



VETERANS TRUST FUND OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Board Meeting Minutes

15 June 2022

- I. **Call to Order:** The Board Meeting of the SC Veterans' Trust Fund (VTF) was called to order at 1300, by Mr. Jim Hawk, Chairman.
- II. **Attendance:**
 - A. Present: Valerie Brunson, Nancy B. Dunn, Dale Ellenburg, David E. Finley, Robin Ghent, Stephen L. Jones, Secretary Will Grimsley, Jim Hawk, Nick Mesenburg, Shawn T. Pinkston, Melvin Poole, Brenda L. Stewart, Dr. Nikki Wooten
 - B. Excused: Dr. Ada D. Stewart
- III. **Welcome New Board Members**
- IV. **Minutes:** Minutes from the 16 March 2022 meeting were read and approved by those in attendance.
- V. **Remarks from Secretary Grimsley:**
 - Another orientation will be held after the board meeting today
 - SCDVA wants to provide equitable services to Veterans across the state
 - Last year tried to focus on more finite items, next year's focus has been redesigned; suggested looking at how SCDVA will be and how presenters might align more with SCDVA
 - FY22-23 Action Plan Summary (hand-out): 3 of these apply to the VTF
 - expanding Coalition going to go before General Assembly to better resource County Veterans Affairs Offices;
 - reducing suicide – will get worse before it gets better;
 - improving Veteran services in under-resourced counties (e.g countywide transportation, Veteran Treatment Courts)
 - Suggested the Veterans' Trust Fund think about how they might contribute overall to these goals

- When asked how much is awarded by grants, Secretary Grimsley explained funding is part of the problem. The goal is to have General Assembly change how funds are spent.
- When asked how they would rank transportation, it was explained that some counties are a part of the DAV van program and that the DAV manages the cost. They utilize volunteer drivers which can be difficult. The USDVA is strict on volunteers. Lancaster Area Rides Service – the county purchases tickets for Veterans – the service takes the Veterans to stores, doctors, etc. 46 counties, 46 different ways. Ms. Ghent said Chesterfield has nothing, need to focus on rural areas. Three counties share, Veterans Trust Fund cannot solve the problem but it can help.

VI. Grant Requests:

Bullets and Band-aids

Robert LeHeup, Executive Director/Founder

Requested: \$10,000

- He was USMC infantry 2000-2004: had issues, told his story 10 yrs after he got out, acknowledged the issues he was going thru, tried to run away from issues; wrote a memoir that started out being a suicide note
- He facilitates relations between Veterans
- The Veteran tells the story: story and artwork - civilians write and artists paint sculpt etc
- 2012 started working with artists; 2019 became their own: November to late December toured in 5 different cities
- Shows artwork in macro and micro scale: 6% has served or is serving; 82 different participants last year, over 100 this year
- Biggest issue was they didn't market enough, people were concerned they couldn't bring more people to the table
- Has an event coming up - want opposite ends of conflict
- Is focused in SC, will always be in SC, focus is on Carolinas and American Veterans
- Trying to share the light; fine arts manager of Art Field: 200 best artists in SE, also has someone who does restorations
- Questions:
 - How many people attend? 2012 had 215, 2016 had 550; the last tour was five cities and 500-600 people attended
 - Part of the Arts Council? Is partnered with the Columbia Museum of Art but has not signed MOU yet.
 - How is a location selected? 2 days per city, try to get larger cities, try to get as many people as possible,

- How will funds be used? Veteran gets copy of print and writer/artist gets \$100 stipend (showed Volume 3)
- What is the marketing strategy and is it available online? Last time had 500 or so made that can be purchased through the website

Operation Patriots FOB (OPFOB)

