



# TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

## VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

### **Meeting Minutes – February 16, 2021**

Meeting Attendees – Dan Benjamin, Paul Cancelliere, Melinda Cook, Rob Ettinger, Sean McGrath Jackie Millinor, Jay Pinette, VSO Dave Mangan

Absent: Rick Pearson, Marion Dennehy, Brian McCoubrey, Michael Owen, Kristi Yentile

**Item 1: Call to order:** Chairman Pinette called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM

**Item 2: Pledge of Allegiance:** conducted by all attendees

**Item 10: Main Street Banners:** To accommodate the Board's invited guest, Town Councilor Ed Dombrowski, the Board took Item 10 of the agenda next.

The town of Wakefield would like to honor our veterans, alive and passed, on our downtown lampposts. The only requirement for participation is that the veteran has/had a connection to Wakefield. They lived here when they served, they currently live in town, etc.

The banners will display a picture of the veteran in uniform, as well as their name and branch of service. The town has the space to honor 200 veterans (50 lamp posts with 1 double sided banner on each side (left and right) of the lamppost. The Galvin lobby has 110 Wakefield veterans on the wall of honor, so that would leave another 90 slots.

The town has the ability to enhance older faded pictures if necessary. We would like to have them displayed during the warm weather, perhaps from Memorial Day through Veteran's Day.

Motion by Jay, and second by Sean that the Wakefield VAB supports the veteran banners along Main Street program, and agrees to move forward. Vote was unanimous.

**Non-Agenda Item:** Jay introduced guest Tom Lyons, a Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, the Chairman of the 2021 Congressional Medal of Honor (MOH) Society Convention, which will be held in Boston, and was an original member of the Wakefield VAB back in 2012.

Tom explained to the Board that at the last convention in Boston (2015) they were able to use Blackhawk helicopters to fly the MOH recipients to various schools across the state, and that two of the MOH recipients were flown to Wakefield High School to talk with the students. He is hopeful to be able to do that again at this year's convention which will run from September 7-11, 2021.

**Item 3: Review/Approval of January 2021 VAB Meeting Minutes:** Motion by Jay, and second by Sean to approve the January meeting minutes. Vote was unanimous.

**Item 4: VSO Report:** from VSO Dave Mangan - Food bank for Wakefield is Wednesday February 17th Wakefield food pantry has donated dry goods to go along with the Boston Food Bank donations. We currently have 19 recipients.

We currently have 13 recipients on the Chapter 115 program in Wakefield. Re-certifications for 2021 chapter 115 clients are processed waiting on acceptance from authorizer.



Kristi Yentile and I went out last Saturday and distributed the door decals to the first 35 participants of the Veteran Discount program in town. When the weather gets better we will hit the streets again to spread the information.

We have a 100-yr. old WW 2 veteran in town, Joseph R., who survived COVID after only spending two days in the hospital and on a ventilator. He is 100% disabled from a bomb blast in Guadalcanal 1942. I would like to interview him for one of the Veterans corner segments in the future.

Please know that legal aid is available for veterans facing evictions, benefits issues, family matters, debt, etc. Veterans can request assistance via our website at <https://veteranslegalservices.org/online-screening/> or by calling 857-317-4474.

For those Veterans seeking out enrollment in the VA health care system for vaccinations at the various centers around Boston VA facilities and VFW satellite locations, they may reach out to the Outreach coordinator at VA Boston, David Hencke at [David.Hencke@va.gov](mailto:David.Hencke@va.gov), 857-364-5934. For the Wakefield community they can call my office and arrange for a one on one meeting to fill out the forms and I will send them along to the VA. .

With the stress and strain on Veterans mental health from the isolation as a result of COVID the coordinator for the Greater Boston has provided us with an outreach.

For any mental health information at VA Boston please contact Kyle Toto at [kyle.toto@va.gov](mailto:kyle.toto@va.gov) and he will help point you in the right direction.

[https://www.boston.va.gov/psychologytraining/Behavioral\\_Medicine.asp](https://www.boston.va.gov/psychologytraining/Behavioral_Medicine.asp)

There is a vaccination clinic for Veterans 50 and older being held in Lynn on Saturday February 20<sup>th</sup> from 9-4. For appointments call 781-687-4000.

**Item 5: 2021 Wreaths Across America:** Jay communicated to the Board that Mr. Fazio of the light department was happy to have the Wakefield VAB continue to be the local coordinator for the Wreaths Across America event in December 2021. Motion by Jay, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dave that for 2021 the VAB will again act as the local coordinator for the Wreaths Across Americas Program. Vote was unanimous.

**Item 6: Wakefield Veterans Discount Program Update:** VSO Mangan provided an update. Beyond the update given in his VSO Report, he mentioned that businesses have been very enthusiastic about the program. Next steps include getting to all remaining businesses in town, and then compiling a list of participating businesses – Target date March 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Item 7: Wakefield “Veterans’ Corner” Program Review/Planning:** Jay asked for any comments on the draft Introductory Article he had circulated prior to the meeting. Other topics for future articles were discussed including the Congressional Medal of Honor Convention in Boston in September of this year, and the Roll to DC in May 2022 for area Vietnam Veteran’s. The Board endeavored to develop a list of topics for future articles.

**Item 8: Memorial Day 2021 Program:** Mr. Maio confirmed the Board should plan for a virtual ceremony. The Board plans to have more detailed discussions at the March and April meetings. Action Item: Jay to reach out to WCAT to confirm their participation. Action Item: Jay to reach out to the American Legion to invite their participation. Action Item: Jay and Dave to confirm how many flags we currently have prior to ordering any additional ones.

**Item 9: Proposed Project to Erect Veterans' Field Memorial and Flagpole:** The Board discussed the grant available to towns with matching funds for monument projects. The project would need to be quite large \$40,000 - \$20,000 from the town and a \$20,000 match from the grant. The Board discussed additional projects such as a memorial on the Common. Action Item: Jay to approach Mr. Maio to see if there are any town projects under consideration that may be able to avail themselves of the grant money. We will add to the March meeting agenda, the consideration of other projects. As to the Veteran's Field project, Jay said that Mr. Maio and Mr. Dombrowski were very receptive, but that the next step would be to go in front of the Town Council to discuss the project. Motion by Jay, and second by Sean to endorse and support a project that will include a monument at Veteran's Field at the corner of North Ave and Church Street. Vote was unanimous.

**Item 11: Other Business:** None

**Item 12: Adjournment:** The chair adjourned the meeting at 7:33 PM

Submitted by: Rob Ettinger, Wakefield VAB Clerk