



# Vietnam Veterans Of America

## Chapter One

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

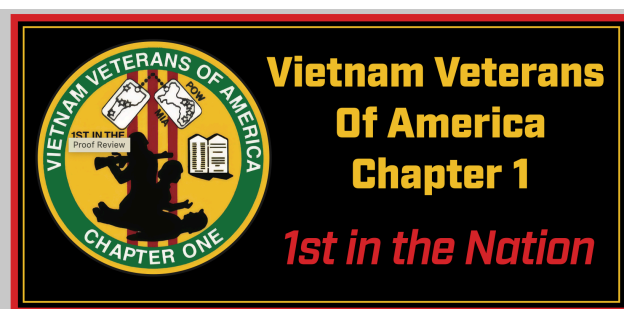
SEPTEMBER 2026



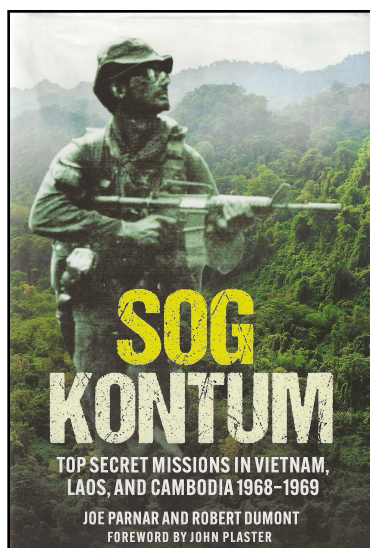
### MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING SEPT. 9, 2026

I counted 25 people attending, 8 on Zoom and 17 in person.

The minutes of the August meeting were approved. As part of a brief discussion, Norm Flanders reported on his investigation of a purchase of blankets for residents of the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington. The chapter has allocated \$2,000 for the purchase of blankets with military insignia representing the residents' branches of service. The hope is to buy blankets made in the U.S. The source of blankets is still to be determined.



This is the final design for the Chapter 1 sign to be attached to the VFW building upon its completion by Tuttle Printing. The sign will be placed at the second story level on the northwest corner of the building.



Vietnam veteran and former medic John Brower of Rutland donated this book, which includes an account of his cousin, Robert Sherdin, who was missing in action in 1968 and never found. The book is available for members to

Treasurer Richard Reed reported cash on hand. He noted interest received of \$217.16 on a CD we purchased as a way of putting our savings to work. The report was approved unanimously.

Dick Doyle reported 180 members. The newest member is John French of Rutland. Dick noted that this month marks the 35 year of his membership. "Hands down, this is absolutely the healthiest this chapter has been . . .," he said. "It's all because of you people here." Dick joined in 1991, the chapter having been founded in 1980 as the first in the nation.

President Bill Ellwood noted there are 20 members of Chapter 1's AVVA (Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America) chapter.

Bill and Dick each related recent incidents in which people had, out of the blue, picked up the cost of their meals at Applebee's and Denny's, after recognizing their Chapter 1 hats. Bill added, "We want to be out there in the community making a positive impact, even if you're just talking to people. My standard line is, they say, 'Thank you for your service,' and I say 'Well, thanks for caring, and did you serve or have family members that served?' And that generally opens a conversation because almost every

family has someone that served.”

Stan Clark of Perkinsville reported on the southern Vermont committee of the chapter, noting limited attendance at their monthly meetings. Stan is continuing regular visits to veterans in the area. He currently visits 14 vets on a weekly basis. Besides Stan’s visits, Mike Murphy reported on visits to the Rutland Center for Living and Rehabilitation nursing home on Nichols Street in Rutland by Jack Crowther, Jim Freeze, Mike Burke, and David Potter, the visits scheduled monthly. In addition, Larry Gold plans a luncheon with vets at The Gables and The Meadows, two affiliated retirement and assisted living facilities in Rutland Town. The luncheon will be held on Sept. 23 at noon in The Meadows piano room. Any Chapter 1 members interested in taking part can contact Larry at the Chapter 1 email address: vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com, preferably by Friday, Sept. 18. Other Chapter 1 members are involved in visitation activities that have not necessarily been reported to Mike Murphy.

Larry Gold noted there were no new developments on the “social media” front. Jack Crowther asked if we had a count of visits to the website. We don’t at present, but that can be done.

Bill Ellwood again plugged the AVVA, noting it was available as a non-voting membership adjunct to Chapter 1 for anyone wishing to assist in chapter activities.

