



MEETING MINUTES
ADVISORY MILITARY and VETERANS LIAISON COMMITTEE
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2020 - 6:00 P.M.
125 EAST AVENUE, FIRST FLOOR LOUNGE
NORWALK, CT 06851

1. **CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** the meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jeff DeWitt.

2. **PUBLIC FORUM:**

a. None.

3. **ROLL CALL:**

a. Present (5): Jeff DeWitt, Chair; Bryan Rooney, Military Outreach and Deputy Chair; Fred Wilms, Financial Services Chair; Matt Seebeck, Veteran At-large; Dan Caporale, Veteran At-large; Leon Breault, Veteran At-large.

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

4. **CHAIRMAN COMMENTS:**

a. (REPEAT/UPDATE) 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. Norwalk has been approved for August 6-9. More to come from VVMF as they control the calendar and publicity. *Update (2/3): American Legion Post 12 is the named host of the event. Their insurance covers the event.*

b. Larry Cafero identified the need to involve all entities in future discussions on business rules, organization structure, etc. He feels and the committee is in agreement that there are many people around Norwalk with long and commendable service to the city that should be involved in the discussions. The deliverable from these meetings is a plan to present to Mayor Rilling and ultimately the Common Council on the outcome for their direction. NOTE: there is no intent to dissolve any existing organization, committee, or responsibility. The goal is to have one entity for anyone in the city to work with regarding services, outreach, and ceremonies / events. At present, there are three which is inefficient. Meetings about the future need to be scheduled to answer the need Mr. Cafero identified. UPDATE February 2020: This remains an open agenda item. A draft organizational chart was provided to the mayor's staff for consideration. **(OPEN)**



c. The Bridgeport office of the Connecticut VA is still interested in moving to Norwalk. Space in the Health Department has been considered. This committee hopes that project moves forward soon. **(OPEN)**

5. REPORTS:

a. (REPEAT/UPDATE) Larry Cafero – had a very productive meeting with Brian Griffin from the Norwalk Chamber of Commerce regarding partnering with the A-MVLC on programs to enhance the visibility of veteran owned business and more. An invitation will be extended to Brian Griffin and anyone else he would like bring, to attend the next meeting on March 2, 2020. UPDATE: Brian Griffin has been informed he is welcome to become a member.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

a. (REPEAT) Bryan Rooney presented a program where individuals or business entities in town receive a “Gold Star Stamp” which would indicate the entity is veteran friendly. Recommend using Mayor’s letterhead as part of recognition. UPDATE 2/3: Changed the name from “Gold Star Stamp” to prevent any confusion with Gold Star Family. New name “Veterans Advocate Award” adopted. Design and criteria for the award sent to the mayor’s staff. Attachment 4 is a draft of the criteria. **(OPEN)**

b. (REPEAT) Fred Wilms opened discussion on the physical binder discussed at the start of the formation of our committee for veterans’ resources in the City of Norwalk. There is a collection site for documentation online until a resource document can be built or published online. UPDATE: The Google Drive for the committee is the repository for much of what has been collected to date and the shell of a physical binder was started months ago. Continuing to work on the content.

c. (REPEAT) November 2019: Had a discussion with Bryan Rooney (*Deputy Chair*) regarding New Canaan’s Hometown Heroes Banner Program. It is brought to this committee as an idea to look into for Norwalk. Fred Wilms recommended along Memorial Day parade route. Some discussion on how to select Veterans. Recommended rotation of names. **UPDATE:** January 2020 -- A research book is near completion documenting all of the names on the plaques in Norwalk who died during wartime service in WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and OIF - OEF. In the first round of identifying the people for the banners Chairman Jeff DeWitt recommends the committee identify some of those 256 names who paid the ultimate sacrifice, to be honored with banners. This would be for the first round only. Possible locations would be East Avenue near City Hall or Town Green, Calf Pasture Beach near Shea-Magrath, or Seaview Avenue near Veterans Park. The banners would look similar to those in attachment 1. The program can be expanded in future years where residents can purchase banners on their own under the program and the city selects the site where the banner will be flown. This is a very preliminary plan. Advice, consent, and approval will be requested from Recreation and Parks and the Common Council once the details of the plan are finalized. **UPDATE:** February – recommend 10 banners total. Will ask the VFW and American Legion to fund 3 each and for the City of Norwalk to fund the final 4. Recommended names to consider in the first round are:

