



MEETING MINUTES
MILITARY and VETERANS LIAISON COMMITTEE
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2019 - 6:00 P.M.
125 EAST AVENUE, ROOM 218
NORWALK, CT 06851

1. **CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** the meeting was called to order by Chairman Jeff DeWitt at 6:03 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jeff DeWitt.

2. **PUBLIC FORUM:**

a. None

3. **ROLL CALL:**

a. Present (8): Jeff DeWitt, Chair; Leon Breault, Veteran At-large; Dan Caporale, Veteran At-large; Don Overton, Veteran At-large; Deanna D'Amore – Health Department; Matt Seebeck, Veteran At-large; Bryan Rooney, Military Outreach and Deputy Chair; Fred Wilms, Financial Services Chair

b. Absent or excused (5): Larry Cafero, Legal Services Chair; Bob King, Labor and Business Relations Chair; Howard Dixon, Veteran At-large; Irene Dixon, Mayor Rilling's Staff; Juliet Taylor, Veteran At-large.

4. **CHAIRMAN COMMENTS:**

a. (Repeat from last month) An application was submitted to the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Fund (VVMF) to have the [Wall That Heals and Mobile Education Center](#), a ¾ scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, return to Norwalk. In October 2000, the wall came to Norwalk and was displayed in Veterans Park. Many organizations came together to make the event work. The MVLC, the Norwalk Veterans Memorial Committee, American Legion Post 12, and VFW Post 603 are co-sponsoring this effort. Official announcements won't be until October / November 2019 for the 2020 calendar. We were informed that being a previous host city weighs in our favor. Eleven people from Norwalk visited Hempstead NY on August 31 and met with VVMF employees and the site hosts from the Hempstead area. Many lessons learned. Details sent to Mayor Rilling.

b. Jeff DeWitt coordinated with Jessica Paladino from Norwalk Department Public Works and Tom Slattery from City Carting to retire 19 barrels of U.S. flags that had accumulated at the Fire Department and American Legion. City Carting donated the roll-off dumpster and driver. Charlie Williams from the American Legion acted as Chaplain and Jeff DeWitt as emcee for a short service at the American Legion prior to the truck leaving for Wheelabrator Inc. in Bridgeport for final retirement. Thanks to all. The goal will be to do this every 6 months or so.



c. REPEAT: Cynde Bloome Lahey from the Norwalk Library has made some solid progress to bring the Veterans History Project to Norwalk residents. The project is a joint effort between Central Connecticut State University and the Library of Congress to record (video / digital) a veteran's story about their time in the military. More to come. Leon Breault recommended the Library partner with the NCC.

d. Spoke moving towards the Connecticut VA District 4 office move from Bridgeport to Norwalk and the potential / impact for the city. This would make Norwalk the center for veteran services in Fairfield County. The two employees that would come with the move are paid for by the state, so no cost to the city except for office space and a phone line. Pursuing public-private partnership agreements to assist can be a part of this effort. Don Overton has been involved in implementing this template in Palm Bay, Florida where the city opened a "Veteran Resource Center", and Palm Bay was recognized nationally for all they did. This center could become the primary center for veteran outreach to Norwalk veterans and active, Guard, and Reserve troops. There is great potential in partnerships with these offices and Norwalk Community College, American Legion, VFW, and more.

e. The American Legion is looking for a contract for snow plowing. Leon recommended Brian D'Amato.

f. Jeff DeWitt will re-nominate Thomas C. O'Connor to the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame by the deadline on September 13. The package was declined in 2016. Fred Wilms suggested getting a cover letter from State Senator Bob Duff to add impact to the package.

g. Mayor Rilling made an announcement at the American Legion that he will be opening a Veterans Resource Center in the Health Department. More details later in the month.

h. Jeff DeWitt is gathering information on the 18 people connected to Norwalk who were killed in Vietnam. Request any personal testimonials and pictures of the 18 be sent to norwalkmvlc@gmail.com The names:

PFC CHARLES WILLIAM "CHIP" BACHMAN JR., ARMY
CAPT JOSEPH ORVILLE BROWN, AIR FORCE
PO2 MARIO CHARLES CRUGNOLA JR., NAVY
CPL WILLIE CECIL DAVIS, USMC
PFC JAMES THOMAS FABRIZIO, ARMY
PFC JAMES THOMAS HENDRICKS, USMC
PFC RICHARD ALAN "RIT" KASKE, ARMY
CPL WILLIAM JOSEPH LILLY, USMC
CPL EDWARD VINCENT PALMENTA, ARMY
SSG MICHAEL BRADLEY PAQUIN, ARMY
1LT ALBERT MICHAEL PREVOST, USMC
LCPL CHARLES EDWARD RICHARDS, USMC

