



# TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

## VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

### **Meeting Minutes – January 18, 2022**

Meeting Attendees – Paul Cancelliere, Rob Ettinger, Jay Pinette, Marion Denehy, VSO Dave Mangan, Joe Dellolio, Brian McCoubrey, Kristi Yentile, Michael Owen, Dan Benjamin, Melinda Cook

Absent: Sean McGrath

**Item 1: Call to order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM

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

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

**Item 4: VSO Report:** Wakefield Veterans monthly Food bank will be held Wednesday January 19th and we will have 1 additional recipient. The Wakefield food pantry located at the Civic center offers one bag per person of much needed dry goods such as paper towels, shaving cream and razors, soap and shampoo etc. They are delivered to the senior center the day before for distribution along with the Greater Boston food Bank food items. We have received many thank you messages.

The first of the yearly six-month recertifications for the Chapter 115 clients in Wakefield have been submitted and the January checks have been dispersed. We have received a few calls regarding the checks being a bit lower than previous checks and I have explained that the increase in S.S. offsets that amount.

One new chapter 115 client has been added to our recipients as of January. The Veteran and his spouse are grateful for the program, and it should keep them sustainable at their current location and as they stated, “gives them Hope”.

We have been able to offer a continuance to a new Gold Star spouse for the Annuity and she will be receiving the Dependent Indemnity Compensation (D.I.C) as a result of a service-connected death due to the Camp LeJeune contaminated water during his time in service.

We have processed three new disability claims through the VA for compensation. Many of the claims have been outsourced to private agencies for examinations and are located several miles from the Veterans homes. I have addressed this with the VA in Bedford at the eligibility office and they have given them alternative locations and times by having the Veteran and my office contacting the agency.

The Veteran Service office continues to reach out to the community for any Veteran who may need our assistance from navigating for benefits, to agencies who can give them support in many areas including war time bonuses

Motion by Jay, and second by Joe to accept the VSO's report. Vote was unanimous.



**Item 5: Veteran's Corner Article:** Had an article on cannon, coffee socials, etc. No feedback received about the cannon. At coffee social discussed an article on tax exemptions available. Jay to draft an article to raise visibility for benefits to veterans and their families.

**Item 6: Veteran's Writing Project:** Jay, Brian and Dave met last week with Colleen from the "Room to Write" to discuss a program that could have veteran's writing shared with the public. Maybe invite them to the next coffee social? Dan very supportive of Colleen. Next steps TBD.

**Item 7: Coffee Socials – Review / Recap of January 8<sup>th</sup> Social:** February 12<sup>th</sup> next social. Eight people signed into the January social. Logistics all set (donuts, location, etc). Topics?

**Item 8: Veterans Field Memorial Project:** No update for this month. Need a project lead (Dan, with help from Brian and Joe), and a target date. Get in touch with American Legion who have been involved since beginning.

**Item 9: Memorial Day 2022 Planning:** To be held at Galvin (hopefully) Jay sending emails going out to participants, priest from Most Blessed Sacrament to be member of clergy. Speaker? Perhaps General Magurn? Dave to reach out to him to gauge interest.

**Item 10: Wakefield Tax Exemptions:** covered in Item 5

**Item 11: Board Turnover:** Jackie resigned. Melinda and Dan's and Jay's terms are up at end of April. Jay retiring from Board and Saugus VSO. Jay will get article in paper to solicit membership.

**Item 12: State Grant Program:** Could Revolutionary War cannon be appropriate for that? Seems to be. \$25-30k estimate. Maximum of \$15k in funds. Need to get town signed-off to contribute 50% of the funds. Or other investors/donors. Could be in kind, not just cash (like labor). Collaborate with Wakefield Historical Commission. Combine with "Room to Write" program?

**Item 13: Other Business:** Veteran's Discount Program still doing well – North Ave Diner wants to join. Dave and Kristi to ramp up again in the spring. March 29<sup>th</sup> is Vietnam Veteran's Day. Should VAB do something? Tough with Omicron right now. Wreaths we laid around town will come down when they get a little ragged. Tomorrow at 2pm is webinar on VA benefits.

**Item 14: Adjournment:** Jay moved, and Dave seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 PM

Submitted by: Rob Ettinger, Wakefield VAB Clerk