



# Onondaga County Legislature

**JAMIE McNAMARA**  
Clerk

**JAMES J. ROWLEY**  
Chairman

**TAMMY BARBER**  
Deputy Clerk

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## HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 14, 2022 PEGGY CHASE, CHAIR

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ms. Kuhn, Ms. Gunnip, Ms. Cody, Mr. Bush

**ALSO ATTENDING:** Mr. Ryan, Mrs. Ervin also see attached

Chair Chase called the meeting to order at 10:28 a.m. *The minutes of the previous meeting had been distributed, and there were no objections to waiving the reading. There were no corrections to the minutes, and the minutes were approved.*

### 1. **HEALTH:** Ann Rooney, Deputy County Executive

#### a. **Confirming the Appointment of Kathryn Anderson, MD PhD MSPH CTropMed, as Commissioner of Health for the County of Onondaga (Kathryn Anderson, MD PhD MSPH CTropMed)**

- Onondaga County has had healthy and growing relationship with Upstate Medical University since the pandemic
  - Worked hand and glove over the last few years
  - Several candidates were considered for position from Upstate; one of which was Dr. Anderson
  - Medical Degree and Master's in Public Health Degree are required to be a Health Commissioner within large counties in NYS
  - Dr. Anderson:
    - Comes from Upstate University Medical Hospital
    - Dr. Anderson is familiar with the community
    - Comes from and did her residency in Minnesota
    - MD, PhD, MSPH from Emory University in Atlanta
    - Worked with CDC and Walter Reed Army Institute of Research
    - Trained Epidemiologist
- Upon approval start date will be 11/7/22
- Had outreach from 2 candidates that were not local
  - National search was not conducted because of candidates who met qualifications locally
  - Determining Committee existed of: County Executive J. Ryan McMahon, Ann Rooney, Brian Donnelly
- Media excited and dealt with Dr. Anderson during the pandemic
- Dr. Anderson was Chief of several Epidemiologists working under Dr. Stephen Thomas at Upstate
- 2 people from Upstate commented: "win for citizens of Onondaga County, sad loss for Upstate,"
- Best Practices for a Health Department
  - "If by chance in your community you have a Teaching Medical School or teaching in the Health professions, it behooves a County and that University to form a more solid relationship with one another." Per Public Health Foundation website, under Best Practices, it's called Academic Health Departments
    - Dr. Anderson will be 100% with County, but would also remain a principal investigator on a grant she secured from the CDC years ago for Dengue Fever and its impact on communities
- Will be sure to bring up connection with OCC new health in order to expand health curriculum

***A motion was made by Mr. Bush, seconded by Ms. Kuhn, to approve this item. Passed unanimously;  
MOTION CARRIED***

**2. ADULT & LONG TERM CARE:****a. INFORMATIONAL: 2022 Budget Update**

- Moved to October 2022 Health & Services Committee Meeting

**3. VETERAN'S SERVICE AGENCY: Ann Marie Mancilla, Director****a. INFORMATIONAL: 2022 Budget Update**

- Legislative support is much appreciated
- Need Congressional support and assistance retrieving records due to 18 month backlog
- PACT ACT includes the following that Veterans were previously denied for
  - Burn pit exposures
  - Addition to Agent Orange exposures
  - Contaminated water in Camp Lejeune
- T-shirts have been a big asset in making staff more approachable
- Digitizing boxes of records was completed a few years back and took approximately 12-18 months to complete
- New system "Vet Pro"
  - Able to transfer all records from previous system without losing any information
  - No need to print
  - Has ability to sign electronically
- Still talking with towns
  - Will do informational presentation with towns in one location instead of going to each town
  - Addition of Salina Outreach Coordinator has been huge
  - Skaneateles, Salina & Cicero have outreach
- Need to see how duties of new staff settles before knowing what future staffing will be
  - Looking to 2024 to possibly grow staffing
  - Will not be asking for more staff for 2023 budget
  - Clerk I will be able to do more than they initially thought
  - Putting SOP (standard operating procedures) together for training
- Burials on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
  - Relationship with Parks Department has helped manage phone calls from families
  - Parks Department cannot do burials everyday due to staffing
  - Has not been a big issue with families
- Relationship with VFW and American Legions
  - All VSO's are accredited by the American Legion
  - Processing claims all the way up to Buffalo
  - Cindy Meili (VSA Asst. Director) is in the Auxiliary and attends monthly meetings at the Legion
- Women's event held by the VA at the VFW in Mattydale
  - Strengthening relationships to fill in gaps
  - Maintained network through list serve
- VFW/American Legion is older population
  - Bring younger generation to the legion to show how VFW/AL has helped them
  - One project is to be more present for veterans
  - Older generation is getting smaller
  - Theory – need to focus on events other than the bar to attract veterans
- Expand Shape Up
  - Interested to roll out program
  - Shape Up did not originate from County VSA
  - VSA will play an active role in program
- Back to War Memorial for in person event
  - Many renovations with shadow boxes and paintings
- Parade at Fair will be at the Center of Progress building on 11/5/22
  - Historically department just walked, however will have a float this year with their shirts on



County of Onondaga  
**Veterans Service Agency**

John H. Mulroy Civic Center, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 421 Montgomery Street, Syracuse, NY 13202

J. Ryan McMahon, II  
 County Executive

Anne-Marie Mancilla  
 Director

## 2023 Veterans Service Agency Information for Health Committee- September 14, 2022

The mission of OCVSA is to assist veterans, military personnel, and their families apply for local, state or federal benefits they may be eligible for. To provide information, assistance and advocacy for claimants in actions or claims against the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or state and local veterans-related entitlements to include burial assistance.

