

**MINUTES FROM THE HAMDEN VETERANS COMMISSION,
SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITY ROOM, MILLER COMPLEX,
TUESDAY, JUNE 5, 2012**

Commissioners Present: Mr. Johnson, Mr. Laffin, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Oakes
Mr. Ortoleva, Mr. Shultz, Mr. Weil

Commissioners Absent: Mr. Best, Mr. Conway, Ms. Pavlis

Guests: Mr. Deutscher, Mr. DiSantis, Mr. McCarthy, Ms. McKay, Mr. Mitchell, Ms. Parks

Approval of Minutes – May 1, 2012 – **APPROVED.**

Laura McKay/SCSU. Ms. McKay works with Jack Mordente who is the Veterans Coordinator at Southern. She is the Secretary to Student Support Services and has been assisting Jack in transitioning students like Zach (Zach Deutscher goes to SCSU) get back into college. They help with benefits, they work closely with the VA in Buffalo to resolve problems and also have veterans working in their office in their work study program. “And I love my job!”

Ms. McKay elaborated that they currently have approximately 425 veterans. “I would say every week we get 2 new veterans in.” She spoke of basic housing allowance which is only good only for the time they are in school. The max is \$2000 month.

Tyrone Mitchell is a Hamden resident. He was in the Air Force as a Nuclear Weapons/Explosives Officer. When he left the Air Force he had a degree in chemistry so he went into the chemical industry where he stayed for about 25 years. He’s ‘actually been retired’ for about 11 years. Upon retirement he got involved in real estate – “we all know how the real estate market turned down so I had to go on to something else. I got involved in working with unwed mothers& their children and the last 5 years involved in kind of a grandfather program with Head Start in New Haven. “The kids graduated, and unfortunately when they got to be 5/6 years-old they didn’t need me anymore so I got involved with some other activities.” He really wants to get involved in helping veterans. “Is there something I can do to help?”

Rich DiSantis is also an Air Force Veteran. Military Police. Member of the American Legion. He had talked to Mr. McCarthy at our last meeting. “We don’t have much in our Post (150), what I’m looking for is to help veterans within the Town of Hamden. Veterans that are in need of help with families. The way the market is right now, who’s working, who isn’t. Who’s got a job – tomorrow they don’t. If anybody knows of

anyone that needs help, please get back to us – we can help.”

Jane Park – Volunteer. Elks Club. West Haven VA. “What I’d like to say is I was very upset to find out that the Town of Woodbridge wants to open the schools on Veterans Day. Isn’t that a National Holiday?” Mr. Deutscher pointed out that most of the schools are open – all the State Universities – are open on Veterans Day.

Veterans Awareness Day – May 25, 2012 – Mr. Oakes noted “this was our 12th year so everything sort of comes automatically now.” Sen. Blumenthal, Nancy Wyman and Linda Schwartz were there.

The most frequent response from the HVC – “I thought it was great!” There was disappointment that we did not have the bomb sniffing dogs. Brief discussion regarding the motor vehicles, signage and the layout. Some of the displays were difficult for the students to find. Mr. Shultz shared a comment from one of the new participants, “How can kids that dress so lousy be so damn polite?” He went on to say, “I’m impressed with the kids. I think they’re going to turn out okay.”

Memorial Day Parade – Mr. Laffin commented on the vehicles. There weren’t enough. We had some cancellations.

The Future Veterans – 9 had promised to participate. Only 1 showed up. Mr. Weil stated recruiters have told him the principal is a major problem. He doesn’t cooperate. His people cooperate, but they’re afraid of him. In contrast: the week before I went to Bristol and they had 14 young men and women who had joined the service. They had a sit down dinner for a 160 people at the Golf Club. They gave them each a plaque. 2 state senators came with proclamations for each of them – by name. And the principal from the high schools there came up and gave each one of them a red, white & blue tassel to wear with their cap & gown at graduation.”

There was discussion about the HVC honoring our Future Veterans at VAD.

Mr. Oakes asked if the recruiters are saying the principal does not allow them to go in and talk to the kids. Mr. Weil replied, “The comment I got from one of the recruiters is, ‘the principal is extremely difficult to deal with and he really doesn’t want to be bothered.’ That’s what I heard and I’m passing it on.” Mr. Laffin noted past experiences and next year he’ll be retired and we will work around it. “We have to get his boss to tell him, ‘Yes, you will do this’. We’ve got to go from the outside in rather than inside out.”

Mr. Oakes noted that 2 groups showed up that had never responded.

Flags – 2200 flags were placed on graves. Volunteers included: 4 Boy Scout Troops, ACES, Fred McCarthy, Jane Park, Rich DiSantis and Abner Oakes.

Thank You Notes – Went out today from the Mayor’s Office and the HVC. Ms. Parks noted the number of people who commented how impressed they were with the flags on the poles.

“Fisher House CT” – Mr. Laffin began by stating that he thinks it’s going very well and the Hamden Elks is doing a great job. We’re having some problems in West Haven. McCarthy reported the total received in just 11 days is \$16,000.00. Some other fund raising events include: The Mercedes Raffle, Buy-A-Brick, and the big dinner at Aqua Turf in September.

House of Heroes – Held a Pep Rally at the Hamden Plaza Saturday, May 26th at 7:00 am. They went from the Rally to the 3 veterans’ home projects in Hamden, Meriden & Stratford. The House of Heroes also marched in our Parade - with a float - accompanied by the Hamden High Dance team.

Freedom Park - Mr. Oakes reported the Town has gone out to bid for the new tree. The only bid that’s come in so far is for \$40K. Mr. Oakes will work on this over the summer. Mr. McCarthy stated, “Craig Cesare is going to bring it up to do it as a Bid Waiver because of the price that we got. A 25 ft Christmas tree, uprooted and planted and guaranteed and put in place all by him – for \$5,500.” Mr. Oakes: “By Craig Cesare?” Mr. McCarthy: “Yeah, so. Craig Cesare is going to ask for a Bid Waiver. Instead of having to go to bid.”

Mr. Oakes shared with our guests the history of the Hamden Veterans Commission. The HVC was formed on October 2, 2000 by Mayor Carl Amento. At that time we had 9members. April 3, 2006 we went up to 11 members, 2 of whom could be non-veterans. On September 8, 2009, we kept it at 11 members but 8 had to be veterans/3 non-veterans.

From the beginning our meetings have been held on the first Tuesday of the month at 5:30.

He credited past HVC Vice-Chair and Commissioner Pat Corso for his work on the creation of the HVC rules and noted particularly the rules regarding HVC Member attendance and our current meeting dates and times. There have often been conflicts for HVC Members attending meetings with our current schedule.

Mr. Oakes asked that all Members consider any improvements or changes that should be made to our 2013 Meeting Schedule. Might it be better on a different day? A different location? Or a later hour to accommodate working members?

*Be prepared for further discussion at our September 4th meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:40 pm.

Submitted by: _____
Deborah Gaiolini, HVC Clerk

