<p><b>5. Good of the Order</b></p> <p><b>County Veterans Program Review &amp; Role of the Board</b></p>	<p>The committee reviewed the purpose and responsibilities of the Veterans Advisory Board; an oversight of the County Veterans Program. One piece is overlooking the Veterans Assistance Fund (VAF) collected through tax levy dollars that the Whatcom County Health Department administers. The board also welcomes guests from the VA, and discusses needs and gaps to services for veterans in our community.</p> <p>VAF requests have dropped off significantly since the beginning of the pandemic, and Liz has been doing primarily VSO work. The county is partnering with Opportunity Council to administer the \$6.8M in rental assistance dollars coming to our county from Treasury. There are plans to include the VAF piece alongside the general rental assistance funds available on flyers to be distributed out into the community. County staff requested other ideas for how to advertise that there are VAF available. The board discussed what they are seeing in the community regarding assistance referrals and requests, and employment. Some ideas for advertisement include digital platforms and transportation (WTA). William Adamek covers four counties and will be distributing a resource guide to all veterans who have ever enrolled in Work Source; another option would be to guide veterans to create an account so they receive this information. The County will prepare a pandemic specific digital flyer directing veterans to the County Veterans Program; this will be distributed to community partners to share with their clients.</p> <p>It was also suggested to get the word out about the County Veterans Program and VAF through presentations at City and County Council meetings.</p>	<p><i>All</i></p>



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	<p>We will email board members the fund balance as of February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 when have information from finance.</p> <p>Chris requested the Veterans Program and Veterans Advisory Board webpages be updated with links to current county code and RCWs.</p> <p>Come June, Liz will be the only accredited Veteran Service Officer in Whatcom County. The board will discuss this at the next meeting.</p>	
<b>6. Next Meeting</b>	The next meeting will be held Monday April 12, 2021 on GoToMeeting.	<i>Lynne</i>
<b>7. Adjourned</b>	The meeting was adjourned.	<i>Lynne</i>