



COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Chair

Councilor William H. Dwight

Councilor Eugene Tacy

MINUTES

Monday, March 18, 2013

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street

Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building, Northampton, MA

1. Members present/absent: Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Councilor Gene Tacy, Council President Bill Dwight
2. Meeting Called to Order: 5:00 pm
3. Announcement of Audio/Video Recording of Meeting: Councilor Marianne LaBarge. Ruth McGrath is videotaping the meeting for Adam Cohen, Winning Writers.
4. Approval of Minutes of February 11, 2013. Approved: Councilor Eugene Tacy, Councilor Marianne LaBarge, and Councilor Bill Dwight. Vote was Unanimous.
5. Lucy Hartry, Northampton Health Services Manager, Tapestry Health, spoke on the following:
 - Tapestry Health Program Descriptions
 - Tapestry Health and Massachusetts Health Care Reform
 - Question and Answer

Tapestry Health is a local health and human services agency that has been in existence since 1973. They are celebrating their 40th Anniversary. They play a key role in delivery reproductive health care and HIV counseling and testing to all people living in Western Massachusetts. In Springfield they have the LaVoz program, offering HIV Prevention counseling.

In Northampton Tapestry Health has the Needle Exchange program. Created by the State, the program is designed to offer clean needles to people who inject drugs, minimizing the spread of infections spread by sharing infected needles.

When asked about some of their challenges, the one that always exists is funding. Also, some of the health reform and aspects of health insurance have become challenges for Tapestry Health. Some health insurances will no longer contract with Tapestry Health.

6. Steve Connors, Veterans Service Director, City of Northampton, spoke on the following:
 - Update on his budget
 - Funding Cuts
 - Up-date on Homelessness
 - Up-date on Reimbursement Charges

Steve Connors stated that today the Mayor's Office issued a Press Release announcing that the Lieutenant Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness Steering Committee unveiled a three year plan to prevent and end homelessness amongst veterans. A copy of the Press Release is attached to these minutes. Steve Connors served on this Council.

The Council is hoping to reduce the numbers of homeless veterans by one thousand in the next two years. The entire plan is available on online. Implementation of the plan is to begin during the first week of April 2013. Steve's priority is under the category of 450 Chronically Homeless Veterans.

The majority of homeless veterans are between 55 and 65. Homeless veterans that are especially hard to find are those that have spouses. The reason they are hard to find is that they are doubling up in different housing authority units. There is one family Steve is dealing with right now. They are currently in a hotel. They have been staying in different housing authority units and hopping around all over the valley. The wife just gave birth at the end of January, and as soon as the child was born DCF took the child, because they are homeless. So Steve is working with the VA, the State Department of Veterans Services, the State Housing and Reintegration Program (SHARP) to find them a place right now, but for now they are back in a motel. They will be stabilized, given the services they need, and hopefully they will get their child back.

Steve stated that if we are really going to be successful in this plan we have to convince the entire state, all the cities and towns, that this is the right cause. It's everyone's duty because somebody went and fought in every single town.

VSO's need to be trained, tested and certified. Steve discussed situations where VSOs were untrained or didn't know the job. Certain cities have had problems locating their VSO's, they would try to go to them, try to find them, couldn't locate them.

We were awarded the CIC Grant. We put in \$35,316.00. It was money to allow Hadley and Middlefield to join the district, plus we put in money for new staff to help out Rebecca, a new computer, a new laptop, some cell phone money and an increase in travel money. but it's only for that one year and only for the town of Hadley and the town of Middlefield. We were charging them monthly.

There is a small town Veterans Expo that is going to be happening on May 10 and May 11 at the Cummington Fair Grounds. We are having it for the purposes of Florence, Leeds and all the folks in the hill towns. They're not going to downtown Springfield to learn about Veterans benefits. There will be representatives from the Soldiers Home, Tapestry Health; everyone will have a table there. If you're a veteran you will be able to get information there.

7. **Brad LeVay, President, Northampton Veterans Council**
Tim Daley, Vice-President & Chair of Activities, Northampton Veterans Council
Gerry Clark, Treasurer, Northampton Veterans Council – Could Not Attend
Norbert Reike, Secretary, Northampton Veterans Council

The Veterans Council presented a list of planned events that will be for the year 2013. A copy of the list is attached to these minutes.

