



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – February 28, 2023

Meeting Attendees – Paul Cancelliere, Dan Benjamin (& Lois), Rob Ettinger, Joe Dellolio, Bill Curran, VSO Dave Mangan, Kristi Yentile, Marc Young

Absent: Sean McGrath, Michael Owens, Marion Denehy

Special Guests: Councilor Bob Vincent, Dale Finley

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM

Pledge of Allegiance: Conducted by all attendees

Approval of January Meeting Minutes: Motion by Rob to approve minutes, and second by Dave. Vote was unanimous for approval.

VSO Report: Wakefield Veterans monthly Food bank was held Wednesday February 15th from 10 am thru noon behind the Senior center 30 Converse St. Wakefield. We now have 24 participants in the program of which three must be delivered due to transportation difficulties. Both the Wakefield food pantry and the Greater Boston food bank contribute to this humanitarian effort.

I have been accelerating the awareness of the services offered to the community with a new platform on social media called “Park Bench Wakefield”. It has been developed by Nichole DiModica who has been interviewing businesses and departments in the community to elevate the awareness of “hometown” structural commerce and information. These social dealings with the community and integrated platforms should and will bring a larger more social awareness to Veteran services and businesses alike. Along with the communications manager for Wakefield, Jennifer McDonald, the networking of our Services should grow proportionately to the number of Veterans within the town. The coffee socials, the Daily Item newspaper Veterans’ corner, Memorial Day and Veterans’ Day socials at the middle school, the Kiosk, and now the social media we should see a greater awareness over the next few months increasing exponentially. As such the 18 hour a week position of Veteran Service Officer may need to be revisited on the 2025 budget to advance to a 30 hour a week position. The Veteran benefits and spousal benefits have been increasing over the last four years to a point that it overshadows the chapter 115 program.

As mentioned last month the Medal of Fidelity is now being offered to families for Veterans’ who have died of wartime service-connected disability. The applications require certain information that may not have been mentioned in the past. For those applying for it, as stated on the application documentation should come either from federal or state medical records identifying how the cause of death was service connected. A cover letter from my office can accompany the application and I can research the documents to send.

The memorial service for the 4 chaplains from the USS Dorchester sinking 80 years ago on February 3rd, 1943, as the result of a German U-boat, was held at the Temple Emmanuel on



Chestnut Street Wakefield Friday February 3rd, 2023. The extreme subzero cold weather did not stop us from the remembrance of these heroes and how they gave the ultimate sacrifice. The turnout was good, and the Temple invited us all inside to keep us from the extreme exposure to the elements. At which time the chairman Paul Cancelliere had a representative from each of the denominations read off a segment on the Chaplains.

We have two new clients applying for chapter 115 within the next few weeks as they are gathering paperwork to support the initial qualifications. We also have one additional chapter 115 participant who has been accepted to the program. Under Chapter 115 of Mass. General Laws the Commonwealth provides 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 Married \$16,600. 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.

The coffee social was held Saturday February 18th at the Quannapowitt Yacht club on Linda Road from 10 am to 12 noon. We had a large turnout with Veterans from all branches interacting and contributing to the gathering. We discussed everything from the PACT ACT to compensation and pensions. The next social will be held on Saturday March 18th 10 am – noon.

For appointments for Veteran Services, we are now located downstairs at the Senior Center 30 Converse St. Wakefield and is by appointment only

Veteran Services hours of operation:

Monday, Wed. & Thursday. 8 am – 2 pm

Holidays on Monday hours will be Tues. Wed. and Thursday 8 am -2 pm

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

Veteran's Coffee Social March 2021: Next meeting scheduled for 10-12 on Saturday, March 18th at the QYC. No topic yet for the meeting. Perhaps the Tax Exemption Program. Perhaps recognition of an individual or a business that has done something to support veterans. Start with Honey Dew and Derek, perhaps. Bob Sardella? Dennis Fazio? We should be able to use the Club through May. Or we can use the Senior Center, if necessary.

Veterans Outreach (Dan Benjamin): This summer or fall, we can expand outreach. By forming a subcommittee within the VAB take some off the pressure off of Paul. 4th of July parade, Wakefield 101. Farm out to members of the VAB. Discussion of allowing recruiters into the High School. Town Council recognition of a returning veteran, especially a current town employee (fire, police) reservist?

Veteran's Corner – Wakefield Daily Item: Family and Friends Day aboard the USS Thomas Hudner. Paul attended and highly enjoyed. He intends to publish as an article in Veteran's Corner. Highlight Veteran's Discount program, and the businesses supporting that program. Perhaps we should have a Veteran of the Month-type article? Thank the QYC for their support of Coffee Socials?

Veterans Discount Program: Kristi said to further the program, we could hit the pavement to visit additional businesses, as well as advertise in the Item, how businesses can participate. Dave and Kristi will get together to write an article. Mr. Vincent would be willing to read the list of participating businesses at the end of a Town Council meeting.

Update - Disabled Veterans Earned Benefits relative to COLA: Bills S.2408 “An Act Relative to COLA Adjustments for Veterans Benefits” and H.3677: Paul had copies of House Document 1022 and Senate Document 2519, which are sponsored by Senator Lewis and Rep. Lipper-Garabedian. Rep Wong has not yet been involved.

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

Update: Soldiers and Sailors Monument: Update from Bob Vincent (through Paul), still have not received report from December inspection. Should be turned in by March 1st.

2023 VAB Board Member Term Re-appointments: Seven terms were up, 5 reapplied, 2 did not, so we will have 2-5 openings, as our Board can have up to 10.

Memorial Day 2023 program: Monday May 29th at 1pm at GMS. Paul has secured Andrew Biggio as guest speaker. Former Marine, served in Gulf War. Former Town VSO. Currently a State Trooper. Author of “The Rifle”, a moving and revisiting book that is a collection of stories from WW II Veterans. We should be awarding 2 Medals of Fidelity at the ceremony.

Next Meeting: Next meeting will be Tuesday, March 21st at 6:30 PM via Zoom.

Other Business: None

Adjournment: Dave made a motion to adjourn, and Bill seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 7:39pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Ettinger, Secretary, VAB