

**MINUTES FROM THE HAMDEN VETERANS COMMISSION,
SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITY ROOM, MILLER COMPLEX,
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2015**

Commissioners Present: Mr. Best, Ms. Goodwin, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Laffin, Mr. Lewis
Ms. Lupi, Mr. Oakes, Mr. Shepard, Mr. Shultz, Mr. Weil

Commissioners Absent: Mr. Mitchell

Guests: Jason Burke, Mark Frazee, Cherie Strucaly

Approval of Minutes – November 3, 2015 – **APPROVED.**

Veterans' Day November 11th at 11:00 a.m. – Mr. Oakes reported, “it went very well”. Thanks to all to who helped set up. He asked if there were any suggestions: Mr. Johnson noted that without the custodian to set up we had no microphone and “we do need a microphone”. Mr. Shultz thought it was “a great job”.

The DECA ladies led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Pledge to Pledge program now has it's own website: PledgetoPledge.org. “Right hand over heart, pledge to do your part”. All donations go directly to Wounded Warriors. There is also a link on the Town's website. Brendan Sharkey is very impressed and has invited the ladies up to the House.

Mr. Laffin added that their video is 80% complete and it's very professional. They're looking for Purple Heart recipients & Active Duty people. Mr. Weil said we can get recruiting people. He will be with the 3rd Year Cadets at UCONN and with UNH on Friday. He will also check for people with the Purple Heart. Mr. Burke added that QU has several too – as long as it doesn't conflict with finals they could participate.

Davenport/Dunbar Veterans' Ceremony – Friday, November 6th. Mr. Oakes reported “it went very well, extremely well”.

West Woods School – Mr. Oakes thanked the HVC Veterans that went. “the kids are still talking about it”. “They are sending stuff to people from Hamden”. Mr. Oakes told them about the Middle School Project.

Braveminds – No One from HVC was able to attend.

Til Duty is Done – Ms. Goodwin reported, “it was a great day! It was amazing! There were hundreds of people”. The event was held in a huge ballroom. They were broken up in to 3 groups: Veteran Groups, Companies hiring/doing job applications & Veteran groups that fund raise. There were hundreds of people.” Mr. Oakes said the concert in the evening was tremendous. They had the West Point Glee Club, West Point Graduates and Purple Heart recipients. Mr. Oakes will be asking Justin Nash (Vets Rock) to come & speak to us in January or February.

Glass Top Table from Library – Mr. Oakes reported that the Mayor has approved placing the table in the main lobby at the Government Center. Ms. Goodwin reported that the table should be delivered tomorrow or Thursday. And yes, there will be a lock on it.

The first person Mr. Oakes asked about contributing to the content of the Display Table was Vera Morrison. She has many items from her Dad. There was discussion on where in the lobby should the table be placed? What items will be on display? How often to we change the items?

He will work with the Mayor's office on a Press Release. It will be open to anyone who wants to put stuff in... with the assurance that it will be locked up. The HVC can rotate duties changing the items in the case periodically.

Ms. Goodwin suggested updating or changing the contents around different holidays or themes. There was brief discussion on where in the lobby it should be placed, items to be put in the display, a news release, etc.

Veterans at QU - Mr. Oakes attended the QU Vets Dinner. "I'm amazed at some of the things you do at Quninnipiac". Mr. Burke spoke on the vet population at QU stating the vets group has grown considerably. GI Bills, Job Market not good and the Service downsizing all contribute to the increase of vet students. QU has gone from 48 student veterans to 120. He spoke of 40 veterans using Vocational Rehab benefits from the VA.

The Law School has moved to North Haven. It's a more professional environment. Brad Davis, a second year law student, has reinvigorated the Student Vet Law Society. There's about 25 folks, majority are non-vets. They do pro bono work.

He spoke of the Spring Lecture Series. One of the guest speakers will be Army veteran Danielle Green-Byrd. Danielle lost her arm above the elbow while serving in Iraq. She will speak on "overcoming obstacles".

Mr. Burke spoke of the "Vets Oasis". It's a 400 sf space for a sort of "commuters lounge". The student/vet organization applied for a grant for funding and got it! The grant came thru in gift cards. They still need a few things. Ms. Goodwin offered a gaming system. Mr. Shepard offered an area rug. Mr. Burke will find out what's needed and get back to them. He also suggested that maybe we can have an HVC meeting there... more to follow.

Mr. Oakes received an email today from Jolene Kennedy and we're all set for the Friday before Memorial Day for Veterans Awareness Day at QU.

Mark Frazee, Head of Volunteer Services at West Haven VA – Mr. Frazee began by stating "We provide for veterans things the VA can not provide". He outlined some of the services his office provides, noting that he covers the entire state. All donations and volunteers go through his office. He spoke of peer support groups, counseling services, special events and volunteers. He mentioned that he took 20 veterans to Til Duty is Done (Vets Rock Concert).

Regarding donations? "If you have it and you don't need it, we can find a veteran who needs it". They accept donation of just about everything. Clothing, toiletries, furniture, etc. They will arrange for transport of furniture. They have a seamstress that w/fit veterans for suits.

Mr. Oakes asked how do you get PTSD vets to go for help? Peer support groups made up of volunteers & employees. They reach out to veterans in the same age group, the same era. Mr. Frazee went on to say they get 2 vets from every college. Once a month they have training sessions with representatives from different departments (VA) who come and speak about what their department can do for them. They include the Blind Center, Rehab and Primary Care.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the average person can volunteer. Mr. Frazee said “Absolutely. We have volunteers that do everything from massage therapy down to filling water bottles – and everything in between”. Escorts, volunteers at front desk, stuffing envelopes – you don't need any particular skills. No new volunteers during the month of December. They will start again in January. Contact Mr. Frazee through Email mark.frazee@va.gov or his Direct Phone #203-937-3814

2016 Meeting Schedule – Ms. Gaiolini distributed copies of the Approved 2016 Meeting Schedule.

Community Mediation – Their offices are right near Post 88. They provide Pro Bono services for veterans who need a lawyer.

HMS Supports Our Troops – The students are getting packages ready for HHS graduate and former HMS student Mike Hopkins. He is currently serving in Iraq. They need to raise money for the postage. The Winter Concert is December 8th at 7:00p at Hamden High School. There will also be a raffle, bake sale and silent auction.

Fisher House – Building may start in Spring. Mr. Frazee said they have to tear down the house. Because it's so old, they have to get approval from the Historic Commission. It needs new infrastructure. They have to run new water/new electric. As Mr. Lewis stated, “the site has to be pad ready”.

State Street Cemetery – Mr. Shepard reported that there was another clean up on Saturday, November 7th. There were only a few people available that day: Scott, Linda and a couple of kids. A dumpster was rented – and they filled it!

Mr. Oakes noted that he is trying to get Commandant Zuckoff of the U.S. Coast Guard for VAD.

Mr. Laffin mentioned - “it's time to start thinking Memorial Day Parade”. He will meet with Gail and revamp with the new dates. Since we all agreed – it will be the same as last year.

Mr. Shepard shared info & forms with everyone for the Free Flu Shots at Walgreens.

Mr. Johnson added that they could use more HVC veterans at the Vets 4 Vets meetings which are held the 2nd Wednesday of the month.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:41pm.

Submitted by: Deborah Gaiolini
Deborah Gaiolini, HVC Clerk