



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – September 20, 2022

Meeting Attendees – Paul Cancelliere, Marion Denehy, VSO Dave Mangan, Joe Dellolio, Bill Curran, Michael Owens, Dan Benjamin

Absent: Sean McGrath, Kristi Yentile, Robert Ettinger,

Special Guests: Bob Vincent, Sam Stella

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 6:31 PM

Pledge of Allegiance: Conducted by all attendees

Review/Approval of May 7, June 21 and August 16 Meeting Minutes: Motion by Marion Dennehy to accept all 3 sets of minutes, and second by Bill Curran. Vote was unanimous for acceptance.

The Chairman welcomed both Bob Vincent and Sam Stella as guests to the meeting.

VSO Report: The Veteran service office at the senior center has moved to the downstairs level next to the work out center. It is a nicer, more private location. When coming for an appointment, please check in with Marianne McPherson the administrator at the front desk and she will alert me as to your arrival.

The “Roll to Washington” trip last week was a tremendous success. The 13 Wakefield Veterans had a time worthy of their service to America. From the Wall to the monuments to the Air and Space Museum, the meals and the hospitality were fantastic. Kudos to the committee and all of the donors for making this such a memorable experience.

The “Food Bank” is tomorrow Wednesday the 21st and we currently have 20 participants in the generous program offered by the Greater Boston Food bank and the Wakefield food pantry. This program takes the edge off of the increase in all aspects of our economy to help the Veterans, the spouses and families in so many ways.

As for the Camp LeJeune relentless commercials and radio advertisements, as I have told many of the folks inquiring about it, the pact act that was recently signed, does allow Veterans and spouses of deceased Veterans who were stationed there to file a claim, but if they apply through my office and receive benefits from Agent Orange to Camp LeJeune water contamination, burn pits etc. and they receive benefits, they cannot also sue in a class action and expect to receive more as it will be deducted from the claim.

Among the unanswered questions is whether veterans who are eligible for disability payouts and VA health care may lose access to those benefits if they sue the government and win. Coupled with potential attorney fees, that could end up costing individuals more than they receive.



In a statement, Veterans Affairs officials said they will not penalize individuals by denying pending disability claims or cutting services simply for filing a lawsuit related to the Lejeune Justice Act.

But they noted that if a lawsuit is successful, “any award must be offset by the amounts of VA benefits provided in connection with health care or disability relating to exposure to the water at Camp Lejeune.

Coffee social: The monthly Veteran coffee social will resume hopefully 12th of November the Second Saturday of the month at the Quannapowitt Yacht club Linda Road. Normally we have been having them on the third Saturday, but I will be away that weekend. We will be discussing everything from Camp LeJeune, to the PACT ACT (burn pit info) to the trip in D.C. Coffee and donuts will be provided compliments of Honey Dew.

VAB Vacant Seat: Looking for someone to fill the empty seat left by Brian McCoubrey. Joe Dellolio may have someone interested and has sent the person the form to be filled out to apply for the opening. As of right now no others have shown interest.

New Service Flags: New service flags have been set up in the Town Council room. All but Service Flags except Space Force are set up, Space Force is on backorder. Some discussion regarding putting small service flag replicas in the Veterans picture cases at the Galvin was discussed or finding other ways to make those cases more noticeable.

Town Day: Paul discussed the 4-hour Town Day event and asked if we might have a table there and who might be able to help out with that. Various suggestions were made and discussed on what the VAB could have for information to be given. Paul will send out an email to see if there is any interest.

Veterans Field Dedication: Paul met with Dennis Fazio, Dan and Lois Benjamin. Signs are being tweaked for final OK. The Town Council is fully supportive. Asked Sam Stella to see if he can arrange for gun salute through American Legion. Dan will instruct Dennis to send bill for all floral enhancements to Council of Clubs for payment. Ceremony will take place at 9:00 am on November 11th. Question on should there be a wreath? Yes.

Veterans Day Ceremony: Paul said he is planning a very impressive ceremony but would be keeping all or most of the particulars quiet until everything is finalized. Rabbi Hersch will be our Chaplin, Boy Scouts are ready and he expects to hear from the Girl Scouts, High School band and Chorus will be there. Decision to have a collation after was made by Board and Dave will talk to Kristy about what can do.

