



Vietnam Veterans Of America Chapter One

www.vvachapter1.com
FEBRUARY 2017



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING February 8, 2017

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place at the start. Directors present included President Andy Megrath, Treasurer John McLaughlin, and Secretary Jack Crowther.

Also present were member Larry Lyman, Richard Gallo, Vermont veterans outreach specialist with the Vermont National Guard; and Don Ramey, the sculptor from West Rutland who completed the marble carving at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The secretary's report was approved as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported \$60,241 in the chapter's bank accounts. The report was unanimously approved. There is \$600 in the Dodge House fund for replacing the furnishing at the home for homeless veterans. Anyone wishing to contribute to the fund may send a check to VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701. Specify that the money is for the Dodge House refurbishing fund. Also state whether you wish to be identified or remain anonymous.

Richard Gallo, the National Guard outreach specialist, was seeking assistance for a replacement propane hot water heater for the widow of a Vietnam era Air Force veteran living in Hubbardton. Gallo had researched options, including a switch to electric water heating, but the propane option seemed more suitable. The total price from Fyles Brothers of Orwell will be \$1,466, including some repair of flooring that is needed. Gallo noted that the propane dealer, Fyles Brothers, was discounting the installation cost. The Dodge House in Rutland for homeless veterans and the Blue Star Mothers group will contribute, leaving a request for \$1,100 to Chapter 1.

After Gallo departed, we discussed the request. Jack Crowther moved to donate the \$1,100 which would be paid to the Fyles Brothers, rather than the homeowner. John McLaughlin suggested that with the woman eligible for a veteran's widow's pension, not yet received but in the works, she might be able to pay for a portion of the cost of the heater. Gallo had mentioned that the woman is an artist and is seeking employment.

John McLaughlin suggested an amendment to the effect that, when the widow's pension comes through, it be requested that she contribute something to Chapter 1 as reimbursement. Jack accepted the amendment, which John then seconded. Passed unanimously.

Before Gallo left, Jack Crowther mentioned a new group called H.O.P.E. (Homeless Outreach Prevention Experience), which made a brief presentation at David Allaire's mayoral candidacy get-together recently in Rutland. Jack thought the group might be of interest to Gallo in his efforts to help veterans. The HOPE representatives, Dennis Dunn and minister Barry Dean, had mentioned that a number of vets were among the city's homeless.

Gallo seemed informed on homeless prevention efforts for vets in the area, but said he would check with Allaire on the group. Interestingly, Gallo made the following statement, "To my knowledge, there's no veterans on the street right now that don't want to be on the street." He said that in the last year he and others

had placed five veterans in homes. “What we find a lot of times is the veterans won’t commit to the restrictions.” The Open Door Mission and the Dodge House both serve homeless vets but apply certain rules. Other help is available at the Homeless Prevention Center and the VA’s Community Based Outreach Clinic, both in Rutland.

“Rutland does a fairly decent job,” Gallo said. “If there’s veterans on the street, it’s not because we’re putting them out there.”

Don Ramey was present at the invitation of Jack Crowther. He had given Jack a call regarding maintenance of the sculpted prone soldier, carved in marble, at the Vietnam Memorial. Back before the construction of the memorial in Rutland then Chapter 1 President John Bergeron had located the bare beginning of a prone soldier carved in a large block of marble by John Reno.

The history of the sculpture is spelled out on one of the plaques at the memorial. As noted there, Reno had struggled with depression and flashbacks following his Vietnam service and began sculpting the large marble block in 1981 as a therapeutic project. Unfortunately he died in a boating accident in 1982. His sculpture lay neglected in a Castleton gravel pit for years until Bergeron discovered it in 1995. The idea of incorporating the sculpture into the Vermont Memorial caught on and became possible when Ramey donated his services to complete the sculpture.

Unfortunately, the original stone was not of high quality and requires ongoing maintenance. Ramey said that the present sculpture can be protected with some retouching, power washing and a good sealer that will prolong its life “who knows, 20, 50 years.”

“But that stone . . . was never a good piece of stone,” Ramey said. Flaws are visible on one of the feet, which has been glued on, and elsewhere. A major crack comes up from the bottom of the stone and ends not far below the surface, where it may wreak havoc in the future. “So it’s not a stone that’s going to last long-term,” he said.

