



MEETING MINUTES
MILITARY and VETERANS LIAISON COMMITTEE
MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 2019 - 6:00 P.M.
125 EAST AVENUE, ROOM 231
NORWALK, CT 06851

1. **CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** the meeting was called to order by Chairperson Jeff DeWitt at 6:02 p.m., and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bryan Rooney.

2. **OPEN FORUM:** Mayor Rilling reiterated his unequivocal support for the formation of the committee and what we're going to accomplish.

3. **CHAIRPERSON OPENING REMARKS:** Jeff DeWitt spoke about the purpose and overview of the committee. He also discussed the potential organizational chart for committee business. Exact text of comments is included as Addendum 1.

4. **INTRODUCTIONS:**

a. Jeff DeWitt, Chairperson. U.S. Air Force active duty 1982-2008 (Chief Master Sergeant {E9}, retired). Telecommunications and Computer Operator. Secretary, Norwalk Veterans Memorial Committee; Finance Officer, American Legion Post 12; '19-'20 Quartermaster, Mulvoy - Tarlov - Aquino VFW Post 603.

b. Bryan Rooney, Military Outreach and Deputy Chair. Captain, Army National Guard, 2008 to present. Officer Candidate School Executive Officer & Senior Platoon Trainer. Former Commanding Officer of a Heavy Armor (tank) Company. Associate TV Producer, WWE. Member, American Legion.

c. Fred Wilms, Finance and Tax Chair. Senior Vice President Webster Bank for small business relations. Former member Connecticut House of Representatives. Born into a military family and lived on or near military bases in his childhood.

d. Deanna D'Amore, Medical and Health Services Chair. Director of Health, City of Norwalk. Worked for Health Department as a Project Coordinator for 6 years and returned as Director of Health in 2018.

e. Bob King, Labor & Business Relations Chair. U.S. Army 2003-2008, Military Police and Combat Engineer. Director of Operations, King Industries in Norwalk. Board member Norwalk Chamber of Commerce. Leads annual community project to replace all U.S. flags at Veteran's headstones in cemeteries in Norwalk in May. Employs 28 Veterans.

f. Leon Breault, At-Large Veteran. Life-long Norwalk resident. Army National Guard (1966-1972). Quartermaster Support at numerous locations including the Nike Missile site in Westport. Worked for Burndy Corporation for 27 years. President, Lifetime Learners Institute at Norwalk Community College.

g. Dan Caporale, At Large Veteran. US Marine Corps, 8 years, 3 tours in Vietnam. Chairman, Norwalk Veterans Memorial Committee; Commandant, Marine Corps League Mahackemo Detachment #37; Junior Vice Commander American Legion Post 12.





h. Howard Dixon, At-Large Veteran. U.S. Air Force Air National Guard, 1966-1988 (Lt Col, retired). First Commander, Advanced Airlift Tactics Technical Center (AATTC), Rosecrans Air National Guard Base in St. Joseph, Missouri. Namesake of AATTC “Dixon Award” awarded annually to an individual or group of individuals who demonstrate the innovative, forward thinking by taking risks. Commercial airline pilot.

i. Steven Marsan, At-Large Veteran. U.S. Army National Guard 2007-2011, heavy equipment operator. Works for Westport Department of Public Works.

j. Don Overton, At-Large Veteran. U.S. Army, 82nd Airborne, medically retired. U.S. Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program, Defense Medical Research and Development Program, and Armed Forces Institute of Regenerative Medicine scientific review panels. Former Veterans Affairs and Business Specialist for the City of Palm Bay, Florida. He fostered collaborative efforts resulting in the establishment of a new Veteran Owned Chamber of Commerce tasked with advancing statewide contract preference policies, as well as consolidating various countywide initiatives under a newly established Veterans Resource Network.

k. Matt Seebeck, At-Large Veteran. US Army Reserve 2008-2016, Military Police. Senior General Manager at Brookfield Properties. Norwalk resident and Member, American Legion.

l. VACANCIES ON THE COMMITTEE: Housing / Relocation Services Chair and Legal Services Chair. The committee is dedicated to finding candidates for those positions.

5. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Survey: the first deliverable the committee will work on is a survey to establish a database of Veterans and those on active duty, or in the National Guard or Reserves. A draft of the content of the survey was handed to each committee member to work on prior to the next meeting. Jeff DeWitt will invite the IT Department for the City of Norwalk to the next meeting. Jeff DeWitt will also ask the Legal Department for the City of Norwalk what the restrictions are for survey questions such as those related to the Privacy Act.

b. Charter: a draft of a charter in the form of a discussion memo was drafted by Bryan Rooney in collaboration with Jeff DeWitt. That discussion memo is included as Addendum 2 at the end of these minutes. The committee is requested to look over that document and bring back their thoughts. Jeff DeWitt also emphasized that committee positions remain open: Housing / Relocation Services Chair and Legal Services Chair.

