



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – March 21, 2023

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

Absent: Sean McGrath, Michael Owens, Kristi Yentile

Special Guests: Councilor Bob Vincent

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

Pledge of Allegiance: Conducted by all attendees

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

VSO Report: Wakefield Veterans monthly Food bank was cancelled this month due to the inclement weather and location availability. Memorial hall Melrose where the assembly of bagged items are initiated, was under construction replacing windows and removing asbestos. They asked us to move the distribution to The Milano center which we had planned on doing outside in the parking lot but the weather of course did not cooperate. I called the recipients and told them of the dilemma and gave them the opportunity to visit the Wakefield food pantry at the Civic center if they were in dire need of supplies. The program will return on April 19th. We now have 26 participants in the program.

There is a Hoya lift and hospital bed along with a 15-stair acorn chair lift available in Tewksbury that is being donated for any Veteran in need. If it is still available, please contact my office and I will connect you to the folks donating it or call Sue Magner the North Reading Veteran Service Officer at 978-357-5212.

Why is March 29th Vietnam Veterans Memorial Day? It was chosen to be observed in perpetuity as March 29, 1973, as it was the day United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam was disestablished and the day the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam. Massachusetts has 1,420 Vietnam Veterans per 100,000 ppl. publicized information indicates that in the last 14 years Vietnam veterans are dying at the rate average of 390 deaths each day or 44,000 potentially a year nationally. Today, there are fewer than 850,000 living Vietnam War veterans, many of whom who are eligible for VA benefits.

Kraft Sports and Entertainment Group is looking for 30 Vietnam veterans and 5 Gold Star families to attend the pinning ceremony at Gillette Stadium on March 29th at 10:30 am. rsvp to Patriots directly at CHARITABLEEVENTS@PATRIOTS.COM

As of last week, we have two new clients applying for chapter 115 they are gathering paperwork to support the initial qualifications. In some cases, the aging clients do not have computers or access to one so I will need to visit the homes and assist in this process.



We also have one additional chapter 115 participant who has been accepted to the program. As I mention each month 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, Married \$16,600 As of January 1st. The Pact Act letters have gone out to any Veterans or surviving spouses who in the past were denied compensation for service-connected issues up to and including death. For clarity on this issue please contact the office and I can give you a more definitive explanation if you qualify.

The coffee social was held Saturday March 18th at the Quannapowitt Yacht club on Linda Road from 10 am to 12 noon. Paul Cancelliere the Veterans Advisory Chairperson covered for me as my injury was still prevailing. He covered all aspects of the social and picked up the coffee and donuts from Honey Dew as well. "Thank you, Paul," for your continued support to our Veteran community. After speaking with Paul and recapping the event, it was a tremendous success. The turnout was large, and the representation of all branches were on board. The April Coffee Social will be held on Saturday, April 15th at the Senior Center on 30 Converse St. 10 am to 12 noon downstairs in the social room. Access will be by the rear of the building and parking is available. We hope to have a member or perhaps members from the Town Council available to hear any concerns Veterans may have that they wish to address at that time.

For appointments for Veteran Services, please contact me with any questions you may have regarding on going benefits or submission of new benefits. We are 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

Welcome US Army Reserve Major Dr. Jon Santiago of Boston, Secretary of the Executive Office of Veterans Services (see attached press release - EOVS): Paul read the press release to the Board. Mentioned the invite from Rep. Lipper-Garabedian for a Zoom with the Secretary on April 4th, and encouraged VAB participation.

Veteran's Coffee Social March and April 2023: March meeting well attended, next meeting at the Senior Center on Saturday April 15th.

Veterans Outreach (Dan Benjamin): No updates.

Veteran's Corner – Wakefield Daily Item Articles: We've posted some topics on social media. WCAT wants the VAB to do as piece on the USS Thomas Hudner. Any last-minute articles on Women's History Month? Women Veteran's? Gold Star Wives (Marion will look into it)?

- Women's History Month
- Family and Friends Day aboard the USS Thomas Hudner

- Veterans Discount programs

Soldiers and Sailors Monument: Update from Paul, Bob Vincent got funding included in town budget. Estimate to complete repairs is \$300,000 to do the repairs to the monument, the fencing and the two cannons. The DPW has picked up the responsibility for this budget item (budget not yet approved by capital planning committee), has applied for matching funds grants, and has begun to schedule the work. VAB to provide public support at the appropriate time.

Memorial Day 2023 program: Monday May 29th at 1pm at GMS. Paul has secured Andrew Biggio as guest speaker. Paul will send notes to Police and Fire Department – will ask for the Fire Bells to be brought to the ceremony. Paul will reach out to First Baptist chaplain to take part in the ceremony. Marion to reach out to Tom Collins and the American Legion about participation/flags.

Update - Disabled Veterans Earned Benefits relative to COLA: Bills S.2408 “An Act Relative to COLA Adjustments for Veterans Benefits” and H.3677: No updates

Next Meeting: Next meeting will be Tuesday, April 18th at 6:30 PM via Zoom.

Other Business: Tim Johnson, WMHS Lacrosse Coach has dedicated April 26th WMHS Lacrosse game (vs Wilmington) as a Salute to Veterans/Services in a pre-game ceremony (vs Wilmington). Should advertise in Veteran’s Corner in the Item. Mr David Robinson at WMHS Guidance working with Paul on how to get military career opportunities info to students. March 27th – Wakefield Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at WMHS.

Adjournment: The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:37pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Ettinger, Secretary, VAB