



# Chelan County Veteran Advisory Board January 2026 Meeting Minutes



**January 22, 2026**  
**TIME 1pm – 3pm (extended meeting to 4pm)**  
**Location: Economic Services Conference Room (400 Washington Street)/ Zoom**  
**Meeting Contact:**  
 Anna Witherington  
 Administrative Assistant  
 Chelan County Veteran Service Office  
 509-667-6888  
[anna.witherington@co.chelan.wa.us](mailto:anna.witherington@co.chelan.wa.us)

**Board Members Present:**

Name	Position	In Attendance?
<i>Jim Walters</i>	<i>Chair</i>	Yes
<i>Robin Bloch</i>	<i>Vice Chair</i>	No
<i>April Featherkile</i>	<i>Voting Member</i>	No
<i>Norm Gutzwiler</i>	<i>Voting Member</i>	Yes
<i>Butch Sims</i>	<i>Voting Member</i>	Yes
<i>Jim Cook</i>	<i>Voting Member</i>	No
<i>Josh Williams</i>	<i>Voting Member</i>	Yes
<i>Tony Sandoval</i>	<i>Non-Voting Member</i>	Yes

**Excused:** Robin Bloch, April Featherkile, and Jim Cook

**Others in attendance:**

Patty Etkorn, Amber Murillo-Vera

**I. CALL TO ORDER & ATTENDANCE**

*Called to order at: 13:02*

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

*The "Public Comment" period provides an opportunity for members of the public to address the Veteran Advisory Board on items either not on the agenda or not listed as a public hearing. The Veteran Advisory Board Chairperson will ask if there are any citizens wishing to address the Veteran Advisory Board. When recognized, please provide your name and address and state the matter of your interest. Citizen comments will be limited to three minutes.*

**III. ADMINSTRATIVE AFFAIRS**

*Approval of agenda and minutes from the Nov 20, 2025 Meeting*

*Motioned by: Norm Gutzwiler Seconded by: Butch Sims Motion Carried: Unanimously*

**IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- Policies, Procedures, Forms and Associated RCWs (Patty)

*The VAB spent the meeting going through the Policies and Procedures draft. Changes were made to the definition of the VRF, eligibility – dishonorable discharge is not okay. Service needs to be considered as a whole, not just the last discharge, a decision was made for a 150% poverty level, deductions, interpretation of rental property, transportation, the use of a grocery store app, non-cosmetic dental/medical care, auto repair – require liability only, language throughout the P&P. The VSO staff will reach out to local organizations for gas and food cards. If the VSO goes over a \$1,500 limit, the VAB will discuss the amount at the next meeting. Total max allocation is \$3,000 in 12-month period. VSO staff will work on the revisions for the policies, procedures and associated forms and send the “redlined” edits to the VAB for their approval. The policies, procedures and associated forms will be put on the agenda for the next meeting for official approval.*

- Anna Witherington advised the VAB that due to scheduling conflicts, the 2026 Purple Heart event cannot be held at Pybus. Location discussion (Anna)

*VSO staff is looking for new venue for Purple Heart this year. Looking for any leads on locations.*

- VAB Meeting with Shon Smith? Date and agenda discussion (Amber)

*The VAB Chair & Vice Chair met with the BOCC Chair, Economic Services Director, County Administrator, and Community Services Manager on January 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss the roles & responsibilities of the VAB and how it connects to the BOCC. Moving forward, the VAB will determine which meetings that they would like to have the BOCC Chair present at for discussions.*

- Plan for VSO in 2026? Board of Commissioners’ approved (Amber)

*There has been discussion between Chelan County Commissioners and Douglas County Commissioners to merge the two Veteran Relief Funds to create a regional approach to veteran services. The Economic Services Department is working on putting together a proposal to present to the two commissions for official approval to move forward. If there is official approval, the VAB will be notified by the Community Services Manager, and the VAB will create a subcommittee at their next meeting to advise on the plans for the merger.*

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

- Presentation - VAB Member Roles & Responsibilities & Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) Training – Discussion (Patty)

*It has been identified that the VAB members need to take the OPMA training. It is required that the training take place 90 days after being confirmed onto the board. A link will be sent to VAB members to complete the training. Once they have completed the training, they need to email a confirmation to the VSO administrative assistant that they completed their training. The administrative assistant will save these records.*

- Mission Statement – VAB – Discussion (Patty)

*It was proposed that the VAB should have their own mission statement as required by the Bylaws. The Chair had already begun some of that work a while ago, and would like to present his ideas and have a further discussion about the mission statement at the next meeting. Patty has researched examples of other VAB mission statements. The VAB requested that those examples be sent to them.*

- Workplan 2026 – VAB – Discussion (Patty)

*It was proposed that the VAB create a workplan for their goals and vision for the needs of the veterans in the community and how to address them. It would also assign specific tasks to specific members of the VAB. The VAB has decided to talk about this further at the next meeting. VAB Chair requested that the Clark County Workplan be “cleaned up” and sent to the VAB.*

- WDVA Contract for Tony’s office at VSO building expired (Tony)

*The VAB was notified that Chelan County is working with the Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs to renew this contract. No action needed to be taken by the board.*

- Establishing a long-term plan for Veteran Community Support (Butch)
  - 1. Infrastructure
  - 2. Education
  - 3. Child Care
  - 4. Transportation
  - 5. Therapy

*Board Member, Butch submitted the idea for the VAB to establish a long-term plan to support veterans in the community. The goal would be to work with veterans, especially those recently transitioning out of the military, and connect them with services, career paths, etc. that would empower and support them. This is a conversation that will be continuous with the board and may merge with the workplan conversation in the future. The board would like to create a subcommittee to address specific needs. This will be on the next agenda for more discussion.*

## **VI. REPORTING**

- Veteran Relief Fund Assistance (Amber)

*The report from the CCVSO system was provided to the VAB members. It showed the veteran relief funds that have been expended since the last VAB meeting.*

- Veteran Service Office – Washington Department Veterans’ Affairs (Tony)

*Tony provided an overview of the State’s reporting for VSO’s claims submitted. This was a reporting mechanism that the state had lapsed on creating for some time, but they have started to produce it again and this will be a report that will be provided moving forward.*

- Quarterly Budget Update (If applicable) (Amber)

*Since it is the end of the Chelan County fiscal year, the Community Services Manager provided the expenditure reports for 2025 and the revenue report for 2025 to the VAB rather than the quarterly report.*

**VII. OTHER**

*Patty advised that the Chairperson and Secretary need to sign the minutes following approval.*

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

*Meeting adjourned at: 16:09*