



Vietnam Veterans Of America Chapter One

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AUGUST 2016



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING
August 25, 2016

Note to Members: This newsletter is longer than normal due to the volume of business conducted at the meeting. Attention is called to two items in the minutes below: (1) Discussion of setting up “perpetual care” for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial when Chapter 1 is no longer viable, and (2) A challenge to the *membership* to donate in support of a Dodge House request for replacement of furniture. I’ve begun discussion of each of these two topics with bold type to make them easier to locate. — JC

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, George Henry and Dick Doyle, directors. There being no business for the board to conduct, the regular meeting began.

Nine members attended the regular meeting, including Norm Savigny of West Rutland and Bill Ellwood of Shrewsbury and Florida.

(1) The meeting began with presentations from Rutland City Treasurer Wendy Wilton and William Notte, president of the Rutland City Board of Aldermen. Chapter 1 Secretary Jack Crowther had invited them to attend to discuss whether the chapter could establish a trust fund with the city for “perpetual care” of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Main Street Park. The idea arose from the fact that as the Vietnam vets of Chapter 1 retire from active participation, the chapter and its active oversight of the memorial will end.

The chapter has discussed setting aside some of its funds for ongoing care of the memorial, which involves the maintenance of plantings, paving, a large sculpture, commemorative plaques, and flags.

Treasurer Wilton began by noting that the city Board of Aldermen would need to approve establishment of the kind of fund that is envisioned. Once that happens, her office would assume oversight of what would be called a fiduciary fund, meaning “money that the city holds in trust for others.” In that case the city doesn’t own the money but is “custodian” of the money. Existing funds of this type include the city workers pension fund and the Mike Garofano scholarship fund.

Wilton said that the status of fiduciary funds is reported monthly to the aldermen, is protected from bank failure, and is subject to annual auditing by outside auditors.

A question and discussion concerned who would supervise the fund once established. In the case of the Garofano Scholarship Fund, a group was set up to award the scholarships.

President Notte, said of the memorial, “Certainly this is a wonderful addition to our city parks.” He noted that the aldermen would need to create the fund and accept the money from Chapter 1, but he thought the procedure of adopting guidelines for the money would be an “easy action” for the aldermen.

Notte envisioned a meeting, perhaps of the aldermanic Recreation Committee, which oversees city parks, at which Chapter 1 would spell out the uses of the money donated by the chapter. Those guidelines would then be adopted and guide expenditure of the money in the future.

President Andy Megrath noted some of the maintenance requirements include replacement of the placards at the memorial, replacement of flags, and sealing of the pavement and sculpture.

Treasurer Wilton raised the question of maintaining the memorial once the trust fund was exhausted. Board President Notte replied that he envisioned language for the fund that provided for city responsibility for the memorial once funds for its upkeep ran out.

Andy Megrath suggested as an example that the chapter might make an initial deposit of \$10,000 to the fund, then add money later. When the chapter closes its doors and ceases to exist, it might transfer remaining monies into the fund. Wilton confirmed those kinds of actions were fine. Notte added that anyone who wished could contribute to the fund once established, as for example through memorial donations.

On a somewhat related matter, Jack Crowther noted that at some point he’d propose a meeting with the Rutland Historical Society to decide which materials — such as the Chapter 1 charter and early records — might be kept permanently when other materials were disposed of.

President Notte said he would report to the aldermen at the next meeting on our discussion at the Chapter 1 meeting and have the matter referred to a committee, probably recreation or finance. He said that when Chapter 1 had come to a decision on establishing the trust fund and had drawn up criteria for its use, it could then meet with the committee to “make certain that before the board officially says, ‘Let’s go forward with this,’ we have full agreement on what you’re hoping to do.

“So I think that’s the smart way to move forward,” he said. In answer to a question, he said the guidelines for the fund could be modified with another vote of the aldermen.

Wilton assured Andy Megrath, who expressed a concern of a member, that there was no way the funds donated by Chapter 1 would be mingled with the city’s general fund for operations. “Our auditor would not be happy . . . and neither would I (be happy),” she replied.

Later in the meeting, those attending agreed that Jack Crowther would draw up guidelines for setting up the “perpetual care” fund for the memorial. ***However, it’s important that any members with views on the matter — either in support of the idea or against it — should weigh in and give their opinions, either by writing to the chapter at VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701, or emailing President Andy Megrath at vthogman@comcast.net.***

In connection with the discussion about the end of Chapter 1, there was some discussion of whether, as current leadership retires and the chapter becomes inactive, a reduced form of operation might be possible under the VVA Constitution. The issue can be pursued as necessary with the constitutional experts at VVA national.

