



# VETERANS ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OF COOK COUNTY

**Executive Board Meeting Minutes**

**26 November 2024**

**AML Post 36**

**1291 Oakwood Ave, Des Plaines, IL 60016**

**(Executive Board Members):** Frank Gutierrez (*President*), William Browne (*1st Vice President*), Dutch DeGroot (*2nd Vice President*), Robert Arciola (*Treasurer*),

**At Large Board Members:** Greg Jacobs, Wayne Kern, John Steciw. Non voting **Appointees** Jim Parker (*Secretary*), Kevin Ake (*Chaplain*), Gina A. LoGalbo (*Judge Advocate*), Lorenzo Fiorentino (*Sargent at Arms*). Elizabeth Soto (*Superintendent*)

**I. Welcome - President Gutierrez**

**a. Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order at 1800

**b. Roll Call/ Establish Quorum – 2ndVP DeGroot**

Second Vice President DeGroot confirmed quorum and Executive Board meeting commenced six of 7 board members attending.

**c. Recognition of Guests President Gutierrez**

Don Hanson - American Legion Post 335, Victor A. Somoza – VSO VACCC

**d. Motion to those board member (1 VP Browne) only to attend remotely to do so and allow to vote**

Motion 2ndVP DeGroot Second Treasurer Arciola voice vote passed unanimously.

**II. Opening Reflection - Treasurer Arciola for Chaplain Kevin Ake (who arrived late)**

**a. Prayer/ Reflection**

**b. Pledge of Allegiance**

**III. Consent Agenda - President Gutierrez**

**a. Approval of any Minutes**

2ndVP DeGroot please add under old business. Digitizing files for VACCC

The minutes from the previous two meetings, held on 15 July 2024, and 22 August 2024, were approved by unanimous voice vote voice vote passed unanimously..

Motion 2ndVP DeGroot Second Treasurer Arciola voice vote passed unanimously.

**IV. Public Comment for any items Not on The Agenda - Gutierrez**

There were no public comments

**V. VACCC Report(s)**

**a. Office Superintendent Elizabeth Soto**

Superintendent Soto gave a detailed report on what we now interpreted as our new budget but must be confirmed in a week. This included personal additions.

Digital archiving, veteran transportation upgrades highlights of the 3rd quarter where records were broken on veterans served and help disseminated.

*(Many questions came from the board and where addressed).* Of main concern was reaching out to undeserved areas and this was agreed is a priority.

On the subject of digitizing records the board recommended we use sources outside the county departments to best meet our need.

Treasurer Arciola talked on the merits

of detailed reports from the VACCC in all areas to show continued progress.

Motion to accept Treasurer Arciola Second Greg Jacobs voice vote passed unanimously. Superintendent Sotos full report shall be attached to this and posted on our website

**b.** Consultant on budget Provided - VP Bill Browne

Vice President Browne felt the Superintendents comments covered his report

**c.** Consultant on Services Provided - Wayne Kern

**d.** Consultant On Bylaws - John Steciw

EB member was not in attendance tabled.

**e.** Governance Report Treasurer Arciola

Treasurer Robert Arciola provided a report on the membership bank account and clarified that membership does have NFP status. President Gutierrez tabled the idea of establishing the board and renaming the NFP.

**VI.** Unfinished Business - President Gutierrez

**a.** Membership NFP StatusX.

Tabled

**b.** Digitizing files for VACCC

This was fully covered in Superintendent Sotos report

**VII.** New Business - President Gutierrez

**a.** Archival closed meeting minutes

The closed meeting minutes from 22 August 2024 & 24 Sept 2024 will be reviewed and archived in accordance with OMA. Access to these minutes will be restricted to authorized personnel as required. Hold future conversations with the attorney to clarify proper storage and access to closed-session documents.

**b.** Adjusting benefits for veterans burial, housing etc.

This was brought up by our Commissioners at the board meeting we attended. We all agreed and asked Superintendent Soto to put the adjusted benefits into an agenda item for membership to vote on at our next meeting.

**VIII.** Good of the order

**a.** Absorbing /merging the CCVA into the VACCC VP Browne brought up this subject and the board recommends that preparatory negotiations begin and this be brought up as an agenda item at the next membership meeting. VP Browne shall take the lead in this with the assistance of the board. 2nd Vice President Dutch suggested to Brown that he communicate with Todd Moore and Commissioner Donna Miller to begin negotiations to absorb the CCVA.

