



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes - December 15, 2020

Meeting Attendees – Dan Benjamin, Paul Cancelliere, Melinda Cook, Marion Dennehy, Rob Ettinger, Brian McCoubrey, Sean McGrath Jackie Millinor, Michael Owen Jay Pinette, VSO Dave Mangan

Absent: Rick Pearson, Kristi Yentile

Chairman Pinette called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM

Item 1: Pledge of Allegiance conducted by all attendees

Item 2: Review of November 2020 VAB Activity/Proposals:

VAB Board Officers/Job Descriptions - As has been previously approved in October, the board agreed to proceed with the positions of Chairman, Vice Chairman and Clerk. Jay is continuing as Chairman for another 2-year term. Discussion was held to determine whether the VSO should be a voting member of the VAB. It was agreed that the VSO would not be a voting member, in order to avoid possible conflicts of interest.

Election of VAB Officers: Rob volunteered to serve in the Clerk's position. Motion made by Paul and seconded by Marion to approve Rob for the Clerk's position. Vote was unanimous. Kristi volunteered to serve in the Vice Chairman's position. Motion made by Jay and seconded by Dan to approve Kristi for the Vice Chairman's position. Vote was unanimous.

The board agreed that the positions would be for terms of two years.

Veterans Day 2020 – per direction from the Town Administrator, no indoor ceremonies were allowed in observance of Veterans Day as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. The VAB decided to hold a small "Virtual" ceremony at the WWII Memorial on Veterans Memorial Common. Mr. Bankert at WMHS provided audio of the WMHS Treble Choir singing the National Anthem and WMHS alum Averil Parece playing taps. VSO Mangan served as MC for the event. Members of the VAB were in attendance. Senator Jason Lewis attended and gave a short speech. A wreath-laying was included in the ceremony. WCAT taped the 2020 ceremony. In addition to re-running presentations of the town's Veterans Day observances held prior to 2020, local politicians (Sen. Lewis, Reps Lipper-Garabedian and Wong) provided short speeches. VSO Mangan and member Cancelliere provided content that was included with Veteran-focused Power Point type presentations. All things being equal, the board agreed that the ceremony was appropriate and was a fitting honor for our local Veterans.

Item 3: VSO Report from VSO Dave Mangan - there are currently 14 Chapter 115 Clients being assisted by the Wakefield VSO's office. Annual recertification of Chapter 115 Clients is underway. The monthly Veterans Food Market continues with clients picking up their food at the Wakefield Senior Center. The Wakefield Food Pantry has also contributed toiletries and other goods for the clients. There are 22 clients being served through the food market. The office assisted with the recognition of a local Chinese-American WWII Veteran, Mr. Tony Moy, with the Congressional



Gold Medal. VSO Mangan is working to identify a suitable location for a brief observance, while conforming with current COVID-related guidance. The office has assisted with the identification of awards, etc. required for local families to fabricate "shadow boxes" for Veterans. The office also assists local Veterans and dependents in obtaining military records and documentation. Tom and Judy Gordon from the First Congregational Church have contributed \$300 in Market Basket gift cards for the office's use. Dan and Lois Benjamin have donated 15 Shaw's gift cards for the office to utilize.

Item 4: Wreaths Across America (WAA) - The VAB is serving as the local coordinator for the Wreaths Across America event to be held on Saturday, December 19th at Forest Glade Cemetery. The board will work in conjunction with Mr. Fazio from the DPW/Cemetery Department. The board will have to begin a "get the word out campaign" in print and on social media. *The Daily Item* placed an insert of the WAA flyer in the November 10th edition. We will also have to create printed flyers, etc. We have over 400 wreaths to consider for Wakefield. We have some carryover from last year already on the books. Dan and Dave believe that the Reading Vietnam Veterans chapter will be making a \$300 cash donation.

Item 5: 2021 VAB Calendar – it was agreed that the board would continue to meet on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, with the exception of the months of July and August.

Item 6: Wakefield Memorial Inventory – VAB member Melinda Cook's son Daniel and one of his friends, Brendon Christ, completed an inventory of Wakefield memorials to assist the American Legion post's efforts in contributing to a national database of memorials. The final report was shared with the VAB. Dan Benjamin proposed that the VAB consider a project that would lead to the creation of a memorial at "Vet's Field" at the head of Lake Q. Dan offered a bit of history about the area/field. A flagpole does exist in center field. It was mentioned that the town has a memorial fund check-off box on the annual excise tax bills. We will need to determine if this could be utilized as a possible source of funding should the project be formalized.

Item 7: Wakefield Veterans Support/Discount Program - VSO Mangan and Member Yentile have agreed to serve as the leads for this project. VSO Mangan proposed an appeal to local businesses in an effort to create a network offering discounts and other benefits to local Veterans. The VAB will solicit input from the local Chamber of Commerce. We will also reach out to The Scholarship Foundation of Wakefield to see if we can utilize their business database. A logo/display will be designed that will allow vendors to highlight their participation in the program. The VAB will also publicize the program in local media.

Item 8: Wakefield VAB "Veterans Corner" Media Discussion – the VAB will undertake a program which will feature periodic articles containing information on benefits and other Veteran-focused issues. An editor at the *Daily Item* has agreed that the paper would make "page 4" space available. The VAB will pursue a "banner" design that may be used to call attention to the articles placement.

Item 9: Other Business – Kristi Yentile noted that Kendall Florists may be another option for supplying wreaths in the future. Marion Dennehy noted that the Wakefield Council of Clubs will be conducting the annual Christmas food basket program where more than 40 baskets will be provided throughout the community.

The chair adjourned the meeting at 7:30 PM

Submitted by: Jay Pinette



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