Paul Patten of Fair Haven reported on his ongoing contact with the local squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, a youth organization affiliated with the U.S. Air Force. He attended their August meeting at the Rutland airport, officially the Southern Vermont Regional Airport. He described the squadron as “a pretty remarkable group” of young men and women from 10 to 18 years old. Activities include regular military-style training, along with classes, such as a recent one on resume writing. Cadets have assisted with Chapter 1 activities and again will assist with the Vets Town Hall, scheduled locally this year on Friday, Nov. 6, at the Godnick Adult Center. Cadets will also be taking part in the coming Adirondack Balloon festival in Glens Falls Sept. 18-20. The group is working to get a sign at the airport identifying it as the home for the squadron.

Jack Crowther displayed the final, approved design for the four-by-eight-foot sign for Chapter 1 to be placed on the second story of the northwest side of VFW building, where we have our offices. Supporting Jack’s suggestion, the meeting voted to center the sign between the top and bottom line of the adjoining windows.

Lee Phillips has signed up for the October Leatherstocking Honor Flight from Albany. The flight transports veterans from the area to Washington, D.C., for a one-day visit to the nation’s war memorials, all expenses paid. The October flight is full, but another is scheduled for April. Applications and information can be found at [leatherstockinghonorflightny.org](http://leatherstockinghonorflightny.org). A couple of other vets from the area are believed to be signed up.

Dick Doyle noted that all the money for the Honor Flights is raised by donations. He proposed that the chapter donate \$2,000 to support the program, which has faced some steep cost increases recently. Jack Crowther seconded Dick’s motion. Passed unanimously.

As mentioned, the Vets Town Hall will be Friday, Nov. 6 at the Godnick Center from 6 to 8 p.m. A Bennington version of the event will take place the same day at the Vermont Veterans Home at 6 p.m. A Vet Town Hall in Brattleboro will take place at American Legion Post 5 Sunday, Nov. 8, from 1 to 5 p.m. Chapter 1 member Norm VanCor will be co-moderator with Tristram Johnson at the Brattleboro event.

Further information on these and other Vets Town Halls in Vermont can be found at [vtvetstownhall.org](http://vtvetstownhall.org). Vets wishing to speak can preregister at this site. Ten minutes are allotted. Others vets wishing to speak but not registered will be called on as time permits. The events are non-political, with vets invited to tell what their experience in the service meant to them. Audience members are invited to listen but not ask questions.

The event in Rutland includes a free dinner sponsored by Chapter 1 at 5:30 p.m., which requires pre-registration by the end of October at [vtvetstownhall.org](http://vtvetstownhall.org). Preregistration for the Vets Town Hall itself is encouraged but not required. A \$1,000 donation by Chapter 1 supports the Rutland and Brattleboro events.

The Vermont VVA State Council will meet Saturday, Sept. 19, at 11 a.m., upstairs in the Chapter 1 office at the VFW. Any member is invited to attend. Attendance has been low, and some state councils around the country have folded up. Richard Reed said he and State Council president Perry Melvin have discussed the future of the group. He pointed out that Vermont's State Council sponsors the service officer program for Vietnam veterans. Richard is a former service officer. Chapter 1 has supported that office, which provides vital assistance to veterans seeking their entitled benefits from the VA (the Department of Veterans Affairs).

A VVA Council of State Presidents meeting will be held in Arlington, Va., Oct. 8. A VVA member from St. Albans is expected to attend in the place of Perry Melvin.

Jack Crowther reported on the recent progress of No One Left Behind in assisting Afghans who supported our military in the 20-year war, as they seek sanctuary in the U.S. The chapter recently resumed support of the group at the rate of \$200 per month.

Vice President Larry Gold will contact Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports, which runs programs for handicapped people, including veterans. Some events are specifically planned for veterans. Chapter 1 has been a regular contributor to the group, working through Tim Lonergan, a Chapter 1 board member and volunteer with Vermont Adaptive. Tim notified us he would be unable to be the contact this year. Bill Ellwood made a motion to appropriate \$2,500 for Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Approved unanimously. Larry noted that the program started decades ago at Pico ski area and has expanded greatly to include four ski areas in Vermont and a program in Maine. Programs include summer activities as well as skiing and other winter activities.

After brief discussion of the Stuff-a-Bus food drive, Dick Doyle moved to donate \$500 to the charity. Seconded by Jack Crowther. Passed unanimously. Larry Gold will explore the best way to convey the donation. Chapter 1 volunteers, for example, could be involved on the day of the event, scheduled for Nov. 5-7. On those days, Marble Valley Regional Transit vehicles will be stationed at grocery stores to receive food or cash donations, which then are distributed to local food-assistance charities.

