



MEETING MINUTES
MILITARY and VETERANS LIAISON COMMITTEE
MONDAY, APRIL 8, 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 Chairperson Jeff DeWitt at 6:01 p.m.

2. PUBLIC FORUM:

a. Rick McFarland, Regional Director, Guardian Angels Medical Service Dogs. Would like to raise awareness of the organization. In his 3rd year raising funds. Would like to see a dog matched to a veteran in need in the Norwalk area.

3. ROLL CALL:

a. Present (5): Jeff DeWitt, Chair; Bob King, Labor and Business Relations Chair; Fred Wilms, Financial Services Chair; Leon Breault, Veteran At-large; Don Overton, Veteran At-large; Deanna D'Amore, Medical and Health Services Chair

b. Absent or excused (8): Larry Cafero, Legal Services Chair; Bryan Rooney, Military Outreach and Deputy Chair; Kras Carlucci, Housing Services Chair; Dan Caporale, Veteran At-large; Howard Dixon, Veteran At-large; Matt Seebeck, Veteran At-large; Irene Dixon, Mayor Rilling's Staff

4. CHAIRMAN COMMENTS:

a. Congressman Himes to host an invitation-only event at Norwalk Library to speak about veterans' issues. Jeff DeWitt and Don Overton will represent the MVLC.

b. Larry Cafero filed a Freedom of Information Act request with Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs for a list of veterans residing in Norwalk (deadline 4/8/19).

c. Website is now live as is an MVLC e-mail address to receive official business (mvlc@norwalkct.org).

d. Google Drive created by Matt Seebeck to create a space for collaboration on MVLC business. Invitation will be resent on 4/9.

e. By-Laws approval and editing tabled until the May meeting.

f. Bryan Rooney met the CEO of Hire Heroes. Will put Bob King in touch with him for further partnering.

g. Bryan Rooney and Jeff DeWitt spoke to Legal Counsel about the makeup of the committee and which positions should have Norwalk residency or employment requirements, which are voting positions, and more. Results coming soon.



h. Chair Jeff DeWitt contacted the Public Affairs Officer for a local Guard unit who will be deploying soon. The goal is to know if there are any Norwalk residents going on that deployment so we can make city services available to any family members left behind.

i. Matt Seebeck e-mail the annual report from the New York City Veterans Advisory Board. The document can serve was a resource for best practices.

5. READING OF THE MINUTES:

a. As the meeting minutes were distributed and no corrections were recommended, Bob King made a motion and Leon Breault seconded to dispense with the reading of the minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

6. REPORTS:

a. Brian Rooney – Military Outreach: (REPEAT) Project Evergreen’s “GreenCare and SnowCare for Troops” (<https://goo.gl/gK4RdY>) is a program for military rank E-6 and below to register when deploying to have some basic needs taken care of in their absence. Program volunteers take care of lawn, landscape, and snow removal services at their cost. Publicity will be needed to establish a database of volunteers in Norwalk and education of the active, Guard, and Reserve population in Norwalk. Developing a trifold style brochure about the committee is a priority as an initial step towards publicizing the committee’s efforts, goals, and services. The brochures can then be put around town, National Guard armories, handed out at events such as 5Ks, Memorial Day parade, etc.

b. Bob King – Business & Labor: asked for support of his program at St. John’s Cemetery on 5/18, starting at 9:00 with setup, 9:30 refreshments, 10:00 flag placing. Offered he and King Industries to Kelly Kultys from the Norwalk Hour to highlight veteran owned businesses and role on the MVLC.

c. Fred Wilms – Financial Services: created a one-pager related to credit scores. It will be a great tool for young veterans to learn about credit score and methods to improve their credit score to better qualify for loans (car, home, business, etc.). Future one-pager will focus on veteran entrepreneurship and funds available to veterans for startups. Partnership with SCORE, Chamber of Commerce, lending institutions, etc., will be required to see this program become successful. Don Overton has some experience in this regard.

d. Deanna D’Amore – Health Chair: spoke about upcoming positions opening on the City of Norwalk staff for Human Services and Social Services. When those positions get filled, an invitation to an MVLC meeting will be sent so they can understand what the MVLC needs are and what we can offer. Survey being conducted by Data Haven. A question being asked is whether the respondents are veterans or not. The survey results would help the city understand services need. The results will be broken out by type of city (median income, etc.). Spoke about a directory of phone numbers we can link on our web page from Southwestern Mental Health Board.

7. OLD BUSINESS:

a. Survey: (repeat; tabled until the next meeting). Direction seems to be towards keeping it very simple and use follow on surveys. Larry Cafero recommends disclaimers regarding “list will not be sold, etc.”

