

Veterans Committee Meeting Minutes - 4/15/26

In attendance: Steve Connor, Veterans Services, Bryan Doe, Springfield Veterans Center, Gumersindo Gomez, Bilingual Veterans Center, Vega Johnson, Three County CoC, Megan Kimball, VA, Thea Schlieben, VA, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Uri Strauss, CLA, Wendi Warger, Three County CoC, Sue White, VA

Congratulations and thank you to Steve Connor!

Steve is retiring after 22 years serving as Director of Central Western Veterans Services. We thanked him for his amazing work for veterans across the region in general and his support of the Network in particular. We are so grateful and we wish Steve the best of luck in his next chapters (and come to the [Network annual event](#) to send him off in person!).

Three County CoC Veterans Data Update

- 64 veterans on by-names list, 3 housed recently at Hearthway's new housing in Pittsfield
- In total, 120 veterans are in emergency and transitional housing (most at Soldier On)
- 50 veterans exited the homelessness system last quarter, 17 to permanent housing

Provider and misc. updates:

- VA "One Team" meets weekly to assess veterans' housing needs and figure out best response (including but not limited to HUD/VASH vouchers); in general seeing an increase in older veterans; calling
- Soldier On is closing two buildings on its campus in July 2027, still in planning phase around that - we will stay tuned
- Gumersindo (Bilingual Veterans Center) noted two openings and 2 more coming soon - Call Gumersindo to discuss further - 413-731-0194 (housing for singles only)
- Uri Strauua of Community Legal Aid shared that he is leaving CLA. His replacement is Kate Mierher. We will get connected. We thanked Uri for his important work and wished him the best of luck!
- We discussed the significance of Steve's presence at Housing Court to assist veterans facing eviction and the need to replace that intervention due to his retirement. Steve is in conversation with the court around zoom options for support. VA and other providers are interested in providing whatever support they can to facilitate the continuation of this resource.

Network State Budget and Policy Updates

- The House Ways and Means Committee Budget is being released today. [See these quick budget actions](#) to be counted in the push for housing/homelessness funds through the process.
- HUD is proposing regulatory changes that threatens rental assistance for thousands of public and subsidized housing tenants. [Read more and take action here.](#)
- [Sign-on letter by April 20](#) to join groups nationwide in opposing HUD's proposed rule to ban rental assistance for mixed-status families.

- **Network Annual Gathering - Friday, May 29, 9:30 am, Holyoke Community College**
- See [the flyer](#) and [register here!](#) The space is filling up so please don't delay.

Next meeting date: Wednesday, September 16, 11 am