



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

MAY 2023



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING MAY 10, 2023

At Chapter 1's May meeting, held on the Zoom app, attendees included Bill Ellwood, president; Tim Lonergan, vice president; Richard Reed, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Directors Andy Megrath, Michael Murphy, Cliff Adams, and Carl Baldwin. Also attending were Larry Gold and Doug MacPhee. A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors was held; no business was transacted.

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

Treasurer Richard Reed presented his report, which was unanimously approved.

Richard Reed reported on the State Council meeting in April. "The main item that came up in the course of the meeting was concern among chapters who are losing members and kind of losing ground," he said. "We've already lost at least one chapter in Vermont that I know of, the Essex Junction chapter. I know Bristol is hanging on by a thread. Apparently some of the others are, too."

A topic that has come up at the national level, Richard said, is chapters being absorbed by other chapters. Chapter 1 could be a new home for VVA members of disbanded chapters, he suggested. "So my concept is, 'Chapter 1, first in the nation, last to leave,'" Richard said, with a discernible twinkle in his eye.

Andy Megrath, president for the last 19 years before his recent retirement and election as a board member, said that if a chapter disbands, the members become VVA members "at large," unless they transfer to another chapter. Transfer requests are submitted to the receiving chapter, which submits the transfer to the State Council and VVA national, Andy said. Bill Ellwood thought it would be good to pursue the idea of recruiting members of closing chapters.

Richard said the next State Council meeting will be June 10 at the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington. Members are invited to attend the meeting, which features a cookout tended by VVA members. Cooking will begin at 11 a.m.

There was some discussion of establishing a chapter email address to receive messages generated by people visiting the chapter's website, vietnamvetschapter1.org. The consensus was to create a chapter email address.



Chapter 1 Secretary Jack Crowther presented a framed picture of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial to Danielle Tomasi, co-owner of Tomasi's Tavern in Fair Haven, on April 19. The gift was a thank-you for the years of support Tomasi's has provided Chapter 1 through the sale of break-open tickets.

Andy Megrath said Chapter 1's tax form has been accepted by the IRS. The financial report is ready to go to the state, he said. The election report is ready to go with the addition of Richard Reed as State Council rep. The chapter is entitled to three State Council representatives. Anyone interested in taking part in these meetings can let Richard Reed know.

Andy reported that the Dodge House, which provides temporary housing for homeless veterans, has closed and that the longtime director, Chris Morgan, has been terminated. Chapter 1 has supported Chris and the Dodge House for many years. We recently approved money for security cameras at the facility, but paused the donation when we learned of the upheaval in its operation. The board of the Dodge House reportedly decided no security system was needed.

Morgan has worked for the Veterans Assistance Office, located at the Dodge House, for about 17 years. In November 2019 the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued her a certificate of appreciation for her work with veterans.

Under new business, Larry Gold reported that a "ski buddy" had spoken to him about donating a condominium to a veterans organization upon her death, the suggestion from Larry being that Chapter 1 might be such an organization. This triggered a discussion of some length about whether and how Chapter 1 might respond to a concrete offer, if it occurred. Carl Baldwin weighed in on tax accounting issues involved in a gift like that. Questions arose about a non-profit like Chapter 1 getting involved in managing a property such as a condo. Richard Reed advised "extreme caution," noting "We have no business in the property management business." He also asked of the chapter, "What is our intention going forward, in terms of the money we have and the existence of the chapter. I think there are some very big existential questions that we need to address right away."

Bill Ellwood summarized things by suggesting we convey to Larry's friend that the chapter is interested in what the offer would be, noting as well the chapter is not in the property management business. Also, as Larry Gold observed, it's possible the owner of the property could actually outlive Chapter 1. Bill enlarged the discussion by saying an issue he wants to pursue is exploring whether the chapter might designate a trust to receive Chapter 1 funds when the chapter closes down.

Moving on to possible donations to charities, Michael Murphy reported he had reached out to Rutland City's Open Door Mission, which offers services specifically to veterans, as well as others, to learn what needs of the mission Chapter 1 might be able to fulfill. So far he has not heard back, despite multiple efforts to contact the manager.

Jack Crowther, reporting on two charities he had researched, proposed donating \$500 a month for a year to No One Left Behind and \$200 a month for a year to Save the Children. He noted that the chapter has supported both charities in the past and that both are rated four stars, the highest rating, by Charity Navigator, which evaluates charities based on four criteria: 1) Impact & Results, 2) Accountability & Finance, 3) Leadership & Adaptability, and 4) Culture & Community. Details on the criteria and the two charities' ratings can be found at charitynavigator.org. Mike Murphy seconded the motion. Passed unanimously. The roles of the two charities have been described in previous newsletters.

The chapter will continue to explore charitable giving opportunities in the future. One particular charity previously mentioned was World Central Kitchen, which has been active in feeding people in Ukraine.

Bill Ellwood announced that Chapter 1's chaplain, the Rev. Pete Hults, will be giving a Memorial Day sermon Sunday, May 28, at 10 a.m. at the United Church of West Rutland. The church is at 60 Chapel St., just a block from the town hall. Chapter 1 members in the area are invited. Although Pete is retiring next month from his pastoral duties at the church, he is interested in working in the future with the chapter. In that regard, Bill is interested in arranging visits to veterans in nursing homes and hospitals, using volunteers who might be interested. Bill also suggested the chapter could sponsor a veterans meal, possibly collaborating with one of the other organizations that provides meals to the needy.

In a final note, Andy Megrath reported that the Patriot Guard motorcycle group would be providing an escort for the funeral Saturday for Fred Hellmuth of Pittsford, a life member who died Feb. 15.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

THE NEXT CHAPTER 1 MEETING WILL BE BY ZOOM WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, AT 5 P.M.