



# Vietnam Veterans Of America

## Chapter One

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

OCTOBER 2024



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### MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING OCTOBER 9, 2024

Approximately 17 members/associate members attended, along with students and chaperones from the RISE exchange program with Japan and others seeking Chapter 1 assistance. As well as being well-attended, this was one of the longest meetings in memory, lasting more than two-and-a-half hours! It was noted that three past presidents, Mark Truhan, John Bergeron, and Andy Megrath attended, as did current President Bill Ellwood.

Minutes of the August meeting were approved unanimously.

The treasurer's report was approved unanimously.

Membership chair Dick Doyle said membership stands at about 131, with a few additions balancing out some passings. Some new memberships are in the works, including a rejoining of Tom Reed, a charter member from Chapter 1's founding in 1980.

Chapter 1 is sponsoring the food for the Veterans Town Hall scheduled for Friday, Nov. 8 at the Godnick Adult Center, 1 Deer St., Rutland. The event runs from 6 to 7:30 p.m. and is free. A free dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m. but requires preregistration at [vtvetstownhall.org](http://vtvetstownhall.org). The program invites vets to speak of their experiences and what their service means to them. Non-veterans are invited to attend and listen. More information is on the website.

John Pisanelli, Commander of VFW Post 648, where Chapter 1 has its offices, has provided us an estimate of about \$1,400 for renovation of the second floor bathrooms that Chapter 1 uses. Labor will be donated. The chapter would like to spruce up the bathrooms and contribute to the cost. After reviewing the quote, we agreed that we are interested in a more ambitious project, including new flooring. Andy Megrath moved that the Chapter allocate \$5,000 toward the work and provide John with some suggestions for additional work beyond what the quote covered. Jack Crowther will communicate with John on the details.

Chris Chapman, a Rutland Middle School teacher and chaperone for the RISE student exchange program with Hanamaki, Japan, appeared with six students who made the trip earlier this year. Each of the students gave highlights of the trip, which Chapter 1 supported with a \$4,000 donation after a major donation fell through. The group, which will be hosting a Japanese contingent, will be providing the chapter a slide show of the trip.

Audrey Bridge, executive director of the Rutland Community Cupboard, presented a summary of the “food shelf” activities in a request for financial support. She cited recent increases in people’s need for food, noting the families served had grown from 60 when she started to 1,400. She is seeking to raise \$55,000 to fund operations and is currently at about \$29,000. The organization does get food donations but receives no state, federal or municipal funds.

The chapter took no action on the request at the meeting. Subsequently a proposal was made to the Chapter 1 board to donate \$2,000 to the Community Cupboard. Our bylaws allow for donations up to that amount to be made between meetings if a majority of officers and board members approve.

Richard Gallo, a veterans outreach specialist long active in the area, appeared on behalf of a retired Marine and Army national guardsman. The former master sergeant is facing a financial emergency to pay for winter fuel and costly dental work. His daughter is providing some assistance. After discussion and questioning, Shawn Bryan moved to donate \$500 for fuel assistance. Seconded by Andy Megrath. Passed unanimously. Richard is welcome to seek further help for the dental work at a later date.

On Veterans Day, Monday, Nov. 11, the chapter will be updating the Honor Roll at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Seven names will be added to the 350 already on the Honor Roll. They are Frank Belock, Grenville Day, Thomas Holland, and Michael Sule, all of Rutland; Albert Mallette and Freeland Mattison, both of Castleton, and Walden Pratt of Wells. The ceremony will be held at 10 a.m. at the Memorial.

There was a lively discussion about whether to include an eighth name, but a decision was postponed to a later date. The issue was that while the veteran had served in Vietnam and had grown up in Rutland, his “home of record” was Windsor County. According to the rule for inclusion on the Honor Roll, the veteran must have entered the service from Rutland County. The veteran in question moved to Springfield in the fall of his senior year of high school. Just after graduation he joined the Marines.

Michael Murphy, a schoolmate of the individual, argued in favor of making an exception, while Andy Megrath favored sticking to the rule. Opinion was divided. Ultimately President Bill Ellwood pushed through a pause in the decision until more members can weigh in. Because of production deadlines, the name cannot be included in the Nov. 11 Honor Roll update.

Jack Crowther noted that Mike Cauty of Proctor had donated his services in repainting the sign at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans in anticipation of Veterans Day. The chapter will hold a work party on Saturday, Nov. 9, to tidy up the memorial before the ceremony.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Crowther, Secretary

**THE NEXT CHAPTER 1 MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY, DEC. 11, AT 4:30 P.M.  
BY ZOOM AND IN PERSON AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND. A BRIEF BUSINESS  
MEETING WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A SOCIAL GATHERING DOWNSTAIRS AT THE VFW.**