CPL MICHAEL JOHN SCANLON, USMC
PFC DANIEL JOHN SHEA, ARMY
SP5 ROBERT FRANCIS STEVENS, ARMY
SSG WILLIAM JAMES TARSI, ARMY
MAJ LARRY ALAN THORNE, ARMY
PFC ALEXANDER GEORGE WAINIO, USMC

5. REPORTS:

a. Deanna D'Amore – Health Chair: has been quite busy with work over the last 2 months. Drinking water safety has priority!

b. Brian Rooney – Military Outreach: No report this month. Just came back from Guard duty at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania as an Officer Training School senior platoon leader and Exec Officer.

c. Larry Cafero – Legal: No report this month

d. Fred Wilms – Financial Services: through work, completed a certification on the Civil Service Relief Act which was enacted in 1940. See addendum 1.

e. Bob King – Business / Labor: No report this month

6. OLD BUSINESS:

a. None

7. NEW BUSINESS

a. Matt Seebeck spoke about the Veterans Treatment Courts and the possibilities in this area. See addendum 2. Might be something for Larry Cafero to introduce the idea locally in legal channels to see if there is any interest. There are veterans on the Norwalk Police Department that may be the perfect fit to see this program become successful here. **(OPEN)**

8. GOOD OF THE ORDER:

a. Repeat: Dan Caporale shared that the [Norwalk Veteran Memorial Committee](#) is on hiatus until September. Planning for Veterans Day will begin then. A guest speaker has been lined up already. After the school year starts, Columbus School will be asked to have their choir perform again. Some discussion on the Grand Marshal(s) for next year's Memorial Day parade. Next year is the 30th anniversary of Desert Shield (8/2/1990 – 1/17/1991). Also, Korean War veterans would be a great choice.

b. Repeat: Leon Breault discussed the upcoming 1st annual [Norwalk Film Festival](#) on September 28. It will be an excellent opportunity to engage the community. In coming years, there will be themes for each year. A veteran / military theme in future years could be a great opportunity to focus a positive light on veterans and help tell their story.

c. In reference to paragraph 4g above, Don Overton spoke about his meeting with Mayor Rilling regarding moving the VA office in Bridgeport to Norwalk. There is space for them in the Health Department building. They would be responsible for VA related issues only. Anything needed at the local level would need to be assigned as additional duties for existing city employees. Another non-traditional approach would be to have a grant-funded position that can administer all of the projects that need to be fielded out to the community. Future meetings with Mayor Rilling later in September.

9. MILITARY AND VETERAN RELATED EVENTS AROUND NORWALK

SEPTEMBER 2019

- 11: Patriot Day event at City Hall, 8:30 a.m., American Legion, 7:00 p.m.
- 12: Mulvoy-Tarlov-Aquino VFW Post 603 Monthly Membership Meeting, 60 County St (7:00)
- 17: Membership meeting for American Legion Post 12 and Auxiliary Unit 12, 60 County St (7:00)
- 19: Sons of the American Legion Squadron 12 Membership Meeting, 60 County St (7:00)
- 20: National POW/MIA Recognition Day
- 20: Operation Stand Down, 287 West Street, Rocky Hill CT; 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

OCTOBER 2019

- 2: U.S. Air Force Rhythm in Blue Jazz Ensemble Free Concert, Norwalk Concert Hall, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
- 6: Veteran of the Month and Flag Raising Ceremony, American Legion, 60 County Street (11:00)
- 10: Mulvoy-Tarlov-Aquino VFW Post 603 Monthly Membership Meeting, 60 County St (7:00)
- 15: Membership meeting for American Legion Post 12 and Auxiliary Unit 12, 60 County St (7:00)
- 17: Sons of the American Legion Squadron 12 Membership Meeting, 60 County St (7:00)

10. ADJOURNMENT: the meeting was adjourned by Jeff DeWitt at 7:03 p.m.

11. Next meeting is Tuesday, October 8, 2019, 6:00 p.m., room 231.

Addendum 1

Service members Civil Relief Act (SCRA) benefits for Veterans

First enacted in 1940, this Act has been amended several times through 2019. The purpose of the SCRA is to offer short-term financial and legal relief to military personnel and their dependents.

Who does the SCRA cover?

Active Duty Service members. Benefits begin the date active duty starts.

Reserves and National Guard. Benefits start the date of the receipt of the orders.

Service members with Permanent Change in Station (PCS) orders.

Dependents.

What are the benefits?

