



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

OCTOBER 2025



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING OCT. 8, 2025

I counted 22 people in attendance, 20 in person and 4 on Zoom, another great turnout! New members attending included Abe Leber of Belmont, Doug Barrett of West Haven, Roy Godda of Rutland, and Ken Crews of Benson.

The minutes of the September meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter, with one correction, as follows: The group of members of Chapter 1 that have transferred from the now closed Chester chapter are to be designated a “committee” of Chapter 1.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported on the cash in all our bank accounts. The report was unanimously approved.

Membership Chair Richard Doyle reported 180 regular members, including 18 new members from Vermont and out of state. This large influx is largely due to transfers from chapters that have closed and is thanks to outreach efforts to those newly “orphaned” members by Richard and Mike Murphy.

President Bill Ellwood reported 21 Chapter 1 Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America members, including a few Chapter 1 regular members who are also associate members. Bill proposed that for anyone willing to join AVVA, which is open to those not eligible for regular VVA membership, Chapter 1 would pay half the \$100 lifetime membership fee, after the person had shown sincere interest by attending at least two meetings. Moved and seconded and approved without opposition. Chapter 1 has approved \$2,000 for projects that its AVVA affiliate may undertake.

Mike Murphy reported that on a recent plane trip three TSA (Transportation Safety Administration) security people reacted to his Chapter 1 hat in a very friendly, affirmative way. “It impacted me the whole day,” Mike said. Carl Baldwin said he had had the same TSA experience in Las Vegas, where he had gone for a reunion of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing. The TSA agents thanked him for his service. “I had a number of our 366 members that said, ‘Well, where’s Chapter 1? And then that prompted conversation. And then they would talk about their chapters at home. They wish they did the things that we did. So we really have a premier chapter, and it’s just great to hear those compliments from other veterans and other chapters.”

Mike reported on the fledgling Outreach Committee, recently established as a vehicle for Chapter 1 members to visit veterans confined to health care and assisted living facilities. Mike has identified a dozen such locations in the Rutland area and was pleased to report that at least one Chapter 1 member has taken responsibility for visitations to each facility. In addition, Stan Clark from Perkinsville is actively involved in vet visits. Stan spent 32 hours of visits in September with vets in his area.

Despite this encouraging picture, Mike is hoping more members will step forward to participate. Nearly all the facilities contacted were enthusiastic about the chapter’s program, which can involve anything from a phone



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Jack Crowther submitted the above graphic at the Chapter 1 meeting Oct. 8 as a possible design for a sign on the VFW building, to identify it as the home of Chapter 1, The building will be repainted in the spring, when the sign can be added.

contact to personal visits. Further, the visits can uncover instances of personal financial need, which the chapter may be able to assist with. Anyone interested in volunteering who has not already stepped forward can email Mike at greenmountains@gmail.com, or call him at 703-856-3571.

Mike also mentioned that volunteers working with the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association hospice program must attend a day-long training session. The next training will be Nov. 7 in Rutland. Also offered is a training session by the Bayada home health agency for volunteers in its hospice program. One chapter member is participating in that training already. Among the vets wishing to take advantage of the Chapter 1 visitation program are a half-dozen Chapter 1 members who are homebound.

Bill Ellwood will be speaking Nov. 20 at the annual meeting of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Larry Gold reported that revisions of the Chapter 1 website are under way with Laurie Musick Wright, a graphic artist who created the existing website. The website is found at vietnamvetschapter1.org.

Bill Ellwood extended a thank-you to Chapter 1 member Don Amorosi for making monthly donations to the chapter. A resident of South Glens Falls, Don isn't able to attend meetings regularly, but keeps in touch. Bill also thanked member Thomas Siefring of West Virginia, who made a generous donation and encouraged the chapter to keep up the good work.

Bill again plugged the Vets Town Hall Nov. 7 at the Godnick Center in Rutland. A free supper paid for by Chapter 1 will begin at 5:30 p.m. but requires an RSVP by the end of October. Register here for the dinner or to present your experiences: <https://www.vtvetstownhall.org/event/rutland-vets-town-hall-2025/> The after-dinner portion begins at 6 p.m. Veterans are invited to speak about what their service means to them. Non-veterans are encouraged to attend and listen. This event is free and non-political, and all perspectives are valued. There will be no debate on American foreign policy. Kyle Aines will emcee.

