

DANE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE



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Memo

To: Personnel and Finance Chair and Committee Members

From: Dan Connery – Veteran Service Director

Date: September 27, 2021

Re: Request to fill vacant 1.0 FTE Assistant Veterans Service Officer Supervisor position

County Ordinance 29.52 (15) requires the Personnel and Finance Committee and the County Executive to approve filling positions which are vacant for longer than six (6) months. The Dane County Veterans Service Office is respectfully seeking approval to fill its funded 1.0 FTE Assistant Veterans Service Officer Supervisor position (Position #1484). Through help from the County Board and subsequent adoption by the County Executive, this position remains fully funded through the recent budget process.

1. What is the nature of the work or what is the essential function of the position?

Our office's service officers are frontline advocates for Dane County veterans, their dependents, and their survivors. We conduct daily interviews with clients to help identify benefit entitlements. Service officers assemble claim documents and complete claim applications. Benefit applications include, but are not limited to, the following: VA Health Care enrollment, VA Service-Connected Disability claims, needs-based VA Pension claims, education benefits, and more. We also perform housing and job referrals. Our office works with some of Dane County's most vulnerable citizens. This position provides direct supervision to office staff and, among other things, oversees office's "Emergency Assistance" program. Serving as "deputy director" to the office's Veterans Service Director, Dan Connery, this position also represents office at various community-based events annually.

2. How has this function been fulfilled without this position?

From March 2021 to present, with this position unfilled, all staff have pitched in to keep the office moving forward. With our building mostly closed, we have not seen significant walk-in clientele; however, this is only temporary. Extra hours and/or temporary shifting of duties by all has helped to stave off any substantial delays in delivering services to our clients. That said, it has definitely been a challenge in recent months.

(Note: At the time this position was vacated, the office had just hired two new Assistant Veterans Service Officers. With training of the new staff being a priority, posting for this position was temporarily put on the back burner. We are now re-seeking recruitment authority.)

3. What will be the impact on the Department's function and mission if the position remains vacant?

This position being filled is crucial to our day-to-day operations. We have managed without this position being filled for a short period of time, but this is not sustainable. For the effective delivery of services to be maintained at the highest level, we need this position filled. If this position were to remain vacant, we would see increased wait times for appointments and returning of phone calls/emails, etc. Additionally, remaining vacant would also limit our community outreach, making our office "less available" (or flexible) to participate in community events, an essential part of our job. Lastly, this position is important to the leadership structure in the office.