**Vermont Federal Executive Association**

**Quarterly Meeting**

**July 8, 2014 @ 4:00 PM**

Meeting was called to order by Lisa Rees, President, @ 4:00 PM.

**Participants (if we did not list you, please let us know):**

Phone:

* Padraic Paffen, ICE
* Deanna Payne, ICE
* Melissa Surmont, FEMA
* Sandi Bushey, USCIS
* Linda Maguire, USCIS
* Fred Divigard, ICE
* Deborah Amdur, VA

In Person:

* Lisa Rees, President VTFEA, USCIS
* Joe Rapley, Vice-President VTFEA, FAA
* James Rapley, Treasurer VTFEA, USCIS
* Bill Swaney, Secretary, VTFEA, DOS
* Mike Heston, Member-at-large, VTNG
* Sean McVey, Member-at-large, USBP
* Anthony Ercole, VA
* Mary Hamesevicz, VA
* Leslie Fleury, DOD, DCMA
* Christopher Graupe, ICE
* Linda Past, ICE
* Dustin Whitney, USCIS
* Nick Russo, FEMA
* Susan Eastman, USCIS
* Elizabeth Carter, CBP
* Joe Burke, ICE

**Introduction:**

President Rees welcomed all recognizing new faces in the crowd, notably from the VA in White River.

She highlighted the importance of Federal employees in Vermont, and the need for public service and public servants to play a role commensurate with our status as the largest employer in the state. This year’s Excellence in Government Awards embodied this effort and helped raise the profile of federal employees and their work in and around Vermont. Successful events by the Vermont Federal Women’s Network were also noted, along with strong progress in promoting locality pay initiatives and developing the communications platform for the Association.

**Locality Pay:**

Sean McVey, USBP, reviewed the ongoing efforts to obtain locality pay. Currently, the White River area has been recommended to receive locality pay by the Federal Salary Council, but is awaiting action by the President’s Pay Agent. A separate initiative for northwest Vermont has gotten a positive reception by the Council, but is awaiting further review and action on existing recommendations prior to receiving a formal endorsement. The strong support of the VT Congressional delegation was noted, along with the long-term objective of obtaining locality pay for all of Vermont.

In order to further strengthen the northwest Vermont proposal a call was made for letters of support that outline the staffing challenges (recruitment and retention issues) related to salary levels, and which identify the unique job skills needed for many positions in the state that have national and/or international scope. A revised package will be sent to the Congressional staff so they can add another letter of support and once it is finalized we will send it to the Office of Personnel Management for their submission to the Federal Salary Council. President Lisa Rees will be attending the Council’s hearing once it has been scheduled and we will keep everyone posted on our progress.

**VTFEA Website/Social Media:**

Secretary Swaney outlined improvements in the VTFEA website ([www.VTFEA.org](http://www.VTFEA.org)), and the creation of a Facebook presence ([www.facebook.com/VTFEA](http://www.facebook.com/VTFEA)), stressing to members that this communication platform serves as the bridge between the organization and the federal employees of Vermont we exist to serve and represent.

Members were encouraged to ask their employees and contactors to visit and utilize the online resources available on the website which include:

**News –** Highlights the most recent and important happenings related to the VTFEA and our members

**Federal Directory** – giving an overview and points of contact for all the federal agencies and offices in the state (who have provided information to us – please contact us if your office is missing)

**Employee Specials –** Information on special offers and discounts available to federal employees

**Locality Pay** – Updates and documents relating to this important initiative

**Vermont Federal Womens** Network – Latest news and events from the VFWN

**About VTFEA** – All about our association, our Board, bylaws, etc.

**COOP/FEMA** – News and resources on emergency planning and Continuity of Operations

The website remains a work-in-progress, and ideas on how to make it more useful, attractive, and usable are greatly appreciated, and can be directed to Bill Swaney at [swaneywd@state.gov](mailto:swaneywd@state.gov).

**Vermont Federal Women’s Network Update:**

Susan Eastman provided an update on the network, noting the upcoming event at the Vermont Lake Monsters baseball game on July 31st (see website for details – [www.vtfea.org](http://www.vtfea.org)). The VFWN seeks to encourage professional growth and networking among federal employees, and is open to BOTH male and female members. Members organize two events each month, one personal and one professional, providing a wide variety of opportunities.

**CFC Update:**

President Rees gave a quick review of the Combined Federal Campaign, noting that the program had a difficult year due to government furloughs and other concerns, but that the program continues to be a powerful tool for harnessing the goodwill of federal employees. She noted that the VTFEA can serve as a mechanism for members to share best practices in promoting the CFC in the coming year. Sean McVey and Betsy Carter both of CBP offered to join the New England CFC Local Committee along with Lisa Rees and want to thank them for volunteering.

**Finances:**

James Rapley reviewed finances noting that the association currently has a balance of approximately $7,100 with revenue coming from sponsors and events hosted by the Vermont Federal Women’s Network, and expenses relating principally to the annual Public Service Recognition Awards and efforts in support of locality pay. The VTFEA is still allowed to accept donations from tangentially related federal entities who want to support the association. Unfortunately, funding was less this year and we may have to change the format for the annual public awards recognition ceremony going forward. We also will be changing the day of the week to Friday to allow the Congressional representatives to attend when they are not in session.

**Elections:**

Treasurer James Rapley noted that the current board is willing to serve in their current capacities, and that no nominations had been received prior to the meeting. He called for any nominations from the floor and none were presented (though Elizabeth Carter volunteered to help the Board).

Slate of Officers:

* The Board presented the below slate of officers for election/confirmation.
  + Lisa Rees, President, USCIS
  + Joe Payne, Vice President, FAA
  + James Rapley, Treasurer, USCIS
  + Bill Swaney, Secretary, DOS
  + Mike Heston, Member-at-large, VTNG
  + Sean McVey, Member-at-large, USBP
* Jim asked for a motion to approve the slate of officers as stated.
* Elizabeth Carter – 1st motion
* Leslie Fleury – 2nd motion
* All attendees passed the slate of officers with no objections

**From the floor:**

Hearing no questions from the floor President Rees invited reports from FEMA, VTNG and CBP

Nick Russo from FEMA noted that available office space identified through the VTFEA community had saved taxpayers an estimated $130,000. He reported that this success has been identified as a best-practice for the agency, which hopes to reap similar savings across the country as they respond to events throughout the country. He was extremely complimentary of the VTFEA and its ability to assist in this effort.

Mike Heston, of the Vermont National Guard reported on the successful training mission recently completed by the 86th Brigade in Fort Polk Louisiana, where they performed admirably and were judged to be operating at or above the level of an active duty unit. It was an incredible accomplishment and something that the Guard and all federal employees should be extremely proud of.

Elizabeth (Betsy) Carter, of Customs and Border Protection noted the importance of the VTFEA network in catalyzing interest and participation in their “Nexus” expedited entry program. CBP hosted an event last month that allowed the public an opportunity to apply for expedited border crossing. A VTFEA member and his wife applied and offered a glowing report of not only the application process but actually used the process after returning from a recent trip out of the country and they were cleared for entry in a fraction of the time. The program is ongoing and an update will be posted on the VTFEA website in the near future (www.vtfea.org). If you want to learn more about the program or apply, please visit [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov).