

**MINUTES OF THE HAMDEN VETERAN'S COMMISSION,
SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITY ROOM, MILLER COMPLEX,
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2009 AT 5:30 P.M.**

Commissioners Present: Mr. McCarthy, Mr. Oakes, Mr. Ortoleva, Ms. Pavlis
Mr. Slater, Mr. Weil

Absent: Mr. Conway, Mr. DiSorbo, Mr. Mallory, Mr. Shultz

Guests: Bill Gillotti, Jane Parks

Approval of Minutes – November 3, 2009 – **APPROVED AS WRITTEN.**

Mr. Gillotti spoke of the events on November 11th. He was very impressed with the program in Hartford (KWV Sculpture) and took several pictures. He stated that there is also a DVD, but he doesn't know how to get a copy. Mr. Oakes will contact Nancy Wyman to see if she can help.

Mr. Oakes presented Ms. Parks with a copy the recommendation letter she had requested. It will be mailed out from the Mayor's Office.

Veterans Day Ceremonies: November 8, 2009 – Monument – Mr. Ortoleva wanted to know if there is any way of letting people know more about it – it seems under attended. Mr. Oakes reported they had some PR – he saw it in various newspapers. Everybody comes out for the parade, but they don't come out for the services after.

Veterans Day – Hamden Middle School – November 10, 2009. Ms. Pavlis reported she had a 15-minute tape that the kids like a lot. Several of the teachers also liked the tape and wanted to know if they could get copies of it. Her focus was women in the military. The Korean War veterans focused on that particular period of time. She also spoke that day at her grandson's first grade class in Wallingford – the children sat on "listening mats" and actually asked good questions. It was a very nice event.

Veterans Day – Aces – November 10, 2009. Mr. Oakes went to the program at ACES. Also present were Hamlet Hernandez, Ken Henrici and a young man just back from Iraq. There were also programs at Wintergreen and Westwoods & Hamden High School.

Sacred Scars – November 10, 2009, 7-9 p.m. @ Hamden Middle School. Mr. Ortoleva expressed some disappointment stating, “It was about the evolution of the call to service. We did cover some good ground, but I’m not sure it held together the way I had scripted it.” There were some good comments – good questions. He believes it could have been 2 separate events; 1) information for veterans and 2) entertainment.

Mr. Slater observed that it was “hard to get off the ground. It went over a lot of people’s heads. The first two guys that got up, supposedly to ask questions, they were just tooting their own horns. You took it in hand and tried to get them on track.”

Mr. McCarthy noted only one criticism and that was with the Army Sgt. Major. “You were looking for one specific answer – but he was coming around back-side. That got a little heated.”

Mr. Ortoleva explained: “Most of the things I had discussed with him (prior). If I was trying elicit something – it was something we had talked about on the phone.” The question/issue was - if somebody is joining for ‘the wrong reasons’? “He had a wonderful answer for that and I wasn’t getting it out of him.”

Mr. Weil stated; “it was a good evening. I didn’t get any negative feedback from the 2 Army guys. I did not like the guy from the Veterans. He made some comments I took offense with.” He went on to say, “the guy whose book it was – I don’t know what he was talking about. He had an attitude. All in all, I think the questions that you asked, I think the answers came out – the one thing that came through is – Join a veterans organization because you will get information.”

Mr. Oakes noted he & Mr. Ortoleva have talked about having a meeting at the Senior Center one morning and have an Advocate from the VA to answer questions. “It’s something to think about for the future.”

Wal-Mart Salute to Veterans. Mr. Oakes reported the HVC has received a \$1000 donation from Wal-Mart for Hamden Veterans.

Note Cards of Memorial Mural - Mr. Oakes had available the note cards of the Veterans Memorial Mural, designed by Kathy Teulings. Suggested donation of \$10. Proceeds to HVC Gift Fund. Any extra money he’d like to put up a plaque next to the mural stating when it was done and dedicated by the children of Hamden Middle School.

Mini-Stand Down, Ansonia, December 12th, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. George & Mary Porter are both veterans. They’re hosting a Stand Down at the Ansonia Armory.

Holiday Luncheon – December 16th – Errera Center. Mr. McCarthy noted that every year appx. 125-150 veterans come for holiday lunch – the staff sings Christmas Carols. He also spoke of a situation this past Sunday regarding a homeless veteran “under a bridge not too far from here”. She’s at Columbus House now. He reiterated again that veterans are not being told about their “so-called benefits”.

Discussion moved to discrepancies between Regular Army and National Guard.

Discussion carried on to veterans issues – physical, emotional & financial – benefits, budget cuts

and how to get information to veterans.

December 31, 2009 – 12:00 noon - Veterans Home, Rocky Hill – Mr. Oakes reported the Elm City Banjo group will be attending/performing as well.

Military Recruiters at Hamden High School, December 11, 9:00 a.m. – Mr. Oakes reported there will be active duty recruiters from the Army, Navy, Air Force and National Guard. There was some discussion regarding recruiters going to a school. Mr. Oakes stated Barbara Ann Gay, Guidance Counselor at Hamden High told him it was okay.

Veterans Bulletin Board – Senior Center – Suzanne Burbage wants as much info as possible posted on the Veterans Bulletin Board. Clerk Gaiolini noted Ms. Burbage had already been added to the email distribution list for HVC Agendas and Minutes.

Veterans Property Tax Exemptions – Mr. McCarthy reviewed the 3 stages of the Veterans Property Exemptions. Stage 1) 29,800 single, 36,500 married. Stage 2) 54,800 single, 61,500 married. Stage 3) 57,300 single and 64,500 married. “Everybody that files a DD214 with the Assessor’s gets \$6,000 off their assessment, regardless of income. I’m having them work up the sheets so we can post them in various places. It’s going to be confusing for certain people to try and figure out...if you have any problem see Helen Totz in the Assessor’s Office.”

Mr. Oakes spoke of USAA insurance (house/auto/credit card). It used to be only for retired veterans – now it’s for any veterans (and their families). Great Savings! Look them up.

He also reported on 2 veterans at QU Law School who have formed an association to help and get involved with veterans at QU. He will contact them and invite them to our meetings.

Ms. Parks reported that the remains of 6 more Vietnam Veterans are being sent to Hawaii to be identified. She spoke of the facility she had been granted permission to visit which is built in the side of the mountain (the Punch Bowl).

Mr. Slater asked all to think about the parade banner for the HVC. He’ll work on getting prices.

Mr. Weil wanted to make a statement before the meeting closed: “Guy did an outstanding job of putting it all together and coordinating it. From the audience standpoint, I think the people that were there got what they wanted. They either got to blow steam on something, or they got some information. Again, Nobody knew what was supposed to be happening. It’s like when you’re out on a parade ground – nobody knows what’s supposed to be happening so everything goes right. I think that night you did a great job and everything went right.”

Meeting Adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Deborah Gaiolini, Commission Clerk