Tim Daley said that flag burning will be done every year. This year it will be at the American Legion Parking Lot and will be formal, by regulation, but is not open to the public. There will be veterans there, Sons of the Legion, and the Veterans Council will be there. The date is May 18, 2013 and there are approximately 2000 flags anticipated.

Tim Daley asked Councilor Gene Tacy to be a speaker at the Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony in Florence on May 27, 2013. Councilor Tacy said he would be honored.

The Veteran's Council has purchased 200 thank you coins with the seal of Northampton. On the back is all the seals of all 5 branches of the services. They can be used to say Thank You.

Both Steve Connors and Council President Bill Dwight expressed their appreciation for all the hard work the Veteran's Council has done for the Veterans in Northampton.

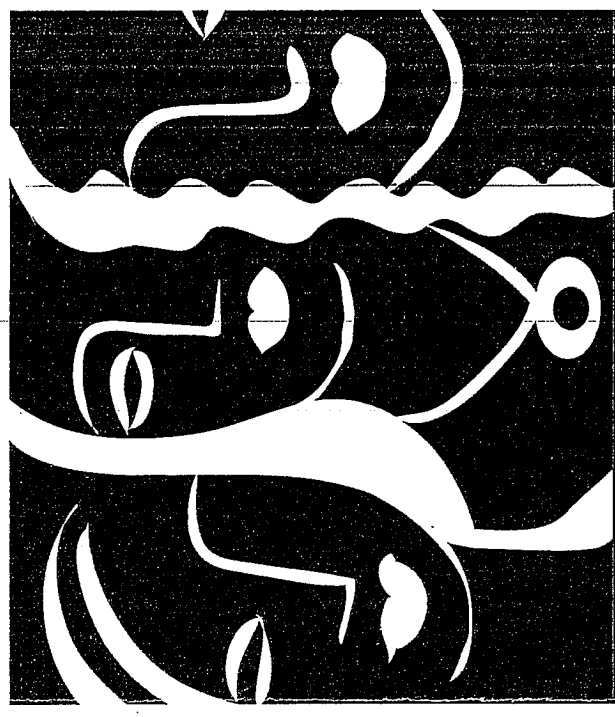
8. City Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Chair, talked about the agenda for the Month of April 2013:

9. Public Comment: No Public Comment

10. NEW BUSINESS: There was no new business

11. ADJOURN: 7:00 pm. Motion to adjourn was made by Council President Bill Dwight and seconded by Councilor Eugene Tacy. Vote was Unanimous.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2013 at 5:00 pm.



Reproductive Health
Services – Health
Insurance Enrollment
HIV/AIDS counseling
and testing – La Voz –
LGBT – Men’s Health
Project – Needle
Exchange – WIC –
Care Coordination
Program

Amherst 27 Play Street
Amherst, MA 01002
413.548.9992

Greenfield 80 Sanderson Street
Greenfield, MA 01301
413.773.5403

Holyoke 15A Main Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
413.536.8777

North Adams 85 Main Street, Suite 328
North Adams, MA 01247
413.664.5659

Northampton 16 Center Street, Suite 415
Northampton, MA 01060
413.586.2539

Pittsfield Care Coordination Program
413.582.0192

Pittsfield 100 Wendell Avenue, Suite 1
Pittsfield, MA 01201
413.443.2844

Springfield 1985 Main Street
Springfield, MA 01103
413.733.6639

Greenfield 80 Sanderson Street, Upper Level
Greenfield, MA 01301
413.773.8888

Northampton Harm Reduction Services
16 Center Street, Suite 423
Northampton, MA 01060
413.586.0310

Holyoke 15 Main Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
413.532.6754

Springfield La Voz Program
130 Maple Street, Lower Level
Springfield, MA 01103
413.363.9472

*dedicated to providing
high-quality, affordable,
confidential health services
and advocacy*

For 38 years, TAPESTRY

HEALTH has played a key role in delivering reproductive health care, HIV counseling and testing to residents in the four counties of western Massachusetts.

Since 1973, TAPESTRY HEALTH has played a key role in delivering reproductive health care and HIV counseling and testing to ALL PEOPLE living in western Massachusetts.

Tapestry ensures that those who are most in need can get the care they deserve, regardless of ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or income.

From being the first in the region to offer the rapid one-day HIV test, to providing confidential birth control and emergency contraception services to those who have nowhere else to turn, to ensuring that more than 6,313 low-income mothers and their babies get nutritious food through the WIC program, Tapestry continues to be there.

