



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

5A  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** February 12, 2019

**Title of Item:** Veteran Services Office Update

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	<b>Action Requested:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*
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<b>Submitted by:</b> Penny Harms	<b>Department:</b> Veterans Services
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<b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b> Penny Harms CVSO	<b>Estimated Time Needed:</b> 15 minutes
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**Summary of Issue:**

Update on Veterans Services Office.

**Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:**

**Recommended Action/Motion:**

**Financial Impact:**

Is there a cost associated with this request?     Yes     No

What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$

Is this budgeted?     Yes     No    *Please Explain:*

# Veterans Services Office Report

February 12, 2019

The number of Veterans living in Aitkin County in FY 17 is approximately 1820 - down 184 from FY 16.

- I. Veterans Services Office data – January 1, 2018 – December 31, 2018
  - a. 670 office visits
  - b. 180 outreach visits in McGregor, Hill City, Malmo and home visits. This is twice the number from 2017 due to the outreach locations Josh has established in McGregor, Hill City and Malmo.
  - c. 131 new clients is an increase of 24% from the 99 new clients we had in 2017.
  - d. 32 veterans signed up for VA medical benefits for the first time.
  - e. 803 forms completed and mailed to the VA
  - f. 6000 files edited in VIMS (Veterans Information Management System)
  - g. 95% success rate for positive outcomes on claims filed from our office.
  
- II. 2018 Vet Van Statistics
  - a. 107 trips to Mpls and St. Cloud
  - b. 133 veterans rode the Aitkin County Veterans van.
  - c. Total Expenses - \$ 8,774 Reimbursements - \$4,182
  - d. Net expenses for vet van \$ 4,592
  
- III. Federal Benefits to Aitkin County Veterans FY 17
  - a. Compensation and Pension - **\$ 7,914,000**
  - b. Education and Vocational Rehabilitation - **\$ 245,000**
  - c. Insurance and Indemnities benefits to surviving spouses - **\$ 123,000**  
**Total Federal VA \$s coming directly to veterans in Aitkin County = \$ 8,282,000**  
This is a 5% drop from 2018. The number of veterans has decreased by almost 10%  
**This is more than double the amount from 10 years ago. 2007 = \$3,678,000**
  - d. Medical Care to Aitkin County Veterans - **\$ 8,917,000** 914 veterans in Aitkin County received care at a VA medical center in 2017. This dollar amount increased by 2.5 million dollars from the previous year even though the number of veterans in Aitkin County decreased by 184.  
**Total Federal VA expenditures to Aitkin County Vets for FY2017 = \$ 17,200,000**
  
- IV. **MN Department of Veterans Affairs State Soldier's Assistance Program (SSAP)** offers Dental, Optical, Subsistence, and Special Needs Grants to needy veterans and their families. In 2018, 24 veterans and family members benefitted from this program. Special needs grants included money for major appliances, and medical bills. 3 people received dentures and the rest obtained routine dental care and eye glasses. **Total to Aitkin County veterans in 2018 = \$ 32,806**
  
- V. **Minnesota Assistance Council to Veterans (MACV)**. Provides Assistance to Aitkin County Veterans for 1 time emergency fund payments for rent, utilities, etc; and ongoing subsistence to families having financial difficulties. In 2018 10 veterans and their families were assisted by MACV..  
**Total to Aitkin County veterans in 2018 = \$ 8,079.**

- VI. The CVSO Operational Improvement Grant awards Aitkin County \$10,000 per year. These dollars are used to enhance the operations of the County Veterans Service Office. For FY 18, over \$6000 was used for office supplies and equipment with most going to outfit Josh with his own computer and printer. In addition, we purchased jackets for the van drivers, advertising, and new tires and seat covers for the van. This coming year, grant moneys will be used for advertising, office supplies, training and, hopefully, for furniture depending on when we actually get to move in to our new offices.

### **Community Collaboration and other information:**

Aitkin County Veterans Service Organizations keep us well supplied with gas and grocery cards throughout the year along with bags of household supplies. We are able to give them to veterans as we see the need. In 2018 we gave out 84 gas cards, 64 grocery cards and 37 Dollar Store cards valued at \$25 each. We also distributed 15 grocery bags filled with household supplies to veterans in need. These items were donated by the Aitkin DAV, AL, VFW and their auxiliaries.

In addition, the Aitkin County Veterans Service Organizations donated the following to 5 other veterans when we put the call out for help:

\$1200 for Medi-van to take a veteran to Mayo in Rochester for a risky knee replacement  
\$450 in gas cards to a veteran going through chemo 3 times a week – 120 miles round trip  
\$200 in gas and grocery cards to a veteran and his wife after veteran was injured and couldn't work  
\$200 in gas and dollar store cards along with baked goods for a veteran and his wife who were in need  
\$450 for a new refrigerator for a veteran and his family of 5 during the Christmas season

The Aitkin DAV donated \$2000 in the past 2 years to the Aitkin County Homeless Coalition. This money is earmarked for veterans and their families and is used to prevent homelessness. Five veterans assisted in 2018 using these funds.

