Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

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MAY 2016

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING
May 26, 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; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Bill Whitney and Dick Doyle, directors. There being no business for the board to conduct, the regular meeting began.

The minutes of the April meeting were approved unanimously.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported $61,505 in the chapter's bank accounts. His report was approved unanimously.

Andy Megrath reported that Gary Besaw and his wife are no longer in the business of supporting and maintaining web sites. They had handled the construction of the Chapter 1 site and assisted with it for a number of years. The plan has been to work with students at Castleton University to handle the conversion of the web page to whatever it will be in the future, with Andy continuing to handle the routine updates, such as posting of the newsletters. The Besaws have renewed the chapter's domain names, vvachapter1.com and vvachapter1.org, for which they will be reimbursed. The alliance with Castleton hasn't yet occurred.

Andy raised the issue of supporting the Boys & Girls Club of Rutland County, a suggestion from member David Gilman. After brief discussion, Jack Crowther proposed a donation of $1,000. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Approved unanimously.

Andy presented a request from a Blue Star Mother, Valerie Pallotta, whom he met at the Salute to Veterans event the previous Saturday in Barre. The core of the group are mothers who now have, or have had, children honorably serving in branches of the United States military. Associate members include dads, relatives, friends, and other supporters of our troops.

Valerie and Gregory Pallotta's son, Josh, committed suicide following active service in Afghanistan in 2009 and 2010. Now the Blue Star Mothers, with whom Valerie serves as first vice president, is working to acquire a house to convert into a wellness recreation center for veterans. It will be called Josh's House in honor of her son and will provide recreation and wellness services for victims of post traumatic stress disorder, with the goal of helping them return to full lives.

The Pallottas live in Colchester. The Blue Star Mothers of America is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization formed for the purpose of supporting America's military, veterans, and their families, and to foster patriotism. The Vermont chapter of Blue Star Mothers was chartered on February 4, 2011. The Blue Star Mothers do not support any political organization and do not support or endorse any candidate or affiliation.

The consensus of our Chapter 1 meeting was to acquire more information about the project before committing to a specific donation amount. Andy will get the information. Most of the details above were not available at our meeting and were obtained online afterwards.

Andy provided a report on the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council, of which he is a member. He said the recently concluded Legislature had not passed any veterans benefits. Andy was critical of the committee's current excessively large membership of 32, with decision-making resting in the hands of an executive committee. "I've already been told to shut by mouth a couple times," Andy said. Andy said he has also been been removed as the VVA State Council rep to the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council.

"No offense, but what are you on it for," asked Dick Doyle.

The obviously frustrated Andy said he was staying on the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council to be a thorn in their side. By that he he obviously meant representing veterans outside the inner circle of those seeking to take over the council.

"Just maintain your integrity, that's all you can do," Doyle advised.

Andy then raised the issue of a donation to the Dodge House, Rutland's transition house for homeless veterans. It is a cause Chapter 1 has regularly supported in the past. We agreed that Chapter 1 should have a specific request from Christine Morgan, the executive director, in order to make a new donation.

In old business, Andy again raised the issue of a granite memorial addition to the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Main Street Park. The chapter had received a quote from Rutland Marble & Granite Products for a granite marker that was envisioned as something more permanent that the four plaques that currently tell the story of the Vietnam War, the founding of Chapter 1, the establishment of the memorial, the list those killed in action from Rutland County, and the roll of those who served in the war from Rutland County.

Andy had received an inquiry from John Socinski of Rutland Marble & Granite about his quote. Jack Crowther repeated his points from the last meeting, essentially saying he felt the memorial was a unified and complete project as it stood. He preferred that money be set aside for a kind of "perpetual care" of the memorial for when Chapter 1 ceases to exist. That is likely to be in 10 to 15 years, as most of us acknowledge. That day could come much sooner, as Andy Megrath has suggested this may be his last term as president.

Following was a discussion about who might receive and administer any funds the chapter might set aside. Ultimately Jack Crowther agreed to talk to City Treasurer Wendy Wilton concerning setting up a city fund with strings attached to insure that the money was used for the purpose intended.

In the final item of business, Andy played for us on his smartphone a video prepared by a junior at Milton High School on the Vietnam War. We were impressed with the work of Meghan Edwards, who combined interviews with vets with pictures from the war and facts about the often unfriendly reception vets received on returning home. She also related problems vets experienced that were related to their service. Andy was one of those interviewed and planned on relaying congratulations to her for a job well done.

The winner of the $50 attendance lottery was Andy Megrath..

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING THURSDAY, AUG. 25, 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.