



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

MARCH 2020



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING MARCH 11, 2020

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

Members Tim Lonergan and Frank Wetherby were also present.

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

President Andy Megrath presented the treasurer's report for Richard Reed. The total in all our accounts is \$104,565.66.

Andy reported on the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council, which had met the day before at the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph. He reported that the VA Medical Center in White River Junction was serving vets but having them all enter through one door, where they are screened for the corona virus.



Chapter 1 President Andy Megrath presents a check for \$40,000 to Chief Financial Officer Mary Alma Noonan of the Rutland City School system to provide a self-sustaining scholarship fund for graduates of the Stafford Technical Center who are children or grandchildren of veterans. Stafford's director, Melissa Connor, is at right. (Details in the newsletter.)

“Crossover day” in the Legislature was to be March 13, Andy reported. That's the day when bills need to pass from the chamber (House or Senate) where they originated to the other chamber to have a chance of passing. Subsequent to our meeting, the Legislature shut down for a week due to the corona virus.

Andy said that Gov. Scott has endorsed Bill H 846, which would make pensions for military retirees tax-free. Testimony was to take place that day. Andy noted that procedures only allow 10 minutes of testimony on a bill. Andy mentioned there had been a “meet-and-greet” session among legislators, veterans, and representatives of the Vermont Veterans Home on Feb. 4.

Andy said he and two others from GVAC were working on a web page for the council. Three vendors will be submitting proposals to create the site to Bob Burke, director of the Veterans Affairs Office in Montpelier, who will refer the matter to the state adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Greg Knight. The site will tell of the council's accomplishments and bills that it is supporting. The web site may include links to a list of senators and representatives, so vets can easily contact their legislators.

A submarine, the USS Vermont, will be commissioned April 18 in Groton, Conn.

National Guard retirees meet for breakfast the second Tuesday of the month at Denny's.

Post 31 of the American Legion will host a Vet to Vet informational and social event Saturday, March 21, for veterans, families and friends. (Check status for cancellation.) The schedule includes Help Booths from 4 to 5 p.m., an informational panel from 5 to 5:30 p.m., a Vet Q & A from 5:30 to 6 p.m. moderated by Rep. Bob Helm of Fair Haven, and an \$8 spaghetti dinner at 6 p.m. Dancing to a DJ will begin at 7 p.m. For further information, contact Dolores Luebke at (802) 645-0109.

Andy contacted the Rutland Board of Aldermen, Mayor David Allaire, Treasurer Mary Markowski, and city Parks Director Bob Peterson to discuss the chapter adding money to the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans War Memorial Trust Fund for ongoing maintenance of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The chapter established the trust fund in 2017 with a contribution of \$10,000. When Chapter 1 is no more, the money will help the city, which technically owns the memorial, to keep it up. The chapter has discussed adding to the fund. After some discussion, and in consideration of the healthy state of the Chapter 1 finances, Jack Crowther moved to appropriate \$15,000 to add to the trust fund. Seconded by Jim Ficken. Passed unanimously. We have now put \$25,000 into the trust fund.

We held a related discussion on the memorial about the fact that access to the memorial by someone in a wheel chair is only possible by traveling some distance on a sidewalk from either end of the park. A curb cut by the memorial and short paved access directly to the memorial would address that issue. A rough estimate of the cost is \$10,000.

As the result of discussion, we reached a consensus that when we get a firm estimate for the curb cut and entrance to the memorial, we will most likely appropriate funds for that and not ask that it come out of the war memorial trust fund.

Discussion next turned to beefing up the other trust fund the chapter maintains for awarding scholarships to Rutland High School's Stafford Technical Center graduates. Established last year with \$12,000, the Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, Stafford Technical Center Scholarship provides \$2,000 a year for graduating seniors who are the children or grandchildren of veterans and plan to continue their technical educations. The \$2,000 can be divided in various ways to accommodate different numbers of students.

Discussion pointed to the fact that a fund of \$50,000, invested at 5 percent interest, would yield a bit more than the \$2,000 annual award, making the scholarship fund self-sustaining. With that in mind, Jim Ficken moved to appropriate \$40,000 for the Stafford scholarships. Seconded by Frank Wetherby. Passed unanimously.

Andy read a thank-you letter from Home at Last, a homelessness prevention program for vets based in Brattleboro. Chapter 1 donated \$2,000 to the program, which acquires mobile homes and rents them to

vets. All administrative functions of the organization are performed by volunteers.

Jack Crowther reported the transfer to West Rutland American Legion Post 87 of the marble bust that was part of the original Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Rutland. When we replaced the sculpture in 2017, due to deterioration of the original, we saved a portion of the old sculpture, which has now found a home at Post 87. The photo shows the bust and the stand made for it. The sculpture sits in the banquet room of the Legion and will be officially unveiled after the 2020 Memorial Day Parade, when the post offers the community a free dinner. Chapter 1 will provide a plaque describing briefly the history of the carving. A draft of the plaque reads as follows:

This marble bust is a portion of the original centerpiece of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Rutland. The late John Reno of Fair Haven, a Vietnam veteran and artist, began the sculpture as a tribute to fellow veterans but died in an accident in 1982 before completing it. West Rutland sculptor Don Ramey completed the carving, which was dedicated in 2000. The original sculpture, suffering from exposure to the elements, was recreated by Don Ramey and dedicated in 2017. Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 1, of Rutland donated this remnant of the original memorial to West Rutland American Legion Post 87 in 2020. It serves as a lasting tribute to the men and women from Rutland County who served in the Vietnam War (1955 – 1975).



Frank Wetherby made a request for support of the Moving Wall, a half-size traveling version of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. The Moving Wall will come to Brattleboro on Sept. 16. VVA Chapter 843 of Brattleboro is co-sponsor with the town, and Frank, though a Chapter 1 member, is helping with the arrangements. A visit of the Moving Wall requires a number of preparations by the host city, including accommodations for the staff, construction of a platform and other details. Frank will come back with a specific request at our April meeting. The overall cost is estimated at about \$10,000.

The VVA State Council will meet Saturday, March 21, at 11 a.m, at the Chapter 1 office in Rutland.

In other business, Jack Crowther was appointed head of the Nominating Committee and presented the following names for voting at the April 8 Annual Meeting: president, Andy Megrath, who has served 16 years as president; vice president, Tim Lonergan; treasurer, Richard Reed; secretary, Jack Crowther; and directors Jim Ficken, Bill Whitney, Dick Doyle, Frank Wetherby, and George Henry. Anyone else interested in serving as an officer or director should attend or express interest to President Andy Megrath (email vt hogman@gmail.com) or an officer or director.

Andy Megrath won the \$50 drawing among those who attended the meeting.

**THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, AT 4 P.M.
AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND. A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**