VAB Bylaws: Bob Vincent, who is a liaison for the Town Bylaws Committee went through a lot of information regarding where the VAB stood as far as being a public body or working Committee. Per Bob it was too much to take in all at once and he would be forwarding all the information he presented to Paul for review.

Bob said he would find out which of the Town Councilors will be at the ceremonies on Veterans Day and let the Board know. Also, mentioned about at State Grant that the town could match for upgrading memorials. We told Bob we had approached this at another time.

Wreaths Across America: The date for laying the wreaths at Forest Glade is December 17th. We have a credit from last year to help beginning our fundraising. There will be a small ceremony before we lay the wreaths.

Paul mentioned there was going to be a State Level Meeting on December 28th regarding various cemeteries with Wreaths Across America.

The Wall that Heals: The Wall that Heals will be in Bedford at the VA Bedford Healthcare System on September 22nd through 25th. It will then be moving to Methuen at PFC Richard Potter Field on Pelham Street from September 29th through October 2nd.

Other business. Sam Stella member of the American Legion Post 63 addressed the Board regarding the tax abatement assessments. Sam spoke of the tax rate that has increase substantially yet the abatements given to those veterans that are less than 100% disabled and honorably discharged still receive only \$450 while those 100% disabled and honorably discharged still receive \$1000. Sam felt this should be increased and tripled to go in line with the tax rate. Marion Dennehy asked Bob Vincent if this wasn't something that was controlled by the state and not the town to which he said yes. Sam feels that it is controlled by the town meeting and is asking that it be addressed.

Sam also asked about the possibility of putting a small stone by the WWII memorial with the names of those who were influential in getting the monument rebuild. (Phyllis J. Hull)

Next Meeting: Next meeting will be October 18th at 6:30 PM on Zoom.

Item 15: Adjournment: Dave made motion to adjourn and Joe seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Dennehy

Vice Chairman, VAB

Appendix to VAB September 2022 Meeting Minutes (materials submitted by Mr. Bob Vincent)

Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) and Bylaws

A. Wakefield Bylaws Chapter 9 governs Boards, Committees and Commissions. Chapter 9 is divided into 27 sections.

Ch 9, Article VIII, Section 9-19 - Scope. This sections states that any multiple member body of the Town of Wakefield, however constituted and named, shall be covered by this article. This includes, but is not limited to, boards, committees, commissions, subcommittees, councils and advisory boards, whether elected, appointed, or otherwise has members and serves a public purpose.

I note that boards, committees and commissions are referred to as “multiple member bodies” rather than “public bodies” in the bylaws. The VAB is a multiple member body under this definition and the requirements under Chapter 9 are applicable to the VAB.

B. Ch 9, Article VIII, Sections 9-19 through 9-27 is titled “Governance of Multiple Member Bodies” and the VAB should ensure it adheres to the requirements set forth in these sections. Section 9-26 is titled “Creation of Appointed Public Bodies” and states that “[with] respect to each multiple member body, there shall be a list of designated powers and duties. For appointed multiple member bodies, this shall be created by the appointing authority(ies) and include: a) the intended purpose, powers and duties of the body; b) the term of membership of each member, and c) how successor members shall be appointed.”

I respectfully suggest the VAB consult with the Town Administrator when creating the document required by this section.

C. Should the VAB be specifically listed in the Bylaws? Under Chapter 9, only 5 Boards, Committees and Commissions are listed. The Conservation Commission (9-1), Historical Commission (9-2) and Commission on Disability Issues (9-3) are listed in the bylaws in 1992. They appear to be specifically listed because they are commissions established under Massachusetts law. Each of these sections only contained one sentence that explains the commission has all of the powers, duties and functions provided under the Massachusetts General Law that established the commission. The Finance Committee (9-4 through 9-7) and Permanent Building Committee (9-8 through 9-12) are Wakefield Town Charter established committees.

Since the VAB is a Massachusetts established board, it could be added to Chapter 9, with a single sentence indicating the VAB has all of the powers, duties and functions under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 115, section 12.

D. Chapter 51 – Reports. Chapter 51 governs the Annual Town Report. Chapter 51-3C contains the list of Town Departments, Offices, Boards, Committees and Commission that are required to submit a written report for inclusion in the Annual Town Report. The Veterans’ Services is listed, but the VAB is not. The VAB should consider being added to this section, so the VAB can created and submit a report for the Annual Town Report.