

Central County News

Troy Veteran's CBOC Closing Draws Assemblyman's Ire

by Doug La Rocque

Last week *The Eastwick Press* asked if the Troy Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) for veterans is actually closing its doors following a press release from the Veterans Administration.

It stated the CBOC was being realigned, and that expanded facilities in either Albany, Schenectady or Clifton Park would be available. We sent an email to the VA asking for specifics. In response, they answered "to say that the facility on River Street is being closed would be an inaccurate classification, Clinics are relocated based on lease contracts." They went on to say, "this has nothing to do with a location but everything to do with our commitment to ensuring our veterans' healthcare needs are met and, as such, remains our top priority, regardless of location. All of the elements that could raise concerns due to distance did not change the options available, which remain in place and continue to be afforded to Veterans." Bottom line is, the doors in Troy will no longer be open.

We also asked about the increased travel distance for veterans especially in the rural portions of Rensselaer County. The VA said they have "carefully reviewed and coordinated the various transportation options available to veterans through VA, the county VSOs and DVAs to ensure the realignment doesn't impact our rural area veterans who are aware and accustomed to receiving these transportation services as they often do when referred to the Albany VA Medical Center for advanced or complex health care treatments or services. This is not unfamiliar to them. None of these options will be affected and they will continue to provide veterans with the transportation they need, as has always been the case." The VA's spokesman also said the CBOC in Bennington and Veterans' Clinic in Pittsfield are options for those living closer to these facilities.

Ashby Reacts

None of this is sitting well with 107th District Assemblyman Jake Ashby, who told *The Eastwick Press* he is demanding immediate action and a swift reversal of the recent announcement by the Veterans Administration to close the Troy Community Based Outpatient Clinic. Despite serving over 1,000 Veterans a year, the VA has elected to close the facility, apparently, in order to save money related to the cost of leasing the building.

"The decision to close the Troy CBOC facility represents a tremendous error in judgment and a slap in the face to the thousands of Veterans who rely on the VA for their medical coverage," said Assemblyman Jake Ashby, a combat Veteran and the current Ranking Member of the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee. "I know many fellow Rensselaer County Veterans who utilize this facility for their care who will now be directed to facilities far outside of our County."

Ashby also noted the peculiar choice to announce this closure on the cusp of Memorial Day Weekend. "Announcing the closure of this facility at any point of the year would have been difficult for our local Veterans, but to do it as we begin Memorial Day Weekend comes off as disrespectful to the women and men who answered the call in service to our country."

The Veterans Health Administration created the Community-Based Outpatient Clinic program in the early 1990s in order to expand capacity and provide efficient primary care, particularly focusing on Veterans who had to travel out of their area to receive their health services.



107th District Assemblyman Jake Ashby

GRAFTON Summer Festival Returns

After taking the year off due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the original Grafton Summer Festival is back and hopes to be bigger and better than ever before.

The Festival is again scheduled to be held in the historic Grafton Town Park on Saturday, July 17. The park is located on NYS Route 2, one mile east of the State Park entrance.

For more than 30 years, the Grafton Summer Festival has been a tradition enjoyed by all the residents of Grafton, the surrounding towns and visitors to the area.

This year we are again featuring Civil War reenactors known as the Crenshaw Battery. There will be soldiers in authentic uniforms including weapons and equipment. At past festivals this has been a very popular exhibit. The people of Grafton have many ancestors who served in the Union Army during the Civil War and we're very proud of that heritage.

Sister Kennan McGowan's Memorial Giant Raffle will have close to 100 prizes with a growing monetary grand prize. Tickets are available from most parishioners of Our Lady of the Snow Mission and Our Lady of Victory Church. Tickets will also be sold all day on Saturday, July 17.

There will be a chicken BBQ served from noon until 2 pm, or when the meals are sold out. The dinners consist of ½ chicken, baked potato, coleslaw and dessert and can be enjoyed on site or for take-out. It is suggested that tickets for the dinner be obtained ahead of time and reserved by calling 518-421-5070 or 518-953-0363.

The local Boy Scouts will be providing hamburgers, hot-dogs, sausage and peppers and cold soft drinks. In the morning, coffee, donuts and other breakfast items will be available.

There will again be music and singing in the gazebo.

Since the inception of the Grafton Festival over 35 years ago, we have had a craft fair and flea market with vendors selling a large selection of crafts and exotic items, including antiques, collectibles, hand-crafted jewelry and woodworking items. It is anticipated that 50 or more vendors will be participating.

The Grafton Summer Festival as it looked in 2019. Eastwick Press File Photo.

The Grafton Community Library and the Grafton Historical Society will have booths, as will several other community organizations.

Our Lady of the Snow will offer homemade baked goods, including "mini" pies, cupcakes and numerous other sweets.

The festival provides the people and friends of Grafton the opportunity to meet their neighbors and the people who serve them in various volunteer capacities.

To join in the festivities, call 518-466-8555 for more information and registration forms as a vendor or participant.



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