



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

FEBRUARY 2025



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING FEBRUARY 12, 2025

Approximately 17 persons attended, about half on Zoom and the other half in person.

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors was held; no business was transacted.

The minutes of the December meeting were accepted as printed in the newsletter.

Membership Chair Dick Doyle reported the chapter has 136 regular members, including new members Norman Flanders of Clarendon, Lonnie Leroux of Mendon and Anthony Marchand of Rutland. Louis Wierzbicki of Rutland submitted his paperwork at the meeting to join the chapter. Dick noted the passing of members Stuart Selikowicz of Waldoboro, Maine and Peter Mayhew of Whiting. Peter passed away just this Feb. 4.

Mike Murphy reported on efforts being made to provide a “home” chapter to VVA members whose chapters have disbanded or who may be otherwise listed as having no chapter affiliation. Mike is attempting to contact about 137 such “orphan” members. It’s challenging because many have no email addresses. Chapter 1 sent out an email inviting these unaffiliated VVA members to join Chapter 1 or either of the other active Vermont chapters, in St. Albans and Bennington. Chapters in Essex Junction, Brattleboro, Montpelier, Bristol and Chester have disbanded. A couple of unaffiliated members have expressed interest in joining Chapter 1.



Lt. Joann Larson, squadron commander for the Rutland Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, describes the local youth program at the Feb. 12 meeting of Chapter 1. The chapter has donated \$2,500 in support of the squadron.

Chapter President Bill Ellwood has, for the time being, been heading up Chapter 1’s AVVA (Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America) component. These include non-veterans interested in assisting the chapter’s efforts. Chapter 1 allocated \$1,000 to our AVVA group to carry out projects of their choosing. An initial project was assisting someone settling into new living quarters by providing a “starter kit” of household supplies. VFW Chapter 648 assisted the person with some furniture it had acquired.

The local unit of the Civil Air Patrol, known as the Rutland Composite Squadron, appeared at the invitation of Chapter 1 to describe their program and ask support for its current goals: a visit to the retired aircraft carrier USS Intrepid, with its museum, and the 911 Memorial in New York City; and equipment for its Honor Guard. Lt. Joann Larson appeared with five cadets, some of whom had assisted at a Chapter 1 Veterans Day service at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Rutland and a Veterans Town Hall in the fall. The squadron has about 15 cadets.

CAP teaches leadership skills and provides military style activities to young people, who may enter from ages 12 to 18. Members also take part in emergency response situations. CAP is a civilian affiliate of the U.S. Air Force. Participants who go on to join the military may be able to enter the service at a higher rank and pay grade.

After the departure of the CAP contingent, Larry Gold moved to donate \$2,000 to the local squadron. Seconded by Tim Lonergan. Approved unanimously. This amount is in addition to \$500 approved at the December meeting as a preliminary donation.

Following the CAP presentation, we heard from Heidi Lynch, executive director of the Vermont Farmers Food Center. Jack Crowther had invited the Food Center's Farmacy program to apply to Chapter 1 for financial support. As Heidi explained, the Farmacy program is one that provides fresh produce to area residents whose doctors recommend it for health reasons. Farmacy is a play on words in the sense that fresh produce is "prescribed" by a health provider in the manner of a pharmacy prescription.

Heidi reported that recipients of the program receive weekly boxes of food for 15 weeks during the growing season, beginning in June. Local farmers supply the produce and are paid, one of the program's goals being support of local agriculture. Food is supplemented with recipes, nutrition information, and cooking classes, so the program has a social element. Participation has grown from 75 recipients initially to 250. The program conducts fundraising each year.

A new Farmacy collaboration is with the Community Based Outpatient Clinic of the VA, which is right across West Street in Rutland from the Food Center. This year the VA will provide 20 Farmacy shares for veterans. Other community partners also support the program, while some participants share the \$400 cost-per-participant. The program works with all the rural health clinics in the county, Heidi said.

Although Farmacy focuses on food delivery during the growing season, it continues year-round as off-season food, like winter squash, is available. Participants are not asked to supply financial information. Rutland's is one of the oldest Farmacy programs.

After Heidi completed her presentation, answered questions, and departed, Jack Crowther moved to donate \$2,000 to the Farmacy program. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Passed unanimously.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported on the chapter's accounts, including income from the sale of break-open tickets from Tomasi's in Fair Haven. The report was approved unanimously.

The Chapter 1 meeting revisited the question of whether Ken Seward's name should be added to the Honor Roll at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Eligibility for listing has always required that the serviceman or woman receive the Vietnam Service Medal or show other proof of service in the war and that the person entered the service from Rutland County. Ken went on to have a career in education in Richmond, Va. His situation, as explained by Mike Murphy, was that he grew up in Rutland but moved with his family to Springfield shortly before graduation from high school. Immediately after graduation he joined the Marines, entering the service from Windsor County, where he was then living.

There has been general support for adding Ken's name, in light of him clearly being "a Rutland County boy," but a few members felt the rule about entering the service from Rutland County needed to be strictly enforced. In commenting on the issue, Bill Ellwood said the chapter was not changing the rule for inclusion on the memorial but rather making a one-time exception.

Dick Doyle moved to add Ken Seward to the Honor Roll. Seconded by Jack Crowther. The motion passed unanimously, with one abstention.

The Chapter 1 Annual Meeting will be Wednesday, April 9. Jack Crowther acts as a Nominating Committee of one, normally putting forth a slate of four officers and five directors consisting of current office holders willing to continue serving and/or newcomers interested in stepping up. Anyone interested in serving as an officer or director is encouraged to contact an officer or director or email the chapter at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com.

The Region 1 conference of State Council presidents and directors from New England will be held June 14 in Rutland, with Chapter 1 as host. The conference will take place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Chapter 1 is considering holding its 45th Anniversary celebration at the same time. It would take the form of a dinner banquet, with the regional representatives and a likely official from VVA national in attendance.

Bill Ellwood noted that the chapter will again help sponsor a Veterans Town Hall Nov. 7 in Rutland, as did last year.

The national VVA Convention will be held Aug. 5-9 in New Orleans. As the organization contemplates its eventual dissolution, this will be an important gathering. Dick Doyle is interested in attending, and Perry Melvin, a Chapter 1 member and Vermont's VVA State Council president, is expected to attend. The chapter is probably

entitled to 2 or 3 representatives, so anyone interested should notify Bill Ellwood through the email listed above of their interest. Preference will be given to officers and directors. The chapter will pick up the basic costs, which Dick estimated to be \$1,695 per person.

Jack Crowther wrote a song about Chapter 1 and is interested feedback on its accuracy, quality, etc. It is posted on YouTube and can be accessed through this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRBy8DLyxvAvXza1zx2IjuA>

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

The next chapter meeting will be Wednesday, March 12, 4 p.m., upstairs at the VFW and by Zoom.