Daniel Shea (USA, Vietnam, Medal of Honor)
John Magrath (USA, WWII, Medal of Honor)
Michael Scanlon (USMC, Vietnam, Silver Star)
Harold Coffin (USA, WWII, Silver Star)
Aurelio Mucci (USA, WWII, Silver Star)
Donald Wason (USA, WWII, Distinguished Service Cross)
Tony Paradiso (USA, WWI, Distinguished Service Cross)
Warren Semple (USA, WWII, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal – 8 times)
Frank Godfrey (USA, WWI)
Aime Tarlov (USA, WWI)

New Canaan ran the program as part of an Eagle Scout project. Contacted the scoutmaster in Norwalk who said their Eagle Scout candidates all have projects assigned already. Will move ahead as an A-MVLC sponsored project. Banner manufacturers need a high resolution 5"x7" photo which could prove to be difficult to find. Attachment 1 has an example from a vendor. **(OPEN)**

NOTE: This program can evolve to honor others in town. It would be a great method for families to honor a loved one. The goal with the first iteration are those who were Killed In Action.

d. Larry Cafero provided a list a few months ago of 1,800+ people in Norwalk receiving a tax credit due to their veteran status or a deceased family member who was a veteran. It is the goal of this committee and core to what we want to accomplish, to begin to introduce the committee to them and make sure they understand we are available to help or find help for them should they need it. The list has been provided to Bryan Rooney and Matt Seebeck to explore options on how best to contact everyone. **(OPEN)**

7. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Jeff DeWitt asked Reverend Artie Kassimis from the Word Alive Bible Church to head a project to have Norwalk named a "Purple Heart City." He asked for some time to consider it. There are 90+ veterans that we know of that were Killed In Action that were recipients of the Purple Heart. The goal would be to honor them and to host a gathering to honor any living Purple Heart recipient and/or the family of recipients to help the healing and to share their story with each other. Project details in Attachment 1. **(OPEN)**

b. Jeff DeWitt presented a document that will be given to Deanna D'Amore at the Health Department to circulate among health care providers who don't accept Tricare insurance to help them sign up. (Attachment 3) **(OPEN)**

c. Creation of a veteran registry in Norwalk is being requested to the IT Department in City Hall. A link was sent to IT and they have been asked about the feasibility of duplicating what the State of Pennsylvania has already done **(OPEN)**:

<https://www.dmv.pa.gov/veteransaffairs/pages/outreach-and-reintegration/pennsylvaniaveteransregistry.aspx>

8. GOOD OF THE ORDER:

a. The American Legion is pursuing some long-term planning. A goal is to build a ground-level building that is accessible to everyone. At present, the main downstairs hall isn't accessible. A request for pro-bono drawings of a building went out to architects in the area and one has responded that they would like to help. The property is 3.07 acres. There are also discussions about how to maximize the space in the rear lot. A playground and gazebo have been discussed as part of the bigger planning picture. The Town of Trumbull received grant money to pursue a similar project after their VFW building was condemned. Article here:

<https://www.trumbulltimes.com/news/article/Council-hears-from-Trumbull-veterans-14965618.php>

9. MILITARY AND VETERAN RELATED EVENTS AROUND NORWALK

FEBRUARY 2020

13: Mulvoy-Tarlov-Aquino VFW Post 603 Monthly Membership Meeting, 60 County Street (7:30)

18: Membership meeting for American Legion Post 12 and Auxiliary Unit 12, 60 County St (7:00)

27: Sons of the American Legion Squadron 12 Membership Meeting, 60 County St (7:00)

10. ADJOURNMENT: the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

11. NEXT MEETING: is Monday, March 2, 2020, 6:00 p.m., 1st floor lounge.

Attachment 1



Add Major Honors and Military Service Seals



Attachment 2

**GUIDELINE TO ESTABLISH A PURPLE HEART TEAM, COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY, CITY OR TOWN**

1. Establish a desire to lift those that have received a Purple Heart from the United States of America. Past Wars, Posthumously, Retired, or Currently on active duty, and Gold Star families.
2. Canvas for those that are connected to your establishment or city by advertising a “Meet and Greet”, the idea is to bring together families and friends that have a Purple Heart recipient in their family. Have them bring pictures, awards, stories about their family member. This is not only healing, but support and ownership into the decision-making.
3. Create a booklet of the pictures and stories to be printed for others to see.
4. Provide a Purple Heart Parking space.
5. Create a Proclamation and have a public meeting to read and dedicate the establishment as a “Purple Heart” Team, City, College, University or Town.
6. The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of Connecticut, will provide a Plaque and PH parking sign. We will also have the establishment placed on the National Purple Heart Trail.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart was established in 1932 in Derby Connecticut by three WWI Purple Heart recipients. Chapter 1 of the MOPH is still active today. In many cases those that have received the Purple Heart have never been able to tell their stories. Family members receive the PH medal in the mail and it is never presented in public. By becoming a Purple Heart establishment, you are letting the world know that you recognize the sacrifices made and that you will not allow that sacrifice to be kept quiet. The only way a person can get a Purple Heart is to be wounded in combat by an enemy of the United States.

Freedom is not free.

Daniel M. Eddinger
Maj, USA, (Ret)
Commander MOPH CT
828 707-5131 (commander.mophct@gmail.com)

Attachment 3

TRICARE invites you to serve America's heroes and their families by participating in the TRICARE program. TRICARE is the health care plan for the nation's 9.6 million uniformed services members, retirees, and families.

- TRICARE is an industry leader in timely claims processing; close to 100 percent of correctly filed claims are paid within 30 days, and all are paid within 60 days.
- TRICARE regional contractors provide administrative support, including quick, reliable assistance through dedicated contact phone numbers and resources.

You do not have to join the TRICARE network in order to see TRICARE beneficiaries, but you must become TRICARE-authorized. Most providers with a valid professional license (issued by a state or a qualified accreditation organization) can become TRICARE-authorized. It's easy!

Begin the process or get more information by:

- Visiting www.tricare.mil/providers
- Calling the regional contractor for the region where your office is located

FOR CONNECTICUT:

Tricare North / Health Net Federal Services, LLC:

- 1-877-TRICARE (1-877-874-2273)
- <http://www.hnfs.com>

Once you become TRICARE authorized, make sure your office staff knows you accept TRICARE. Beneficiaries often ask friends or neighbors for provider recommendations, and they will call your office to see if you accept TRICARE.

We hope you will partner with TRICARE to deliver world-class health care to America's heroes and their families.

Attachment 4

VETERAN ADVOCATE AWARD PROGRAM

PROGRAM

The Veteran Advocate Award (VAA) program is a method by which the Advisory Military and Veterans Liaison Committee (A-MVLC) identifies a local organization, business, or individual as being an advocate to veterans in Norwalk. The award will be presented quarterly.

PURPOSE

To identify organizations, businesses, and individuals who go above and beyond to foster a positive relationship with the veteran community through policy or service.

CRITERIA

Through partnership, good deeds, policy, etc., all organizations such as fraternal organizations, businesses who proudly put veterans at the front of their business model, or individuals who go above and beyond to help and promote veteran organizations, events, or outreach.

METHOD OF NOMINATION

In February, May, August, and November each year, the A-MVLC will bring nominations to the monthly meeting. Each nominating person will verbally present an argument in favor of their nomination. After each nomination is heard, a silent ballot will be held. The winning nomination will be forwarded to the Mayor's Office.

METHOD OF RECOGNITION

A formal presentation will be made with the Mayor present as his/her schedule allows. The presentation should take place at the location or meeting of the organization, business, or location of an individual's choosing that meets with the approval of the A-MVLC.

COST

This recognition program's cost is minimal and is solely the administrative cost to produce certificates and proclamations in the Mayor's Office. Rough estimates are \$5 per quarter or \$20 per year.