Recommendations:

- Don't include month in the birth day field.
- Do you avail yourself of VA healthcare Y/N.
- Primary care doctor in Norwalk Y/N.
- Include Tricare For Life to list of insurance providers
- How is the information going to be used?
- Where are veterans utilizing services?
- Add Optional comment section for each category.
- “This survey seeks to identify the military and veteran population in Norwalk”
- Distribution method: if web based, anyone can fill out the information and we only need to capture Norwalk-based military and veterans
 - No local census capability available.
 - Using a mailing service would be costly but it will capture the largest audience, to include those that don't use a computer.
 - Can a survey be included in the tax bill, or some other mass mailing already in place by the city?

From previous meetings

An initial deliverable was to generate a survey to capture demographic and needs data for all military and veterans in Norwalk. Jeff DeWitt sent a draft version of the survey to the City of Norwalk legal team and asked for their input on the legality of a survey as it relates to Privacy Act, Freedom of Information Act, etc. Attorney Christie Jean responded with information related to applicable law, Connecticut Personal Data Act, Connecticut Freedom of Information Act.

Leon Breault, veteran At-large, spoke with someone at Norwalk Community College regarding the survey. It was recommended that the survey be less in depth. Category of discharge shouldn't include negative options.

Don Overton, recommends that we have a unique opportunity to get out ahead of the state to capture more useful data. Assessing veteran owned businesses is an option to include in the survey. The results of the survey could be used by the state to incentivize the opportunity for veterans to move to Connecticut and more specifically, Norwalk. Any positive data gleaned from the survey can be used in that regard. For every dollar saved in programs like property tax exemptions, two dollars goes back into the local economy through sales tax, etc. There are ways the survey can identify opportunities to present to the Common Council that will create opportunities in Norwalk for veterans. Avoid PII altogether but gather general trends.

Bryan Rooney discussed our need to decide what the purpose of the survey is. If it's simply statistical analysis, then we need the largest pool of questions possible. Maybe that method would be a good first-step. The next survey could then relate to veterans and military awareness of programs and benefits in Norwalk such as the City of Norwalk property tax exemption,

banking advantages, retail discounts, etc. Another option would be to survey veteran's awareness of services normally available on a military base. Even beyond statistics, the survey could help create a sense of community behind what the committee is chartered to do.

Mayor Rilling originally requested the survey to understand the veteran community. Awareness of services is important but demographic information is important too. Irene Dixon will get clarification from the mayor about his goals for the survey.

Fred Wilms recommended getting to voter registration data and cross reference names from survey from voter registration data.

Don Overton will reach out to Connecticut Veterans Affairs for data. In order to engage with external agencies such as Connecticut VA effectively, the committee needs legal standing. Jeff DeWitt will contact the Arts Commission for their lessons learned and any source documents that can be mirrored to expedite our efforts.

The Tax Collector's Office reports 1,437 households receiving some sort of veteran tax exemption. Well below the 3,000 estimate of military or veteran residents.

b. By Laws / Charter (repeat; tabled until the next meeting):

(1) Deanna D'Amore asked that the language be changed for her position from "medical professional" to more align with her position as a health *administrator* for the city.

(2) Ensure the charter clearly states the purpose of the At-large veterans on the committee. The goal for them is to provide the focus area chairs first person testimonial of the experiences of being a veteran and/or serving in the military. Much more important is the kind of expertise Don Overton brings to meetings through his relationship with the legislative process and the Veterans Administration to educate us all on developments.

(3) Bryan Rooney will make the adjustments to the charter / by-laws and present it at the next meeting in March.

(4) The process after MVLC approves it, Brian Candela, attorney for the Ordinance Committee, will review it for their approval.

c. Priorities (repeat)

(1) Convert present charter into by-laws. When completed, present to Ordinance Committee for approval (meets every 3rd Tuesday), then Town Council approval (meets every 4th Wednesday). **(OPEN)**

(A) Irene Dixon learned about formalizing a committee legally. Three concerns: 1) Connecticut General Statute, Title 7 (Municipalities), [Chapter 99](#), Section 7-190 says there must be a "bare majority" by political party on every commission; right now we are 7 one major party, 3 unaffiliated, 2 other major party, 1 registered out of state, and 1 unknown; it's important to know the answer for our future; need the definition of what "bare majority" means; 2) can someone who is registered to vote out of state, serve on a municipal commission; and 3) can someone who resides outside of the municipality serve on the commission, specifically city employees who live elsewhere. Attorney Jean from the Counsel's office has been asked to look

into all three concerns. **(OPEN)** UPDATE: Attorney Jean has replied. Response will be shared at the May meeting.

(2) Web site on the Norwalk portal. On 3/12/19, the IT department has been asked to create a page along the same lines as the Arts Commission. **(CLOSED)**

(3) Publicity: print and digital. Bryan Rooney will take this. **(OPEN)**

(4) Future meetings should include defining direction such as event partnerships, schools and churches, and similar venues to advertise through them that the committee exists and invite people to committee meetings. **(OPEN)**

8. NEW BUSINESS

a. Logo approval: Leon Breault made a motion that the body approve a logo for the NVMC, seconded by Bob King. Motion carried unanimously.

