



Vietnam Veterans Of America Chapter One

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OCTOBER 2016



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING October 18, 2016

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place at the start. Directors present included President Andy Megrath; Dave Mathis, vice president; John McLaughlin, treasurer; and Jack Crowther, secretary. There being no business for the board to conduct, the regular meeting began.

Six members attended the regular meeting, including Bill Ellwood of Shrewsbury and Florida and Cliff Adams of Bristol.

The meeting began with a presentation and request from Richard Gallo, a Vermont veterans outreach specialist with the Vermont National Guard. His role is to work with combat vets and the Guard. A 22-year Army veteran raised in Rutland, he described his role as working with individuals and agencies to assist veterans. He has a current case load of 18 cases. He works with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the local Dodge House for homeless vets, the Open Door Mission, and Project Vision, as examples.

Gallo's request involved a Purple Heart veteran, wounded in Somalia, who needed financial help to repair his car, to the tune of \$948, of which \$350 had already been raised. The veteran in question has a spouse and young child.

Later in the meeting, Jack Crowther made a motion to donate \$500 to assist the veteran in question. Seconded by Dave Mathis. Passed unanimously. As is customary with this type of assistance, the money will be paid to the provider of the service, in this case auto repair, rather than to the individual.

Gallo assured us that he had a further promise of assistance to raise the full amount.

The minutes of the August meeting were approved unanimously as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported \$62,543 in the chapter's bank accounts. His report was approved unanimously. The report included an accounting of what we're calling the Dodge House Fund, which came about this way:

Rutland's Dodge House for homeless veterans recently requested assistance for some new furniture, estimated to cost a total of \$4,542. At the August meeting, we voted to donate half that amount, \$2,250, and invite members to donate additional funds. Bill Ellwood, a life member of Chapter 1, began with a donation of \$100. We stated that persons could donate anonymously or publicly. Since Bill's donation, we have received an additional \$445, as follows: \$200 from an anonymous donor; \$100 from Carl Baldwin; \$100 from Fred Wallis; \$20 from Martha Jillson; and \$25 from Gregory and Brenda Washburn in memory of Laura Dix.

Additional donations may be made to Dodge House Fund, VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701. Let us know if you wish to remain anonymous or be identified. If no preference is stated, we will give your name.

The treasurer's report was approved unanimously.

President Andy Megrath reported the chapter has 141 members and 5 associate members.

Andy read a letter from the Morristown Community Development Coordinator, Tricia Follert, thanking Chapter 1 for its donation of \$250 to help remove several hundred tires from the property of a veteran who had recently suffered a stroke.

The Dodge House also sent us a thank-you for our donation cited above.

We received a note from John R. Fraser of Chelsea, who is trying to get in touch with someone who knew Jody Fish, a Rutland soldier who was killed in the city of Hue in 1968 during the Tet Offensive. At the time of his death, Jody had just two weeks to go before his tour was to end. Jody Fish is one of 18 area soldiers killed in action whose names are engraved on the Vietnam Memorial. John Fraser served with Jody Fish in Hue. John Fraser's telephone number, for anyone who would like to contact him, is 802-685-4357.

The meeting then turned to the issue taken up in the last couple of meetings: the eventual end of Chapter 1 and our interest in establishing some sort of "perpetual care" for the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. At our last meeting in August, City Treasurer Wendy Wilton and Rutland City Board of Aldermen President William Notte outlined the procedures for setting up a fiduciary trust in the city to care for the memorial once the organization no longer exists. The fund would be cared for by the city treasurer's office but kept separate from city government operating funds. To set up the fund the aldermen would have to approve its establishment, including guidelines for its use.

On Sept. 6, President Notte brought up the issue with the Board of Aldermen, who referred it to the Recreation Committee. Our understanding is that the Recreation Committee will wait for communication from Chapter 1 regarding our wishes for the fund.

Secretary Jack Crowther agreed at our August meeting to draft guidelines for the fund for care of the memorial. Here is the draft he submitted at the October meeting:

DRAFT

Rutland County Vietnam Veterans War Memorial Trust Fund

I. Introduction

A. The Rutland County Vietnam Veterans War Memorial Trust Fund will be established by Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America on DAY/MONTH/YEAR.

