PROCEEDINGS OF THE BROWN COUNTY
VETERANS' RECOGNITION SUBCOMMITTEE

Pursuant to Section 19.84, Wis. Stats., a regular meeting of the **Brown County Veterans' Recognition Subcommittee** was held on Tuesday, November 17, 2015 at 4:30 p.m., in Room 201 of the Northern Building, 305 E. Walnut Street, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

PRESENT: Chair Bernie Erickson, Carl Soderberg, Ed Koslowski, Delores Pierce, Duane Pierce, Jim Haskins, Rosemary Desisles, Tracy Rosinski, Joe Witkowski
EXCUSED: Lynn Geiser

**Running Total of Veterans' Certificates: 1725

1. **Call Meeting to Order.**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bernie Erickson at 4:30 pm.

2. **Invocation.**

Duane and Delores Pierce informed the Subcommittee that Mike Kellner of Legion Post 11 passed away on November 16, 2015. According to the obituary in the *Green Bay Press Gazette*, Mike served in the Korean War. He was a lifetime member of American Legion #11, adjutant for 37 years as well as a lifetime member of Amvets Post 11 and VFW Howard/Suamico. He was also a member of the 40 et 8 and United Patriotic Society. Further, Mike was Commander of the Color Guard at all Packer home games for 40 years as well as being involved in a number of other activities honoring veterans. A moment of silence in honor of Mike was observed following the invocation.

3. **Approve/Modify Agenda.**

Motion made by Jim Haskins, seconded by Rosemary Desisles to approve. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. **Approve/Modify Minutes of October 20, 2015.**

Motion made by Duane Pierce, seconded by Delores Pierce to approve. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. **Discussion re: Veterans Day Wrap Up.**

Rosemary Desisles thanked those who helped at the event at the VFW on Veterans Day; however, she felt that this Subcommittee should not take this on again unless there are more volunteers. She understood that not everyone is able to work at the event itself, but would like to see all members make at least a few calls for donations. She also felt that each ticket drawn for door prizes should be for a specific prize. This would eliminate someone having to run back to the board to post the tickets and it would also ensure that people do not take more than one gift. Desisles continued that the Subcommittee only has a small space available, and as the event gets bigger and bigger with veterans coming for breakfast the space gets smaller. She also questioned if the VFW is the right place to have the event. She also noted that the Subcommittee does not get much recognition. She said that she made an effort to thank the VFW numerous times for allowing the Subcommittee to come in as a guest.

Tracy Rosinski felt there was a lot of opportunity to do more with the event at the VFW and she likes to have it there because there are so many veterans to reach, but she agreed that there was not much recognition of the Subcommittee. She felt that there would be ways to streamline the prize process and one suggestion would be to combine a number of prizes into gift baskets.

Desisles also noted that she was not able to offer sign up forms for veterans' certificates because there were not enough people to help and she would like to offer this in the future.

Ed Koslowski added that one of the problems is that there is not any signage or anything else to identify the Subcommittee. Haskins noted that one of the VFW members had some issues but he was able to smooth things over, but he did not want this to happen again in the future. Desisles thought a big part of the problem is the lack of space, but Rosinski felt that the current space may be able to work with a little more organization. Haskins also said that in the future we should be sure to turn the speakers on in the bar so people in there can hear the prize numbers. He also felt it would be beneficial to have someone from the Subcommittee available at each door. Further, Haskins said he was asked several times for a listing of other Veterans Day events and offers going on around the area and he suggested that next year a list of events and offers be available to be distributed, or, alternatively, this information could be posted on one sign somewhere.

Erickson encouraged Desisles to make a list of things that should be improved so more discussion can be held next year. He said that what he is hearing is that the space is too small and the Subcommittee may be too dependent on the VFW. He suggested that a different location may work better and one of the options discussed was the Yacht Club. Rosinski felt that the lack of experience and lack of help were some of the issues and these are things that can be worked on for next year. She was confident that changes could be made to make the event flow much smoother.

6. **Possible Discussion re: 2016 Veterans' Appreciation Day at the Brown County Fair.**

Erickson stated that he has done a little research and found that 2016 is the 25th anniversary of Desert Storm and this may be something to honor at the Fair in 2016. This was discussed briefly and the Subcommittee felt that honoring Desert Storm vets might encourage some younger vets to attend the event. This will be discussed in much greater deal as the Fair approaches.

7. **Report from CVSO Jerry Polus.**

Polus was not in attendance and therefore no report was given.

