

Veterans Affairs Committee
REGULAR MEETING
April 20, 2015

PRESENT: R. Farrington, P. DeRing, F. Hutchings, W. Willinsky, T. Dickerson, W. Petras, R. Cote

ABSENT: K. Burke, J. Sterry

OTHERS PRESENT: S. Bransfield – First Selectman

1. CHAIRMAN CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chairman R. Farrington called the REGULAR meeting to order at 6:32 PM at the American Legion Hall, located at 12 Freestone Avenue, Portland, Connecticut.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF OUR COUNTRY

3. ACCEPT AGENDA

There was a motion to accept the agenda as presented. Vote unanimous, motion carried.

4. ACCEPT MEETING MINUTES

There was a motion by W. Petras, seconded by W. Willinsky, to approve the meeting minutes of April 20, 2015 as presented. Vote unanimous, motion carried.

5. VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER'S REPORT (J. Sterry)

No report.

6. VETERANS BENEFITS & INFORMATION OFFICER'S REPORT (P. DeRing)

Nothing new to report.

7. COMMISSION ADVISOR'S REPORT (W. Willinsky)

Engraving the names on the monument is all set. The four names being added are:

- Roman Glowinski (WWII)
- Andrew Chaisson (Persian Gulf)
- Thomas Chaisson (Persian Gulf)
- Adam Fontenault (Persian Gulf)

The garden club members completed the gardens on the 14th. The gardens look very nice.

Mr. Robert DeCarlo, the American Legion 7th District Commander, has agreed to be the keynote speaker at the Memorial Day Ceremony after the parade.

Approximately 658 American Flags were placed on the graves of Veterans yesterday at the town's cemeteries. The Portland High School (PHS) Key Club assisted R. Farrington, W. Willinsky and T.

Dickerson. Extra flags are available at the Town Clerk's office in the town hall in case any veteran's grave was missed.

The American Legion is sponsoring the Memorial Day breakfast on Saturday May 23rd.

The Portland Memorial Day Parade is Sunday. Mike Rogalski will be driving his 2 ½ ton military vehicle in case anyone needs a ride.

The VAC purchased 600 new flags for \$1.05 each to go with the leftover flags we had that were still in good condition.

R. Farrington added that he found the grave of veteran Mr. Dickerson (No relation to VAC member T. Dickerson), whose relative called the town hall asking to make sure a flag was placed on his grave at Center Cemetery. The caller said the grave was not marked with any military veteran identifier.

R. Farrington sent a note to the Middletown Press thanking the PHS Key Club for helping put out the flags. While at one of the cemeteries, a woman gave a \$10 donation to one of the Key Club members. This was then given to R. Farrington. R. Farrington will see if it is all right for the Key Club to accept this donation.

W. Willinsky asked if it would be possible during the Memorial Day Ceremony, following the parade to include the new names added to the Veteran's Memorial as part of the script. He also asked if we could tell everyone that if they know of anyone whose name might belong on the monument and is not there, to please contact the Portland Town Clerk's Office.

8. OLD BUSINESS

W. Willinsky will call Mr. Robert DeCarlo to confirm his attendance at the parade as the keynote speaker.

9. NEW BUSINESS

R. Farmington passed that Mr. Andrew Donohue from Portland has received an appointment to the Military Academy in West Point, NY. He just finished his first year at Norwich University.

There will be a ceremony on Wednesday May 20th at 2:30 pm at the Portland High/Middle School. The student council will be placing flags around the drop off circle.

10. GENERAL DISCUSSION / PUBLIC COMMENT

W. Petras shared his experience participating on the Honor Flight from Hartford, CT to Washington D.C. and return. There were 80 WWII veterans on the flight. Technical issues caused a flight delay of several hours, but overall it was a great trip with no injuries or illnesses. They went to all of the monuments except the Navy Memorial. This could be the last large flight as the number of remaining WWII veterans keeps decreasing. W. Petras was the sponsor for a Middletown Veteran. This was a full day of activities for the veterans with all of their expenses paid for.

T. Dickerson reminded everyone that R. Farmington was intending to step down as the Chairman of the VAC but remain on as VAC member. S. Bransfield was asked if a formal resignation and appointment process was required. She stated that the VAC makes the decision themselves whom the Chairman is. At the next meeting, all we need to do is have R. Farrington officially announce he is stepping down as

chairman. The VAC members can then nominate other members to fill the position of chairman. After nominations are completed, the new chairman is determined by a majority vote.

S. Bransfield also confirmed that the VAC budget for the coming fiscal year was the same as this past fiscal year. (\$4000)

11. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

There was a motion by W. Petras, seconded by T. Dickerson, to adjourn the meeting. Vote unanimous, motion carried. Meeting adjourned. (Approximately 7:05 P.M.)

Respectfully submitted,

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Timothy E. Dickerson

Recording Secretary

Wording sent to Governor Malloy, Senator Linares, and Representative Carpino

Honorable Governor Malloy,

The Portland Veterans Affairs Committee is writing to oppose Governor Malloy's proposed budget cut to the Connecticut Military Department; specifically the proposed \$469,533 cut to the general fund support for the Honor Guard. Removing the funding to support the rendering of military honors for veterans should not be considered as an option in balancing the budget deficit. With an approximately twenty billion dollar budget proposed, the cuts to the Military Department's Honor Guard represents approximately two hundred thousandths of one percent. (0.00002%). Given that the Governor recently displayed a lack of concern after uncovering a \$55 million dollar calculation error, he should have absolutely no concern about finding another place to make up the \$469,533 requested to fund the Honor Guard.

Rendering military honor at veterans' funerals is just one small thing the State can do to show their thanks to the deceased's family in their time of need. These honors provide a ceremonial paying of respect to the veteran for their service to the United States, providing a small but necessary amount of comfort. Since most current politicians have never served in the military, regrettably, many do not understand the sacrifices made by the veterans and their families during their time of service.

A veteran - whether active duty, retired, or national guard or reserve - is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to "The United States of America," for an amount of "up to and including THEIR LIFE." (Author: ~Unknown Author).

In closing, please read and remember the poem "It Is The Veteran" Author unknown.

It is the VETERAN, not the preacher,
who has given us freedom of religion.
It is the VETERAN, not the reporter,
who has given us freedom of the press.
It is the VETERAN, not the poet,
who has given us freedom of speech.
It is the VETERAN, not the campus organizer,
who has given us freedom to assemble.
It is the VETERAN, not the lawyer,
who has given us the right to a fair trial.
It is the VETERAN, not the politician,
who has given us the right to vote.
It is the VETERAN,
who salutes the Flag,
It is the VETERAN,
who serves under the Flag.

Thank you.
Portland Veterans Affairs Committee
//s//
Timothy Dickerson (Secretary)