



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

APRIL 2025



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING APRIL 9, 2025

Approximately 16 persons attended, a handful on Zoom and the others in person.

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

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

Treasurer Richard Reed reported the total in our bank accounts. The report was unanimously approved.

President Bill Ellwood previewed goals for the year ahead, noting plans for the banquet celebrating the chapter's 45th anniversary June 14, at the Franklin Center. To recap what is known so far:

Chapter 1 members are invited with one guest to attend for free. Event is likely to begin about 5 p.m. on June 14, following the Regional VVA Conference from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the VFW.

MEMBERS (regular and associate): As soon as convenient, please let the chapter know if you and a guest plan to attend the June 14 banquet. Email us at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com. Lacking internet, you may call Secretary Jack Crowther at 802-775-1182 or mail Chapter 1 VVA, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701.

ALSO, Members and associates who wish to attend the regional VVA meeting earlier the same day at the VFW from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., please notify the chapter through the same means as above.

HEADCOUNTS ARE IMPORTANT FOR PLANNING!!

Note: Officers and board members are welcome to invite special guests to the banquet at no cost. Just let Bill Ellwood know!

Bill also laid out some potential activities for the year ahead, this being our Annual Meeting. These included a visit to the Vermont Vietnam Memorial at the Sharon Rest Area on Interstate 89 northbound and the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph. He also promoted the idea of a Chapter 1 group taking the Honor Flight. These trips, from Albany and Plattsburgh take veterans from the area for a day in Washington, D.C., to visit military monuments. The annual cookout for residents of the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington is another event that could become a collective outing for the chapter. "We need to hear from you," Bill said, expressing the wish that members weigh in on their interest in these ideas or others.

Membership Chair Dick Doyle reported the chapter is up to 140 members, the latest being Louis Wierzbicki of Rutland. Dick is working on processing transfer forms for VVA members from other chapters wishing to join Chapter 1, several chapters in Vermont having closed. We could be gaining as many as 20 new members, he said.

On a motion by Jack Crowther, seconded by Dick Doyle, we agreed to spend up to \$1,000 to mail copies of the upcoming Rutland Historical Society Quarterly featuring Chapter 1, written by Janelle Faignant, to all chapter members. We will also have about 50 more printed for new members and others interested. The Quarterly will eventually be available for sale at the Historical Society and online at their website, rutlandhistory.com.

Jack Crowther submitted the following slate of officers and board members to serve for the coming year: president, Bill Ellwood; vice president, Larry Gold; treasurer, Richard Reed; secretary, Jack Crowther; and board members, Dick

Doyle, Tim Lonergan, Mike Murphy, Carl Baldwin, and Dave Potter. Dave is a new member. There were no additional nominations. Richard Reed moved to elect the slate, seconded by Mike Murphy. The vote was unanimous.

Kimberley Jarrait, assistant director of the Dodge House, spoke as an invited guest to update the chapter on current operations. Dodge House provides transitional housing for homeless veterans. It is again operating after being closed for a time amid a shakeup in its staff and governance. Chapter 1 member Bruce Paquin is the president of the Dodge House board. Kimberly, herself an Air Force veteran, reviewed the history of the facility, which Chapter 1 has supported from the beginning and helped establish. It is named for Mike Dodge, an early Chapter 1 member who committed suicide.

The home at 95 Crescent St. currently has five men and three women residents in the divided quarters. The staff also includes Executive Director John Tester. There are two full kitchens, a food pantry, and a library. Residents pay nothing. Supported by grants in the past, Dodge House has operated completely on donations for the past year. Sons of the American Legion is a main supporter. The staff works with residents to obtain employment and permanent housing. Applicants must be 30 days sober to be taken in, and a “zero tolerance” policy applies for substance abuse.

An ongoing need is drivers to transport the residents to appointments. Groceries run about \$250-\$300 per week. The Vermont Food Bank helps out.

Chapter 1 is receptive to aiding the Dodge House financially, and Kimberly will get back to us with a more specific request.

Tim Wigmore of the RISE Hanamaki Student Exchange spoke on behalf of the program, which he has been involved in since 2004. With him was Jonny Gydus a ninth grader in the Rutland City School system. The program features visits from the Rutland schools’ 8th and ninth graders to Japan and vice versa, and has been ongoing for 35 years. Six children and two chaperones will take part this year. Self-confidence, and new perspectives are goals of the program, which Tim said have touched over 2,000 lives during its existence. The program sought financial support for its \$25,000 goal, which is raised by various fundraisers.

Tim readily agreed to pursue a work project, possibly at Evergreen Cemetery, in return for a donation from the chapter. Following a discussion, we voted to contribute \$2,000 to the group. The group will make a presentation to the chapter after their visit to Japan.

Following up on a presentation at our March meeting by Companions in Wholeness, a food kitchen and shelter at the Methodist Church on Strongs Avenue in Rutland, Jack proposed a donation of \$2,000 to help in their operations. Seconded by Bill Ellwood. Passed unanimously.

Richard Gallo, Vermont Veterans Outreach Specialist, under contract with the Vermont National Guard, was on hand to solicit participation in a program to transport vets to appointments and errands. A new development in the effort is that the program is now being run through the Marble Valley Transit District (locally known as The Bus). Volunteers are now able to receive reimbursement of 70 cents per mile, in addition to the rewards of interacting with vets who need the rides. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Richard at richard.d.gallo.ctr@mail.mil or call his office at 802-338-4323.

On a motion by Bill Ellwood, seconded by Larry Gold, we unanimously approved up to \$2,000 to send Dick Doyle to the National VVA convention in New Orleans Aug. 5 to 9. Chapter 1 is entitled to send up to three delegates, so others interested in representing the chapter should step forward. Preference will be given to officers and board members or others who have been active in our meetings. Anyone interested should contact Bill Ellwood at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com, and he’ll provide an application.

There will be a wreath-laying ceremony May 2 at noon at the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph. The event, to take place at the flagpoles, commemorates the 50 years since U.S. troops were removed from Vietnam, and is a thank-you to those that served. Please let Perry Melvin, VVA Vermont State Council president, know if you plan to attend. His email is usmcdocvt@yahoo.com.



Kimberley Jarrait, assistant director of the Dodge House for homeless veterans, spoke to our April meeting, which included Zoom participants shown in the background.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Crowther, Secretary

The next chapter meeting will be Wednesday, May 7, at 4 p.m., downstairs at the VFW and by Zoom.