- Foreclosure protection for one year after the service member returns from duty.
- Maximum 6% interest rate on pre-service debts for one year after service member returns from duty. Eligible debts include mortgages, auto loans, credit card loans and home equity lines of credit. Federally guaranteed student loans are NOT eligible.
- Prohibits negative reports to credit bureaus for exercising SCRA rights.
- Prevents credit denials or negative credit changes by financial institutions where military status is the sole reason.
- Prevents rescinding/terminating property purchase loans if the deposit or first installment was made before active duty.
- Apartment and auto leases can be terminated without penalty after the date of military service.
- Life insurance policies purchased prior to service must remain in effect for two years after military service has ended, regardless of whether the premiums have been paid.
- Health insurance before military service must be reinstated upon the release from military service.
- Court proceedings may be stayed up to 90 days after active military service. Excluded are criminal and child support proceedings, or if there is no “material” effect.
- Income taxes incurred before/during active service are deferred up to 6 months after active duty ends.
- Dependents who rent their homes cannot be evicted during active duty, provided the monthly rent is \$2,400 or less.

How to receive the benefits?

Service members must proactively contact their financial institutions because SCRA benefits are not automatic. The request must be in writing and within 180 days after the

time of service ends. A copy of the mobilization orders must be provided (or in some cases a letter from the person's commanding officer) along with a claim that military service had a "material effect".

Addendum 2

Veterans Treatment Courts

When veterans return from combat, some turn to drugs and/or alcohol to cope with their experiences on the battlefield. Sadly, too many veterans end up in the criminal justice system as a result of their service. Veterans Treatment Courts give our veterans the opportunity to live a sober and stable life while restoring their military honor and their commitment to family and community.

Judge Robert Russell, presiding judge of the Buffalo Drug Court and Buffalo Mental Health Court, created the nation's first Veterans Treatment Court in January of 2008 in response to the growing number of veterans appearing on his dockets who were addicted to drugs and/or alcohol and/or suffering from mental illness. Immediately following the launch of the Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court, Judge Russell and his team were inundated by requests from courts, elected officials, veterans service organizations, and concerned Americans around the country witnessing the same increases in veterans entering the criminal justice system.

What are Veterans Treatment Courts

The bonds of military service run deep. Veterans have many shared experiences not common among civilians. Research suggests that traditional community services may not be adequately suited to meet the distinct needs of veterans in the criminal justice system.

In Veterans Treatment Courts, those who served in our nation's Armed Forces go through the treatment court process with their fellow veterans and are connected to the federal, state and local services that are uniquely designed for the distinct needs that arise from military service.

Veterans Treatment Courts follow the Drug Court model. Veterans Treatment Court participants receive first class treatment and other services they require to get back on track and lead constructive lives, yet they are also held accountable by a judge for meeting their obligations to society, themselves and their families. Participants are regularly and randomly tested for alcohol/drug use, required to appear frequently in court for the judge to review their progress, and immediately receive rewards for doing well and sanctions for not living up to their obligations.

Who Participates in a Veterans Treatment Court

Veterans Treatment Courts involve cooperation and collaboration with traditional partners found in Drug and Mental Health Courts, with the addition of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration (Veterans Justice Outreach), Veterans Benefit Administration, state department/agencies of veterans affairs, Vet Center, veterans service organizations, volunteer veteran mentors, and other veteran support organizations.

The American Legion and Veterans Treatment Courts

The American Legion provides an extremely valuable service to Veterans Treatment Courts. The American Legion can assist Veterans Treatment Courts by providing Service Officers, mentors, and linkages to federal, state and community veterans' resources.

Veterans of the United States Armed Forces may be eligible for a broad range of programs and services provided by the federal U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). These benefits are legislated in Title 38 of the United States Code. Veterans may also be eligible for specific programs and or benefits through their states' veterans agency to include other agencies due to their veteran's status.

Many veterans who enter the criminal justice system are unaware of their eligibility in VA programs and services. Veterans often require additional expertise from accredited American Legion Department (State) service officers in navigating the filing and/or appealing of a claim, peer support and guidance.

Justice For Vets, National Association of Drug Court Professionals

Justice For Vets, The National Clearinghouse for Veterans Treatment Courts is a professional service organization of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and is the lead organization in the nation implementing, advocating, and influencing public policy for VTC's.

Resources:

VA&R Health Policy Unit – For questions, please contact us at (202) 861-2700 or via email at var@legion.org

Justice for Vets, the National Clearinghouse for Veteran Treatment Courts- <http://www.justiceforvets.org>

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Justice Outreach Program
- <http://www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp>