

Aitkin County Board of Commissioners
Request for County Board Action/Agenda Item Cover Sheet



To: Chairperson, Aitkin County Board of Commissioners Date: _____

Via: Patrick Wussow, County Administrator

From: Penny Harms, Veterans Service Officer

Title of Item:

Veterans Service Office Report

Requested Meeting Date: 6-26-12 Estimated Presentation Time: 15 minutes

Presenter: Penny Harms, Veterans Service Officer

Type of Action Requested (check all that apply)

- For info only, no action requested
- For discussion only with possible future action
- Let/Award Bid or Quote (attach copy of basic bid/quote specs or summary of complex specs, each bid/quote received & bid/quote comparison)
- Approve/adopt proposal by motion
- Authorize filling vacant staff position
- Request to schedule public hearing or sale
- Request by member of the public to be heard
- Item should be addressed in closed session under MN Statute _____
- Approve under Consent Agenda
- Adopt Ordinance Revision
- Approve/adopt proposal by resolution (attach draft resolution)
- Other (please list) _____

Fiscal Impact (check all that apply)

- Is this item in the current approved budget? Yes _____ No _____ (attach explanation)
- What type of expenditure is this? Operating Capital Other (attach explanation)
- Revenue line account # that funds this item is: _____
- Expenditure line account # for this item is: _____

Staffing Impact (Any yes answer requires a review by Human Resources Manager before going to the board)

- Duties of a department employee(s) may be materially affected. Yes No
- Applicable job description(s) may require revision. Yes No
- Item may impact a bargaining unit agreement or county work policy. Yes No
- Item may change the department's authorized staffing level. Yes No



Supporting Attachment(s)

- Memorandum Summary of Item
- Copy of applicable county policy and/or ordinance (excerpts acceptable)
- Copy of applicable state/federal statute/regulation (excerpts acceptable)
- Copy of applicable contract and/or agreement
- Original bid spec or quote request (excluding complex construction projects)
- Bids/quotes received (excluding complex construction projects, provide comparison worksheet)
- Bid/quote comparison worksheet
- Draft County Board resolution
- Plat approval check-list and supporting documents
- Copy of previous minutes related to this issue
- Other supporting document(s) (please list) Report

Provide (1) copy of supporting documentation NO LATER THAN Wednesday at Noon to make the Board's agenda for the following Tuesday. (If your packet contains colored copies, please provide (4) paper copies of supporting documentation as we do not have a color printer or copier.) Items WILL NOT be placed on the Board agenda unless complete documentation is provided for the Board packets.

AITKIN COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES

Penny Harms
Veterans Service Officer
217 Second Street N.W. Room 130
Aitkin, MN 56431
218-927-7320
888-404-7320
Fax: 218-927-7374

To: Aitkin County Board of Commissioners

From: Penny Harms, VSO

RE: Veterans Service Office Report

Date: June 20, 2012

I would like to present an update on the Veterans Service Office at the June 26, 2012 Aitkin County Board Meeting.

Sincerely,



Penny Harms
Veterans Service Officer

Encl

Veterans Service Office Report

June 19, 2012

The number of Veterans living in Aitkin County in FY 2011 is approximately 2,290

- I. Veterans Services Office data – January 1, 2011 – Dec 31, 2011
 - a. 800 office visits
 - b. 14 outreach visits in McGregor, 7 visits to veterans homes or nursing home
 - c. 120 new clients
 - d. 57 new veterans signed up for VA medical benefits
 - e. 925 forms completed and mailed to the VA
 - f. 3900 files edited in VIMS (Veterans Information Management System)

- II. 2011 Vet Van Statistics
 - a. 169 trips to Mpls and St. Cloud
 - b. 262 veterans rode the Aitkin County Veterans van.
 - c. Total Expenses - \$16,782
 - d. Reimbursements - \$12,562
 - e. Net expenses for vet van \$4,219.