6. COMMENTS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

a. Bryan Rooney: spoke on his excitement at the initiation of this committee and to maintain a focus not only on Veteran residents of Norwalk, but also currently serving members of Active, National Guard, and Reserve forces and their families while residing in Norwalk.

b. Bob King: identified a need for networking events in the town of Norwalk.

c. Matt Seebeck: identified a possible need for ESGR representation and ombudsman. ESGR points of contact for Connecticut: <https://www.esgr.mil/About-ESGR/Contact/Local-State-Pages/Connecticut>

d. Diane CeCe (Visitor): spoke on the desire to have more Veterans participate in the Memorial Day Parade





e. Leon Breault: spoke on the desire to implement more educational opportunities within Norwalk Schools regarding military service. Particularly around Veteran's Day.

f. Howard Dixon: identified the need to fix Tricare issues within local communities and encouraging more practitioners to accept Tricare policies. Autumn Lake Healthcare, a short-term rehab and extended care facility in Norwalk, now accepts Tricare insurance. Discussed a desire for more public events demonstrating Veterans and military service.

g. Don Overton: pointed out that there are only eight (8) accredited Service Officers in the Veteran's Administration system within the State of Connecticut and identified a need to increase that number within the state.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**: The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

8. **NEXT MEETING** is scheduled for Monday, February 4, 2019, 6:00 p.m.





ADDENDUM 1

MVLC OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

Norwalk, Connecticut has a long and proud history of recognition of Veterans. Cornerstone events include the Memorial Day Parade, Veterans Day remembrance service, and the Shea-McGrath ceremony held the 3rd Sunday in May, which honors the two Norwalk residents who received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

To further that tradition, the Military and Veterans Liaison Committee (MVLC) has been formed to create a formal and visible method for strengthening the relationship and support of those who are currently serving, or who have served, with city services.

The closest military bases to Norwalk are the United States Military Academy at West Point, 60 miles to the west, and the Groton Naval Base, 80 miles to the east. Due to this proximity to the typical services available to Service Members on military bases, it's incumbent upon city services to augment the needs of its residents who are serving, especially while deployed. In addition, the Veteran community can be served in a visible way through enhancing agency support not only in government but local businesses as well.

In the [Veteran's Administration Population Report for FY 2016](#), the estimated Veteran population in Fairfield County is roughly 30,000 or 3% of the total population of 950,000 residents. And specific to the 4th Congressional district, which is largely southern Fairfield County, there are a total of 23,475 Veterans; 8,770 are under 65 years old, and 14,703 are over 65. The VA does not have any city-specific data. Therefore, the City should not only maintain that number, but also know each Veteran residing within Norwalk.

The [US Department of Commerce census statistics](#) for Norwalk show there are 89,000 residents of Norwalk as of July 1, 2017. Using the estimation from the VA, 3% of the 89,000 residents means Norwalk has roughly 2,670 Veterans residing in the city. Add to that the unknown number of residents who are still serving on active status, National Guard, or Reserves, and that number is probably closer to 3,000 military and Veterans residing in Norwalk. Census data also shows of the 10,935 businesses in Norwalk, 925, or 8.45%, are Veteran owned.

This committee is formed to ensure the needs of our Service Members and Veterans are met with (1) a dedicated city employee or employees who will be the catch-all for help and assistance, and (2) a document outlining resources and contact information for Service Members and Veterans to have in their homes. The city services of primary focus for this committee: Housing, Medical & Health, Financial & Tax, Labor & Business, and Legal.

Housing: continue the trend of zero homeless Veterans who are considered "chronic homeless". Chronic homelessness is defined as "y. In order to meet the "chronically homeless" definition, the individual also





must have been living as described above continuously for at least 12 months, or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years, where the combined occasions total a length of time of at least 12 months. Each period separating the occasions must include at least 7 nights of living in a situation other than a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven.” Utilize Federal and state vouchers to ensure every Veteran has a bed. Then identify follow on supportive assistance such as disability services, substance abuse counseling, etc.

Medical & Health: educate the local medical community on the unique needs of Veterans. Encourage the acceptance of Tricare insurance in order to expand options for residents under that plan. Liaise with the Veterans Administration to assimilate assistance into local services.

