



Vietnam Veterans Of America Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org
March 2018



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

March 20, 2018

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

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

We heard a thorough presentation by Sgt. Thomas Conrad and Investigator Michael Davidson of the Vermont Department of Liquor Control regarding our chief source of income, namely “rip tickets” sold by Tomasi’s bar in Fair Haven.

The arrangement with the bar has been vital to the financial health of Chapter 1 for many years, but there has been some question as to whether we in Chapter 1 were following the accounting and oversight procedures required by the state. While our review of procedures is under way, Andy Megrath has instructed Tomasi’s to stop selling the tickets.

In the course of their presentation, Conrad and Davidson outlined their duties and objectives with respect to the rip-off tickets. They described the tickets as an excellent source of revenues for non-profit organizations like Chapter 1, but stressed that the benefitting groups need to follow proper accounting rules. Essentially, the charity needs to be able to account for all the tickets purchased from the distributor, in our case, Bingo Supply of Bondville. We also need to keep track of the money taken in, the prize money awarded and any tickets that are left unsold. It was evident that we, Chapter 1 have not been sufficiently on top of that process, though the relationship with Tomasi’s has continued smoothly for years.

“To run it properly, there’s a lot of time and work . . .” Conrad noted, explaining that the purpose of the state Liquor Control Department’s oversight was to see that the benefitting charities get the money they’re entitled to. “If it’s run correctly, it’s a great source of income,” Conrad noted.

After asking Andy a few questions about the chapter’s non-profit status and tax-filing, Davidson affirmed that the chapter was legally entitled to receive the rip ticket money. But he also noted, “You need to account for your money,” meaning that income, payouts and unsold tickets must be reconciled. The whole procedure is subject to audit by the state Tax Department.

In the future, Chapter 1 needs in its records an invoice for every box of rip tickets the bar receives. “If you’re going to do it, you have to have control of it because it’s yours,” Davidson said.

Andy Megrath and Treasurer Richard Reed plan to visit Tomasi’s to review procedures to bring things into compliance. As mentioned, Andy has instructed the bar owners not to sell tickets for the time being.

In other business, Tim Lonergan, a chapter life member, made a presentation on behalf of Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports, which provides year-round recreation opportunities for people with disabilities. The disabilities cover a wide range, including blindness, missing limbs, PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder), and autism. Veterans with

disabilities are very much a part of the program, and have taken part in such activities as an ice climbing outing in Warren and a women's veterans ski and snowboarding day at Pico, scheduled for the coming weekend.

Lonergan described his own experience working with a blind veteran. Veterans in general, not just Vietnam vets are the focus of the veterans programs. A specific example was a group from the We Soldier On homeless vets program in Massachusetts, which came up and spent the day at Chittenden Reservoir on the water and hiking. "It gives these folks a chance to get out and be active and do things they might have thought they never would do," Tim said.

"This organization has always been cognizant of veterans and tried to find activities for them," he noted. A grant awarded four years ago caused the group to become more involved with the VA facility in White River Junction, he explained, but this year that grant has gone away. To keep the vets program going will require raising \$75,000, the reason for his appearance at our meeting.

Andy Megrath suggested that Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports approach the Vermont Veterans Fund with a request for funding. The fund is a tax-supported item on the Vermont State tax return and doles out grants based on the contributions received. Andy is a member of the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council and sits on the committee that awards the money.

Jack Crowther asked if there was a way of earmarking a donation for a veterans program, and Tim said yes. Both Jack and Andy Megrath both registered some frustration in efforts to communicate with VASS in the past. Tim noted that the organization has 10 paid employees and over 400 volunteers. He offered to serve as a liaison with the group.

Jack further asked if VASS was able to insure that all or a certain percentage of any gift from Chapter 1 would go for direct services to veterans, as opposed to administrative or other general expenses of the group. Tim agreed to get answers.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported balances in the chapter's bank accounts in January of \$44,217 and in February of 48,444. The report was approved unanimously.

Andy reported on the recent activities of the Vermont Governor's Veterans Advisory Council, sometimes called GVAC. Andy outlined seven priorities identified by the council that were forwarded to Gov. Phil Scott, who has supported four. The seven were: 1. Phase out the income tax on military pensions, 2. Support entitlement scholarships for the National Guard, 3. Sustained/appropriate funding for the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington, 4. Increased licensing reciprocity for veterans and spouses in high-demand job fields, 5. Making the Adjutant General's position appointed by the governor, with a revamping of the qualifications, 6. Eliminating the inclusion of VA pensions and compensation in household income on the Vermont State tax return, and 7. Creating a low-interest pool of capital for veterans looking to start a business.

Number 4 refers to allowing soldiers and spouses with professional certifications obtained during military service to be certified in Vermont automatically.

Andy reported that Gov. Scott was standing behind priorities 1, 2, 4, and 5.

Andy also reported some data associated with military retirees, including the following: As of September, 2016, there were 646 non-disabled officers age 65 and over receiving \$1,818,000 per year from the Department of Defense. Non-disabled, retired enlisted residents totaled 1,527, and were being paid by the Department of Defense \$1,872,000 per year. Andy's point was that when issues like the priorities listed come before the Legislature, the first question always asked is, "How much is it going to cost us?" Thus compiling the statistics is a way of showing the economic impact of veterans living in the state.

Another figure from the same sheet of statistics calculated that the total amount of dollars retirees and their survivors contributed to Vermont was \$85,416,000 a year.

"And the worst part of it is the state can't come back and tell us how many veterans there are in the state of Vermont," Andy said. Richard Reed, who formerly headed the state Office of Veterans Affairs, noted, "For what it's worth, nobody has an exact number anywhere. . . I chased that slippery eel."

Jack Crowther, the chair of the nominating committee, nominated the existing slate of officers and directors to be re-elected. They include: president, Andy Megrath; vice president, Dave Mathis; treasurer, Richard Reed; secretary, Jack Crowther; and directors, Joanne Reynolds, Dick Doyle, William Whitney, Jim Ficken and George Henry.

Anyone else interested in one of the above positions should contact an officer or director or attend the annual meeting April 11 and express his or her interest.

Richard Reed reported on an email he received from Tom Jackson, who is a VVA service officer. The national VVA has informed Jackson he is not eligible to be a service officer because he is an associate member, rather than a regular member of VVA. Though a Navy veteran, Jackson's service occurred after the Vietnam era, so he isn't eligible to be a regular VVA member. It was noted that in the past, associate VVA members have served as service officers for VVA. No formal action was taken on this matter.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary,

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11,
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.**