**AURORA VETERANS POPULATION STUDY PROPOSAL**

**11 Feb 21**

Purpose: Proposes the City Council support and fund a thorough study of the Aurora veteran population including a needs assessment.

Discussion

The Ordinance that charters the Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) identifies four objectives for the Commission:

(1) Shall advise the council as to the concerns of veterans relating to transportation, housing, employment and other areas affecting veterans in the city.

(2) Shall make recommendations to the council of solutions to these issues and concerns.

(3) May serve as a source of information regarding sources and services available to veterans.

(4) Shall exercise such other powers and duties as may be assigned to it by the city council.

For the VAC to meet the first three objectives, and for the City to fully support its veteran population, we need complete information about the population and its needs. Today, efforts to support veterans are based on anecdotal information and perceived veteran needs; but facts are missing.

Some information exists about the Aurora veteran population, but its incomplete. For example, the 2000 census data is 10 years old and data from the 2020 census will not be reliably available for 4-6 years. The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has information about veterans who have either filed a claim with the VA or enrolled in the VA health care system – but not all veterans have done both. The Buckley AFB Retiree Affairs Office has information about retired military in the area. According to City officials, the 2020 Point in Time Homeless Count reported six homeless veterans in the City–we are confident that information is incomplete. We are not aware of a complete data set that reflects the total veteran population in Aurora, the demographic breakdown of that population or its community needs. A thorough study is essential for the City to meet the needs of the population.

It may be possible to fund the study by combining City funds, grants and in-kind work from graduate students and faculty from local universities. This type of study would make an excellent topic for a masters or doctoral student. However, estimating the cost of this study is not easy, and as a result, we are proposing a two-step process. First, issue a Request for Information to the business community outlining the study objectives and asking the industry to provide a short description of the process they might use to achieve our objectives. We would also ask for an estimate (order of magnitude) of the cost associated with their approach. After analyzing the responses, we would prepare a proposal for City Council to review that include would include the above-mentioned objectives and a cost estimate.

Recommendation: The Veterans Affairs Commission recommends the City Council approve a Request for Information be issued to industry as outlined above.