

Minutes

May 8, 2008

Oregon Military Department

Veterans' Services Task Force *Post-Separation Subcommittee*

In attendance: Mic Alexander, Chair; James Booker; Amy Goodall; Paul Evans; Kevin O'Reilly; Bill Carpenter; Mark Jolin; Elizabeth Peters; Rachel Post; Val Conley; Jeff Pullman; Dan Long. Absent: Jeff Barker; Krissa Caldwell; Mike Caldwell; Debbie Koreski; Michelle Nelson;

Meeting convened at 4:15 p.m.

Topic of the meeting was Veterans' Housing.

Chair Mic Alexander asked guest Mark Jolin, Executive Director of JOIN, about his organization's experiences with homeless veterans.

Jolin stated that within the population of chronically homeless people, veterans comprise the majority. He stated a "disturbing number" of Vietnam-era veterans have spent time on the street. He reported various anecdotal stories of dealing with homeless veterans. He spoke of a need to have outreach workers going to the veterans on the street as opposed to making the veterans come to them.

Jolin talked about housing for the homeless being a retention rate of 75-85 percent, but didn't know how many of them are veterans. Jolin stated "homelessness shouldn't define the person... it should just be a moment in time."

Jim Booker asked Jolin if Iraqi vets get services sooner, or somehow move to the top of the list of those seeking help. Jolin stated they try to treat them as soon as possible, but they haven't seen that many. He agreed with the importance of helping those in need as soon as possible.

Booker talked about a desire to learn more about what types of things "grab" people from a marketing perspective from some marketing people in an effort to prevent people from ending up on the street because you get the messages about services as soon as possible.

The Chair asked members to begin thinking about priorities of goals for problems and what can be done about them.

Booker quoted Jim Willis that we just need to get people to do what they are paid to do, but just add a little focus on veterans.

Chair asked guest Bill Carpenter, from OHCS, about the OPUS project. Carpenter talked about the effectiveness of the program and how long someone stays on the system.

Booker asked Carpenter if people are trying to identify veterans when they come in. Carpenter replied no. He said there is a reluctance to ask questions that are not part of the contract of the funding stream.

O'Reilly asked if perhaps there is a social stigma attached to asking someone if they are a veteran. Do they fear that once that knowledge is learned, will they receive less in the way of services? Paul Evans replied that it was a valid concern, especially within the Vietnam generation. Evans said he would argue the other way, that by knowing that information, we can dedicate funds to it.

Booker stated that we need to keep confirming that we value veterans in order to prevent another "Vietnam" social acceptance situation.

Evans asked if some sort of welcome home ceremony for the Vietnam veterans who missed out on the parade would help them heal and recognize that they are appreciated. O'Reilly stated, "You can't help those who don't want help."

The Chair said he'd like to hear more from those who have some reluctance to hire or help veterans or Guard folks to learn more about why. Evans responded that we will get more of that kind of information in the upcoming Town Hall meetings.

Booker said he has heard from Korean veterans who say they, too, feel left out much the same way as Vietnam veterans do. Discussion ensued on the value of the "Thank you for your service" praise, and at what point it becomes "hokey" and non-believable.

The Chair suggested he would like to see an administrative rule change requiring all state agencies supplying aid and services to be required to ask about veteran status and offer information for referrals.

O'Reilly asked guest Rachel Post questions about Central City Concern.

The Chair asked Post about the Henry building and its units and how they are available to veterans.

Amy Goodall asked about healthcare service providers and whether they volunteer. Post responded that they provide their own healthcare funded through the Federal Government.

Meeting adjourned: 5:05 p.m.