Moving on to other business, the meeting heard from Tom Allen, commander of the VFW Post 648, which owns the building in which Chapter 1 has its office. Chapter 1 formerly paid a nominal rent of \$200, but several years ago the VFW post allowed us to use our space for free.

Allen said the post was hoping that Chapter 1 might help the post maintain the building. He noted that income of the post has declined a lot and its membership has declined. Some help with the heating costs or building fund would be welcome. “As time goes, this building is killing us,” Allen said. “The electricity here is over a thousand dollars a month.” Allen thought thought that if Chapter 1 contributed \$200 a month it would be “fantastic” and “would help us tremendously.”

Later in the meeting, Dave Mathis made a motion to pay the VFW a voluntary rent of \$200 per month in two yearly payments, beginning Sept. 1. Seconded by John McLaughlin. The motion passed with one no vote. (Secretary’s note: The above “no” vote and others listed below may have been cast for humorous effect, but the secretary is not absolutely certain.)

The minutes of the May meeting were approved unanimously.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported \$62,751 in the chapter’s bank accounts. His report was approved unanimously.

Andy Megrath called attention to a Veterans Expo on Saturday, Oct. 1, at the Waterbury American Legion. The Expo will provide information to veterans and their dependents on how to access services and benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sponsored by the Northfield Savings Bank and Century 21 Jack Associates, the event will also provide assistance with purchasing or refinancing your home with a VA loan through your local bank. A home inspector and attorney will be present to answer questions about the process and how to proceed after a contract is signed. A listing of past exhibitors suggests that a range of services and organizations will be on hand to help with various issues.

The VVA State Council meeting will be Sept. 17 in St. Albans. George Henry and Dave Mathis indicated they’d be willing to attend.

Andy read a thank-you letter from the Council on Aging community development coordinator in Morrisville. The chapter donated \$250 to help in removal of tires. The effort was part of a cleanup of property belonging to a veteran who had recently suffered a stroke.

The chapter currently has 142 regular members and five associate members.

(2) Under new business, Andy read a request from the Dodge House, Rutland's transitional facility for homeless veterans, for assistance in replacing some outmoded furniture at the home. A television, end tables, a curtain, lamps, a rocker-recliner, a love seat, a night stand, a chests of drawers and bedding are among the items, the total bill for which would be \$4,542.

In leading off discussion of the request, Dick Doyle suggested it might be appropriate to extend the request to the chapter membership. After some discussion, Dick moved to have the chapter donate half, or \$2,250 to the Dodge House for the furniture and issue a challenge to the membership to contribute the rest. Seconded by Dave Mathis. The motion passed with one no vote.

Bill Ellwood kicked off the member portion of the drive with a generous donation. Anyone willing to assist in this effort may send a check to Chapter 1 Treasurer, John McLaughlin, 96 Glory Lane, Leicester, VT 05733. If you would like to have your name mentioned as a donor, just add a note saying something like, "OK to list my name as a donor to the Dodge Furniture Fund.

George Henry, a director of Chapter 1, noted that as a "snowbird" wintering in Florida, he is interested in participating in meetings during the winter, if possible, through a phone or other electronic connection.

Andy Megrath noted that the administrators of the Vermont Veterans Fund, of whom he is one, were to meet the next day to decide on distribution of \$93,000-plus. The money will be distributed to organizations that apply for it. The money, raised through a checkoff on the Vermont State income tax return, is a sizable increase from last year's \$53,000. Among the applicants is the Dodge House, which is looking to replace its heating system.

On another matter, Jack Crowther reported on research he had done on replacing the solar flag light at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Main Street Park. After several years of trying to get the flags lit at night in accordance with flag protocol, the chapter had acquired and installed a light. Unfortunately, the light provided minimal illumination. Then, shortly after its installation, the light fell off its bracket. After some discussion, Dave Mathis pointed out that current protocol did not require lighting the light at night. A quick Google search by Dick Doyle indicated that is evidently the case, although the wording is a bit vague.

The American flag "should be displayed only between sunrise and sunset, although the Flag Code permits night time display 'when a patriotic effect is desired' and the flag is illuminated," according to Wikipedia. However, what constitutes proper illumination does not seem to be clearly defined. It does not seem to require a spotlight. One online source, Flags International, suggests that so long as the flag is not "enveloped in darkness" and is "recognizable as such," the code is being met.

In light of the problems in lighting the flag, the possibility of vandalism to a more powerful solar light mounted at ground level, and the apparent wiggle room in the flag protocol, the issue was tabled.

The winner of the \$50 attendance lottery was Norm Sevigny.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING TUESDAY, OCT. 18, 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.**