*Our mission has been directly impacted by the Pandemic and recently passed laws that directly affect VA Benefits.*

The Pandemic added delay to an already flawed VA claims processing system. National Personnel Records Center, which houses military discharges and Service Treatment Records needed to substantiate VA Claims, closed their doors during the Pandemic, and this has caused an 18 month backlog in records requests.

Recent passing of The PACT Act (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxins), which expands eligibility for veterans exposed to harmful toxins while in service, has generated a large number of inquiries. In December 2021, The VSA implemented a new records management system to help accurately track claims and benefits received. To date in 2022, we have received 1,211 interactions, most resulting in new claims processing, claims management or assistance with burial related questions.

*The VSA continues to assist and process Indigent Veteran and Spouse Burials, as well as providing support for burial in Onondaga County Veterans Memorial Cemetery.*

**Local Law 01-2019 Impact-** Waiving the Burial Fee for Veterans and their dependents directly lead to a 71% increase in pre-need burial applications through 2021. To date, we have reimbursed the community roughly \$596,000. This initiative was extended due to the Pandemic and will have a hard stop date of 12/31/2022.

**Indigent Burials-** Cost containment initiatives enacted by the VSA include identifying Indigent Veteran Spouse burial costs not previously collected. We have now established a process to collect these DSS-NYS reimbursements quarterly. In 2021, we are up-to-date on these reimbursements.

Visit us at: [www.ongov.net/veterans](http://www.ongov.net/veterans)



Follow us on Facebook at: [Onondaga County Veterans Service Agency](https://www.facebook.com/OnondagaCountyVeteransServiceAgency)

Anne-Marie Mancilla, Director  
 315.435.3202 Fax: 315.435.3221

Richard Forkhamer, Veterans Service Officer  
 315.435.3220 Fax: 315.435.3221



Cindy Meili, Assistant Director  
 315.435.3217 Fax: 315.435.3221

Sharon Alleyne, Veterans Service Officer  
 315.435.3223 Fax: 315.435.3221

The VSA also continues to seek reimbursement from The Department of Veterans Affairs, when applicable, and NYS Division of Veterans Services for Indigent Veteran Burials. In 2022 we have approved 13 Indigent Burial applications at \$27,754.00.

#### ***Burial Application Support***

- VSA provides applications and assistance for burial in OCVMC as well as support with completing and submitting 21P-530's Burial Allowance Application, when applicable. In 2022, we have assisted with 192 applications for burial in OCVMC.
- VSA works closely with the Parks department to identify unmarked gravesites and provide proper VA Markers that were not addressed at the time of burial. Approximately 50 sites have been properly marked in the last two years and this is an on-going effort.

#### ***Community Partners remain a vital part of our mission***

- Clear Path-Every Wednesday, peer support
- The Vet Center and VA Hospital-Open discussions when assisting veterans
- VFW and American Legions
- Local National Guard/Reserve Units.
- Local municipalities, including the City of Syracuse, regarding Veteran Outreach Coordinators
- Syracuse University Veterans Legal Clinic, Syracuse Serves
- NYS Division of Veterans Services
- ESGR (Employers Support Guard and Reserve) -Director presented with Patriotic Employer Award

#### ***Outreach***

With the support of Onondaga County, effective January 2021, Cindy Meili was appointed as Assistant Director for The VSA. In 2021 Cindy was voted as the NY National Guard Spouse of the Year and then Cindy was named 2022's National Guard Military Spouse of the Year.

This platform has provided Cindy, and the agency with opportunities to discuss challenges facing our veterans, their families and those currently serving. Cindy cannot be with us today because she is attending a virtual conference with the Biden-Harris administration discussing coordinated services in local veterans communities.

Current legislation we are advocating for is the WOTC (Work Opportunity Tax Credit) to include military spouses, and The CVSO Act, which provides federal funding to counties for additional Veteran Service Officers.

In August 2022 the PACT Act was signed in to law, which the VSA advocated for collectively while in DC this past April.

VSA staff have cell phones for more accessibility when working away from the office for outreach and veteran related events. The VSA also purchased shirts with our new logo for recognition when at community events.

*Personnel and Daily Activities*

We currently have six full-time positions; one Director, one Assistant Director, two full-time Veteran Service Officers, one Information Aide and one Clerk I. All positions are filled. The Director and Assistant Director are both accredited Veteran Service Officers and process claims. All service officers maintain at least two accreditations to best serve our veterans.

We have reviewed our contracts with Clear Path for Veterans and Syracuse University Veterans Law Clinic. Both agencies are a large presence in our community and support our outreach efforts.

The VSA coordinated the Memorial Day Ceremony in May 2022 and is assisting with coordination of the Veteran Expo and Parade on 11/5 at The Fairgrounds and the Veterans Day Ceremony on 11/11 at The Onondaga County War Memorial. Staff of the VSA are involved with several local veterans groups as well as the Onondaga County VSAB and The War Memorial and Cemetery Sub-Committees. These groups have had direct involvement with recent renovations at the War Memorial and the OC Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

We have developed and maintained strong working relationships with our county and community partners to best serve our veteran and military community.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



TAMMY BARBER, Deputy Clerk  
Onondaga County Legislature

## ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**

DATE: **SEPTEMBER 14, 2022**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
LISA FARWELL	Fin ops
Jennifer Pagnelli	Fin Ops.
Anne Marie Manulla	VSA
Sharon R. Atteyne	VSA
Debra Lewis	Health
Kenna Kelley	Health
Tenesha Murphy	CE Office
Ronnie Parrillo	WAER - FM News
Nicholas Waley	WAER - FM News
Travis Newbert	WAER - FM news