Financial & Tax: outreach to Veterans who need help with tax preparation, understanding tax law, understanding local Veteran exemptions, etc. Find grant money for business startup, residence modification to meet ADA requirements, etc.

Labor & Business: educate business owners on prioritizing hiring of Veterans, potential benefits to business owners of hiring Veterans (Work Opportunity Tax Credit, etc.), law about rights of active duty members to return to employment post-deployment (USERRA), finding help for Veteran owned business through Chamber of Commerce, SCORE, etc. Establish Vocational Rehabilitation for returning Service Members and Veterans.

Legal: protect the rights of those who serve and have served. Education about death benefits for Service Members, Veterans, and if necessary, funeral homes. Integrate knowledge and expertise with all of the agencies above.

Lastly, on much larger scale, the secondary effects of our efforts should make a lasting impression on city residents considering military service. Keith Zuegel, Senior Director for Government Relations for the Air Force Association said “fewer than half of one percent of Americans serve in the military. Fewer than 15 percent of young adults have a parent who has served (compared to 40 percent in 1995). 80 percent of those in uniform today had a family member serve in the U.S. military. Communities are increasingly disconnected from military life which ultimately affects the sustainability of the all-volunteer force and national security.





ADDENDUM 2

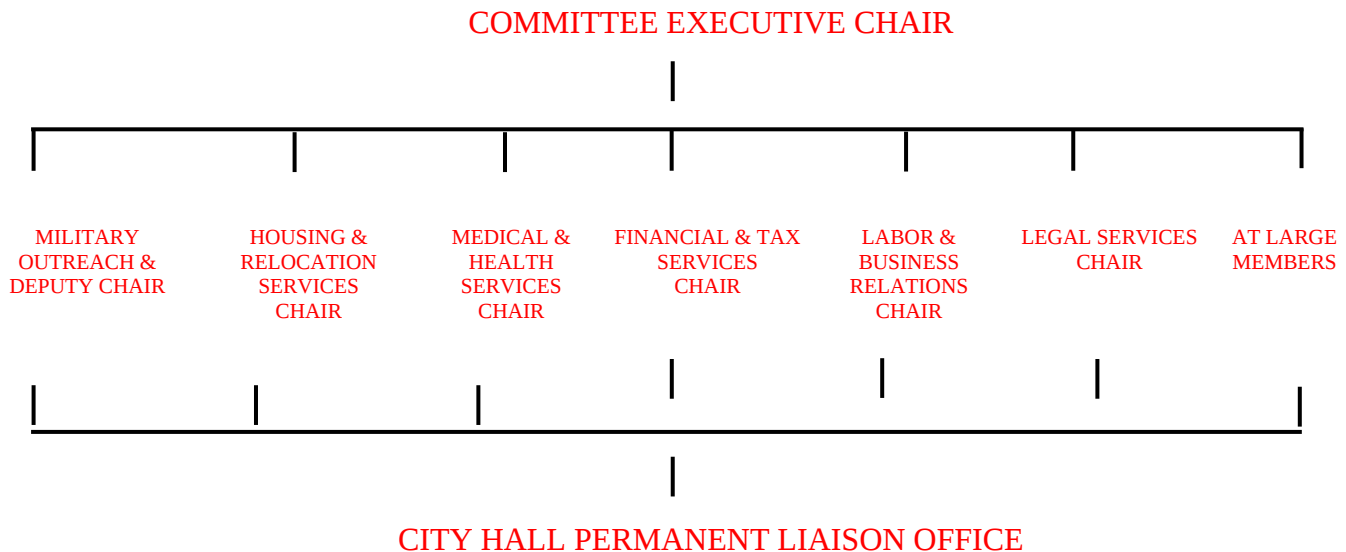
SUBJECT: Discussion of the committee formation, organizational structure, and priorities.

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a discussion framework for the establishment of a Military and Veterans Liaison Committee (MVLC) within the City of Norwalk, Connecticut.
2. **Discussion:** On November 19, 2018, Harry W. Rilling, Mayor of Norwalk, CT, met with founding committee members, Jeffrey R. DeWitt, Bryan R. Rooney, and Irene T. Dixon, to open a discussion on the formation of said committee. The purpose of this meeting was to begin discussions on the following items:
 - a. What are the key military and Veteran affairs issues within the City of Norwalk?
 - b. How will the formation of the MVLC address those needs?
 - c. What is the organizational structure of the MVLC?
 - d. How will the MVLC function?
 - e. What support will be offered on a permanent basis through City Hall?
 - f. What is our baseline course of action going forward?
 - g. What is the timeline for action by the proposed MVLC?
3. **Proposed MVLC Mission Statement:** The mission of the Military and Veterans Liaison Committee is to promote a cooperative relationship between the City of Norwalk and its resident Service Members, Veterans, and their families to provide benefits and programs similar to those available on active duty stations to foster a more integrated community.
4. **Proposed MVLC Duties and Responsibilities:** This committee is established to (1) be advisory to the Mayor, Common Council, City Manager, and City Staff on programs, benefits, or other matters pertaining to military and Veteran relations; (2) assessing immediate and long term needs within the military and Veteran community; (3) raise awareness and coordinate support for military Service Members, Veterans, and their families; and (4) foster and promote within the City of Norwalk a positive attitude towards military Service Members and Veterans.