B. The purpose of Trust Fund is to insure that the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans War Memorial, located on Rutland City property (Main Street Park) on Route 7 South (South Main Street) is cared for and maintained in a manner that honors the men and women who served in the Vietnam war, and all veterans.

C. The Trust Fund is established with an initial contribution of \$_____ from Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, whose address is 15 Wales St., Rutland, Vt. 05701. It is expected that this amount will be added to in the future with contributions from Chapter 1 and donations from Chapter 1 members and the public.

D. The Trust Fund will be overseen as a fiduciary trust by the City Treasurer in accordance with the usual practices for such a trust and the guidelines set forth below.

II. Management of the Trust

A. The Trust Fund will be managed by a Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Joint Committee appointed by the Rutland City Board of Aldermen and Chapter 1 as set forth below.

B. The president, vice president and secretary of Chapter 1 will be members of the committee, whose other members are as set forth in C below. If any of the Chapter 1 officers is unable to attend a particular meeting, the president of Chapter 1 may appoint a replacement.

C. Other members of the Joint Committee shall consist of members of the Board of Aldermen's Recreation Committee (?). The chair of the Recreation Committee shall conduct the meetings of the Joint Committee according to the usual manner.

D. If and when Chapter 1 is no longer in existence, the former officers shall continue to serve as they wish. If vacancies occur, the mayor of Rutland shall appoint replacements to insure that at least two members will represent the county's veterans, giving priority to Vietnam veterans. However, he can appoint non-Vietnam-era veterans at his discretion. Since the memorial honors veterans from across Rutland County, the veteran members do not need to be from Rutland City.

III. Expenditures

A. Expenditures from the trust shall be made for upkeep and maintenance of the memorial, including such things as landscaping, flag replacement, replacement of the informational plaques, care of the marble sculpture, sealing of the paved area, and the like.

B. The Joint Committee shall, on its own authority, propose expenditures from the Trust Fund based on the condition and needs of the memorial.

C. The Recreation and Parks Department of Rutland City shall also make recommendations for expenditures from the Trust Fund based on maintenance and upkeep needs of the memorial. The Joint Committee shall have the authority to approve the proposed expenditures, or to deny them, or to negotiate modifications in what is proposed.

IV. Thank You

Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, expresses its gratitude to the City of Rutland for its interest in, and commitment to, preserving the legacy of Chapter 1 and the veterans of Rutland County who served in the Vietnam War.

The above draft came up for discussion, beginning with a letter from Dave Potter of Clarendon, a former member of the chapter and state representative. While generally approving the idea of the fund, he was concerned that the plaques might not be properly maintained once Chapter 1 dropped out of the maintenance picture. The plaques are a combination of metal and vinyl and subject to deterioration. The memorial's Honor Roll plaque has been updated several times with additional names, and the other plaques have been replaced once because of deterioration.

The draft was discussed. Jack Crowther proposed that he add the treasurer's position to those of the other three officers who will serve on the committee overseeing the trust fund. There was no objection. Also suggested was a gender-neutral reference to the mayor of Rutland, substituting "he or she" for "he" and "his or her" for "his."

Andy Moschetto of Delray Beach Fla., chaired the dedication ceremony of the memorial in 2000 and headed the committee that planned and built the memorial. In communication with Chapter 1 President Andy Megrath, he voiced his approval of the memorial fund, citing the city's initial gift of land in the park for the memorial.

An initial donation of \$10,000 was agreed to. On a motion by Jack Crowther, seconded by Dave Mathis, the meeting instructed Jack to send the revised draft statement to the city treasurer and Recreation Committee. The motion was approved unanimously.

Andy reported receiving documents for two additions to the Vietnam memorial Honor Roll, Francis Timbers and Mark Treanor. They will be added to the Honor Roll with some other names when the Honor Roll is next revised.

Dave Mathis reported on the Sept. 17 meeting of the VVA State Council. He reported: 1) that the national VVA is talking about what to do as members drop out and chapters dissolve. (How are they going to handle it?); 2) that national is also considering how to handle claims of children and grandchildren who may have been affected by the Agent Orange exposure of their parents and grandparents; 3) the national organization is also asking if associate members could keep the VVA going as the regular members leave the scene?