Craig Ostergard, Board of Directors, Treasurer

Requested \$10,000

Roy Brown, Jr., Co-Founder, Chairman

- Craig is a Vietnam Veteran
- JR (USMC 2001-2005) was a bomb dog handler in Iraq; later went into contract work with Blackwater. Had to have rehab for the knee and self-isolated at that time. His wife is the co-founder of their charity. They started training service dogs. In 2019 lost five guys to suicide.
- His wife, Stephanie, is the co-founder of their charity. Stephanie: “being a spouse, military trains to go into battle, but not out” and no one asks about the spouse
- Moved to 268 acres in Ridgeland, South Carolina, then leased another 2,100 acres for hunting
- Want like-minded Veterans to be able to come together for camaraderie; wants to be able to help
- Raised \$325,000 raised last year – getting to the point where they can self-sustain
- All volunteers: 75 volunteers help with everything; have 9 advisory board members and 9 board members – all volunteers
- Active duty/Vet/family member pay nothing
- Questions:
 - For South Carolina Veterans only? 95% of those who come are from South Carolina; open to all Veterans; have had some from Tennessee and Georgia; would like to have a bunkhouse or more Veterans
 - How do you advertise? Word of mouth, media, social media, event-driven (benefit concert); bring 10-15 combat Veterans for week-long events before benefit concert; JR travels and tells his story and presents a video
 - Are you licensed with CAX (Combined Arms)? Would be happy to apply for one

Upstate Carolina Adaptive Golf

Brandon Worley, Executive Director

Requested \$5,000

- Brandon was in the US Army and was stationed in Afghanistan
- Adaptive golf: visually impaired; helps control PTSD
- 2018 started as a resource for Vets

- Questions:
 - How would the money be used? It would be dedicated to facility fees, plus has a pro he will pay for. In February had a golf clinic for deaf Veterans.
 - Where are the courses? They are spread throughout the upstate allowing different Veterans to have a chance.
 - How do you do your marketing? Has an event calendar on his website, word of mouth at different events, speaking engagements, flyers
 - What is your long-term goal? To connect with other groups like his, and to keep this going
 - How many Veterans have you served? Over 160 Veterans year-to-date; 80 per year on average; a lot of mentors are Veterans
 - What is your population of interest? Veterans and non-Veterans

Discussion:

\$13,155.50 is available to award; hands are tied by donations and state law
 After much discussion, a motion was introduced and seconded to grant OPFOB's request for \$10,000. The balance will be carried over to the next quarter along with the other applications. Mr. Poole asked what happens in December to funds that have not been awarded. It was explained that the Board can make grants/donations. Per the by-laws, funds cannot be borrowed from the next quarter, but they can be held or carried over to the next quarter.

VII. Old Business:

Investment policy and long-range goals – a motion was introduced, seconded, and passed unanimously to come back with ideas in September.

VIII. New Business:

Secretary Grimsley offered the assistance of his staff to the board: TerryLynn, Public information, General Counsel, and Resource Manager. A motion was introduced, seconded, and passed unanimously, but by-laws need to be changed. Secretary Grimsley made a commitment to the board to make the Veterans' Trust Fund work.

- a. There was no Secretary's report at this time.
- b. TerryLynn presented the finance report: motion was introduced, seconded, and passed to accept.
- c. Items for follow-up for the next meeting:
 - Volunteer for one of the following committees: 1) investment/financial strategy, 2) long-range planning (where do we want to be in 3, 5 years), 3) public relations/marketing. If interested, please notify Mr. Hawk and/or TerryLynn by 1 August. Need three people on each committee and each committee would create

- its own chair. The Veterans' Trust Fund has had committees like these before; some worked, and some did not.
- Need to change the law to make it more functional; will address this in September.
- Will hold elections in December and the person will start in January.
- Bring your ideas
- Need to amend the by-laws
- Need collaborative functions to move the board forward

IX. Identification of Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Veterans' Trust Fund of South Carolina will be 1300 on 21 September 2022 at SCDVA at 1800 Saint Julian Place, Suite 305, Columbia, SC 29204

X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned.

TLDiChiara
TerryLynn Di Chiara, Secretary

21 Sep 22
Date of Approval

[Signature]
Jim Hawk, Chair
Veterans' Trust Fund of South Carolina

21 Sep 22
Date of Approval