Before Christmas we received a call from Homeless and Wounded Warriors of Minnesota asking if we had any families who needed help with Christmas gifts. Not only did they buy gifts for 2 families, they also donated a car to a veteran and his family after they hit a deer with their van and it was totaled.

The Aitkin CVSO office collaborates with local agencies including Aitkin County H&HS, Salvation Army, The Workforce Center, Rural Rides, Aitkin County Homeless Coalition and Habitat for Humanity to assist our veterans. We also assist veterans with applications for Food Stamps, Medical Assistance, Energy Assistance, and Home rehabilitation.

In 2018, Aitkin County lost 46 veterans, all of them men: 12 WWII veterans, 18 Korean War veterans, 16 Vietnam veterans, and 4 who served during Peacetime. 2 of these veterans served during both Korea and Vietnam and 1 served during WWII, Korea and Vietnam.

Attached is a page from the MNDVA website comparing the state and county populations by age. The first 2 charts show the state overall population and the Aitkin County overall population by age. Throughout the state of Minnesota just over ¼ of the population is 55 and over while in Aitkin County almost ½ of the residents are 55 and over. The next 2 charts show the state veteran population and the Aitkin County veteran populations by age. While ¼ of the veterans in Minnesota are over 75, in Aitkin County it is closer to 20% with about 2/3 of them over 65. That is approximately 1200 veterans in Aitkin County that are currently over 65.

Because of the age of our local veterans, we are constantly working to make sure they are taking advantage of all the VA Medical Center has to offer. Home care, Adult Day Care, ramps, Wheelchairs, medical supplies, hearing aids, etc are all available to veterans enrolled in the VA Health Care system.

The goal of the Aitkin County Veterans Services Office is to take care of our veterans by working to ensure they get the most out of their VA benefits and any other benefits they are entitled to.

Thank you for allowing me to serve the Aitkin County Veterans as their CVSO.

Penny Harms  
Aitkin CVSO

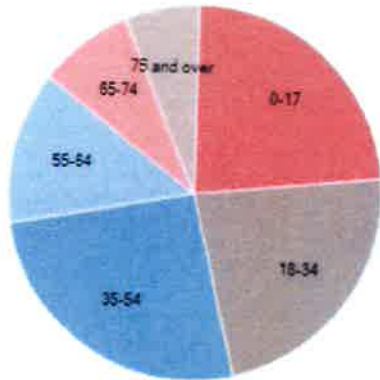
Select Area Type

Select Area

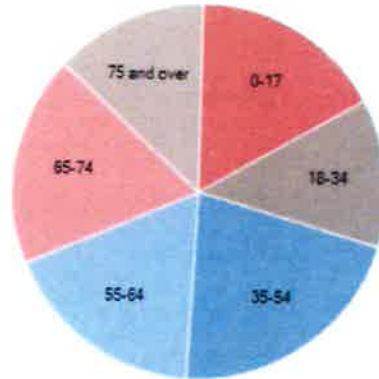
County

Aitkin County

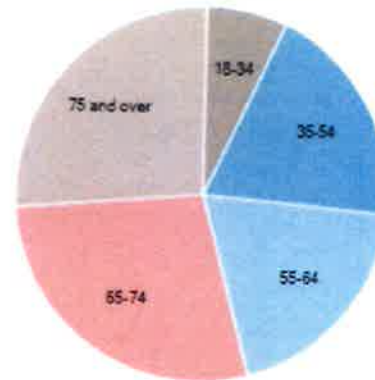
State Overall Population



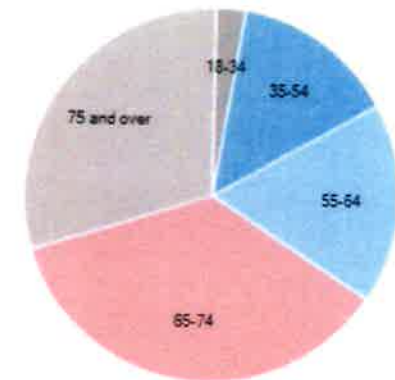
Selected Area(s) Overall Population



State Veteran Population



Selected Area(s) Veteran Population



2013-2017\*\* Veterans Population Breakdown

Area	Population	Veterans	Veterans (%)	Male Vets	Male Vets (%)	Female Vets	Female Vets (%)
Aitkin County	15,841	1,955	12.3	1,844	94.3	111	5.7

\*\*The following data is collected from the US Census Bureau 5-year data (2013-2017)

- Geographic Boundary Data (TIGER/LINE)
- State Veteran Population
- State Veteran Employment

The 5-year data is used due to of limitations in the 3-year and 1-year data. Please refer to the Census Bureau's information on the American Community Survey and geography limitations via the link below.

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/estimates.html>