These questions will be addressed at a national meeting that VVA President Perry Melvin will attend in Washington. The VVA Veteran indicated the national Board of Directors and State Council presidents were to meet Oct. 20-22 in Washington, D.C.

The next State Council meeting will be Saturday, Dec. 17 in Rutland at 11 a.m. at the Chapter 1 room at 15 Wales St.

There was brief discussion of the VVA service officer program, which is seeking donations to support the program. Jack Crowther asked if Chapter 1 should donate. Andy Megrath and Dave Mathis recommended against it.

Andy said he was not referring any vets to the VVA service officer program, "Because for one reason they haven't been very supportive of some of our members." He said he's had to refer some people to the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs in Montpelier as an alternative to using the VVA service officer program.

Andy and Dave's complaints were directed specifically at A.J. Paige, coordinator of the VVA service officers for Vermont and New Hampshire. Difficulty in getting in touch with Paige and his failure to return phone calls were the gist of the complaints.

Andy said he has raised the issue with John Miner of Bennington, VVA Region 1 Director, and Perry Melvin, VVA state president. "He's got too much on his plate," he said of Paige.

Dave Mathis related a personal experience in being unable to get in touch with Paige, even trying to go through VVA State President Melvin. Dave wound up going through a service officer in Florida, where he lives in the winter.

Andy Megrath, who serves as web master for our website, said he has talked to someone about revamping the Chapter 1 website. The problem is that the software for the present website is no longer supported by the software company. In addition, our former web consultants are no longer doing that work. Andy will pursue the matter further. A redo of the site may take 20-30 hours of work, he said. Andy had hoped to get the work done by a student at Castleton University in return for the student getting credit, but the effort has come to naught.

A related issue is that Andy has come across a Chapter 1 Facebook page but is unable to determine who owns it. Bill Ellwood said if someone could direct him to the page, he might be able to determine its authorship.

We heard from member Cliff Adams of Bristol, who is working on a Vietnam veterans project for the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury. Cliff is the Veterans Project outreach volunteer with the center and has been talking to them about an exhibit related to Vietnam veterans. He has already provided them with some pictures and audio tapes but he is seeking further contributions and would like material related to Chapter 1 of VVA. The precise nature of the exhibit is yet to be determined and will depend on materials collected. This could include photos, videos, mementos and the like. The folklife center has a studio that can be used for recording personal stories.

We provided Cliff with two historical articles on Chapter 1 in The Veteran magazine, the VVA publication, along with some other materials. "I'm thinking a good part of it should be an oral history," Cliff said. Cliff hopes the focus of the project to be the history of Chapter 1, although personal recollections and other elements can be part of it as well. Cliff's contact information is: email, cliffadm@sover.net; and phone, 802-453-7112. Cliff said he hoped to pull the project together in the next six months.

In other new business, Jack Crowther mentioned some deterioration of the sign at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Before this newsletter went to press, Andy Megrath and Dave Mathis had already replaced a deteriorating cleat on the back of the sign with some new pressure-treated wood. Andy will try to match the paint on the back of the sign.

With sadness, we report the death of Gold Star Mother Olive Pettis, 88, of West Haven in June of this year. Mrs. Pettis was the mother of Spec. 4 Steven G. Pettis, who was killed in action in Vietnam in 1969.

The winner of the \$50 attendance lottery was Cliff Adams.

The VA has greatly increased its clinical trials, opening up more opportunities for veterans to participate. Participation is **STRICTLY VOLUNTARY**, and the research will be explained to volunteers "in great detail." To participate, you must be eligible to receive care at the VA Medical Center in White River Junction. Patients are currently being enrolled in trials for the following conditions: cardiovascular disease, ischemic heart disease, PTSD, castrate-resistant prostate cancer, MDS, Type-2 diabetes with kidney disease, congestive heart failure, bladder cancer, depression, and colon cancer. In addition, recruitment for the **Million Veteran Program** is under way at the VA in White River. It is a program studying the role that genes play in veterans' health. **THE VA MEDICAL CENTER IN WHITE RIVER JUNCTION SHOULD BE ABLE TO DIRECT YOU TO THE PROPER PLACE TO PURSUE VOLUNTEERING FOR A TRIAL. YOUR PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN CAN PROBABLY BE OF HELP AS WELL.]**

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING MONDAY, DEC. 5, AT 6 P.M.
AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**