

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (VAC)

Minutes of Regular Meeting

Monday, February 24th, 2014 @ 6:30 P.M.

American Legion Hall
12 Freestone Avenue, Portland, Connecticut

Members in attendance: R. Farrington-Chairman, R. Cote, T. Dickerson, W. Willinsky, (arrived late J. Sterry)

Absent: K. Burke, D. Hutchins, R. Walton, P. DeRing, W. Petras

Guests in attendance: S. Bransfield (First Selectwoman)

Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting called to order at 1830.

There were no prior meeting minutes reviewed.

W. Willinsky provided a copy of the account balance. As of 10/15/13, there was \$1,295.30 in the Veteran Affairs (411) account and \$439.52 in the Veterans Plaque Program (442) account.

W. Willinsky provided a newspaper article showing the graduation of Portland resident George Planeta IV from the US Naval Academy last spring. He received his commission in the Marine Corps and his name should be added to the monument.

A newspaper article soliciting for additional names for the monument/plaque will be placed in the local paper.

J. Sterry, Veterans Service Officer – No current cases.

A discussion was held on what additional things could be done to the area around Veterans Park. Some ideas to look into were to add a bench so people could sit and reflect. Additional plantings as well as possibly a shepherd's hook on each end could be added. We don't want anything too busy that would take the focus away from the monuments.

We discussed the smoking area near the back door to the Town Hall near the monuments, which led to a quick discussion on the topic of smoking on town property, recently discussed at the Selectman's meeting. S. Bransfield told the VAC that the Selectmen would welcome any comments that we might have.

R. Farrington will conduct an inventory of the American flags that will be put in the cemeteries. We may need to order some more to replace the damaged ones. The High School Key Club assisted in picking up the flags in the fall and is willing to help put them out in the spring. R. Farrington will ask for an additional adult

chaperone to help with the process. S. Bransfield added that although we have a small budget, it could be possible to treat the volunteers to a small snack or drink afterwards.

It was suggested that photographs be taken this year of the flag installation and other veterans activities to show veterans' involvement around town.

An extensive discussion was held on refurbishing the civil war monument. S. Bransfield stated that the monument was just designated a Historic Structure. This designation is the first step in accessing state funding for restoration. The next step is to have an assessment of the structure by a certified person. S. Bransfield said that she has included \$6000-\$7000 in this year's budget for that purpose. Additional discussion covered ideas on returning the monument to its original structure, although there will be issues with the sight lines for the roads. Part of the original structure is stored at the town recycling center. Other suggestions were to get town businesses to donate services for the restoration project. Deanna Roads of the town planning office is working on this issue. It was suggested that Mr. John (Jack) Dillon might be able to provide some insight as he helped with the last restoration.

S. Bransfield suggested that another possible issue for VAC is to conduct an inventory of monuments in town. Identified so far were the Civil War Monument, Veterans Memorial Park, plaque in front of the Buck-Foreman Community Center, and each cemetery has a plaque.

A couple of current American Legion issues was shared with the VAC. The American Legion is going to look at moving their meeting normally held the 2nd Monday of the month at 1930 to the 3rd Monday of the month at 1930 following the VAC meeting.

The cost to send the Portland High School Students to the American Legion Boys State program has gone up to \$300 per student.

Meeting adjourned at 1905.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 24th, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

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Timothy Dickerson