



## **Final Minutes February 8, 2021 Finance Subcommittee Meeting Discussion with Paul Carew & Susan Ramsey Veterans Services Preliminary 2022 Budgets**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by Phil Rooney Chair of the Subcommittee

Members present were Bill Grome, Chris Resmini. Absent were Jerry Pierce, David Coffey and Julian LaFluer.

Paul Carew had previously responded to questions submitted prior to the meeting concerning Community Services Administration and Council on Aging. Paul next responded to questions submitted to him concerning Veterans Services. At 7:26 Paul began by providing an overview to his responses.

### **FinCom Questionnaire Responses**

Question one; my services have only increased with more hearings with the VA.

While my claims are fewer new cases, but will increase again. I have had to change up Veterans Day, Memorial Day and Pearl Harbor Days. Therefore, we replaced the events, parades, flowers on the graves and speech's. Most important the children, scouts taking part in these events. You can see all the events on local Pegasus TV. We saved Memorial Day plants \$9,000.00 and band \$1,500.00. Ms. Young has added during the covid pandemic we had a couple of younger Veterans who had no income and were not required to do job searches during this period so the benefits they received were higher than older Veterans who receive Social Security and some a small pension.

In reference to Chap 115 work, which Ms. Young takes the lead the following has taken place. The work has more than doubled in this area. With the lack of direct contact, it has increased the paperwork and paper trail. This includes documents to be submitted to both the Town and the Commonwealth Department of Veterans Services. Ms. Young has added services that we provide to Veterans and their dependents was never interrupted. It was extremely time consuming because we were not able to provide the documentation to the Comptroller's office and to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from March 31 2020 to September 29, 2020. We had to confirm the amounts over the phone with clients and family members and then request the amounts from the town and state. Then in October, we requested all the necessary documentation and then had to resubmit it to the Comptroller's office and to the Commonwealth of

Massachusetts. In doing this, we were able to receive certification and received no disallowance for this period from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Veterans Day program \$1,500.00 band. In addition, three events coalitions of \$500.00 each for \$1,500.00 total. Ms. Young and I have been able to be in the office since day one. Our work needs me to be on site. We have had no issues with this. I have grown to depend on zoom for all meetings and one on ones with my clients. This has and does work out well. I have become a zoom host due to the many times I use zoom. I also host the COD meetings, which I am the ADA coordinator for the town. I will most likely continue with zoom for my Saturday groups even when things get back to normal. My work hours have not decreased at all since the covid began. An added is the fact we must meet our clients in front of the building to pick up papers, evidence. Then bring the papers back to the office and make copies and return them to the clients. More time added to our work schedule.

Question two; there has been a percentage<sup>2</sup> salary increase for my position. I am not sure if this is the normal nonunion increase. Ms. Young is union and I am told locked in her final step. Susan's response is level budget with a request for recovery, CBT program that I can explain the importance of. The amount is 9,200.00. We have not changed any of the budget items based on the pandemic going on. We are hoping we are back to some sort of "normal" by Memorial Day. I have already started planning for either way. If the covid 19 restrictions are, still in place I have a backup plan started. It will not be any added money, less.

Question three; being a two-person "department" staffing has been consistent. MGL does mandate for our population one VSO and one Admin in this case an Administrative Assistant. We work very close with the Council on Aging Human Service Department, i.e. Ms. Ramsey Director. Ms. Young performs certain duties for this department and always have. Ms. Young has 20 years in this position. Spending has not been an issue. Complete cooperation with Ms. Ramsey my direct supervisor. I have never had an issue with my budgeted items and spending.

Question four; this question is twofold. First Chap 115 cases. See response to question one for more information that is detailed. The amounts do change at times but we are well covered. I do see possible increases in cases with the

pandemic going on as long as it has I can see more cash allowance with unemployment benefits running out. Time will tell but we are prepared. Point of information when I took this position there were no two or three year lookouts for budgets. It took me about two years to catch up to speed.

Question five; in working with Ms. Ramsey one are we feel the needs in to continue with the CBT Smart Recovery Groups. We had about 4 months from a grant, which was a TA grant and was directed to the Board of Health the grant did state Veterans with addictions. Ms. Ramsey was able to get the BOH to pay about 4 months from that grant. We were able to pay my co-host Dr. Harold Sock PHD. This is so important to our Veterans with both addiction and BH, MH issues. This is in some case the only contact with the outside world.

Question six; we for the most part are asking for level funding. I am prepared to answer all questions you and your team might have.

Again, any questions please call  
Cell phone 508-745-8893

Thank you

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- Paul detailed the following with respect to the Veterans Services Budget.
  - Sections 115 veteran's benefits are financial and medical benefits for indigent veterans and their dependents. Paul is seeing more of the younger veterans who have experienced layoff and loss of benefits requesting 115 assistance.
  - Veterans Services Other 2022 Preliminary Budget is up 643.4%. This is to pay for a behavioral consultant to assist in addiction recovery for veterans and spouses (PTSD, other addictions, etc.)
  - Paul reemphasized the increased steps required to process paperwork for services offered due to the lack of face to face communications.

Paul concluded his part of the presentation and answering related questions at 7:45.