



Vietnam Veterans Of America Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

MARCH 2019



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

MARCH 13, 2019

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place. Directors present included President Andy Megrath, Secretary Jack Crowther, Treasurer Richard Reed, and director Jim Ficken. No Board of Directors business was conducted.

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

Treasurer Richard Reed reported on the period from Nov. 1 to the end of February. The chapter has \$83,296.59 in its various accounts. Notable in Richard's report was a net income of \$38,418 in the fiscal year ended February from the sale of ripoff tickets at Tomasi's bar in Fair Haven.

The report was approved unanimously.

Andy Megrath circulated a flyer for a presentation by Iraq War veteran and philosopher Jeremy Anastasi on Wednesday, March 27, at VFW Post 648 on Wales Street from 7 to 8:30 p.m.. The title of the program is "Combat Veterans and Philosophical Stoicism," part of Public Philosophy Week in Vermont. The event is free, with snacks provided.

Andy presented a sheet of statistics on soldiers still missing in action from the Vietnam War. The data comes from the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Action in Southeast Asia. A total of 1,589 Americans are listed by the Department of Defense, according the league's figures. By country, the numbers break down this way: Vietnam, 1,246; Laos, 288; Cambodia, 48; and Peoples Republic of China Territorial Waters, 7.

According to their flyer, "The league seeks the fullest possible accounting for those still missing and repatriation of all recoverable remains. Highest priority is accounting for Americans last known alive. U.S. intelligence indicates some Americans known to be in captivity in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were not returned at the end of the war. "In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it must be assumed that these Americans could still be alive, and the U.S. Government should not rule out that possibility," the flyer states.



Discussion then turned to finding a home for the bust removed from the original marble sculpture at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Main Street Park (pictured at left). As discussed in previous newsletters, the bust is what remains from the original sculpture at the memorial. Feeling it has historical and sentimental value, the chapter put out an offer to give it to an organization that could display it, thereby sharing some of the story of Chapter 1 and the Vietnam War on an ongoing basis.

Andy received a letter from Bea Noble at American Legion Post 31 in Rutland. She suggested two locations for the bust, both on West Street in Rutland: 1) Across from Rotella's on cemetery property owned by St. Peter's Church, and 2) The historic West Street Cemetery just east of the Vermont Farmers Food Center. The West Street Cemetery contains some very early gravesites, including veterans, and is the site of the city's annual Memorial Day ceremonies.

The drawback to those locations is that they are outside, subjecting the sculpture to the weather, which had taken a toll on the sculpture during its 17 years of display at the site in Main Street Park.

Also expressing interest was the West Rutland American Legion, whose hall serves as something of a public place for open-to-the-public dinners. Those events would permit members of the public to see and appreciate the carving, which was begun nearby and completed by Westside sculptor Don Ramey.

Another letter, from Dennis Devereaux, suggested the Rutland Historical Society or the Vermont National Guard Library and Museum at Camp Johnson, the guard headquarters. (The chapter has been in touch with the historical society about preserving its documents and memorabilia. While the society has welcomed the opportunity to preserve our records in digital form and a small quantity of our physical items, its space is very limited.)

Finally, the Interstate 89 Welcome Center in Sharon, home to Vermont's state Vietnam Veterans Memorial, is available, according to Andy Megrath, who has inquired. Andy favors that location, which would offer indoor protection and wide accessibility to the public. For any location, Chapter 1 could provide information on the sculpture to provide an explanation for the carving.

Jack Crowther suggested designating the Sharon Rest area site as the recommended location for the sculpture, based on the chance for public visibility in a sheltered setting and assuming the willingness of the state Department of Buildings and General Services to house the sculpture. Andy and Richard will pursue this solution. Meanwhile, however, Chapter 1 members should feel free to express their opinions on the best location. Email Andy Megrath at vthogman@comcast.net or attend our next meeting April 17.