**b.** 2ndVP DeGroot Moving current facility ( one possibility JBVA any and all options) this to be made an agenda action item at the next membership meeting.

**c.** 2ndVP DeGroot Liabilities for errors by VSO staff this is something that must be addressed Superintendent Soto shall be reaching out to the IACVAC's and bring back recommendations to help with any litigation brought against the VACCC

**d.** Discuss having outreach personnel being VSO trained & VA accredited this may have merit but shall be left up to discretion of 2ndVP DeGroot and the incoming VSO manager

**e.** 2ndVP DeGroot Membership recruitment 2025 we shall be working diligently to improve membership.

**f.** Treasurer Arciola recommended the EB discuss communicating with Membership at the next meeting about the Elizabeth Dole Act and share it with Veteran Service Organizations within the County.

**f.** President Gutierrez recommended the VAC communicate with local funeral homes to let them know about the VAC burial assistance. Dutch requested a formal email to share with VAC Outreach. He also discussed attending district meetings to increase recruiting efforts for posts currently not part of membership. Graig Jacobs, Board Member (at large), requested an email so he could provide him with meeting information.

**IX.** Items requested to be added to upcoming Membership Agenda –

**a** Start to move out of our facility to a better location

**b** Investigate protection for potential VAC employee errors

**c** Elizabeth Dole Act Communications out to membership

**d** Add benefit increase adjustments to agenda

**e.** Rejoin and recruit

**f.** Absorbing/merging CCVA

**X.** Adjournment

Motion Treasurer Arciola, Second Greg Jacobs @1904 voice vote passed unanimously.

**a.** Next VACCC Membership Meeting - Tuesday 17 December @19hr00 (7pm)

Location Lyons Township 6404 Joliet Road Countryside, IL 60525

*Minutes Respectfully submitted by 2nd VP DeGroot for Treasurer Parker*



VAC EB Meeting  
November 26, 2024

Mission

Budget Request Snapshot

Programs

Staff & Assistance

3rd Quarter

*"...for the just, necessary, and needed assistance and services of military Veterans, who served in the Armed Forces of the United States..."*

Veterans and Service Members (330 ILCS 45/) Military Veterans Assistance Act



# FY25 Budget Request Snapshot

LINE ITEM	REQUEST	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Sal/Wag of Reg Employees	\$ 1,200,030.00	Total of 14 Staff Members
Insurance Benefits	\$ 24,711	Employee Benefits
Transportation and Travel Expenses	\$ 20,000.00	Employee Transportation & Travel Expenses
Personnel Services	\$ 12,500.00	Employee Training
Communications Services	\$ 4,063.00	Office and Employee IT Equipment
Postage	\$ 2,000.00	USPS Postage
External Graphics and Reproduction Services	\$ 12,600.00	Marketing Materials
Special or Coop Programs- Budget Entry	\$ 959,728.00	Directs Disbursements to Veterans
Office Supplies	\$ 19,320.00	Office Supplies, water, etc.
Maintenance and Subscriptions Services	\$ 1,500.00	Office Subscription Services
Professional Tech Membership Fees	\$ 1,000.00	IACVAC / NACVSO
Professional Services	\$ 560,400.00	Transportation Service
Legal Services	\$ 25,000.00	Legal Counsel
<b>TOTAL REQUEST</b>	<b>\$ 2,842,852</b>	

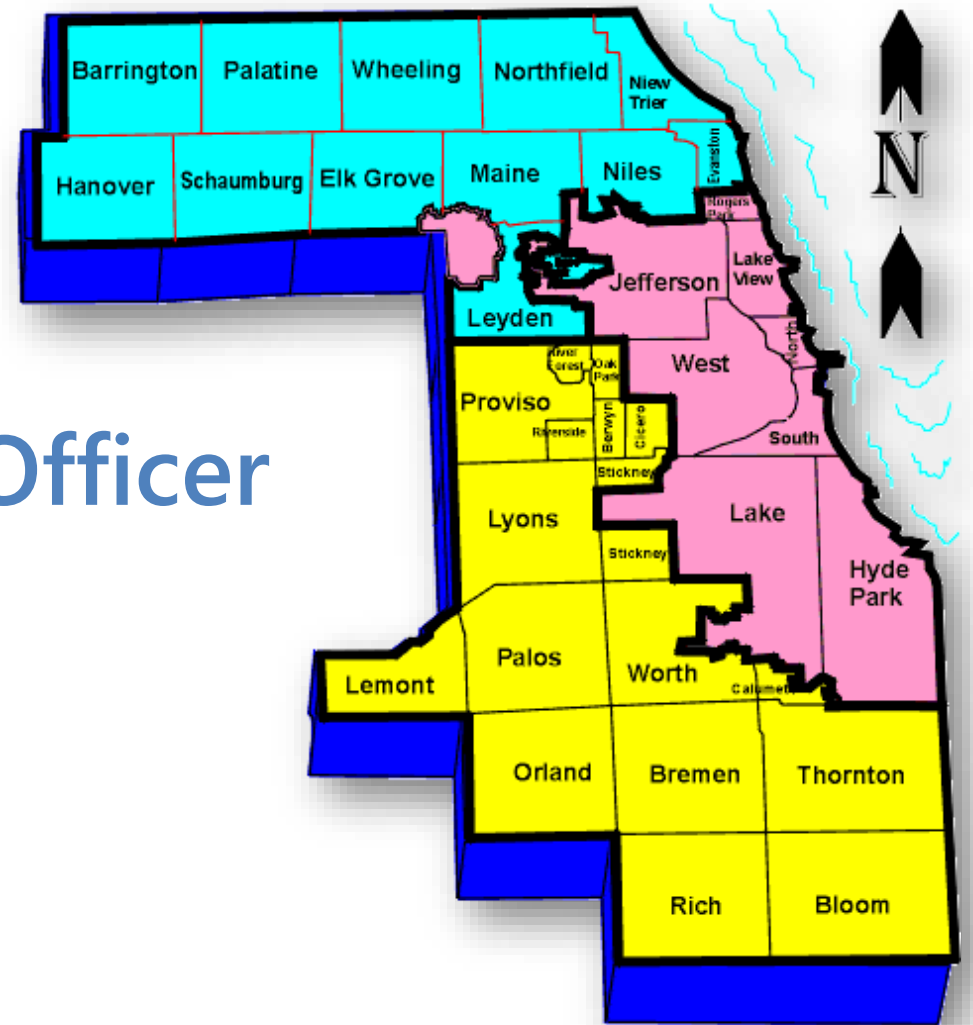
Budget Request  
Snapshot

Programs

Staff & Assistance

3rd Quarter

# Veteran Service Officer Program



# FY25 Projected Veteran Service Officer Program



**Division 1 - North/Northwest Suburbs**

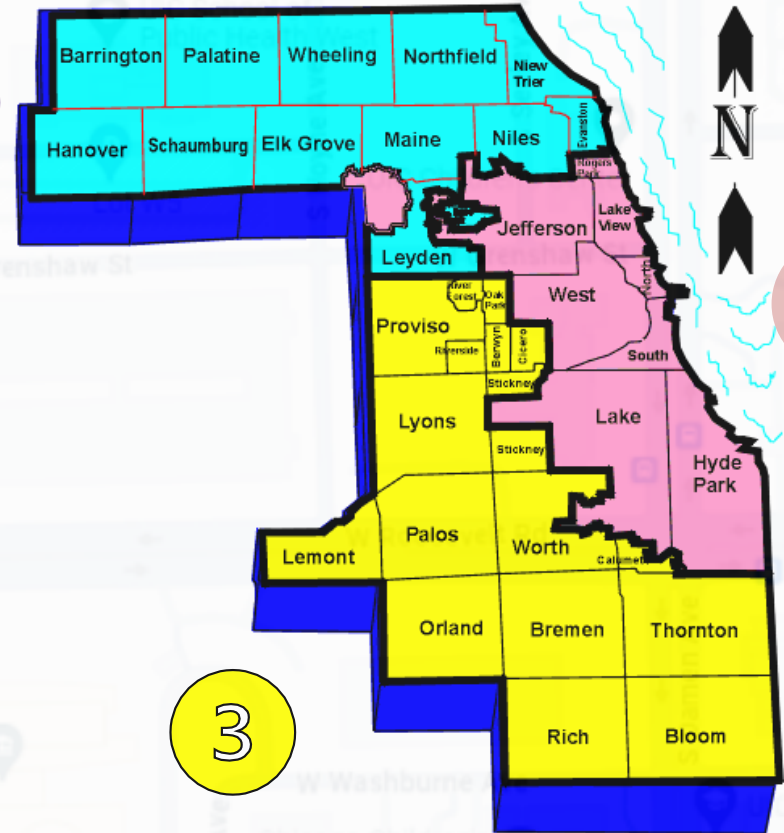


**Division 2 - City of Chicago**



**Division 3 - South/Southwest Suburbs**

1



2

3

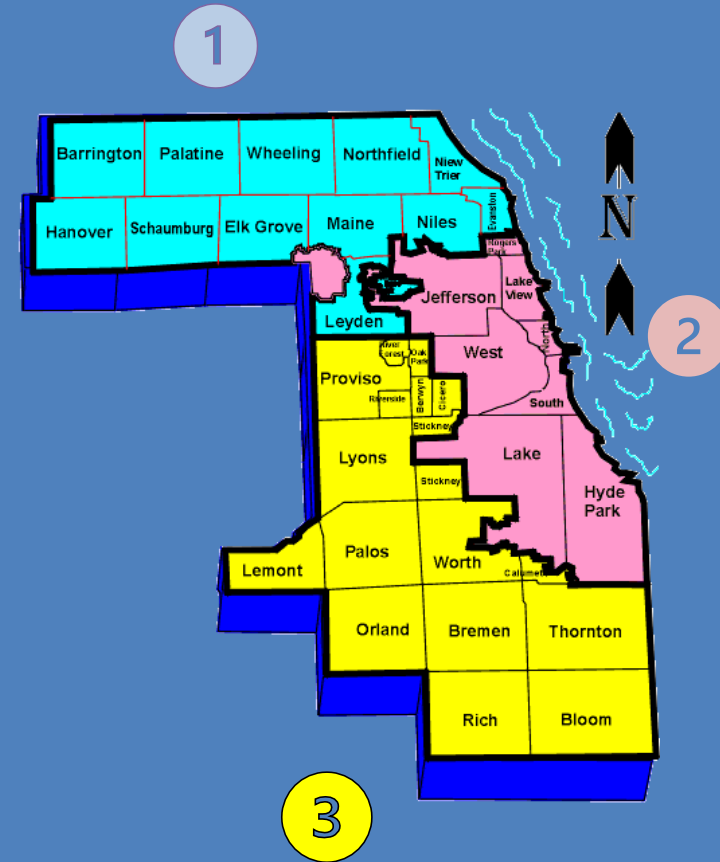


# Veteran Service Officer Claims Specialization

Initial  
Claims

Administrative  
Appeals

Appellate  
Level Review





A-List  
Transportation  
Assistance  
Program

## A-List Transportation Assistance Program



## Transportation Schedule

- **9:00 a.m.:** Initial pick-up at the HINES VA, transporting Veterans directly to the VACCC office.
- **10:00 a.m.:** Return trip from the VACCC office to the HINES VA.
- **11:00 a.m.:** Second pick-up at the HINES VA, ensuring continued access for Veterans throughout the morning.
- **12:00 p.m.:** Midday return trip from the VACCC office to the HINES VA.
- **1:00 p.m.:** Final pick-up at HINES VA, providing one last opportunity for Veterans to reach the VACCC office.
- **2:00 p.m.:** Final return trip of the day from the VACCC office to HINES VA.

Programs

Staff & Assistance

3rd Quarter



Emergency Financial Assistance



# The Office

## Administrative Assistant IV

**Vanessa Meadows**

Spouse of an Army Veteran

## Manager, Finance and Business Operations

**Rajeev Samuel**

## Veteran Service Officer

**Victor Somoza**

Army Veteran

## Veteran Service Caseworker


**Peter Bencak**

Army Veteran

## Communications and Outreach Coordinator

**Connor Intress**

Army Veteran



# Professional Staff Additions



## **Deputy Superintendent** \$115,000.00

Will support the Superintendent in managing day-to-day operations and executing strategic initiatives. Will play a key role in supporting staff supervision, budget management, and maintaining compliance with regulations, acting as a vital second-in-command to ensure the VACCC office meets its mission and goals.



## **Manager, Communications and Outreach** \$105,000.00

Will oversee the outreach team, ensuring effective execution of outreach strategies and coordination with internal and external stakeholders to promote awareness of VACCC programs and initiatives.



## **Veteran Service Caseworker** \$67,000.00

Responsible for assessing and disbursing all Veteran requests for emergency financial assistance. As the primary point of contact for Veterans seeking financial support, the Veteran Service Caseworker plays a critical role in evaluating Veteran eligibility, requests and ensuring timely disbursement of funds to address emergency needs.

