



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

JANUARY 2023



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING JAN. 11, 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, Carl Baldwin, and Cliff Adams. A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors was held; no business was transacted.

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

Treasurer Richard Reed reported a balance of \$116,522.73 in all of the chapter's accounts. Net income from the sale of break-open tickets for the current fiscal year, which began in March, is \$14,215, a corrected figure. Richard noted we have a credit of \$3,688 with the supplier of the break-open tickets, due to an overpayment in December. Richard noted that the proprietor of Tomasi's bar in Fair Haven, where the tickets are sold, told him the tickets "are selling like crazy." The report was approved unanimously.

Discussion then turned to how the chapter might choose to allocate its money, in light of the large balance noted in the treasurer's report. A check of records following the meeting showed that our largest contributions in the past have included a total of \$50,000 donated to the Stafford Technical School scholarship program and \$25,000 to a trust fund for maintenance of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

"I would say, though, that personally I would rather that we spent some time and gave serious consideration to where we want to make big grants," Richard Reed said. The money's sitting there in the account. That's fine."

He said the chapter was below income limits for non-profits, "so we're not necessarily under any pressure (to spend down the account). . ."

Discussion focused initially on the Dodge House, Rutland's transitional place for homeless veterans. Andy Megrath will check with Chris Morgan, director of the Dodge House, on their possible needs. Richard Reed encouraged taking a look at the facility's longer-term needs to see if the chapter might assist in meeting them. He mentioned ongoing problems with the roof. Tim Lonergan suggested inviting someone from the Dodge House to a meeting of the chapter to discuss needs of the facility. Andy will follow up.

Andy said he would check with Chris, as well as with Richard Gallo, a Vermont veterans outreach specialist who has come to Chapter 1 in the past to assist veterans needing financial help. Michael Murphy said he favored concentrating chapter help on Rutland County veterans, so long as any needs exist here.

Other possible recipients of chapter aid included the Rutland City Rescue Mission, which offers shelter, food and other assistance to the homeless, with a particular emphasis on veterans. Andy said he would check with the Mission's director as well, to see if it had special needs. Bill Ellwood suggested we might extend aid to individual vets being served by the Mission.



Chapter 1 provided the plaque shown above at West Rutland American Legion Post 87. The plaque accompanies the marble bust from the original sculpture

Richard Reed suggested Friends of Veterans, based in White River Junction and serving vets in both New Hampshire and Vermont, might merit assistance, as well as those served by the Vermont Veterans Fund. The latter is primarily funded by checkoff donations on the Vermont tax return. Andy Megrath sits on the committee that allocates the taxpayer funds raised. Besides taxpayer check-offs, the group accepts donations, according to Richard. Andy said he would also visit the Friends of Veterans office in White River when he visits the area in the near future.

The service officer program supported by the Vermont State Council is another beneficiary of the chapter's help that we might assist in the future. The State Council will meet via Zoom on Jan. 21 at 11 a.m.

Richard Reed will work on setting up a visit to Tomasi's bar in Fair Haven sometime in the near future for chapter members to thank Shaun and Danielle Tomasi for the financial support they have provided over the years through the sale of break-open tickets. Jack will send out an email when a date is selected. It will probably be on a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday at lunchtime.

Bill Ellwood reported that the updated Honor Roll at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial has been posted on the Chapter 1 website, www.vietnamvetschapter1.org, and appears on the Rutland Historical Society website. Bill will see to it that a second location on the Historical Society site is also updated. Bill suggested "freshening up" the chapter's website with pictures more specific to our chapter. Members are welcome to make suggestions. Send them to Bill at rutlandvvaarchives@gmail.com. Bill will come back with some suggestions. He mentioned a rotating selection of images as a possibility.

Richard Reed reported on the PACT Act of 2022, which expands benefits and health care for veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxins during their service. President Joe Biden signed the bill into law in August 2022. It went into effect January 1. According to the VA (the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs) the law adds to the list of health conditions that the VA "presumes" are caused by exposure to these substances. The law helps veterans and their survivors with the care and benefits they've earned. Richard noted that two "presumptive" conditions relevant to Vietnam vets exposed to Agent Orange include high blood pressure and "monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance." The "presumptive," label means you don't have to prove that your military service caused the condition you are experiencing. More information on the new PACT law is available here <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>.

"The big thing there is that Vietnam era veterans who served in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, they are now in many cases considered presumptively exposed to Agent Orange," Richard said. He assists veterans with claims for VA benefits and said he is putting in a couple of claims based on that expanded eligibility under the PACT law.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

THE NEXT CHAPTER 1 MEETING WILL BE BY ZOOM WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, AT 5 P.M.

Here's the link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82555931292?pwd=UEt6N1hveFg2SzZtZ3doZWQ0aFpDQT09>

Meeting ID: 825 5593 1292

Passcode: 699806