

Jasper County Commission of Veterans Affairs
Administrator Alyssa Wilson
315 West Third Street North, Suite 250, Newton, IA 50208
Phone 1-641-792-7993
Commissioners: Fred Chabot, Marta Ford, Jerry Nelson, and Ed Spangenburg

11 December 2024

Minutes

On 11 December 2024, at 1500 hours, Commission Chairperson Jerry Nelson called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Jasper County Veterans Affairs Commission to order. The commissioners in attendance were: Fred Chabot, Marta Ford, Jerry Nelson, Kat Thompson, and Ed Spangenburg. Also in attendance: Sheriff John Halferty, Shared Benefits Coordinator Josh Price, Human Resources Director Dennis Simon, Newton News reporter Chris Braunschweig, and 25 guests.

Approve Minutes:

Marta Ford made a motion and Kat Thompson seconded to approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled Commission meeting held on 13 November 2024. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business:

1. Dr. Paul Essen Arrangement for TBI Testing:

Josh Price explained that there have been no contacts from Dr. Essen about traumatic brain injury testing. Chairperson Nelson said the county supervisors are on board with use of the small Jasper County Office Building meeting room by Jasper County Veterans Affairs for this purpose.

2. Progress on Joshua Price Certification:

Josh Price said he received certification approval. He must complete a short on-line training session and the VA will issue his PIV card. Josh estimated receipt of his card was one month away.

3. Budget Meeting Back-up Date 13 December 2024:

In light of predicted bad weather, Chairperson Nelson asked the Commission to reschedule this to Tuesday, 17 December 2024 at 1600 hours, in the Jasper County Office Building large conference room.

4. December Walk-ins Only Test:

Josh Price reported that the test of walk-ins only to serve veterans' needs for assistance has worked out well. He recommended continuing this practice into January, 2025.

New Business:

1. November, 2024 Administrator's Activity Report:

Because of Administrator Wilson's absence on administrative leave, data was not available for a November, 2024 Administrator's Activity Report.

2. November, 2024 Expenses and Allocation Report:

Commissioners reviewed the November, 2024 set of reports. Josh Price said the county auditor told him the 58.7% balance remaining in the Veterans Affairs budget, as of 30 November 2024, is in line with expectations.

3. Ad for Letters to Santa Section in Area Newspapers:

Marta Ford made a motion and Ed Spangenburg seconded to approve the cost of \$108.00 for the subject ad in all three Jasper County newspapers. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Alyssa Wilson - Employee Evaluation:

Chairperson Nelson stated that this agenda item is to evaluate the professional competency of an individual whose appointment, hiring, performance, or discharge is being considered when necessary to prevent needless and irreparable injury to that individual's reputation and that individual requests a closed session. It was noted by the Commission that Alyssa Wilson elected to not attend the meeting today. Chairperson Nelson stated that in early August he asked Dennis Simon to validate time sheets and investigate allegations of tardiness and absenteeism on the part of Alyssa Wilson. On December 5, 2024, Alyssa Wilson was notified verbally and in writing of an internal investigation concerning allegations of possible policy violations. Ms. Wilson was placed on paid administrative leave at this time and scheduled to meet with Human Resources on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. Fred Chabot asked for clarification that all the communications from Human Resources Director Simon to the Commission on this subject will now be made public. Dennis Simon confirmed that is true.

The allegations of working rules violations are:

Working Rules - Class I

- #2 - Failure to begin work at start time
- #3 - Frequent tardiness, absenteeism, or leaving work early without authorization or just cause
- #4 - Working unauthorized hours or violation of working hours, rest periods, or lunch periods
- #5 - Leaving employee's workplace during work hours without authorization
- #6 - Unauthorized extensions of break and/or lunch periods

Working Rules - Class II

- #1 - Dishonesty, theft
- #2 - Deliberately falsifying, altering, or supplying false information on County Records (This includes false sick leave claims, falsifying time sheets, other payroll records, and/or application)
- #9 - Failure to notify supervisor that the employee will be absent from work
- #11 - Failure to follow the proper procedures or policies of the County
- #22 - Absolute disobedience, insubordination, or refusal to comply reasonable instructions or authorized supervision

The Internal Investigation Report, subject: Alyssa Wilson, Veterans Affairs Administrator, dated December 6, 2024, from Dennis Simon is made a part of this evaluation of professional competency. It includes a timeline of events from Monday, August 19, 2024, to Thursday, December 5, 2024. Chairperson Nelson read into the recording of this meeting that all the above working rules violations were sustained in the report.