# FY25 Benefits

1

Phone Bill Assistance



2

Internet Bill Assistance



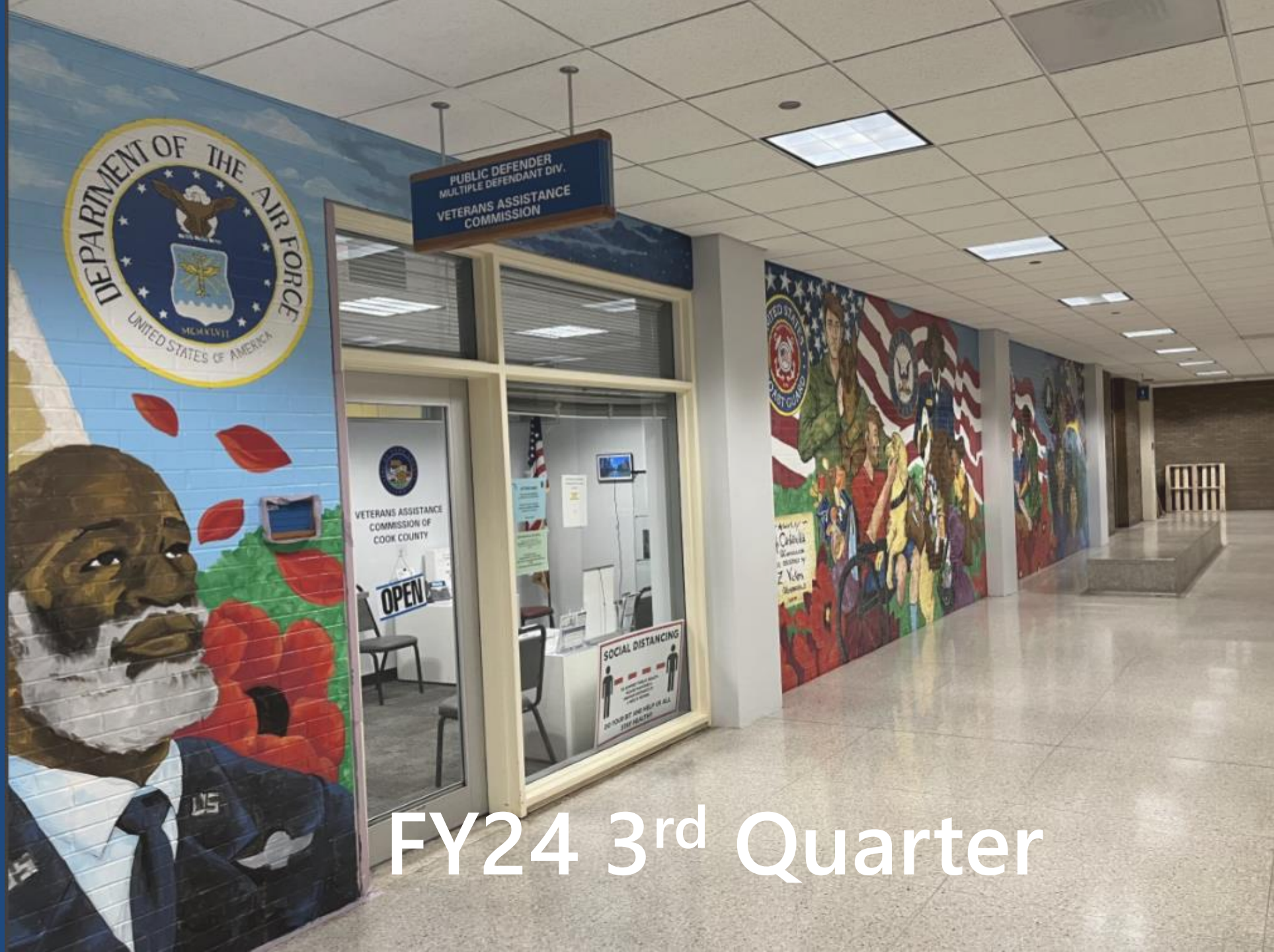
3

Gas Card Assistance



Assistance

3rd Quarter



FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter



# FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter

## Office E1452 Corp. Fund

PERSONNEL SERVICES	JUNE 2024	JULY 2024	AUGUST 2024	3rd QTR FY 2024 ACTUAL	VS	3rd QTR FY 2024 BUDGET
501010 - Sal/Wag of Reg Employees (3 F/T Employees)	\$ 17,985.93	\$ 18,269.51	\$ 27,184.19	\$ 63,439.63		\$ 116,612.52
501164 - Planned Salary Adjustments	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
501511- Mandatory Medicare Cost	\$ 256.95	\$ 256.95	\$ 256.95	\$ 770.85		\$ 2,143.61
501610 - Group Health Insurance	\$ 1,451.57	\$ 1,451.55	\$ 1,451.55	\$ 4,354.67		\$ 4,354.65
501640 - Group Dental Insurance	\$ 83.20	\$ 83.20	\$ 83.20	\$ 249.60		\$ 249.60
501690 - Vision Care	\$ 19.49	\$ 19.49	\$ 19.49	\$ 58.47		\$ 58.47
501715 - Group Pharmacy Insurance	\$ 494.56	\$ 494.56	\$ 494.56	\$ 1,483.68		\$ 1,483.68
501836 - Transportation and Travel Expenses	\$ 112.30	\$ 181.95	\$ 76.17	\$ 370.42		\$ 848.76
<b>SUBTOTAL: PERSONNEL SERVICES</b>	<b>\$ 20,404.00</b>	<b>\$ 20,757.21</b>	<b>\$ 29,566.11</b>	<b>\$ 70,727.32</b>		<b>\$ 125,751.29</b>

# FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter

CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	JUNE 2024	JULY 2024	AUGUST 2024	3rd QTR FY 2024 ACTUAL	VS	3rd QTR FY 2024 BUDGET
520260 - Postage	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 181.89
520490 - External Graphics and Reproduction Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 485.01
521313 - Special or Coop Programs (Veteran Disbursements - Corp.)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 55,493.02	\$ 55,493.02		\$ 232,534.03
521313 - Special or Coop Programs (11286 - American Rescue Plan Act)	\$ 53,196.53	\$ 55,931.86	\$ 18,997.31	\$ 128,125.70		\$ 99,671.01
