

**MINUTES FROM THE HAMDEN VETERANS COMMISSION,
SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITY ROOM, MILLER COMPLEX,
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2011**

Commissioners Present: Mr. Best, Mr. Conway, Mr. DiSorbo, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Laffin
Mr. Oakes, Mr. Ortoleva, Ms. Pavlis, Mr. Shultz, Mr. Weil

Guest Speakers: Suzanne Burbage, Elderly Services Coordinator
Margaret Middleton, Executive Director, CT Veterans Legal Center

Guests: Jane Parks, Dave DeRubeis, Drew DeRubeis, John Nutter

Approval of Minutes – November 8, 2011 – **APPROVED AS WRITTEN.**

Arlington National Cemetery Experience – Suzanne Burbage's mother was recently laid to rest at Arlington. Suzanne spoke of her parent's military history. Her mom was a nurse stationed in North Africa where she met her husband, Suzanne's father. She spoke of the Women's Memorial and her mother being so adamant about making sure her information was there!

“The service at Arlington was flawless. Mom would have been so proud of the ceremony”. She described the setting and the service and shared photos. “I am very proud of my parents. My father gave his heart and soul to everything he believed in. Part of that was the military”.

Review Veterans' Weekend Ceremonies – All Commissioners. Mr. Conway thought it went very well. They had a good turnout and it seems more people are coming to our programs and staying for the services.

Mr. Oakes reported they also had a nice turnout at the Middle School. US Marine Corps League, Purple Heart group and the ladies with the quilts were all participants.

“Fisher House” - Mr. McCarthy reported they're in 'negotiations' with another group of stores. Harry Garofalo, owner of Shop-Rite in Hamden, West Haven, Milford and Stratford has asked them to return to all 4 of his stores. There are also talks to get the remaining 16 stores in CT to participate, plus those in New Jersey. Overall, the TOH total figure is \$49K. Hamden Fish & Game has made a sizable donation.

Mr. Lewis reported on the booth at the Meriden Mall. They have bandannas, bracelets and medallions. Mr. Laffin commented that it was a very nice booth. Drew DeRubeis is selling the bracelets at Jonathan Law High School as well.

Mr. McCarthy noted, “People who understand what we're doing are embracing it”. His feeling is if Hamden can come up with \$80K, why can't other towns? Ms. Pavlis suggested involving Hamden Hall, Cheshire Academy – private schools – get the word out.

Veterans Wall Hamden Middle School – Mr. Laffin reported the project is currently on hold.

Memorial Day Weekend – Mr. Weil reported that we do have a Band!

Meeting Dates for 2012 – Ms. Gaiolini distributed the Approved 2012 Meeting Schedule.

70th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor at Cheshire High School – Mr. Oakes attended the event and said it was – Tremendous. There were 500 guests. 150 Veterans. They showed movies of Pearl Harbor and Normandy. There were bands, food, entertainment and Letters of Appreciation to the Veterans.

Mr. Weil had received a call from a WWII friend who was there and told him it was great and how much he appreciated it.

Linda Schwartz was a participant of the event and gave a fantastic speech. There was brief discussion about the National Anthem and Pledge of Allegiance being banned from public events.

Ms. Parks reported that during Elks ceremonies, blind veterans burned the flag and submariners honored Bill Lehr.

Connecticut Veterans Legal Center – Margaret Middleton is a graduate of Cornell and NYU Law School. She started the non-profit 2 years ago, providing free legal services for homeless veterans. Being physically located right there, (Errera Center) it makes contact easy and many transportation issues are alleviated. The model is to connect people to volunteer attorneys in their communities. They cover the entire state.

They are 'client centered' and provide legal assistance to veterans with legal problems regarding Housing, Family, Consumer Debt, Veterans Benefits Upgrades and Criminal. They serve 'a lot of indigent clients'. They are currently in all 4 Vet Centers.

Ms. Middleton is also a co-teacher at the Veterans Legal Clinic at Yale.

Mr. Nutter is a Hamden resident and the first person Mr. Oakes referred to Ms. Middleton. She noted that one of the other guests here tonight, Drew DeRubeis, volunteers and is “incredibly helpful”.

Networking with attorneys in the area who may volunteer their services is ongoing. She encouraged everyone to get in touch with her for additional information, questions or referrals and to visit their website at *ctveteranslegal.org*.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:41pm.

Submitted by: _____
Deborah Gaiolini, HVC Clerk