5. Proposed Committee Organizational Structure



a. The MVLC shall have a minimum of seven (7) members:

- Committee Executive Chair
- Military Outreach & Committee Deputy Chair
- Housing & Relocation Services Chair
- Medical & Health Services Chair
- Financial & Tax Services Chair
- Labor & Business Relations Chair
- Legal Services Chair

b. The MVLC may have a up to a maximum of six (6) additional “At Large” Members who will serve to provide further input, guidance, and perspective to the MVLC.

6. The City Hall Permanent Liaison Officer (MVLC LNO) – The MVLC will be supported directly within City Hall by a permanently assigned liaison officer.

a. The MVLC LNO will be either a full or part time position employed by the City of Norwalk or assigned to an employee within the City of Norwalk.





b. The purpose of the MVLC LNO is to provide direct support for military Service Members, Veterans, and their family members, Day-to-day duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Fielding questions from Service Members, Veterans, and their family members pertaining to benefits and programs offered by the City of Norwalk.
- Directing Service Members, Veterans, and their family members to the appropriate MVLC Chair, if required, for further assistance.
- Providing the MVLC a report on issues, questions, or items for discussion as brought to the attention of the MVLC LNO.

c. The MVLC LNO may be a Chair or At Large Member of the MVLC and will assume all rights, duties, and responsibilities that come with that office in addition to the duties and responsibilities required as MVLC LNO, If the MVLC LNO does not fulfill a direct role on the MVLC then they are considered a non-voting member.

7. Proposed Committee Roles and Responsibilities:

a. Committee Executive Chair – provide leadership and effective management of the MVLC:

- Represent the MVLC as its non-voting figurehead
- Submit reports to the Mayor and or Common Council as required
- Ensure support and supervision to Chairpersons within the MVLC
- Manage and ensure proper function of all MVLC meetings and business
- Serve as tie-breaker in voting matters when required

b. Military Outreach & Committee Deputy Chair – serve as the primary Service Member representative for the military and Veteran community and, in doing so, fulfills the role of Deputy Chair.

- The Military Outreach & Committee Deputy Chair must be a Service Member still serving or Veteran
- Serve as Deputy Chair to the MVLC and assume leadership in the absence of the Committee Executive Chair
- Identify and bring to the MVLC for consideration any and all issues or goals pertaining to the military and Veteran community
- Identify and develop a network of local Service Members, Veterans, and their families; foster a partnership with local, state, and federal Veteran organizations
- Develop and implement events that benefit the military and Veteran community, increase awareness within the City of Norwalk regarding military and Veteran efforts, or in direct support of initiatives proposed by adjacent Chair offices





- Provide publicity of committee business; work with City of Norwalk Communications Director to implement public affairs planning for local military and Veteran events and news via multi-platform digital and print media

c. Labor & Business Relations Chair – shall advise the MVLC on matters pertaining to military/Veteran employment services:

- Provide information and support to MVLC LNO
- Serve as the primary liaison between the City of Norwalk, the MVLC, and locally owned businesses regarding issues pertaining to Service Members and Veteran employment; including but not limited to USERRA laws
- Develop and execute networking, resume building, interview coaching, and other career building opportunities for Veterans through organizations such as the Connecticut Department of Labor
- Promote and recognize Veteran owned business and Veteran friendly businesses
- Educate business owners on the benefits of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), a U.S. Department of Labor program
- Encourage the business community to consider implementing a military/Veteran discount policy

d. Housing and Relocation Services Chair – shall advise the MVLC on matters pertaining to military/Veteran housing and relocation services:

- Provide information and support to MVLC LNO
- Promote programs for Veterans and Service Members seeking housing;
- Promote relocation programs for Service Members discharging from active duty
- Provide housing and property support programs for families of deployed Service Members
- Aid in raising awareness to military Service Members and Veterans receiving housing benefits while residing in the City of Norwalk

e. Medical & Health Services Chair – shall advise the MVLC on matters pertaining to medical services and healthcare:

