



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – December 19, 2023

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM

Pledge of Allegiance: Conducted by all attendees.

Attendance: In attendance – Paul Cancelliere, VSO Dave Mangan, Dan Benjamin, Dale Findlay, Marc Young, Marion Dennehy, Joe Dellolio. Chris Olsen Absent: Rob Ettinger, Bill Curran, Kristi Yentile, Councilor Dombroski Liaison

Review/Approval of November Meeting Minutes-vote required: Motion by David, to approve November minutes and second by Chris. The vote was unanimous for approval.

Members of the Public may Speak: no one in attendance.

VSO November 2023 Report and Veterans Coffee: The Veterans monthly food and dry goods support program will be held tomorrow, December 20th behind the senior center from 10 am to 12 noon. All 26 applicants have been notified.

- If any Veteran, spouse, or immediate family member of a Veteran would like to participate in this program, and to be included in the drive thru and pick up, please call our office for further information 781-246-6377

The products are offered through the Greater Boston Food bank and the Wakefield Food Pantry. There is a selection of meats, vegetables, and canned goods as well as dry goods.

- The next Veterans coffee social will be held on Saturday January 20th at the Senior Center 30 Converse St. Wakefield downstairs in the cafeteria from 10 am thru 12 noon. Our Guest speaker will be Barnaby Cylien the Veterans outreach coordinator for the Home Base program. Home Base, the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital Program. They provide mental health care for Veterans and their families, providing resources that assist with healing the invisible wounds of war. He will be discussing some of the aspects of what they do for Veterans and how to contact them. As well as many of the awesome programs they have.
- Please come and share some of the highlights of the proposed “Hero Act-Fact” Sheet being offered by the Healy-Driscoll Administration. I have the two-page report available in my office for anyone wishing to review it or you can visit the mass.gov web site.
- The turn out for the Wreaths across America was tremendous. We had the biggest turnout ever for the distribution of wreaths.

As I have mentioned each month Under Chapter 115 of Massachusetts General Laws the Commonwealth provides a uniform program of financial and medical assistance for veterans and their dependents.



Qualifying veterans and their dependents receive necessary financial assistance for food, shelter, clothing, fuel, and medical care in accordance with a formula that takes into consideration the number of dependents and income from all sources.

For appointments for Veteran Services, please contact me with any questions you may have regarding on-going benefits or submission of new benefits. We are located downstairs / rear entrance at the Senior Center 30 Converse St. Wakefield and is by appointment only.

Veteran Services hours of operation:

Monday, Wed. & Thursday. 8 am – 2 pm

Holidays on Monday hours will be Tues. Wed. and Thursday 8 am -2 pm

Voice mail is checked seven days a week at: 781-246-6377.

Member's Report (around the horn):

- Chris – commented on the success of the Wreath's across America event.
- **Vice-chair's report:** Marion – Gold Stars Wives donated 52 baskets of household goods to NE Veterans Home organization.
- Dan – Soldiers and Sailors Memorial ceremony next year (rededication) and need to start planning now and secure groups to support.
 - Open discussion on organizations and military groups to connect with to participate.
- Dave – Charlies on Main (reopened) will continue to give discounts to veterans and first responders.
 - A resident approached Dave to add lighting to the Veteran's Field sign.
 - VSO hours, CMR 108 12-3 Mass Law requires Wakefield to have a full-time VSO, we are currently 18 hours allocated.
 - Part-time hours result in 3-4 veterans able to be serviced / day.
 - Dave feels the appropriate level is 35-40 veterans a week servicing the community properly.
 - Dan agreed.
 - Dave has supported over 600 claims since he took office five years ago.
 - The Director (seated in Melrose) will be supported, as required, in the future but will still require additional hour allocation.
 - The concern is for the future stability of the role and provide the level of support required by law CMR 108 12-3
 - Marion suggested a note from the board to the Town Council to highlight the need to become complaint and support of the increase in hours for Dave and in the future.
 - Paul agreed to add the need to support a FTE (full time employee) VSO to the January 2024 agenda allowing time to define the scope of duties and bring it to the Town Council seeking support. VAB board members should prepare to discuss this matter in January. Highlight the requirement of the state versus the funding of additional hours by the state.
 - Paul moved to add to agenda for the January 2024 meeting for discussion.

Items for Discussion:

- Wreaths Across America – Forest Glade Cemetery Success

- David will send Shaw's a thank you note for the supplied food during the event.
- Shaw's employees saw the event in the newspaper and organized the offering on their own.
- Jennifer McDonald amplified the messaging on various outlets and kept brand standards for Wreath's Across America.
- Dale mentioned the addition of posters at other civic organizations helped with attendance.
- Dale suggested adding Lakeside Cemetery to the program in coming years – more than 160 veterans buried there (Dave).
- 430 wreaths were distributed. Looking to up to 450. Paul stated the goal is not to place a wreath at all headstones but to support the veteran burial areas that are designated.
- Paul said distribution is challenging to locate and place on individual graves.
- Dale was asked to confirm if a section exists and create a proposal to the board and connect with the cemetery board to approve and register with the organization.
- Dan suggested the families order their own wreaths and they lay them during the ceremony, Dave agreed and the discussion continued.
- Dan mentioned sending a thank you to Mr. Dennis Fazio, DPW, and Ian McDermott, WCAT.
- Paul will reach out to Councilor Dombroski to thank him for his participation in the event.
- "Hero Act" - An Act Honoring, Empowering, and Recognizing Our Servicemembers and Veterans (The HERO Act) proposes the following 17 spending and policy initiatives, tax credits, and statute changes organized into three buckets:
 - Information Only – see VSO report.
 - 2-Page fact sheet on the town website.
 - Paul provided an overview.
 - Benefit Expansion
 - Commitment to Inclusivity and Greater Representation
 - Modernization of Veterans Services

Secretary's report: none

Upcoming events:

- February 2024 Four Chaplains Day Saturday, February 3, 2024, at 9:00am at the Four Chaplains Monument at Temple Emanuel
- Monday, May 27, 2024, Memorial Day, at 1:00pm, at the War Memorial on the lower common.
- June 2024 Flag Day, Friday, June 14, 2024, at 6:00pm at the War Memorial on the Lower Common
 - Dave has replacement flags should the town need them.
 - Dale suggested a PA system and speakers for the ceremony.
 - We will need access to power (unlock the box)
 - Just requires communication to the appropriate parties.

Town Council Liaison's comments: None

Next meeting: • Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 6:30pm via Zoom

- Town has offered hybrid meeting locations with video accessibility for CY 2024.

Matters Not Anticipated for Agenda (Any Voting matters not anticipated necessitating action by the Veterans Advisory Board)

- Dan stated a high school senior asked where to find a recruiter. Chris mentioned sending them to the website of the selected service.
- Dale commented that only 1 senior at WMHS is enlisted in the service for this year.
- Paul, sent an email to the VAB distribution list with local contacts for inquiries regarding talking to recruiters – it is unknown if the list is still accurate.
- Chris offered National Guard recruiter point of contact, SGT Justin Johnson. He's an excellent recruiter and does the job because he loves helping people. 857-324-3363, justin.l.johnson145.mil@army.mil

Adjournment (motion to adjourn): Motion to adjourn by Marion, seconded by Dave to adjourn. The vote was unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 7:34pm.

Respectfully submitted: Joe Dellolio, VAB