



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – January 17, 2023

Meeting Attendees – Paul Cancelliere, Marion Denehy, Dan Benjamin (& Lois), Rob Ettinger, Joe Dellolio

Absent: Sean McGrath, Michael Owens, Bill Curran, VSO Dave Mangan, Kristi Yentile, Marc Young

Special Guests: Nancy Bertrand, Wakefield Historical Society

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM

Pledge of Allegiance: Conducted by all attendees

Review/Approval of November Meeting Minutes: Motion by Marion to approve minutes, and second by Dan. Vote was unanimous for approval.

VSO Report: Wakefield Veterans monthly Food bank will be held tomorrow Wednesday January 18th from 10 am thru noon behind the Senior center 30 Converse St. Wakefield. We currently have 22 participants in the program. Both the Wakefield food pantry and the Greater Boston food bank contribute to this humanitarian effort. The recipients were extremely pleased with the additional donations of gift cards for Shaw's and Market basket to help during the holidays.

Under Chapter 115 of Mass. General Laws the Commonwealth provides a uniform program of financial and medical assistance for veterans and their dependents. Qualifying veterans and their dependents receive necessary financial assistance for food, shelter, clothing, fuel and medical care in accordance with a formula that takes into consideration the number of dependents and income from all sources. Maximum Income number in family 1. \$2,265, 2. \$3052, Maximum assets not counting home or vehicle: Single \$8,400.00, Married \$16,600.00.

As of January 1st, The Pact Act letters have been going out to any Veterans or surviving spouses who in the past were denied compensation for service-connected issues up to and including death. As I have mentioned in the past, if a Veteran currently has a disability compensation with the VA and they have a lawyer seeking further compensation, then the VA will deduct any award they receive as a result of the lawyers suing. You cannot sue the VA twice. The amount will be deducted from the monthly claim the Veteran has been awarded.

On Jan. 1, 2023, the Department of Veterans Affairs will open enrollment for Veterans Affairs Life Insurance the first new VA life insurance program for Veterans in more than 50 years extending VA Life access to millions of Veterans. (12/1/22) VA Life will provide up to \$40,000 of whole life insurance for all Veterans, age 80 or under, with service-connected disabilities rated from 0-100%. Acceptance in the program is guaranteed, and no medical underwriting is required. Additional VA Life Insurance information is available on the web site:

<https://www.va.gov/life-insurance/options-eligibility/valife/>



The Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) was granted at 8.7% for Veterans on January 1st, the largest increase in over 30 years.

The coffee social is to be held this Saturday January 21st at the Quannapowitt Yacht club on Linda road from 10 am to 12 noon. All Veterans from every branch are invited to come and socialize with fellow Veterans. There will be several hand outs and information pertaining to benefits and compensation information.

All VA facilities and clinics that administer COVID-19 vaccines are accepting walk-ins for eligible Veterans, spouses and caregivers.

For any appointment for Veteran Services located downstairs at the Senior Center 30 Converse St. Wakefield is by appointment only.

Veteran Services hours of operation:

Monday, Wed. & Thursday. 8 am – 2 pm

If a holiday is on a Monday, hours will be Tues. Wed. and Thursday 8 am -2 pm

Voice mails are checked seven days a week. 781-246-6377

Rob moved, Marion seconded, approval of the VSO Report. Vote was unanimous.

Update: Soldiers and Sailors Monument assessment conducted 12/27/2022: Nancy Bertrand joined to learn about the assessment of the repairs. A member of the restoration company (Daedalus) joined Dan and Joe Conway. From a once over viewing, several hundred thousand dollars may be needed. Assessment includes monument, fencing around it, and the two cannons. Official report not yet received. Fifteen years ago, the full assessment said \$250,000 was the cost. Nancy will send the previous assessment to Paul. Nancy gave some history on the monument.

Veteran's Coffee social: Next meeting scheduled for 10-11am on Saturday, January 21st at the QYC. Should speak about new VA life insurance program.

Veteran's Corner – Wakefield Daily Item: This hasn't been on the agenda recently. Some suggested topics: (i) Navy's decision to commission USS Thomas Kelley, (ii) Christmas ornament from USS Thomas Hudner – extended invite to come to Florida on February 7th for Family Day. Will also extend invite to two WMHS students and a guidance counselor.

“Thank you” from the commander and crew of the USS Thomas Hudner:

Update - Disabled Veterans Earned Benefits relative to COLA: Bills S.2408 “An Act Relative to COLA Adjustments for Veterans Benefits” and H.3677 “An Act relative to COLA adjustments for veteran benefits”: Paul asked Rep. Wong to support this bill. Trying to schedule time to meet with him discuss the importance of the bill. Already supported by the democratic delegation.

Update - VAB Bylaw/Charter/Operating Procedures in accordance Public Body Ch 9: No substantive update for this meeting.

2023 VAB Board Member Term Renewals: More than 2/3rs of Board due in April 2023.
Renewals in process with Sherri.

Memorial Day 2023 program: Monday May 29th at 1pm at GMS. Paul has secured a speaker (to be announced). Looking for local residents who may qualify for awards, such as Medal of Liberty.

Next Meeting: Next meeting will be Tuesday, February 28th (4th Tuesday, due to school vacation week) at 6:30 PM via Zoom.

Other business: Marion described some of the events they are working on for the upcoming year.

Adjournment: Marion made a motion to adjourn, and Joe seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 7:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Ettinger, Secretary, VAB