A Brattleboro Vets Town Hall will be held on Nov. 9 at 1 p.m. and includes a potluck meal. Learn more here: <https://www.vtvetstownhall.org/event/brattleboro-vets-town-hall/> Other Vets Town Halls are planned for Nov. 2 at the State House in Montpelier at 1 p.m., in Bennington on Nov. 7 at 1 p.m. at the Vermont Veterans Home, in Colchester Nov. 9 at 1 p.m. at the McCarthy Arts Center at St. Michael's College, in St. Johnsbury Nov. 9 at 1 p.m. at Catamount Arts, and on Nov. 14 at 6:30 p.m. at the Charlotte Grange. Further information can be found at vtvetstownhall.org

Bill Ellwood made a pitch for developing a "financial strategy" for Chapter 1 donations, which have been going both to individuals with specific needs (help with a fuel bill, for example) and non-profit organizations. Estimating chapter income at roughly \$50,000 a year, largely from break-open tickets sold at Tomasi's Tavern in Fair Haven, Bill said, "I would like to see a little more structure — the way we go about this." He noted that about half of the \$50,000 goes for chapter expenses, including rent of our office from the VFW, mailings, events like the chapter's 45th anniversary banquet, and assisting the VFW with some of its building maintenance and improvements.

Bill advocated for more of a planned giving format, counting up seven recent recipients of chapter donations and suggesting regular donations of \$2,500. He listed the Dodge House for homeless veterans, the Open Door Mission, Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports, the Rutland Civil Air Patrol Squadron, the Rutland Community Cupboard, the Vermont Farmers Food Center Farmacy program, and Companions in Wholeness (recently renamed Rutland Neighbors). He endorsed the Honor Flights program, providing trips for vets to visit Washington, D.C., war memorials, as a possible future recipient.

Bill also noted donations the chapter has been making to non-profits No One Left Behind, which assists Afghans who aided U.S. forces during the Afghan war, and Save the Children, assisting children in the world's trouble spots. Chapter 1 has been donating \$500 a month to NOLB and \$200 to STC since May of 2023. Bill noted that the \$200 for Save the Children was in line with his \$2,500 target for organizational donations but thought the \$500 a month (\$6,000 per year) for NOLB seemed high. Jack Crowther has investigated the two organizations, noting their four-star ratings by the Charity Navigator rating service. He advocated for continuing the NOLB donation "for now," observing that Afghans who helped our military were now at the mercy of the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan, who have wreaked vengeance on citizens who helped the U.S. In addition, aid to the two organizations occurs at a time when the U.S. has cut back foreign aid.

Jack made a pitch for the ad hoc, or item-by-item decision-making approach to donations as a way to stay in touch with the groups being assisted. “We make them come to us and tell us what they need it for. I’m inclined to say, not make it automatic. But do it year to year. It’s not much to ask if a group wants \$2,500. Come and tell us what your mission is and why you want the money. . . . I like the idea that they have to come and ask.” Bill then responded there might be a blend of the two approaches.

Mark Truhan liked the idea of organizations having to come and ask for help but showed some skepticism about the non-local applicants like Save the Children and NOLB. Norm Flanders asked if Save the Children and NOLB ever sent notifications on how the money was spent. Jack receives mailings from both groups but admitted he tends not to read them. Dick Doyle thought the organizations were “worthy” but preferred the \$2,500 level if donations were to continue to NOLB. He didn’t think the chapter had enough “feedback” from NOLB. He asked if we had any idea of the money the group takes in from all its solicitations.

Treasurer Richard Reed recommended against voting on the issue right then, saying Bill’s proposal was “a concept” that needs to be “built up and proven out.” “It would not hurt to sit down and develop a plan for at least some of our giving,” Richard said. “Every year we have a little bit more money in the bank. We’re not rich.” He also liked the idea of applicants coming in and presenting their case. Larry Gold suggested setting up an annual giving committee to “sit down on a regular basis” to screen donations.

