



# TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

## VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – September 15, 2020 6:30 PM

Meeting Held via Zoom Conference Call

Call to Order Chairman Jay Pinette

Members Present: Dan Benjamin, Melinda Cook, Rob Ettinger, VSO Dave Mangan, Mike Owen, Jay Pinette, Kristi Yentile

Member Absent: Rick Pearson

- Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all members
- Minutes for the May 19, 2020 VAB meeting were unanimously approved as written.
  - It was noted that Pam and Don Hart, former VAB members will be relocating to Brooksbury Village, which resulted in Pam's having to resign as secretary of the VAB. A solicitation for new VAB board members was placed in *The Wakefield Daily Item*. The deadline for applications is September 18<sup>th</sup>.
  - Chairman Pinette will compose a letter of appreciation for the Harts in recognition of their efforts on behalf of Veterans.
- Activities performed in observance of Memorial Day 2020 were reviewed
  - "Flagging" of graves at both Lakeside and Forest Glade Cemeteries were performed. It was noted by the VAB that an impressive number of volunteers were present at the cemeteries despite the lack of formal publicity due to the COVID restrictions. It was agreed that this speaks volumes about the people of Wakefield and their willingness to recognize the sacrifices of our Veterans.
  - Due to COVID restrictions, no formal town-wide ceremonies were held.
  - VAB members participated in a ceremonial wreath placement at the WWII Memorial on Veterans Memorial Common.
  - In anticipation of Memorial Day 2021, the VAB will have discussions pertaining to the number and location of wreaths that are customarily placed at memorials in town.
- VAB Reorganization
  - A high-level discussion on the need to comply with open meeting laws and the VABs historical decision to have a board chairperson and secretary was held for the benefit of newer board members.
  - After discussion, it was agreed that the VAB will have Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk positions.
    - VAB members will take the opportunity to compose proposed "job descriptions" for these three positions by the end of September. These proposals will be reviewed by board members in anticipation of formalizing the positions and selecting members to fill the positions during the October meeting.
    - The need to utilize the [veteranadvisoryboard@wakefield.ma.us](mailto:veteranadvisoryboard@wakefield.ma.us) e-mail address for any e-mail activity that concerns VAB business was reviewed.



- Wreaths Across America (WAA)
  - Discussion was held to describe the program in general and to determine whether Wakefield and the VAB should consider participating in WAA in 2020. The WAA efforts in Wakefield were very successful in 2019, which was the first year that VAB members drove efforts to obtain wreath donations. DPW Cemetery Director Dennis Fazio has been service as the WAA local coordinator for the last number of years. Chairman Pinette has spoken with MR. Fazio about WAA for 2020. Mr. Fazio stated that he would appreciate support from the VAB.
    - Two options were discussed – having the VAB continue to support Mr. Fazio in WAA activities and/or having the VAB take over local coordinator duties.
  - Dan Benjamin expressed some concern that we may not be able to meet the demands of the program given that we may have ongoing COVID restrictions at Veterans Day and VAB members ability to fill fundraising gaps.
  - Additional discussion was held and it was unanimously voted that the VAB would continue to support the WAA activities in Wakefield and would assume local coordinator duties if Mr. Fazio felt that was best for the program.
- Veterans Day 2020
  - At this time, given COVID-related restrictions on gatherings, etc., it appears doubtful that there will be formal Veterans Day ceremonies this year. We will continue to monitor the state of affairs and must be prepared to act decisively in October. Actions considered for additional action:
    - Chairman Pinette will reach out to WMHS music director Mr. Bankert to see if the musicians could do a virtual performance and/or if a musician would be available to play taps.
    - We will also reach out to the Wakefield Choral Society to gage their activity/interest in any virtual possibilities.
    - WCAT will be engaged to determine if we can have Veterans provide content for airing. Can WCAT stream a minimized ceremony on the common?
- VSO Report
  - VSO Mangan provided an overview of Veterans' Services activities in Wakefield. The VSO continues to work out of the Senior Center. VA claim- related activities have been brisk and the VSO assisted an at-risk homeless Veteran with a placement. The monthly Veterans Food Market is continuing.

The September 2020 VAB meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM. The October meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 20.

Respectfully Submitted: Jay Pinette