Family Planning & Reproductive Health Clinics

TAPESTRY HEALTH has health clinics in all four western Mass counties that provide women, men and teens with affordable and confidential reproductive health care. Our services include: exams for men and women, pregnancy testing, birth control, STI screening and treatment, emergency contraception, HIV counseling & rapid testing, and Gardasil HPV vaccine.

HIV/AIDS Services

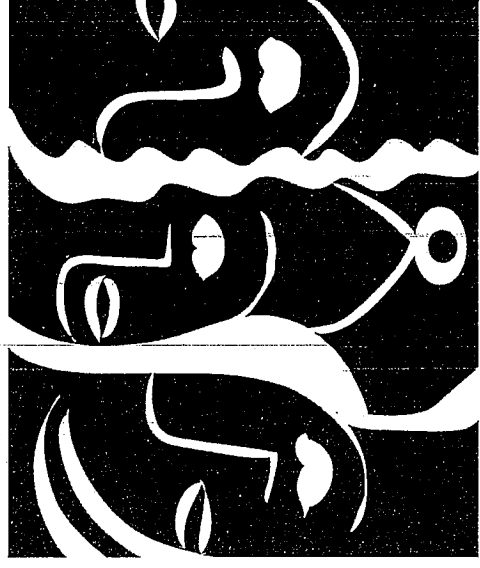
TAPESTRY HEALTH offers HIV counseling & rapid testing, and case management, support and assistance with housing and health/medical benefits to persons living with HIV/AIDS. TAPESTRY HEALTH also harm reduction services, including the Needle Exchange in Northampton and La Voz in Springfield, which offers counseling & education to injection drug users.

Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Nutritional Program

WIC offers food and nutrition information to women, infants and children up to age 5. WIC services include checks for food, Nutrition Education, Breastfeeding Support, Immunizations, and Screenings and referrals to: Medical Services, Medicaid, Fuel Assistance, and other services.

CAC

11 Wilbraham Road, Springfield 413.734.3133
1985 Main Street, Springfield 413.737.8868
425 Union Street, West Springfield
413.734.1381





MAYOR DAVID J. NARKEWICZ

City of Northampton
Office of the Mayor
210 Main Street Room 12
Northampton, MA 01060-3199
(413) 587-1249 Fax: (413) 587-1275
mayor@northamptonma.gov

March 18, 2013

For Immediate Release

NORTHAMPTON'S VETERANS SERVICES DIRECTOR HEADS STATE GROUP JOINS GOVERNOR IN RELEASING PLAN TO END VET HOMELESSNESS

Governor Patrick and Lieutenant Governor Murray last week released the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness' *Integrated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Among Veterans*.

Northampton's Veterans Services' Director Steven J. Connor commented. "Veterans Service Officers are key allies in preventing homelessness among the veterans in our home communities," said Steven Connor, President of the Massachusetts Veteran Service Officers Association. "Whether we serve in our Commonwealth's major cities, or in our most rural small towns, we know there are homeless veterans or those living on the edge of homelessness that we have a duty to serve. The MVSOA is fully supportive of the Patrick-Murray Administration's efforts to end veterans' homelessness and we are committed to partnering with veteran service organization and providers to make this vision a reality in all of our cities and towns."

The Massachusetts Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Among Veterans (Plan) seeks to ensure all Massachusetts veterans will have a stable place to call home. The objectives of the plan are to reduce the number of homeless veterans in the Commonwealth by 1,000 (based on the annual Point In Time count) by the end of 2015 and to statistically end veteran homelessness in Massachusetts. The annual Point In Time count measures the number of homeless persons in the U.S. on a single night in January 2012, including the number of homeless veterans.

The objectives will be achieved by four primary goals: 1) Rehouse and stabilize veterans who become homeless by implementing a housing strategy; 2) Ensure veterans most at risk of homelessness remain housed to prevent homelessness; 3) Increase access to benefits and resources for veterans through greater intervention; and 4) Align and integrate federal, state, and community resources to support veterans through effective partnerships. Each goal, focused on housing, prevention, intervention, and partnerships, is supported by a detailed action plan to accomplish the goal over time.