Freds Chabot said he noted 63 instances of not working a full work day and/or taking time off in the subject report. He expected to be notified 63 times by Alyssa Wilson about these instances. He reviewed saved text and email messages. He found no text messages from Alyssa Wilson and only 14 email messages from her pertaining to either sick or vacation time to be taken. He said there was a gross amount of work hour abuse by Alyssa Wilson and a gross lack of accountability by her to the Commission. He noted that over the period of the investigation it is clear she did not work a full 8-hour work day and did not work the required number of hours in every pay period. There is a minority of times during that period when she informed the Commission about taking sick leave or vacation time. He said he expected a high degree of accountability from Alyssa Wilson through email or text messages regarding tardiness, lunch period, a need to leave early, and the use of sick or vacation leave. She did not deliver on that expectation.

Both Chairperson Nelson and Fred Chabot commented on the way Alyssa Wilson's pattern of working rule violations undermined the intent of the Commission to justify to the county supervisors the need for a full-time veterans services office in the Veterans Affairs office in addition to the administrator.

Kat Thompson noted that unexcused absences on Alyssa Wilson's part over the course of the investigation totaled over 45 hours and that the total of both excused and unexcused absences over the same period was over 101 hours. There was discussion among Kat Thompson, Dennis Simon, and Jerry Nelson about the range of disciplinary actions that could be taken for the working rule violations by the Commission.

Fred Chabot said he wanted to take a balanced view of this situation, taking into account the value to our veterans represented by Alyssa Wilson's knowledge in comparison to her working rule violations. He stated he was in favor of a two-week suspension without pay.

Kat Thompson said she wished the Commission had an opportunity to ask Alyssa Wilson what is going on in her life that might explain her behaviors. She also wanted to know what veterans in the audience had to say about Alyssa Wilson's behavior. Discussion ensued between the Commission and certain guests.

Fred Chabot made a motion to suspend Alyssa Wilson for two weeks without pay with an appropriate counseling session to take place between the full commission and Alyssa Wilson. The motion died for want of a second. Ed Spangenburg made a motion and Kat Thompson seconded to terminate Alyssa Wilson immediately for the working rules violations noted above. The motion passed with four commissioners voting aye and Fred Chabot voting nay.

Kat Thompson made a motion and Ed Spangenburg seconded to adjourn the meeting at 1550 hours. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Input: As noted above
Announcements: None

On 17 December 2024, at 1605 hours, Commission Chairperson Jerry Nelson called to order the reconvened 11 December 2024 meeting of the Jasper County Veterans Affairs Commission for the purpose of a budget workshop. The commissioners in attendance were: Fred Chabot, Marta Ford, Jerry Nelson, Kat Thompson, and Ed Spangenburg. Also in attendance were Shared Benefits Coordinator Josh Price and Deputy Auditor Teresa Arrowood.

The Commission reviewed budget worksheets for fiscal year 2024-2025 furnished by Teresa Arrowood. It was the consensus of the Commission to accept the wages, FICA, IPERS, and insurance Excel file furnished by Teresa Arrowood. Changes can be made to compensation after the county supervisors determine wage increases for the fiscal year 2024-2025. Second, it was the consensus of the Commission to request the following amounts of funding for the other accounts of the General Basic Fund:

Vet Affairs Comm-Expenses \$500; Wages-Vet Affairs Commission \$2,400; Office Supplies \$1,500; Magazines/Periodicals \$100; Publications/Notices/Advertising \$3,000; Postage/Mailing \$200; Employee Mileage/Meals \$800; Telephone Services \$0; Educational/Training Services \$6,000; Maint-Office/Computer Eq. \$2,500; Dues/Memberships \$500; Food/Provisions \$8,000; Taxable Items \$0; Rent Payments \$10,000; Mortgage Payments \$7,000; Utilities-Gas & Electricity \$2,500; Electricity Payments \$7,000; Water Payments \$1,500; Natural Gas Payments \$2,000; Fuel Oil/Propane Payments \$1,500; Other Transportation \$12,500; Funeral Services \$3,000; Care-Graves/Markers \$3,000.

Kat Thompson made a motion and Marta Ford seconded to adjourn the meeting at 1710 hours. The motion passed unanimously.

Confirm next meeting: Wednesday, 8 January 2025, 1500 hrs., at the Jasper County Office Building.

/s/ Ferdinand J. Chabot, Secretary