



Lawrence County

## **VETERANS COMMITTEE**

**Date:** Thursday, September 4, 2025 | **Time:** 5:30 – 6:07 p.m.

**PRESENT: County Executive** David Morgan. **Commissioners** Chris Sutherland, Scott Franks, Phillip Heatherly, Denny Gillespie, Barry Luffman, Dave Ray, and Shane Eaton. **Lawrence County Veterans Service Officer** Donnie Morris.

**ROLL CALL:** Chairman Denny Gillespie, Shane Eaton, and Chris Sutherland.

**ABSENT:** Tim Clifton and Travis Cauwels.

**Chairman Denny Gillespie** called the meeting to order.

**Morris reported:**

- At the last meeting, reported on some issues with computer, etc. Now have fiber in the building, all problems are solved. Also issues with new VA reporting system are worked out.
- Looking at doing a Veterans Town Hall meeting, he has requested a spring date. This will be a big event – representatives of different veteran's departments will be present to speak in person with those experiencing problems in those areas.
- Widow/widower benefits – often get left behind in the process; local churches have stepped in the gap.
- State bill written to American Legion to try to take better care of widow/widower. Benefits now stop on the date of the service member's death.
- Homeless veterans – not as big a problem as once had. Two that were living under DCSP bridge wanted to remain homeless and have moved on.
- New benefits system is a little harder to work with. Will provide more accurate reports. Regional office can now go in and develop reports.
- Local office has seen a good percentage of wins on benefit cases.
- Morris went to Pulaski a couple of days to assist Giles County's Veterans Service Officer with VA new system. Once it was up and running, he turned in his resignation.
- He has looked at the Election office building and determined it will work perfectly as a new site for the office.
- The office formerly had access to a warehouse where veteran-serving agencies stored donated wheelchairs, canes, clothing and food. A storage building on the Election Commission property will provide that space. Office

currently has to shut down for Morris's live (online) court appearances, to maintain privacy. New location will also have a space for that.

- Election Commission moving within the month.
- There is a need to stabilize front steps, put up a flagpole, paint a couple of rooms and replace flooring in a couple of rooms.
- **Executive Morgan:** furniture available in the Election Commission's new location that they will not use. Election Commission also has a couple of desks they will be leaving.
- **Morris:** the office is on track to bring its usual large amount of benefits into the county this year.
- The office is supposed to do two outreaches a year. This year he did none and has removed those from his budget. Outreach allows local services and businesses to present their services to veterans.
- **Executive Morgan** suggests planning an outreach when office moves. Chamber can do a ribbon cutting, services can set up under tents in the parking area. Asks Morris to meet with him the following week to talk about the event.
- **Morris** states that getting information to veterans is one of the biggest issues.
- **Gillespie:** to understand what veterans face, go to Murfreesboro VA hospital. New VA office at Cool Springs includes a clinic and Disabled American Veterans office. Columbia clinic is expanding to offer x-rays.

#### **Motion to Adjourn.**

**Motion:** Eaton. **Second:** Sutherland

**Vote:** Motion passed unanimously, 3/0.

**Minutes Submitted By:** Nancy Brewer

**Formatted By:** Christian Tyree