8. **Comments from Carl Soderberg.**

Soderberg stated that the military budget has been in the news lately. The House and Senate passed one and the President vetoed it because it increased spending in a sly maneuver by increasing $38 billion dollars to the overseas contingency fund which was basically going to be used to fund weapons buying and other normal purchases instead of fighting overseas. In the budget agreement that was decided upon right before Representative Ryan took over as Speaker, it was set that social spending and military spending will both go up in the next two years. This negated the President's reason for the veto and a similar defense budget was passed which fit under the new budget caps enacted right before Ryan became Speaker.

The other thing Soderberg reported on is individual unemployability. He stated that if someone is more than 60% service-connected disabled, there is an addition to that because the idea is if you are under retirement age, if you were able to work, you would be earning more than just the 60% disability, so the idea is the individual unemployability tops you up to more of a national average wage. He said the Congressional Budget Office and the Government Accountability Office has recommended restricting or limiting this because once vets get to retirement age they do not need

that extra because they no longer need to be topped up to a working wage because they are retired. There are arguments for and against this and there are no proposals at this time, but he wanted to make the Subcommittee aware that it is something that is being tossed around as a way to nickel and dime to a lower military budget.

9. **Report from Committee Members Present (Erickson, Dahlke, Desisles, Haskins, Geiser, Koslowski, Maino, Pierce, Rosinski & Witkowski).**

-Erickson reported that he had received a call from someone regarding the Veterans' Day activities who was very angry that the *Press Gazette* article stated that the offers were for local veterans. The gentleman was from Kewaunee and Erickson advised him that it would not be a problem for him to attend the breakfast event and further advised him that he would probably not be turned down at any of the other businesses offering discounts.

Erickson also presented Tracy Rosinski with an appreciation certificate that was created by the Board Office for Heartland's contribution of paying for the band at the Fair.

-Desisles did not have anything further to add.

-Haskins reported on some of the offers he took part in for Veterans Day. He also got some leads on businesses who would be interested in donating items for next year's event. Haskins continued that two years ago Starbucks pledged to hire 10,000 veterans by 2018 and they are half way there. Also, Haskins learned recently that that Post Office hires more veterans than any other organization. Haskins also shared a story about the last survivor of World War I who died at the age of 111. Haskins concluded his report by noting that First Lady Michelle Obama and Mrs. Joe Biden have created a website to help returning veterans find civilian careers. The website is: ebenefits-va.gov.

-Koslowski reported on the Gamblers game and stated that during the game Tundraland redid his nephew's bathroom. This was announced to his nephew on the ice during the game and a picture of the new bathroom was shown on the scoreboard. The tub allows Ed's nephew to get into the tub right from his wheelchair.

Koslowski also noted that the box of chocolates he brought to the meeting was donated by Seroogys. Koslowski also addressed the Heroes discount program and Erickson noted that that will be included on the agenda in January.

-Pierce reported that the Amvets will be doing a meat raffle at the VFW in Howard on December 5 at 2:00 pm. Secondly, Snake reported that the Army/Navy game is scheduled for December 12 and the Pearly Gates will be throwing a bash during the game with food specials and other things. Further, he noted that the LZ Christmas raffle will be held at the Pearly Gates at 5:00 pm on December 14. Pierce also reported that 224 is again doing their annual Christmas basket handout. They will be delivering baskets to about 35 needy families. The baskets are funded by money made at the summer ride and each basket has about $300 - $350 worth of merchandise in them.

Pierce continued that during Armed Forces weekend next year, the Menominee Tribe of Indians will be holding their annual veterans pow wow in Keshena at the bowl and they will be honoring Vietnam Veterans. Pierce has attended some of these events in the past and stated that they are amazing. He will provide more details on this closer to the event.

-Rosinski reported that Heartland has done multiple pinnings in surrounding communities. Heartland also did a food drive for Veterans Manor and it will be delivered to the Manor soon.

-Witkowski shared a copy of the article from the *Press Gazette* regarding Veterans Day offers and felt that perhaps the members of the County Board would like to see the work that is being done by the

Subcommittee. Witkowski also noted that his birthday is tomorrow and he provided treats for the group as the group sang "Happy Birthday" to him.

10. **Such Other Matters as Authorized by Law.** None.

11. **Adjourn.**

Motion made by Jim Haskins, seconded by Delores Pierce to adjourn at 5:23 pm. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Giannunzio
Recording Secretary