



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes – May 16, 2023

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 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, Kristi Yentile. Absent: Joe Dellolio, Bill Curran. Special Guests: Bob Vincent, Town Council, VAB Liaison, John Carney.

New Member Introductions: Welcome Dale Findlay and Chris Olsen!!!! Officer appointments

Officer Elections for 2023/2024: Marion moved, and Dave seconded that Paul continue on as Chairman. Vote was unanimous for approval. Paul moved and Kristi seconded that Marion continue as Vice Chair. Vote was unanimous for approval. Paul moved and Kristi seconded that Rob continue as Secretary/Clerk. Vote was unanimous for approval.

Approval of April Meeting Minutes: Motion by Dale to approve minutes, and second by Chris. Vote was unanimous for approval.

VSO Report: The Veterans monthly food and dry goods support program will be held this Wednesday, May 17, behind the senior center from 10 am to 12 noon. All 27 applicants have been notified by our Volunteer. 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. The products are offered through the Greater Boston Food bank and have a vast selection of meats, vegetables, and dry goods. Support for this program is also contributed by the Wakefield Food Pantry.

The monthly Veterans Coffees social will be held Saturday May 20th 10 am to 12 noon at the McCarthy Senior Center 30 Converse St. Wakefield. Entrance and parking is available at the back of the building. This month's theme is "gratitude" Honoring the Fallen on Memorial Day. We are sharing the events and actions that veterans do educating our community to remember the Fallen who so valiantly made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms.

The Town of Wakefield and the team from the Department of Public Works took the time to line Main Street with the banners of the portraits of the 161 Fallen who did not return from war. Thank you, Department of Public Works.

Coffee and donuts will be available, donated by "Honey Dew" on the Quannapowitt. Thank you, Derek, and your team, for your continued generous support of our social.

We have had an influx of applications for Aid & Attendance, burial benefits, spousal benefits, and service bonuses for active and discharged Veterans. The Welcome Home Bonus program is a Massachusetts benefit for those whose active service falls between the following dates: September 11, 2001, to present. A Veteran can apply on-line at the Mass.Gov web site or contact my office for further instructions. All proper documents will be requested such as a DD 214 discharge or proof of service if currently active.



- For Reserve or Guard members, DD214(s) are required if active for 90 days or more.
- For active, or reserve or guard that was active for less than 90 days, concurrence from chain of command is required, this can be email concurrence, a memorandum, or the Commanding Officer Form.

Active service shall not include active duty for training in the National Guard or Reserves. The relatives of a deceased veteran may also apply to receive the bonus the veteran would have received.

Vietnam Conflict veteran, World War II veteran, or a Korean War veteran, you can apply for a bonus. If you are a family member of a deceased veteran of either of these wars, you may also be eligible for one of these bonuses. For further information and details regarding the various bonus amounts, contact the treasurer's office at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/veterans-bonus-division>.

Thank you to Sgt. Michael Graham for assisting us in the movement of the donated Veteran items a few weeks back. We now have several flags, hats, service items to be given out through the years for Veteran Districts Wakefield, Melrose, and Saugus. These items will go out as awards, welcome home gifts, speaker gifts for Veteran events, and socials.

The yearly summer Veteran Service officer training program will be held this June in Hyannis and will encompass all the upgrades in the services to Veterans and Veteran families including the recent PACT ACT legislation that was signed into law on August 10, 2022, by the President. I will bring to the table at the June VAB meeting many of the New and valuable additions to the services.

As I mention 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.

Town Flag Policy Concerns/Discussion – Mr. John Carney: Author of Daily Item article entitled “Sad Day in Town” regarding the town’s flag policy. Paul reminded the VAB about the recent April 2022 history on this issue in Wakefield. Mr. Carney pointed out he was invited to attend tonight’s meeting. Mr. Carney expressed his views on the topic, and that he disagrees with the Town’s decision to add a 2nd flagpole at the Americal Civic Center to fly flags other than the American Flag and POW/MIA flag. He would like the VAB to bring an article to the Town Meeting that the 2nd flag should be for the State Flag, but not affinity flags. Marion made a motion to table this issue until our next scheduled VAB meeting. Seconded by Rob. The vote was unanimous. Dan motioned to approach the Town Council with a request to only fly the American Flag on Flag Day (June 14th), seconded by Marion. The discussion on the motion reinforced the prominence of the American Flag when flown with other flags. The vote was 7 in favor, one abstained. A letter addressed to the town council will be sent to Councilor Chines, Chair of the Town Council, and to Mr. Maio, Town Administrator on Wednesday, May 17, 2023.

Memorial Day 2023 Final Planning/Coordination: We will place flags at Lakeside Cemetery Monday 22nd of May at 3:00, and at Forest Glade on Friday May 26th at 3:00.

Flag Day June 14 – Boy Scouts Troop 701 Ceremony on the Upper Common behind the War Memorial: Encourage members to attend – usually at 6:00pm behind the WW II memorial.

Scheduling Matters: (i) VAB discussion about Veterans Day – Saturday, November 11, 2023 (Federal Holiday is Friday, November 10, 2023) What day will VAB recommend to the town council to celebrate Veterans Day? Rob motioned and Marion approved to have the town celebrate on Saturday, November 11, 2023. The vote was approved by a vote of 7 to 1. (ii) The following changes to the standing 3rd Tuesday of the month cadence of the VAB meetings were recommended

- Tuesday, November 14, 2023, at 6:30pm via Zoom - The November 2023 VAB meeting is the 2nd week of November because Thanksgiving is falling early on 11/23/2023.
- Tuesday, February 27, 2024, at 6:30pm via Zoom - The February 2024 VAB meeting is on the 4th Tuesday of the month avoiding February school vacation week.
- Tuesday, April 23, 2024, at 6:30pm via Zoom - The April 2024 VAB meeting is on the 4th Tuesday of the month avoiding April school vacation week.

Paul motioned and Dale seconded to accept the proposed alternate dates for the November 2023, February 2024, and April 2024 VAB meetings. The vote was unanimous.

Other remarks: Mr. Vincent mentioned that he was pleased that the Town Council approved the appropriation of \$300,000 to repair the Soldiers and Sailors Monument (aka the Civil War Monument), and that the town would seek out an additional \$50,000-\$100,000 and \$15,000 in additional grants to help with the cost of repairs. Mr. Vincent also highlighted that April of 2025 would be the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War, which might be an appropriate time to unveil the repaired statue. The chair thanked Councilor Vincent for his guidance and inspiration during the past year.

Next meeting Tuesday, June 20th at 6:30 pm (via Zoom)

Adjournment: Paul moved, and Dale seconded a motion to adjourn. The vote was unanimous. The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:48pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Ettinger, Secretary, VAB