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COUNTY of ALBANY
VETERAN SERVICES BUREAU

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SCOTT LESLIE
DIRECTOR

TO: Hon. Wanda F Willingham, Chair
Audit and Finance Committee
FROM: Scott Leslie, Director
DATE: October 16, 2024
RE: Veterans Services Bureau

1. Identify department representative appearing before the Audit & Finance Committee for your agency budget presentation: Scott Leslie, Director

2. Identify by line item all vacant positions in your department. None at this time.

3. Identify by line item any new position(s), how the position(s) will be funded and the reimbursement rate(s), if applicable.

A6510 11927 480014 Veterans Service Officer I. This position is 100% County Share.

A6510 16401 480004 Confidential Secretary. This is 100% County funded.

4. Identify by line item any proposed salary increase(s) beyond union contract commitments. Include justification for those raise(s). Not applicable

5. Identify by line item any position proposed to be eliminated or salary decreased.

The Clerk Typist I line A6510 16236 480010 was eliminated as Albany County no longer uses this title.

6. Identify by line item all positions that are funded by grant money, the percentage of funding provided by the grant and indicate whether there is a commitment that the grant has been renewed for 2025.

The Director III line A6510 11027 480001 is grant funded. The Veteran Services Grant, A6510 03710, is a reimbursement grant and funds 43% of this position.

7. Identify by line item all job titles proposed to be changed or moved to another line item (e.g., reclassifications). Not applicable

8. Provide an itemized breakdown of specific expenditures regarding fees for services lines and miscellaneous contractual expense lines and indicate 2024 budgeted expenditures compared to 2025 proposed expenditures (included a column for each expenditure year).

For 2024:

- Community Activities for Veterans (such as gardening at Shaker Place, Lawson lake events, sporting events) approximately \$25,000
- Employment/Housing/Transportation for Veterans (job fairs, Stand Down, Workforce Development, CDTA bus passes) approximately \$26,000
- Physical/mental health activities for Veterans (gym memberships, various community athletic activities) approximately \$80,000
- Recognition for Veterans (such as hats, flags, thank you coins, shirts) approximately \$25,000
- Meals for Veterans to build community approximately \$5000
- Outreach activities (tabling events, American Legion, Altamont Fair, VFW posts) approximately \$40,000

For 2025, Veterans Services Bureau will focus on our community outreach and engagement and activities. We anticipate continuing our concentrated efforts at community activities and events and Veteran recognition and support but will scale back on the sporting events, Workforce Development and gym memberships.

9. Identify any new initiatives and/or eliminated programs, and reimbursements associated with those programs.

2024 was a turning point for the Veterans Services Bureau with a remarkable effort to outreach and engage the Albany County Veteran community. As is reflected in #15, the team connected with more veterans and hosted or support more community events than ever before. The use of Private First Class (PFC) Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer-to-Peer Support Program funds have been instrumental in this effort.

10. Identify all County vehicles used by your department. Include the title of any employee(s) assigned each vehicle and the reason for the assignment of a County vehicle to that employee. None at this time.

11. Provide a specific breakdown of the use for the proposed funding for all Conferences/Training/Tuition line items in your department budget.

The \$5000 in the budget is to support Veterans Services Bureau staff to attend the annual NACVSO conference. The National Association of County Veterans Service Officers is an opportunity for members to earn 16 Continuing Education Units (CEU's). NACVSO was officially recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs "for the purpose of

preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs”.

12. Provide a specific breakdown of overtime line items in your department budget including the actual overtime expenditures for the previous two years. None at this time.

13. Identify by line item any positions that were established/changed during the **2024** fiscal year. Not Applicable

14. Please describe the biggest risk your department faces and the actions you have taken (or will take in **2025**) to better understand that risk and mitigate it.

We've improved on everything as a department from the 2023 year to 2024 and we continue to improve the lives, mental, physical, spiritual and financial wellness of Veterans and their families by connecting their service connected injuries or illnesses with the VA through the claims process. This allows a Veteran and their families to receive additional income (compensation), tax breaks, access to healthcare and mental health treatment. We can provide referrals and other advice on a wide range of Veteran benefits that might not be known to the Veteran. Through our interviews with Veterans, we can provide a unique set of recommendations and other service providers unique to their needs and entitlements.

15. Please list performance indicators and metrics used by your department and current statistics for those metrics.

- We've had a massive increase in the amount of claims we've filed with the VA, and we've achieved a 400% increase in claims activity against the historical production over the last decade.
- 12 monthly Honor-A-Veteran ceremonies
- 110+/- claims submitted for Veterans and spouses for compensation, pensions, aid and attendance, and burials
- 400+ Community Outreach and engagement events
- 100+ Weekly Veteran's Coffee Club and Veteran's Breakfasts
- Planned and held Veteran recognition events for Memorial Day and Veterans' Day
- Conducted a suicide prevention and mental health first aid class for Veterans and law enforcement.
- Created a presentation on gun safety issues and safe weapon storage for Veterans and how to communicate with loved ones believed to be at risk for suicide.
- Held a Veterans Service to Success Resource Fair and Veterans Homeless stand down.
- Held monthly town halls for Veterans in the Hill towns.

16. Note specifically all potential new unfunded mandates, regulations, risks to grant revenues, risks to reimbursement revenues, from any source. Not applicable