



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

APRIL 2026



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING APRIL 8, 2026

I counted 18 people attending, 5 on Zoom and 13 in person. It was good to see new members Paul Patten of Fair Haven, Ron Bills of Springfield, and Russell Brooks of Tinmouth.

The March newsletter and minutes were approved.

President Bill Ellwood thanked board members for their efforts over the past year, this being our annual meeting and the 46th anniversary of Chapter 1's founding as the first VVA chapter in the country in 1980. "This is a team that works," Bill said, noting that a lot goes on "behind the scenes." He particularly thanked officers and directors for "covering a lot for me," as personal matters demanded his attention in the past year. He cited the chapter's active presence in the community, adding, "Hopefully we're going to continue to do as much and probably more."

Treasurer Richard Reed reported our total cash on hand and income from break-open ticket sales at Tomasi's Tavern in Fair Haven. In response to a request from the membership, he reported individual expenditures on credit card purchases and checks written on our account.

Richard requested better information on donations the chapter is making, especially when the requests for him sending out checks are made by email. "Please, send me the whole email chain, so I know what's going on," he said.



Pictured here are attendees at a March 25 dinner sponsored by the Building Bridges meal program held in Brattleboro. Chapter 1 made a \$2,500 presentation to the non-profit, which provides a free meal and social opportunity for vets. The Brattleboro location, one of 17 sites in New England, is at the Brattleboro American Legion. From left are Bob Tortolani, Larry Gold, Chris Carlisle, Dick Doyle, Norm VanCor, Carl Greenwood, Stan Clark, Ed Davidson, Ron Bills, and Len Derby. Carlisle started the program. The others are Chapter 1 members who attended the supper.

The treasurer's report was unanimously approved.

Membership chair Dick Doyle reported 179 current members. A membership for Patrick Trombley is in the works. We have 19 AVVA (Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America) members. Dick spoke briefly about the late Kym Hoerr, who died Feb. 4 in Zephyrhills, Fla., at age 96. Kym was a retired Army colonel. Dick came to Chapter 1 in 1991, when Kym lived in this area and was active in the chapter.

“She was a fireball, let me tell you,” Dick said. “She brooks no bull - - - from anybody, but she was a lovely woman. She had a stellar military career, but you’d never know it.” Dick led a moment of silence for Kym. She was to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery. The chapter sent a donation to an organization she belonged to.

Bill Ellwood said if members knew of a member passing away to let the chapter know, so a donation can be made.

Stan Clark of the Chapter 1 Chester committee noted his group is planning a “cookie drop” at the Sharon rest stop on Interstate 89, date to be announced. Money raised, \$750 last year, will go for flag replacement at the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph. The chapter endorsed the effort on a unanimous vote.

Larry Gold reported on the Building Bridges supper put on March 25 at the Brattleboro American Legion post. Chapter 1 presented a \$2,500 check to the sponsoring organization, which offers meals at 17 sites around New England. “It’s not just to feed veterans but to kind of get ’em out of the house,” Larry explained. The idea is that socialization is good for veterans who may feel isolated as a result of PTSD or other factors. Nine Chapter 1 members attended the supper, which was reported on by the Brattleboro Reformer, including a short video on the paper’s website.

As chair of the Tech and Social Media Committee, Larry reported that his group will be getting training on website operation so we can add content without going through our web designer. Larry, Bill Ellwood and Jack Crowther are on that committee. (The training occurred April 14.)

Bill again noted he plans to recruit members for AVVA and encouraged members to invite family members to join. Cost is \$100, but the chapter will pay half that if a person shows an interest by attending meetings. Bill had scheduled an AVVA meeting ahead of the chapter meeting, but no one showed, other than Bill, who is also a member of AVVA. Richard Reed commented as follows: “My observation is, I love the concept of AVVA, and I really would like to see them be active. My concern is that I feel that you and national and probably a lot of other people are putting a lot of weight on the AVVA to pick up the pieces when we cease to be Vietnam Veterans of America, and I’m concerned that there’s nobody there with a broom and a dustpan to do that. So I support the AVVA, and I’m happy to help them in any way I can. But I’m putting my eggs in a different basket.”

Responding, Bill Ellwood said he was trying to get our ducks in a row as the national organization wrestles with its future. “We don’t know where national’s going at this point.”