Next on the agenda was further discussion of Jim Ficken's idea of setting up a scholarship fund for the Stafford Technical Center. Jim has taught at Vermont's high school technical centers and currently substitute teaches at Stafford. The goal of the scholarship would be to encourage deserving graduates to pursue careers in the trades. Chapter 1 members attending our March meeting had embraced the idea but Jack Crowther felt it needed some refinement before offering a specific cash amount to the school.

One issue needing clarity was who would be eligible for the scholarship. After some discussion, we decided that eligible students must be the child or grandchild of an honorably discharge veteran. Other requirements laid out in Jim's proposal include:

- That the student write a brief letter stating why he or she would benefit from the scholarship to accomplish their career goals.
- A letter of recommendation from the student's program instructor.
- A military discharge form (DD 214) showing the military service and honorable discharge of the parent or grandparent of the student.

There are 225 students at the technical center, according to Jim.

As further defined in Jim's proposal, "It is envisioned that a \$2,000 annual scholarship be presented annually to each graduating class and the Stafford Technical Center administration choose the most deserving student(s) based on merit in increments of \$500, \$1,000, and \$2,000 annually. That level of funding was agreed on at this meeting.

We agreed that provision of tools will not be part of the award.

We had some discussion over the selection process and agreed that Stafford would need to describe its selection process. We want to insure that there is a fair process, presumably employing a committee.

Ultimately, Jack Crowther moved that we appropriate \$2,000 to launch the scholarship with this year's graduating class. The motion includes a statement of intention to establish long-term funding after consultation with the administration at Stafford, who can tell us how to set aside the money. Seconded by Richard Reed. Passed unanimously.

We approved a request from Andy Megrath to purchase a small electric broom for cleaning our offices before meetings, such as gatherings of the State Council of VVA. (The next State Council meeting is Saturday at 11 a.m. at our offices.)

We had a short discussion about a chapter member facing financial difficulties. We had helped this member previously, and feel this kind of assistance should be limited to one time. We learned that Richard Gallo, veterans outreach specialist for Rutland County is providing assistance and appears to have the situation in hand. While declining to provide further cash assistance, we agreed to assist with a work party or similar help for the veteran, if appropriate.

Finally, we discussed the chapter's Annual Meeting in April and the nomination of officers. Andy appointed Jack chair of the nominating committee. Typically, we have renominated our existing slate unless the officer or director is unable to continue or has not been attending meetings. Andy said he would like to find someone willing to step in as vice president, inasmuch as the current vice president, Dave Mathis, spends much of the winter in Florida. With our summer break, a member who goes to Florida in the fall and returns in spring is excluded from most of the chapter activity.

After some discussion, Jack listed Andy Megrath, president; Richard Reed, treasurer; himself, secretary; and Jim Ficken, director; as those who have expressed interest in continuing to serve. They are therefore nominated. That makes the job of vice president and four more director positions open. Persons willing to fill the positions should make their feelings known before or at the April Annual Meeting. Write to Andy at vthogman@comcast.net, attend the April meeting, or have someone put your name in.

Andy will be speaking to two English classes at Otter Valley Union High School this month about the Vietnam War. He plans to cover the history of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial, its Honor Roll, and some of his experiences.

Tim Lonergan reported on recent activities of Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports in this area, including a retreat for women veterans at the Pico Mountain ski area. Nine women vets took part with three support people. The group included novice and experienced skiers and some with physical disabilities. Tim was able to ski with the group two of the three days of the program, which was supported by Pico volunteers. Participants skied, snowboarded, and snowshoed. Some also went rock climbing at the indoor Green Mountain Rock Climbing Center. He said that while Vermont Adaptive would not allow VVA to fund a specific event, it would welcome a donation from the chapter once Vermont Adaptive has some more local activities under its belt.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, AT 6 P.M. AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES
AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND. NOTE DATE, THE THIRD WEDNESDAY IN APRIL.
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**