521313 - MANDATORY BANK FEES - AMALGAMATED BANK	\$ 44.00	\$ 332.25	\$ 50.02	\$ 426.27		\$ 200.00
<b>SUBTOTAL: CONTRACTUAL SERVICES</b>	<b>\$ 53,240.53</b>	<b>\$ 56,264.11</b>	<b>\$ 74,540.35</b>	<b>\$ 184,044.99</b>		<b>\$ 333,071.94</b>

# FY24 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	JUNE 2024	JULY 2024	AUGUST 2024	3rd QTR FY 2024 ACTUAL	VS	3rd QTR FY 2024 BUDGET
540130 - Maintenance and Subscription Services	\$ -	\$ 2,053.64	\$ -	\$ 2,053.64		\$ 3,000.00
(Supplies, Water, IACVAC, Website, Legal Fee, Zoom, Petty Cash, etc.)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
<b>SUBTOTAL: Operations &amp; Maintenance</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 2,053.64</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 2,053.64</b>		<b>\$ 3,000.00</b>

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 73,644.53</b>	<b>\$ 79,074.96</b>	<b>\$ 104,106.46</b>	<b>\$ 256,825.95</b>		<b>\$ 461,823.23</b>
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	<u>VETERANS IN OFFICE VISITS</u>	<u>CALLS HANDLED</u>	<u>OUTREACH EVENTS</u>	
	611	752	49	1st QTR.
	676	779	49	2nd QTR.
	737	755	34	3rd QTR.
	0	0	0	4th QTR.
<b>2024</b>	<b>2286</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>YTD</b>	

	ACTUAL	BUDGET
\$	379,274.52	\$ 461,823.23
\$	244,506.25	\$ 503,065.70
\$	256,825.95	\$ 503,065.70
\$	-	\$ 503,065.58
<b>\$</b>	<b>880,606.72</b>	<b>\$ 1,971,020.21</b>



## ADDRESS

1100 S. Hamilton Ave.  
Suite, C-O11 (Lower Level of the JTDC  
Building)  
Chicago, IL. 60612

## CONTACT

Main Phone: 312. 433. 6010  
Fax: 312.433. 6015  
Email: [vaccc@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:vaccc@cookcountyil.gov)  
Website: [vaccookcounty.org](http://vaccookcounty.org)



**3rd QUARTER 2024  
FY 2024 OPERATING EXPENSES  
Veterans Assistance Commission of Cook County**

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