- Provide information and support to MVLC LNO
- Develop assistance programs and mental health resource planning: Emergency, short term, long term
- Increase awareness of and encourage local medical community to implement Tricare plans within their insurance offerings
- Provide information pertaining to expanding military and Veteran healthcare programs within the City of Norwalk





- Act as representative to connect Veterans with pertinent healthcare needs, benefits, and practitioners

f. Finance & Tax Services Chair – shall advise the MVLC on matters pertaining to finances and taxes:

- Provide information and support to MVLC LNO
- Maintain budget and accounting of MVLC transactions
- Increase awareness on financial incentives and tax benefits for military Service Members, Veterans, family members, local businesses, etc.
- Identify local assistance available to Service Members, Veterans, and their families such as available with the American Legion and VFW

g. Legal Services Chair – shall advise the MVLC on legal matters:

- Provide information and support to MVLC LNO
- Coordinate with City of Norwalk legal department and advise the MVLC on legal matters regarding conduct of business; ensure all policies and procedures are followed and legally sound
- Increase awareness and develop channels for the providing of legal assistance to Service Members, Veterans, and their families

h. At Large Members – shall provide the MVLC with community input and serve as community representatives for the MVLC where appropriate

- Aid in the identifying of military and Veteran issues to bring before the MVLC
- Support all programs, events, and opportunities set forth by the MVLC when applicable and facilitate in any outreach efforts
- Serve as a community resource for local Service Members, Veterans, and their families
- Act as a “sponsor” to recently separated Service Members to aid in the transition to civilian life

8. Proposed Requirements to be a member:

a. (1) City of Norwalk Resident, OR (2) an employer or employee working within the City of Norwalk, OR (3) some other connection to the City of Norwalk and possessing skills and/or other qualifications of specific benefit to the board.

- An example to point (3) would be the parent of a Service Member, whereby the Service Member resides in Norwalk and the parent, who lives and works in Fairfield, is a C.P.A. and desires to serve on the MVLC as the Finance & Tax Services Chair.





b. Service Members serving on the committee must be in good standing within their military unit of assignment. Veterans serving on the committee who are fully discharged from service must possess a Form DD214 stating character of service as either (1) Honorable, or (2) General under Honorable Conditions

c. At least four (4) of the serving chairpersons must be an active Service Member or Veteran and five (4) of the remaining eight (6) “at large” members must be Service Members or Veterans

d. There shall be at least one (1) of each of the following military Service Members or Veterans on the committee:

- One active Service Member (Active, Reserve, or National Guard)
- One fully discharged Veteran
- One female Veteran

e. The following Chair positions must be filled by members who either currently operate or have operated in a job related to the chair position:

- Military Outreach and Committee Deputy Chair – Must be a current Service Member or Veteran
- Medical & Health Services Chair – Must be a medical / health care professional
- Financial & Tax Services Chair – Must be a C.P.A. or other financial/tax professional
- Legal Services Chair – Must be a bar certified lawyer or serve in a professional capacity pertaining to law

9. Sub-Committees – The formation of sub-committees will be implemented as needed and/or required by the Committee Chair

10. Current issues for discussion:

a. Future Organizational issues:

- How will the committee leadership be formed going forward? i.e. membership selection (election, voluntary, appointed, etc.)
- Application/nomination process?
- Is there a minimum length of term by position?
- Once fully formed, date/time of meetings?

b. Budget: Determine what functions will require a budget and project an estimated annual budget requirement to fully integrate Committee work.





c. Core Committee Goals for City of Norwalk

- Encourage increase of Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) and specialists to include TRICARE as an insurance plan
- Determine emergency, short, and long-term mental health care needs / develop course of action with local emergency response, hospitals, and physicians to implement care
- Develop relationships with local and Veteran owned businesses for employment opportunities and Veteran benefit implementations
- Host Veteran-specific events throughout the year to increase committee and military/Veteran awareness

d. Committee Goals (internal)

- Draft a Charter (this document should help build that foundation)
- Evolve committee to an officially recognized commission in the City of Norwalk (this document will help)
- Develop a voluntary online digital network for military/Veterans:
 - (1) Develop a website portal to direct Service Members and Veterans to gain access to all information put forth by the MVLC and regarding benefits and services offered within the City of Norwalk.
 - (2) Provide the MVLC a voluntary registry of Service Members and Veterans within the City of Norwalk to better serve their needs(a) Contact local high schools / Veteran organizations / local units / local first responders; to initiate any potential alumni leads in military