“They confuse the hell out of me,” he said of announcements coming out from the national VVA organization in *The Veteran*, the national VVA’s news magazine. . . . I mean, bottom line is, at some point they’re gonna either come up with another organization that’s gonna carry on, or they’re gonna cut us loose and say, be on your own as Vietnam veterans.”

Bill continues to seek members of the Liaison Committee to help Chapter 1 work with other organizations, such as the Civil Air Patrol.

Mike Murphy, heading up the Outreach Committee, reported on Chapter 1 members visiting shut-in veterans in various locations. Most active has been Stan Clark of Perkinsville, who visits as many as 14 people in a week, logging several hundred miles in a month’s time. Also involved are Jack Crowther, Jim Freeze and Mike Burke, visiting the RCLR nursing home in Rutland. Bob Paolucci and Louis Rousseau focus on the Genesis nursing home, where COVID has of late hampered access. They both are able to provide religious services. Dave Potter worked with a hospice patient, providing transportation for a spouse to visit her husband. He has also driven a vet to the VA Medical Center in White River Junction.

“I feel it’s one of our more basic, important things to do, to reach out to vets who are in various facilities or homebound, to let them know we’re there and see if they need any help,” Mike said.

Dave Potter commented on his help to the hospice patient, who passed away. He felt what he was able to do was a good experience, despite the man’s dementia. “It was a benefit for him and his spouse, before he passed, because the spouse couldn’t drive anymore. It was beneficial from the spouse’s point of view, to be able to reconnect.” Prior to Dave stepping in, the veteran hadn’t been able to see his spouse for two months, Dave said.

Anyone interested in taking part in outreach to shut-in vets can simply do it on their own. However, contacting Mike Murphy or Bill Ellwood allows the chapter to provide support, including financial assistance, or

information, and to share your experience with other chapter members. You can reach them through the chapter's email address: vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com.

Chapter 1 will take part in the Rutland Loyalty Day Parade on Sunday May 3, starting at 2 p.m. If things operate as in the recent past, our group would gather about 1:30-ish on one of the side streets north of Madison Street. Tentatively, we have vehicles driven by Dave Currier and Andy Megrath with magnetic signs featuring the Chapter 1 logo. Also volunteering to march or ride are Jack, Norman Flanders, Tim Lonergan, Bill Ellwood, Paul Patten, and Russell Brooks. We have a Chapter 1 banner for two people to carry, plus several flags and flag holder straps. VFW Post 648 is the parade sponsor. Last year's Chapter 1 entry featured three vehicles and several marchers. The parade route is short, less than a half-mile.

Anyone wishing to take part, please let Jack know at jack_cr2@yahoo.com or 802-775-1182. Also let Jack know if you have a parade-quality vehicle you'd like to enter. We can obtain more magnet signs, as needed.

Jack reported that he has contacted Tuttle Printing for suggestions and a quote on a sign for the VFW building, which will be painted this spring. The painting contractor for the building, Louis Ross, told Jack he thought the more economical route would be to create a sign for attachment to the building, rather than paint it directly on the building. Jack submitted several designs that have been offered. The chapter has worked with Tuttle, which took over Green Screen Graphics, on plaques for the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

A visit to the Dodge House, a transitional home for veterans in Rutland, will be arranged for Chapter 1 members. The chapter is a longtime supporter. Members are also welcome to Dodge House board meetings. The next one will be at the Castleton American Legion Monday, April 20, at 6 p.m. Bruce Paquin, a Chapter 1 member, is chair of the Dodge House board.

Volunteers are needed for the Saturday, June 27, cookout at the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington. The VVA State Council is the sponsor. Traditionally, the event includes cooking hamburgers and hotdogs and sitting with the vets. VVA members arrive at 10 a.m. A State Council meeting follows at noon. Location is the pavilion in front of the home, weather permitting.

Norman Flanders said he receives a monthly newspaper from the Vermont Veterans Home and noticed Chapter 1 was not listed as a donor. "What are the possibilities of us giving money to them to benefit the veterans that are down there?" Norm asked.