9. GOOD OF THE ORDER:

a. (repeat) Don Overton – the Connecticut Radio Information System, Inc. (CRIS) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) radio-reading service that has been serving people who are blind or print-challenged for nearly four decades. They operate with a small staff and a large number of dedicated volunteers who provide voice talent. CRIS Radio broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week featuring articles published in more than 70 newspapers and magazines, including award-winning children's magazines available online and on-demand. There is market to provide veteran specific programming in the future. Don will work this.

b. (repeat) Matt Seebeck: would like an introduction to the Housing Chair, Kras Carlucci. He has met two military/veterans who have housing issues. He would like to get educated on the processes in place in the city to help people. Introduction made via e-mail on 3/15/19.

c. (repeat) Irene Dixon – recommended utilizing the local government channel 79 on Optimum to get the word out. Larry Cafero recommended a still frame information screen related to the committee as needed.

d. (repeat) Howard Dixon – in the future, find what services the bases in the area can provide to retirees.

e. Don Overton spoke about the VA Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 and the effort by the VA to modernize and streamline the claims process to include the appeals process.

Military and veteran related events around Norwalk

April

16: Membership meeting for American Legion Post 12 and Auxiliary Unit 12, 7:00, 60 County

18: Sons of the American Legion Squadron 12 Membership Meeting, 7:00, 60 County

30: American Legion Men's Night, 7:00-9:00, 60 County

May

5: Veteran of the Month / Flag Raising Ceremony, 11:00 a.m.; Honoring Captain John Keogh, American Legion Post 12's First Commander

7: Norwalk Veteran's Memorial Committee Meeting. 7:00, 60 County

9: Mulvoy-Tarlov-Aquino VFW Post 603 Monthly Membership Meeting, 7:00, 60 County

17: Connecticut Armed Forces Day Lunch, 11:00, Aqua Turf, see addendum 3 to these minutes

18: Armed Forces Day

18: King Industries flag placing event; St. John's Cemetery, 223 Richards Ave, 9:30 a.m., see addendum 1 to these minutes

19: Norwalk Veteran Memorial Committee Cemetery Visitation event, meet at City Hall at 10:00 a.m. for a short service, lower the flag to half-staff, playing of Taps; two 2 groups will depart on a schedule for a similar ceremony at cemeteries and other locations; see addendum 2 to these minutes for the schedule

19: Shea - Magrath Ceremony; Calf Pasture Beach, 12:00 p.m., guest speaker is State Senator Carlo Leone, USAF veteran

21: Membership meeting for American Legion Post 12 and Auxiliary Unit 12, 7:00, 60 County

23: Sons of the American Legion Squadron 12 Membership Meeting (7:00)

27: Memorial Day; veterans who want or need a ride in cars, arrive at the American Legion, 60 County, by 8:00 a.m., depart at 8:30 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT: the meeting was adjourned by Jeff DeWitt at 7:04 p.m.

11. Next meeting is Monday, May 13, 2019, 6:00 p.m.

Addendum 1



Memorial Day Flag Placing

Volunteers Needed To Place Flags on Veterans' Gravesites

Saturday, May 18, 2019

St. John Cemetery

223 Richards Ave, Norwalk, CT 06850

10 AM - 1 PM

(Refreshments to be served at 9:30AM)

Please Join Us

As We Honor Our Fallen Armed Service Members

Rain or Shine

Addendum 2

VETERANS MEMORIAL COMMITTEE CITY OF NORWALK

CEMETERY VISITATION SCHEDULE SUNDAY, MAY 19, 2019

10:00 am Everyone will assemble at City Hall where we will have a short memorial service, lower the flag to half mast, and sound taps. Afterwards, we will divide into two groups. Each group will go to the below listed locations to perform a similar service.

TIME	GROUP "A"	GROUP "B"
10:15	WW I Monument (The Green)	Civil War Monument
10:30	Riverside Cemetery	Rowayton Union Cemetery
10:45	St. Mary's Cemetery	Brookside Cemetery
11:00	Union Cemetery	Independent Hebrew Cemetery
11:15	Kings Way Apartments	St. John's Cemetery
11:30	Pine Island Cemetery	Beth Israel Cemetery
11:45	East Norwalk Hist Cemetery	Beth El Cemetery
12:00	East Norwalk Library	Veterans Park
13:00	Memorial service at the Shea-Magrath Memorial, Calf Pasture.	

Trumpeters: _____ & _____



CONNECTICUT ARMED FORCES DAY LUNCHEON

★ *Celebrate Service* ★

MAY 17, 2019 ★ 11:00 A.M.
AQUA TURF CLUB, SOUTHLINGTON, CT

Suggested Attire: Business, Service Dress, Class B, or Duty Uniform



For more information, contact
Sgt. 1st Class William Blake ★ (860) 493-2750 ★ William.D.Blake14.mil@mail.mil
or visit http://ct.ng.mil/CT_AFDL or [facebook.com/CTArmedForcesDay](https://www.facebook.com/CTArmedForcesDay)