



# Vietnam Veterans Of America

## Chapter One

[www.vietnamvetschapter1.org](http://www.vietnamvetschapter1.org)

MARCH 2023



### MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING MARCH 8, 2023

At Chapter 1's Zoom meeting, attendees included Andy Megrath, president; Tim Lonergan, vice president; Richard Reed, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Directors Dick Doyle, Bill Ellwood, Michael Murphy, and Carl Baldwin. Several guests, including Beth Higgins, Chris Morgan, and John Pisanelli, took part at various times. A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors was held; no business was transacted.

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

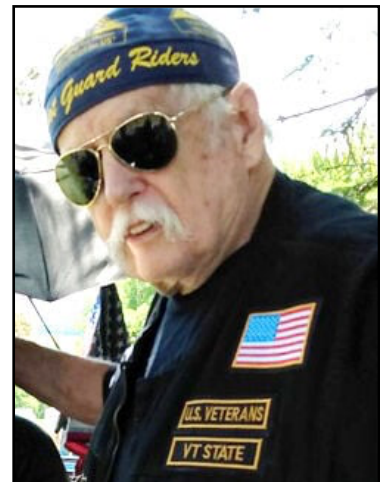
Treasurer Richard Reed reported a balance of \$129,172.60 in all of the chapter's accounts. Net income from the sale of break-open tickets for the 2023 fiscal year, which ended in February, was \$26,354.

Beth Higgins, long active in Chapter 1 with her late husband, Bill, reports that her extended effort to have Bill listed in the "Taps" column of The VVA Veteran, VVA national's publication, appears on track, and she expects to see Bill listed in a future edition.

Chris Morgan, director of the Dodge House on Crescent Street, a place for homeless veterans, appeared with a request for financial assistance for increased security equipment, including doorbell cameras and a floodlight camera. The homes for male and female veterans have been largely free of criminal activity until now, she said, but recently have seen drug dealing and the like between their buildings and the Pet Cage store on Crescent Street. Residents of the home have even been stopped on errands. One was stopped by "a few" people and intimidated into giving them some money. "That actually led to a few of them actually coming to the Dodge House and knocking on the door after hours, looking for money," she said. In one case, a local police officer accompanied a vet to a store and warned the harassers to leave the vets alone.

Chris said she hoped to install four video doorbells and a floodlight camera at a cost of \$600, with any installation likely covered by an electrician who helps the Dodge House. A period of discussion followed. Andy Megrath suggested that it might be wise to have the doorbells wired to the house wiring, rather than run by batteries. That could increase the initial cost, while saving on batteries.

Chris said local police "are very good about doing a drive-through." Police will sometimes come and eat their lunches parked at the house as a deterrent. She said her hope is to share video footage from the new devices with the police as appropriate. After Chris left the meeting, Richard Reed made a motion to appropriate no less than \$595 and up to \$1,000 to cover the cost of the security equipment, plus installation. Chris Morgan and the Dodge House will decide on the details. It is understood the Dodge House will supply invoices for the expenditures. Seconded by Bill Ellwood. Passed unanimously.



**Chapter 1 sadly reports the death of Fred Hellmuth of Pittsford, a life member, on Feb. 15.**

We next talked to John Pisanelli, a member of Chapter 1 who is also commander of VFW Post 648 on Wales St. Chapter 1 has its office on the second floor of the VFW building and pays rent. Post 648 recently had repairs done to its walk-in cooler and has requested assistance with the bill, totaling \$6,450.

Jack Crowther was able to call Pisanelli on his cell phone and connect that way to the chapter Zoom meeting. Richard Reed began by asking whether the VFW post had done any fundraising to contribute to the cost of the repair.

John went over some of the post's efforts. He noted the winner of a rifle raffle donated the prize back to the post. The post will print 750 tickets and charge \$10 per ticket, for example, to raise money through a lottery. Transmission of John's comments were a bit difficult to follow, due to the use of Jack's cell phone.

Dick Doyle jumped in to ask, if Chapter 1 contributed half the requested amount would the post be able to cover the rest. "Yeah, I really think we would," John replied. Referring to past discussion at the VFW about selling the building, John said the post was currently happy with the building and available parking. As Jack relayed from John, the post is currently financially viable. An architect has looked at upstairs rooms at the post as potential housing for traveling nurses, which would be a source of additional income. Home Depot has offered support for work on the building. John said the federal government's COVID relief program had helped with payroll and utility expenses during the pandemic. He also said the post quartermaster, who serves as secretary-treasurer, could answer other questions Chapter 1 might have about the post's financial situation.

John Pisanelli then left the call. After some discussion, Richard Reed moved to donate half the cost of the cooler repair, that is, \$3,225. Seconded by Bill Ellwood. No dissent.

Andy Megrath read a thank-you note from a woman we assisted with the cost of a memorial for her son. The woman, from Danby, is the widow of a Vietnam veteran. Another thank-you note came from Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports, which received a recent donation from the chapter of \$2,000. A third note was from a Danby veteran whom the chapter helped with expenses for his truck and a new water heater. The Vermont arm of the U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants also acknowledged our recent gift.

We then moved on to nomination of officers and board members for the coming year. Voting takes place at our Annual Meeting in April. Andy Megrath announced that he was stepping down as president, a post he has held since 2004, i.e., 19 years! Andy cited family issues as a reason for stepping down but said he would help his successor with some specialized tasks he has been handling, such as filings with the IRS and notifying VVA national about election of officers. Andy will also be stepping down as vice president of the VVA State Council. He will continue as a member of the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council.

In putting forth a slate of officers and board members, Jack Crowther said he typically nominates the current slate, if they are willing to serve. Additional nominations from the membership at large are always welcome.

Tim Lonergan said he was willing to continue as vice president but would not be a candidate for president. Jack Crowther said he would favor folding the chapter if the job of president could not be filled but said he didn't want to foreclose any options, including a reshuffling of the president's duties among others. That might allow someone else to step into the presidency without assuming all the responsibilities that Andy has carried.

There seemed to be a consensus to continue the chapter. "We've made some really solid contributions in the last few years, at least I think," said Dick Doyle, implying we should continue. "Let's not scuttle the boat before it starts sinking," said Richard Reed. Bill Ellwood expressed an interest in a formal delineation of presidential duties. Michael Murphy, who lives in Virginia, offered to help to the degree possible, given his location.

As it was, Jack proposed the following slate of officers and directors for the year ahead: president, vacant; vice president, Tim Lonergan; treasurer, Richard Reed; secretary, Jack Crowther; trustees, Dick Doyle, Michael Murphy, Carl Baldwin, Bill Ellwood, and Cliff Adams.

The day after the meeting, discussions on the leadership issue continued. As secretary, I'll say that it appears we can work out a plan to continue Chapter 1 with some reshuffling of duties. My own view is that we need a clearly designated president, albeit with a lighter workload. Without jumping to conclusions, I think something will be worked out. In the meantime, members should feel free to weigh in at the annual meet, the Zoom link to which is listed below.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Crowther, Secretary

**THE NEXT CHAPTER 1 MEETING WILL BE BY ZOOM WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12, AT 5 P.M.**