Bill asked for a show of hands among those who favored groups coming in in person to request funds. A number of hands went up, but there was no formal count.

Mark Truhan said, “I think we need to give to entities that have helped us in Rutland, and the state. He advocated for prioritizing our giving as follows: Rutland, first; state of Vermont, second; “anything beyond our borders, not so much.”

Jack said he didn’t have a problem reducing the NOLB donation to \$2,500 but volunteered to dig a little deeper into the group to learn more about its resources and operations. Richard came back to his point about not taking an immediate vote but feeling Chapter 1 could come up with a system for applicants to tell a story to justify their request.

Ken Crews pointed out that our donations should also serve as a way to generate positive publicity for the chapter.

The matter was tabled for the time being.

It was moved, seconded and approved without opposition to raise our donation to Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports to \$2,500, from the \$2,000 previously approved, to bring the donation up to what it was last year.

Bill proposed a \$2,500 donation for the Dodge House for homeless veterans, noting that Chapter 1 member Bruce Paquin is president of the Dodge House board. Bill testified to financial stresses currently felt by the organization. A motion to approve the donation was approved, with the stipulation that a representative appear before the chapter to update us on its operations.

Norm Flanders of Clarendon invited members to a ceremony Nov. 11 at the Clarendon ball field on Route 7 B at 11 a.m. A donated flagpole will be dedicated, and Norm requested participation from his fellow veterans.

Bill proposed that the chapter donate a defibrillator to the VFW for response to a possible heart attack in the facility. The group consensus was to support the measure, which will cost in the neighborhood of \$2,000. We may also contribute to training VFW staff to use the device. A vote will be taken when precise dollar amounts are available.

Richard Reed noted that a Chapter 1 grant to the RISE Hanamaki Student Exchange had gone more than 90 days without being claimed, even though he had written to the group to report approval of the money. The grant, for \$2,000, was voted in April. Richard proposed setting a 90-day limit on acceptance of a Chapter 1 grant, after which time the grant would be canceled.

Bill Ellwood made another pitch for volunteers for a maintenance committee to maintain and improve the appearance of the Chapter 1 office. He has one volunteer already. Also needed is help to maintain the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Main Street Park.

We then discussed the possibility of our December meeting being a social event, rather than a business meeting. Subsequent to the meeting, Jack Crowther arranged with John Pisanelli, the VFW commander (and Chapter 1 member) for a social event with food on Wednesday, Dec. 10, from 4 to 7 p.m. at the VFW banquet room, free to members and spouses or plus-ones. Chapter 1 will reimburse the VFW for food provided. Food will be what may be described as “heavy hors d’oeuvres,” i.e., less than a meal but more than cheese and crackers. Beverages will include punch, coffee and water. Members will need to RSVP by the end of November, stating if they and a plus-one will attend.

Jack has contacted a local musician for background music. Other features can be added, but those are the basics. You can RSVP by emailing the chapter at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com or calling or texting Jack at 802-558-4923. If you text, be sure to give your name and whether you’ll be bringing a guest. This will be a purely social event, so no Zoom link. Richard Reed, tying in a suggestion to the earlier remarks about financial planning and support of non-profits, said we could invite our past and potential grant recipients to the event.

Larry Gold reported that the Vet Tix organization provides veterans with event tickets to veterans. Families of veterans killed in action are included. Details can be found at vettix.org, where you can register to participate. From their website: “Vet Tix secures tickets to sporting events, concerts, performing arts, educational and family activities across the nation. VetTixers sign up online. We verify their service. VetTixers request tickets to events that interest them, then pay a small delivery fee to receive their free tickets.”

In a final note, Bill Ellwood spoke about the patches, hats and challenge coins that identify the chapter and the question of availability of additional ones beyond what a member is entitled to. It’s been suggested that these items can be obtained for a donation of \$10 each, if someone wants an extra one. That will be the policy going forward.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

The next meeting will be a strictly social event Wednesday, Dec. 10, from 4 to 7 p.m. downstairs at VFW Post 648, 15 Wales St., Rutland. RSVP by the end of November to vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com or call or text Jack Crowther at 802-558-4923. (If texting, be sure to give your name as I won’t recognize your phone number.)