



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – September 19, 2023

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

Pledge of Allegiance: Conducted by all attendees.

Attendance: In attendance – Paul Cancelliere, Dan Benjamin (& Lois), Rob Ettinger, VSO Dave Mangan, Marion Dennehy, Marc Young, Dale Findlay, Chris Olsen, Joe Dellolio Absent: Kristi Yentile, Bill Curran Special Guests: None

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

VSO Report and Veteran's Coffee Social: The Veterans monthly food and dry goods support program will be held tomorrow, September 20th behind the senior center from 10 am to 12 noon. All 27 applicants have been notified by our Volunteer Nancy Jenny.

If any Veteran, spouse, or immediate family member of a Veteran would like to participate in this program, please call our office for further information 781-246-6377 to be included in the drive thru and pick up.

The products are offered through the Greater Boston Food bank and have a selection of meats, vegetables, and canned goods. Support for this program and dry goods are contributed by the Wakefield Food Pantry.

The monthly Veterans Coffee social was held Saturday September 16th at the McCarthy Senior Center and the turnout was very good. The discussions ranged from the length of time the VA is taking to resolve claims, to property tax abatement issues for service-connected Veterans, to the various documents needed when applying for appeals.

We had Veterans from all branches of service attending from not only Wakefield, but Reading, Saugus, and Melrose including the District Director of Veteran Services Roseann Trionfi-Mazzuchelli who contributed to the discussions and answered some questions.

On behalf of the continued donation of Donuts and Coffee we awarded Derik Robinson the owner of the Honey Dew Coffee and donut shop on Lake Quannapowitt with a citation for his continued support for over two years. We also gave him from our donated Veteran array of patriotic items, a large Bronze Eagle like the real one that resides at the Lake.

We also gave away to the participants from the donated military items Hats, figurines, flags, and patches. After the social, several of the Veterans came upstairs and assisted in organizing the items for storage.

The VAB has been asked by one of our Wakefield Veterans who has fallen on financial hardship to assist in paying the family electric bill of \$945 from the Veterans relief fund of which we currently have \$12,419.64. Please vote on this measure and I will have the accounting office cut the check for the WMGLD for the one-time payment to assist this troubled family. This Vietnam



Veteran will be coming to my office on Monday to apply for VA benefits as he more than qualifies I believe for compensation for his medical conditions relative to the PACT ACT which was signed on January 1st of this year.

As I have mentioned each month Under Chapter 115 of Massachusetts 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.

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 / rear entrance 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 mail is checked seven days a week at: 781-246-6377.

Veteran's relief fund disbursement (Marion moved, Paul seconded) voted for approval – amount of \$958 to a veteran in need to help him pay utility bills. Vote was unanimous.

Member's Report (around the horn): JROTC support for 4 dates was discussed. Veteran's Day, 4 Chaplain's Memorial (probably not needed), Memorial Day (there's actually 2 here: WSSC and Town), Flag Day. Also, Wreaths Across America (WAA) Day. Marion requested we send out the WWA donation request earlier this year.

Items for Discussion:

- **Veteran's Table Town Day – Saturday, October 7, 2023 (vote required)** – Need help manning the table from 11-3. Time to be confirmed. VAB unanimously voted to have a table. **[UPDATE: Town Day was ultimately cancelled due to bad weather – postponed to Spring 2024, at a date TBD]**
- **WVAB Facebook page (vote required)** – A page has been created to aid outreach – Chris Olson and Jen McDonald are the current administrators. Shareable info goal would be 1 to 3 posts per week. Typical content could include highlighting local veteran's (spotlight etc), showcasing the Town's memorials and monuments, celebrating federal holidays associated with the armed services, resharing VSO notes, highlighting veteran-owned or veteran-friendly businesses around town, veteran's deployment or returning home, etc. Discussion on administrator control over inappropriate comments, etc, being posted was had. Joe will work with Chris on the page. Paul moved, Rob seconded motion to approve the new Facebook page of the VAB. Vote was unanimous.
- **Service Flags at the GMS dates** – Paul to instruct Town to move them (all 6 of them!!) from the Town Hall to the GMS in advance of the ceremonies
- **Discussion of COLA Bills (House and Senate versions)** Dale discussed bills with Mr Wong's office. Also discussed with Victor (Tax Assessor) raising amounts of limits in

Town for veterans. Dan confirmed Jason Lewis is sponsoring the Senate bill and will be in town in early October to discuss..

Secretary's report: I'll be following up with certain members that still need to be sworn in, or complete their Public Bodies Handbook Acknowledgement Form.

Vice-chair's report: Working on a lot of Gold Star Wives events. Council of Clubs organizing holiday baskets.

Chair's report: Chair will be away for Annual VSO Conference October 23-27. Veteran's Day plans Reverend Glenn from Methodist Church. Also the chaplain for the WFD.

Town Council Liaison's comments: N/A

Next meeting: Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 6:30 pm (via Zoom)

Matters Not Anticipated for Agenda (Any Voting matters not anticipated necessitating action by the Veterans Advisory Board) - NONE

Adjournment (motion to adjourn): Rob motioned, Chris seconded, a motion to adjourn. Vote was unanimous. Meeting was adjourned at 7:43pm.

Respectfully submitted: Rob Ettinger, Secretary, VAB