- III. Federal Benefits to Aitkin County Veterans FY 2011
 - a. Compensation and Pension - \$ 5,680,000
 - b. Education and Vocational Rehabilitation - \$ 117,000
 - c. Insurance and indemnities – \$55,000
Total Federal VA \$s coming directly to veterans in Aitkin County = \$ 5,852,000.
That is up almost 1 million dollars from last year and all of that is for compensation and pension (FY10 total = \$4,904,000)
 - d. VA Medical Care - \$6,365,000
Total Federal VA expenditures to Aitkin County Vets for FY2011 = \$12,217,000

- IV. MN Department of Veterans Affairs State Soldier's Assistance Program to Aitkin County Veterans – Dental, Optical, Subsistence, and Special Needs Grants. **Total - \$61,995 (double the amount from 2011)**
Special needs grants for 2011 included money for foreclosure prevention, sewer installations, well installation, new furnaces and costs to move and set up a handicap accessible mobile home.

- V. Minnesota Assistance Council to Veterans (MACV) Assistance to Aitkin County Veterans for 1 time emergency fund payments for rent, utilities, etc; and subsistence to families having financial difficulties
 - a. **Total for 2011 is approximately 8,000**
 - b. Currently subsidizing 1 veteran and his family in Aitkin County

- VI. VA grant monies received from MN Department of Veterans Affairs
 - a. **FY 10 – FY 11 \$25,000** for advertising
 - b. **FY 11 – FY 12 \$14,500** for Aitkin County veterans van.
 - c. At this time there are no grant monies available through the MNDVA.

Efforts to assist veterans in obtaining employment.

According to an article in the StarTribune in February 2012. Minnesota's unemployment rate for veterans who have served after the September 11 attacks is almost 23 percent. This is more than 3 times the state's overall unemployment rate.

Many new programs are being developed and implemented to assist veterans in obtaining employment.

VRAP – Veterans Retraining and Assistance Program offers up to 12 months of training in a high demand skill to unemployed veterans who are not eligible for other VA education programs. This program is available for veterans between 35 and 60 who are currently unemployed.

Career and job fairs are offered at Central Lakes College in Brainerd for Veterans. They are also offering National Career Readiness Certificate Testing for recent veterans.

Effective April 19, 2012, MN Veterans Preference points increased to 10 points for veterans and 15 points for veterans with service connected disability applying for local government positions.

Effective August 1, 2012, state agencies can choose to appoint a disabled veteran with 30% or more service connected disability to a classified position without interviewing other candidates as long as the veteran is qualified for the position.

Tax credits are offered to private employers for hiring vets.

Veteran owned businesses are also given preference in awarding government contracts.

Beyond the Yellow Ribbon

Aitkin County Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Chapter is working to provide assistance to veterans and their families. We have numerous volunteers willing to provide services such as lawn mowing, mentoring and even minor home repair.

Our biggest obstacle is that we do not know who the recent returning veterans are or even how many. But we have a network of volunteers willing and ready to help in whatever way we can. Our group has also decided to extend our assistance any veteran or military family regardless of when and where they were in the military.

Disaster Relief Grants

The MN Department of Veterans Affairs Disaster Relief Grants are for veterans affected by flooding and or storms since Jun 13, 2012. Veterans and their families can apply for up to \$750 in reimbursement if they have not received other state or federal assistance.

Disaster Relief Grants Available for Minnesota Veterans and Families

As a result of recent flooding and storms, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is offering Disaster Relief Grants for reimbursable expenses to Veterans in Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Dakota, Goodhue, Lake, Rice and St Louis County, per the Governor's Emergency Executive Order 12-09.

Veterans, their families and surviving spouses may be eligible for reimbursement assistance funds of up to \$750 if they have not received other state or federal assistance.

Veterans and their families in Aitkin County should contact Penny Harms, Aitkin County Veterans Service Officer at 218-927-7320, 888-404-7320 , or penny.harms@co.aitkin.mn.us to apply for a Disaster Relief Grant. Benefits must be applied for no later than September 30th, 2012