



# TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

## VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

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### **Meeting Minutes – October 17, 2023**

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:40 PM

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Conducted by all attendees.

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

**Review/Approval of September Meeting Minutes-vote required:** No votes could be held, as the Board did not have a quorum (only 5 of 10 Board members attended) – all votes to be postponed until the November meeting.

**Members of the Public may Speak:** none in attendance

**VSO October 2023 Report and Veterans Coffee:** The Veterans monthly food and dry goods support program will be held tomorrow, October 18th behind the senior center from 10 am to 12 noon. All 27 applicants have been notified by our Volunteer Nancy Jenny.

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

The products are offered through the Greater Boston Food bank and have a selection of meats, vegetables, and canned goods. Support for this program and dry goods are contributed by the Wakefield Food Pantry.

The monthly Veterans Coffee social will be held next Saturday October 21st at the McCarthy Senior Center and we will have as our guest speaker Victor Santaniello from the Wakefield town assessor's office to discuss the tax abatement discounts for Veterans and the upcoming proposals to make positive adjustments to the program. We will also have a round table discussion. Also we will have as always the free give away of service branch items, hats, flags, coffee mugs etc.

The coffee social for **November** will not happen as we instead will be at the Galvin Middle school at 11 am for the Veterans Day celebration. This year's theme is "**Service.**" I am asking that ALL Wakefield Veterans attend with family in support not only of your recognition, but for the Spirit of Service that Veterans in our community have given and sacrificed for.

There will be a Veterans Breakfast on November 7<sup>th</sup> at 9 am at the Senior Center 30 Warren St. Wakefield sponsored by the Bear Hill Rehabilitation center. You must sign up by November first to attend. There is a limit of only 40 seats available.

There have been several positive claims going thru at the VA from the claims being submitted over the last six months. Veterans have been calling my office with positive results along with getting four annuities filed for the 100% disabled Veterans.



On the Vote that was taken last month for the hardship Veteran who needed help with the electric bill, it has been taken care of from the relief fund as a one-time payment.

This Vietnam Veteran has filed now with the VA for his service-connected disabilities and will be hearing from them soon for a medical review and a compensation hearing.

I will not be available for Veteran Services in the office from October 23<sup>rd</sup> thru the 27<sup>th</sup> as I will be attending training sessions for the week to find ways to better enhance the benefits for our community. If needed, please leave a voice mail as I will be checking it daily and will respond as soon as possible. If it is an emergency, please call the Veteran crisis line at 800-273-8255.

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):** Dale discussed the Wakefield initiative of doubling the property tax exemption (Chapter 59, Sec 115, clause 22) for disabled veterans. The Board of Selectman voted to approve at last night's town council. Dale still looking for volunteers to perform gun salutes at Veteran ceremonies. Dale to work with Chris Olsen and JROTC.

#### **Items for Discussion:**

- **Veteran's Day Final Program (vote required)** – Draft completed, not yet ready to share – description of ceremony posted on Town website
- **Veteran's Day Wreath** – Dave Mangan to order for ceremony
- **Collation** – no discussion
- **Wreaths Across America – Forest Glade Cemetery FB Posts** – Paul spoke to Mr. Fazio – we will keep the # of wreaths at 430, enough for all the veteran gravesites, and memorials around town. We have 181 in the "bank", so need to fundraise for the remaining 249. We will advertise on the new VAB Facebook page, in the Daily Item, and will have handouts at the Senior Center

**Secretary's report:** none

**Vice-chair's report:** none

**Chair's report:** none

**Town Council Liaison's comments:** Mr. Dombroski clarified that the matter for doubling the tax benefit for disabled veterans will actually be included on a Warrant (Article 6) at the fall Town Meeting. He also offered that Jen McDonald could help advertise for the Town's Veterans Day Ceremony using physical and digital kiosks around town. He then presented his views on the amendment to the Town's Flag Policy. Finally, he briefly discussed the timing of the upcoming soldiers & sailors monument restoration.

**Next meeting:** Tuesday, November 21, 2023, at 6:30 pm (via Zoom)

**Matters Not Anticipated for Agenda (Any Voting matters not anticipated necessitating action by the Veterans Advisory Board)** – Discussion of potential amendment to the Town Flag Policy. Discussed potential to fly service flags on 2<sup>nd</sup> pole at Civic Center on their birthdays. Dale brought up the idea of having a Veterans Day Parade in town. The need to enhance marketing of the Town ceremony was discussed.

**Adjournment (motion to adjourn):** Meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm.

Respectfully submitted: Rob Ettinger, Secretary, VAB