Bill Ellwood noted a previous discussion on the matter. "One of the concerns was we weren't sure we wanted to be giving money to the government entity running it." He recommended that "somebody on the inside make a specific presentation and request." Bill noted that the home offers donation options including gifts for "personal needs" and "hobbies." Richard Reed joined the discussion to advise against unspecific donations, or "throwing money at a building," as he phrased it. He advised contacting Melissa Jackson, the veterans home administrator, to learn what the needs are. Norm supported that thought. He volunteered to follow up and get in touch with the facility, most likely with Melissa.

Tom Giffin, cemetery commissioner for Rutland City, made a presentation for Evergreen Cemetery, which is seeking financial support for operation of the cemetery, following years of struggle and near collapse of the organization. Chapter 1 provided a donation of \$5,000 two years ago. That money was put toward "capital funds to help guys out with maintenance," Tom said. "One thing I told you I would do and I did do that, is that I brought a crew in, and we went to the new section of Evergreen and we cleaned every veteran stone that we could find." He invited anyone aware of a Vietnam veteran's stone needing cleaning or repair work to let him know and he would take care of it. The cleaning efforts will continue. There are about 1,400 veterans buried in Evergreen.

Tom praised the "great community outreach" on behalf of Evergreen. That outreach has seen 80 to 100 volunteers helping "restore the cemetery and stones" and doing other work. He cited the GE Aerospace plant for its support. A historical marker will be erected making Evergreen a state historical site "as soon as the city signs off on it," Tom said. Evergreen Cemetery has a website and Facebook page and is in the process of digitizing all the records. The organization has bought a new alarm system and is looking to repair the chapel. Road repair, the water system and mowing are ongoing issues. Tom noted that 95 percent of people who die are being cremated, and often they are not buried, which decreases a traditional source of cemetery revenue.

"I'm not coming here with my hand out," Tom said, noting any donation would be appreciated. He said all cemeteries in Vermont are non-profit. If a cemetery goes bankrupt, Tom said, the municipality *may* take it over, but is not required to do so. In response to a question from Richard Reed, Tom said he didn't know exactly the

space available for future burials, but that it was ample on the 45 acres that Evergreen encompasses. That includes room for “several hundred” in the front part of the property. “Nobody has been turned away who wants to buy a plot,” he said.

Acting as the nominating committee, Secretary Jack Crowther placed in nomination officers for the coming year. All incumbents, they were: president, Bill Ellwood; vice president, Larry Young; treasurer, Richard Reed; secretary, Jack Crowther; and directors, Dick Doyle, Tim Lonergan, Carl Baldwin, Mike Murphy, and Dave Potter. Nominations from the floor were invited, but there were none. Norm Flanders moved that the secretary cast one ballot for the slate of officers and directors. Seconded by Carl Greenwood. Passed unanimously.

After some back and forth we decided to skip a meeting in May and next meet June 10. We may schedule an informal meeting in May. It could be a social event with snacks.

To avoid making Evergreen Cemetery wait two months for a decision on a donation, Larry Gold moved to donate \$2,500. Seconded by Jack Crowther. Richard Reed said that, “not wanting to be a wet blanket,” but “having run a cemetery (the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph)” he “would like a whole lot more information” than the chapter had received so far. “We need to consider where that fits in our priorities, which we are still not really settled on,” he said. “I’m willing to give Evergreen more money, but I want more information from them, what they’re hoping to do with that money.” Carl Greenwood asked if the chapter might stipulate a need for more information. Larry suggested stipulations that the donation go for maintenance of veterans’ gravestones.

After further discussion, Larry removed his original motion, acknowledging the chapter’s wish for more specifics. To avoid additional delay, Jack Crowther suggested that the motion be changed so that Evergreen be asked to request \$2,500 for a specific purpose. In response to the suggestion, Richard moved to grant the Chapter 1 board authority to donate “in this instance” up to \$2,500. Seconded by Carl. Implied was the requirement for a specific use of the money by Evergreen. Richard will reach out to Evergreen for the specific use of the money. Passed unanimously.

Finally, Larry Gold reported that a 250th anniversary celebration of the U.S. Declaration of Independence will be taking place July 4 in Mendon. The town will be unveiling a plaque honoring Mendon veterans, but all veterans will be welcome to the event. Stay tuned for details.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

**The next meeting will be Wednesday, June 10, at 4 p.m., downstairs at VFW Post 648,
15 Wales St., Rutland.**