



MEMO

Date: February 6, 2026

From: Lewis County Veterans Advisory Board (VAB)

To: Lewis County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)

RE: Recommendations for Membership Changes

The Veterans Advisory Board members have agreed to submit the following recommendations to be considered by the Board of County Commissioners:

1. Appointment of New Alternate Member

We would like to recommend Joshua Pickett to be accepted into the Veterans Advisory Board as a new alternate member. Joshua's beginning service will be March 1, 2026, and end February 29, 2028.

2. Removal of Current Members

The Board recommends the removal of Patrick Swanson and Ed Smith from their current positions on the Veterans Advisory Board.

Public Health & Social Services staff will process the appropriate resolution to make the above changes should you approve them to move forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lewis County Veterans' Advisory Board Minutes from February 2026

Board Members

X	Ken Norwood, Chair - Excused
X	Candance Johnson - VChair
X	AJ Rogers
X	Jerry Villarreal
	Grant Kistler
X	Jeff Elder
X	Scott Salkovics

VRF/County

	Scott Brummer
	Meja Handlen
X	Caroline Garibay
X	George Dodd

Guest

Chip Duncan
Josh Pickett

Board Agenda

Wednesday, February 4th, 2026, 11 am

Location: Lower Level BOCC Room/Zoom

Welcome

Call to Order, Flag Salute, Attendance

January 7th, 2026, Meeting Minutes – Candace made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from January 7, 2026. Scott seconded, all agreed.

Public Comment

Public Comment - None

Business Discussion Items:

1. Veterans Museum – Chip provided a spreadsheet showing Brianna's current averages. While the percentage appears low, it does not account for claims that are under appeal or pending status updates. These factors reduce the overall percentage of claims that have been awarded.

Brianna's current numbers for January are as follows:

Client service: 82 (61 Residents and 7 were indigent)

Outside Clients: 21 surrounding counties and 2 indigents

Appeals/Previously Denied: 24

Appeals/Initial – 2

Veterans Intake and Consult – 18

New/increase Claims – 26

DIC Claims – 12

BVA Hearing - 1

The Veterans Memorial Museum and Legacies of Valor are co-applying for several grants to provide Funding. This includes CHOICE (February 20th, 2026) Pritzker Military Foundation (2nd quarter 2026), George and Sarah Buchana Foundation (rolling), Infinite Hero Foundation (June 15th, 2026) Bob Wodruff Foundation (rolling). They are still waiting to hear from the Disabled American Veterans Charitable Trust (April 2026).

Signed a contract with the American Legion for bringing on Kristi Popenoe as a VSO on January 26th, 2026. She will be working on Appeals and DIC claims.

Unable to provide updated batting average and financial report due to American Legion VSO in a traffic accident and has resigned from her position to deal with medical issues.

Veterans Benefit Specialist Report

Financials – no questions on financial report given to board members.

VBS Numbers – 16 for Veterans Relief and 20 new veterans for VSO services.

1. **Housing Committee** – Preparing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and will have those available next meeting.
2. **Outreach** – January 29th, 2026, at the Fairgrounds and January 30th at the Randel Fire Station was the homeless connect standdown. Jerry attended the event at the fairground as was able to talk with other providers in the area. While only one person identified as a veteran, it was well worth attending.

George was at the Randle Standdown and saw no veterans.

Jeff informed the board the next Veterans Standdown is scheduled for April 11th, 2026.

3. **Policy and Procedures** – AJ lead the discuss on the changes to the by-laws. George provided the red-line changes. After review, Candace made a motion to accept the current red-line changes as the first reading, Scott seconded. All agreed.

The second reading will take place on March 4th, 2026, at the next VAB meeting.

4. **Executive Session** – the board went into executive session to review applications for alternate positions on the VAB.

The board came out of executive session. Candace made a motion to accept Joshua Pickett as an alternate Member of the board, and to wait on the other two applicants until they attend a meeting, so the board may interview them. Jeff second the motion. All agree.

5. **Good of the Order** – Recent changes in federal law improve access to housing and support services for veterans with service-connected disabilities. The HUD-VASH program now allows these veterans to apply for permanent supportive housing without being disqualified due to disability income. A question arose about how this impacts the current Grant Housing project. Caroline will discuss this with Meja and report back to the board.
6. Candace made motion to adjourn the meeting, Jeff second. All agreed.

LEWIS COUNTY VETERANS' ADVISORY BOARD

To Whom it May Concern:

The Lewis County Veterans Advisory Board has openings on the board as members and/or alternates. Applicants should be aware that only Lewis County residents may be considered for this position. The current openings requires membership in a nationally recognized veteran's service organization such as the VFW or American Legion, although veterans not affiliated with a service organization may apply and be considered for future vacancies. You will find the application for the Lewis County Veterans Advisory Board on the reverse side of this letter.

Each applicant must have an Honorable Discharge and attach a copy of their DD214 to the application to be considered. Applicants will also be subject to a background check and an interview prior to recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to sit on the advisory board.

Applications must be submitted by email to Caroline Garibay at caroline.garibay@lewiscountywa.gov between December 1 and December 31, 2025.

If you have any questions regarding the nomination process, please contact:

George Dodd
Lewis County Public Health & Social Services
360-740-1417
360 NW North Street
Chehalis, WA 98532

LEWIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
360 NW North Street
Chehalis, WA 98532

I am seeking appointment to the Veterans Advisory Board for Lewis County.

Name: Joshua Pickett

Address: 240 Parkside Loop, Chehalis WA 98532

Phone: (360) 237-4855

Service Organization: Non-affiliated; Work for The City of Chehalis

Why do you want to serve on the Veterans Advisory Board?

I want to give back to my community and am passionate about supporting veterans. I am eager to be part of a service organization where I can contribute my time, skills, and experience to benefit veterans in Lewis County. I feel I would be a strong candidate for this role because of my dedication to service, understanding of veteran needs, and commitment to community improvement. I hope to contribute my time, energy, and skills to help the Board achieve these goals.

What skills, service background, or volunteer experience will you bring the Board?

I bring extensive experience in leadership, advocacy, and community service. I served as President of Student Services at Centralia College and was recognized as Student of the Year for 2024–2025. In that role, I worked to secure funding for the Veterans Center and promoted programs that highlighted and supported student veterans. I have served on multiple committees and boards at both the college and City of Chehalis levels, giving me strong experience in collaboration, decision-making, and governance.

Additionally, I have experience in grant writing, data management, and communications, supported by my bachelor's degree in business. These skills enable me to effectively manage projects, analyze data, and communicate clearly with stakeholders, all of which I believe will benefit the Veterans Advisory Board and the veteran community.

☐ I have attached a copy of my DD214 Honorable Discharge, and I understand that a background check is required before submission to the Lewis County Board of County Commissioners.

Signature Date

☐ I am endorsed by a member of the following Service Organization:

Student Life Director, Parks and Recreation Director

Recommendations

Shelley K. Bannish, MA

Director of Student Life & Involvement

Centralia College

shelley.bannish@centralia.edu | (360) 623-8120

Lilly Wall

Former Director of Parks and Recreation

The City of Chehalis

lwall@ci.chehalis.wa.us | (360) 951-7813

Signature of Organization Quartermaster/Adjutant

Send Application with DD214 to:

Caroline.garibay@lewiscountywa.gov