As readers of this newsletter know, the current Chapter 1 leadership has been considering how to preserve the chapter’s legacy once we are no longer able to be active. With that in mind, we have approached the City of Rutland about establishing a trust fund to maintain the Vietnam Memorial for the future. The Board of Aldermen and treasurer’s office have been quite receptive to the idea, and Chapter 1 has pledged an initial contribution of \$10,000 to establish the trust. The Rutland city attorney is reviewing our draft terms of the trust, prior to final action by the Board of Aldermen.

Thus the question of the sculpture fits in with the discussion of preserving Chapter 1’s legacy. Jack Crowther had asked Ramey about the possibility and cost of replacing the sculpture completely with a higher-quality stone, and the sculptor addressed that question at our meeting.

Preserving the old sculpture would require “a lot of maintenance and yearly attention,” he said. By contrast, granite would be “pretty much maintenance-free.” However, the curb-like marble blocks at the base of the sculpture, which commemorate the 18 men from Rutland County killed in action in Vietnam, would “look a little odd,” Ramey said. A high-quality piece of white marble, on the other hand, would match the curb blocks.

Ramey estimated that a granite stone of 24 cubic feet, the approximate size of the current stone would cost about \$65 per cubic foot, which works out to \$1,560. Good marble, on the other hand, would cost more, probably about \$4,000. Ramey estimated that figure in a followup phone call a day after the meeting. Since granite takes longer to carve, savings in the stone would be offset by the greater expenditure to carve it, when compared to marble.

Labor for the sculpture would run somewhere between \$3,000 and \$5,000. There would still be maintenance required for the marble, cleaning and sealing every three to five years. The better quality marble would be “quite a bit more durable,” than the present stone, Ramey said.

The sculptor said he could do the work this year, and it would likely take a month of labor.

Ultimately, the consensus among those present was that marble was the best choice for a new sculpture because of Rutland's history as a center for the marble industry.

Ramey will prepare some specific quotes for redoing the sculpture in either granite or marble.

Chapter 1 members should feel free to weigh in with their opinions on this issue. You may email President Andy Megrath at vtfogman@gmail.com or write to us at VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701.

The 5th Annual Veterans Summit will be held March 11 at Lyndon State College, featuring special guests, discussion sessions, service providers for vets, exhibit booths, and various vendors. More information is available at LyndonState.edu/VeteransSummit. For a ride to the Summit, please call Rob Norris at 802-359-2072. The event is sponsored by the Lyndon State College Veterans Club in partnership with the college's Veteran Student Support Committee and other veteran service organizations.

Larry Lyman has initiated a bill in the Legislature through Rep. Laura Sibilica of Dover that would allow 100 percent disabled veterans to not have to count their disability income on their Vermont tax return under the "household income" reporting form. The form is used to calculate the "income sensitivity" that reduces one's property tax. Larry's bill has gained a number of co-sponsors.

Chapter 1 notes with sadness, the passing of member Wilbur Dubray of Rutland Town on Jan. 28 after a long battle with cancer. Wilbur served with the Marines in Vietnam and was a retired Rutland City firefighter.

There will be a Spring Fling Veterans Festival from March 10-12 at Pico Mountain, sponsored by Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports. We're short on details, but anyone interested may contact Kelly Walsh at truenorth@vermontadaptive.org.

Andy Megrath appointed Jack Crowther, John McLaughlin and Larry Lyman to be the nominating committee for proposing a slate of officers for the year beginning in April. Nominations are to be made at the next meeting, Wednesday, March 8.

Current officers and board members are as follows: Andy Megrath, president; Dave Mathis, vice president; John McLaughlin, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Dick Doyle, Bill Whitney, Michael Divoll, George Henry, and Joanne Reynolds, directors. Typically, officers and directors who remain active in the chapter are renominated to continue serving. Anyone who is interested, however, can contact one of the above officers or directors or email Andy at vtfogman@gmail.com to put their name in.

Andy expressed an interest in making a contribution to Zeno Mountain Farm in Lincoln, where he attended a retreat from Feb. 3 to 5 involving 25 veterans and a counselor. After some discussion, we agreed that Andy will do some research on the retreat's need for funding. The chapter can then respond as appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 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.**