Attached: *Integrated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Among Veterans*

To the membership,

I want to take a moment to discuss a couple of important items. For one, I'm sure most of you have seen the news about the Governor's 9C cuts (spreadsheet attached). I want to express my gratitude to the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, Sec. Bigsby, and especially, Sec. Coleman Nee for preserving all the benefits for our Veterans and their dependents. Budget cuts to services for anyone in Massachusetts is a difficult reality and I am thankful to secretary Nee for his efforts to protect the benefits and services that we provide to some of our most vulnerable citizens, who have served Our communities, our Commonwealth, and our nation. His efforts will allow us to continue to serve the men and women "who hath borne the battle."

Secondly, I want to make everyone aware of the new action of the MMA, and their continuing assault on veterans services as it currently exists. They are putting forth legislation that would create:

- Special commission to study veterans benefits

The MMA bill would create a special commission to study the entire scope of benefits offered to veterans under Chapter 115, including which benefits are offered, how they are administered, and the role of local veterans services officers. This special commission would be charged with creating legislative recommendations.

- Payment of veterans benefits

The MMA bill would shift the responsibility for the payment of veterans benefits to the state, while the local or district veterans service officer would continue to be responsible for determining each veterans need for benefits and then would issue a payment request to the state. Under chapter 115, municipalities currently pay for 100% of a veterans benefits and then are reimbursed 75% by the state on the following year's chary sheets, system that creates cash flow problems for many communities.

It is obvious to me that the battle continues. I'm very concerned about the motivation for opening up these items under Chapter 115. Currently, I serve with past Pres. Mike Sweeney on the Valor Act Commission that is focused on legislation to train, test and certify license veteran service officers throughout the state of Massachusetts. The MMA has a member on that commission, the mayor of Amesbury. I believe this commission will provide the legislation necessary to ensure that veterans and their dependents will get the benefits and services provided under state law and the 108 CMR.

Now, more than any other time, we have to show our resolve and our unity In working towards a system that will improve the delivery of benefits and services under our own terms. All of us who work in communities know what it's like, and what is needed for our own veterans.

Please, please consider joining us at the legislative luncheon on January 9 to show your support of your legislators and remind them of what legislation we support, and more importantly, what legislation we *don't* support. I believe the two items that the MMA is supporting are two that we need to tell our legislators that we don't support.

It is up to us and our efforts.

Respectfully yours,

Steven James Connor, Pres.



Department of Veterans' Services

DVS Form VS-5 Return of Veterans' Benefits from City/Town of Northampton(214) - March 2013

We, the undersigned Veterans' Services Officer/Veterans' Agent and Treasurer of the City/Town of Northampton state under the penalties of perjury, that the within is a true and correct statement of those persons who have served in the military or Naval Service of the United States, and have been aided according to the provisions of Chapter 115, General Laws as amended, and the name of each dependent relative to whom aid has been granted, with the several sums actually paid to or for each, and the full amount thereof, from the Treasury, for the month of March, 2013.

Veterans' Services Officer/ Veterans' Agent
Connor, Steven

Treasurer
George R. Zimmerman

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 115, 6, the amounts expended by any city or town for veterans' benefits shall, within thirty days following the month in which such expenditures were made, be certified to the Commissioner under the penalties of perjury, by the veterans' agent and treasurer of such city or town.

Summary of Benefits

Totals for :

Ordinary Benefits	\$42,261.74
Fuel	\$5,504.61
Doctors	\$43.00
Medications	\$683.74
Hospitals	\$0.00
Dental	\$467.00
Miscellaneous	\$11,218.81
Total Cost	\$60,178.90

DRAFT

Date: January 23, 2013

From: Activities Committee

Subject: Veterans Council Activities 2013

1. The following is a list of the proposed activities of the Veterans Council for 2013:

Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade March 17th 2013 10:00 AM

Flag Retirement Ceremony at American Legion Post 28, May 18, 2013 10:00 AM

Leeds Memorial Ceremony May 26, 2013 1:00 PM

Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony in Florence, May 27, 2013 10:00 AM

Flag Day Ceremony at Elks Lodge 997, June 9, 2013 3:00 PM

Pulaski Day Parade in Northampton, October 14, 2013 11:00 AM

Annual Salute to Veterans Breakfast at Elks Lodge 997, November 9, 2013
9:00 AM

Vets. Day Parade and Ceremony in Northampton, November 11, 2013 11:00 AM

Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony at Pearl Harbor Mem. Bridge, December 7, 2013
12:30 AM

Norbert Rieke
Sec. VCN