The Dodge House facility for homeless veterans continues its efforts to cover expenses through application for grants. Meanwhile, the organization, a non-profit, is holding a Keys to Hope Gala on Friday, Nov. 13, at the Elks Club in Rutland. There will be heavy hors d'oeuvres, a silent auction and a talk by J.T. Dodge, a relative of Mike Dodge, for whom the home was named.

Bill Ellwood said he'd like to see the chapter sponsor a table of eight guests from the chapter for \$1,000. At this point Richard Reed asked if we knew how the Dodge House had spent the \$5,000 the chapter donated in June. At that time, the facility faced some major repairs. Bill said he assumed the money went for that work. Bill said he didn't think that it was necessary to investigate further. Supporting that viewpoint, Dick Doyle said he wasn't comfortable coming back to the Dodge House after the fact and asking, "How did you spend that." Dave Potter, having attended an open house at the Dodge House earlier in the year felt the operation was "up to snuff" and "doing good work." "I feel very comfortable helping with whatever," Dave said.

Richard Reed pressed his point, however, noting the \$5,000 was an "open-ended grant," whereas the chapter typically approves money for "specific purposes." Agreeing with the approvals expressed about the Dodge House services, he said he was simply advocating for "fiscal responsibility." Bill Ellwood pointed out that other chapter donations, such as to Save the Children and No One Left Behind are made without a requirement to report on how the money is spent.

Bruce Paquin, a Chapter 1 member, is chairman of the Dodge House board but was not available on Wednesday nights, when our chapter meets. Kimberly Jarrait, assistant director of the Dodge House, spoke to the the chapter meeting in April 2025 after it reopened following a closure and shakeup of staff and governance. Mike Murphy, via Zoom, offered, "I'm not too interested in having them justify every penny to use but they could tell us what they spend the money on after we gave it to them."

"To wind this up," Jack Crowther said, "I would support us planning a table of 8, which is not so much a cash donation but participation in a fundraiser, which is to the Dodge House's credit, that they're . . . going after a wide swath of donors." Rick Baker, via Zoom, supported purchasing the table of eight but said that if the Dodge House requests money in the future, "we say we really support what you're doing [but] as a fiduciary responsibility . . . we would ask you to kind of give us a rundown on how you're using the monies, and that would be really helpful."

Bill Ellwood then moved to appropriate \$1,000 to purchase a table at the gala. Seconded by Jack Crowther. Richard Reed was a dissenting vote, with all others voting affirmatively.

Bill Ellwood reported on efforts to help Rutland's Open Door Mission which houses a number of veterans. The chapter has in the past helped the mission with the purchase of bedspreads and some food, when their freezer failed. He has reached out to the mission and asked them to come to a Chapter 1 meeting and state their needs. There has been no response, though Bill noted the organization is holding a charity golf tournament Sept 24 at Neshobe Golf Course in Brandon. "I really have a desire to help the mission," Bill said. Citing Richard Reed's concerns about fiscal responsibility, he felt a need for some information from the facility. "I still will try to reach out to them and get them to be coming in and telling guys what's going on and how we can help them, because there are veterans that live there year-round."

The Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington is doing a cleanup Sept. 19 at the Veterans Cemetery at the home. They're looking for volunteers. Anyone interested can call the home at 802-447-2725 for more information. There might be something on the Veterans Home website, [vvh.vt.gov](http://vvh.vt.gov), though I couldn't find anything as of this writing.

Bill Ellwood noted that any Chapter 1 members are always welcome at VFW functions. Our office is in their building at 15 Wales St. in Rutland.

In discussing the future meeting schedule, Bill proposed meeting in October, skipping November, when a fair number of veterans events are scheduled, and having a social event in December. At this point, Jack Crowther suggested that he would like to see meetings limited to an hour and a half, rather than the two-hours scheduled, which sometimes runs over. Some back and forth on the matter did not result in a vote but did produce some supporting sentiment, and Bill agreed there was a "consensus" to have shorter meetings.

Bill Ellwood winters in Florida and said he expects to leave mid-December and be gone until May, depending somewhat on personal considerations. Larry Gold and Jack Crowther will run chapter meetings during that period.

Turning to chapter finances, Bill noted that we have \$89,000 in a checking account earning virtually no interest. He asked Treasurer Richard Reed to investigate putting "at least half" that amount into a CD. He expressed the view that with money coming in regularly, he didn't see a likelihood of needing so much cash. In other words, it is unlikely the chapter would have to "short sell" a CD and forfeit interest to access its money. The chapter currently has an \$85,000 CD, currently valued, with interest, at \$86,595.70.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jack Crowther, Secretary

**The next meeting will be Wednesday, Oct. 14, at 4 p.m., downstairs at VFW Post 648,  
15 Wales St., Rutland.**