



City of
Melrose
MASSACHUSETTS

VETERANS SERVICES

Roseann Trionfi-Mazzuchelli
Director of Veteran Services
Melrose, Wakefield & Saugus

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

To: Melrose City Council

Fr: Roseann Trionfi-Mazzuchelli, Director of Veteran Services for Melrose,
Wakefield, & Saugus (MWS)

Re: Veteran Services Budget for FY24

@: 15 May 2023

Honorable City Councilors: As your newest Veteran Services Director I am respectfully submitting a summary of my FY24 Budget.

Veteran Services had an increase in our Veteran Benefit line to accommodate the 5.9% COLA increase for Social Security. We also requested an increase in our Staff to meet the State's Districting requirements, so our District will be in compliance.

With the recent passing of some major Legislation, the PACT ACT (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022), which was signed into law on 10 Aug 2022, but not implemented until January 2023, this office along with all other VSO offices have greatly increased their caseload. In Melrose alone, I have prepared, completed, and submitted an average of 5 claims per week. These claims take several hours to do. If the Veteran passed due to his/her illnesses they got because they served in an area related to the PACT Act, then their surviving spouse and/or surviving disabled children or parents are eligible for benefits. Their claims take twice the time as the Veterans' claims as we must connect the Veteran's death posthumously to the presumptive health conditions along with applying for the family member's claims. From January 2023 through April 2023, over 500,000 claims have been submitted to the VA.

The OnBase system for our state reporting went into effect last year. This is a whole new reporting system, and we have discovered many "glitches". This system is much more time-consuming and not at all user-friendly.

The Director's Salary is paid by the 3 Cities/Towns, with each paying a third. Part of my duties as the Director is to oversee the other towns, which hasn't been easy due to the increased caseload here in Melrose. All three towns have approximately the same population, yet Wakefield and Saugus has only part-time VSOs and part-time shared administrative assistants who primarily do the MUNIS part and some of the OnBase.

Our primary function is to assist and advocate for all Veterans, and their families. Chap. 115 Benefits is at the top of the list of the many duties. Both the Saugus and Wakefield VSOs, as well as this Director, volunteer extra time, without pay, to complete the workload as we are dedicated to assisting our clientele.

We are proposing to increase our staff hours for the part-time administrative assistant in Melrose for next year. Our Saugus VSO is leaving so we are seeking his replacement as well as the part-time VSO for Melrose.

This office also reports to the Melrose Veterans Advisory Board, with COL Robert Driscoll as the Chair. The Board has several funds attached to it: Relief Fund, Monument/Memorial Restoration Fund, and Trip to DC Fund. This Board sponsors all the Veteran related events in Melrose to include a Food Drive (2x per year) in partnership with Shaw's Supermarket of Melrose, which supports our local Food Pantries, who in turn, support our Veterans/Family members, as well as Honoring our Veterans at the Knoll with Dedication Bricks for Veterans Day and Memorial Day. This year we had over 120 brick requests.

All three offices participate, with Melrose as the Lead, in a monthly Veterans Food Bank where we have over 200 participants.

We do home visits for the Veterans who aren't mobile. We also participate in school related activities revolving around Veterans.

Our Chap. 115 Clients have reduced due to the VSOs actively seeking Federal funding resources to provide more financial stability to the Veteran/family.