

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
VETERANS APPRECIATION COMMITTEE
APRIL 20, 2021
7:00 P.M.
VIA ZOOM TELECONFERENCE**



Present via Zoom teleconference: First Selectman Melissa M. Mack, Selectman Kathleen Harrington, Executive Assistant Kris Lambert, Municipal Veterans Representative Lisa Trase, Frederick “Fritz” King, Bill Moryto, Dave Gauthier, Lester Smith, Bill Sullivan and members of the Suffield Historical Society

First Selectman Mack called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and began with the Pledge of Allegiance. She went on to recognize the VFW Post for their role in the Town of Suffield’s paying our respects to Officer Billy Evans last week as she received a lot of really lovely feedback from individuals who had attended.

Public Comment:

None.

Approval of the minutes from the February 16, 2021 Special Meeting of the Veterans Appreciation Committee

Selectman Kathie Harrington motioned and Bill Moryto seconded to approve the minutes from the February 16, 2021 Special Meeting of the Veterans Appreciation Committee as drafted. Motion passed unanimously.

Overview of Current Initiatives

Veterans Memorial in Veterans Park

- **Expansion**

- First Selectman Mack reviewed the history she presented at the initial Veterans Appreciation Committee meeting held in February for those who were not in attendance.
 - The original committee was founded in 1990 under First Selectman Paul Kulas.
 - Second committee was convened on November 17, 1999 by Board of Selectmen when Robert Skinner was First Selectman.
 - The Memorial was dedicated to the Town of Suffield in 2003 under First Selectman Elaine Sarsynski.
 - After installation of the Memorial, in July 2004, First Selectman Sarsynski asked the Board of Selectmen to convene another committee with the scope as follows:
 - 1) *To determine if additional recognition is warranted for veterans who were not listed on the new Veterans Memorial Monument.*
 - 2) *To address special recognition for disabled veterans.*
 - 3) *To consider at what point in the future the Town should address the group of veterans inadvertently omitted from the monument.*
 - 4) *No town records have been found that references taking any type of action since that point. This new committee will “pick up the ball” from where the last committee left off with regard to expansion of the monument.*

- **First Selectman Mack** noted that she had put together a scope and a proposed resolution for the group to recommend to the Board of Selectmen to convene this new committee. The resolution is as follows:

Resolved that the Board of Selectmen convene a Veterans Memorial Expansion Committee to expand the honor roll in Veterans Park to include veterans from recent wars and conflicts, to address those veterans who were not previously included, to determine eligibility criteria and to collect names of veterans to be honored.

- Other items that are included in their scope will include:
 - Fundraising
 - Working with Town of Suffield Communications Manager to publicize the Committee's mission and the events to be held
 - Working with Public Works and the Permanent Building Commission on the Request for Proposals, scope of work, design and installation and other related activities.
- Criteria for inclusion in the next phase will be an important decision.
- A controversial issue was who was to be included in the original phase. The committee decided it would be those who were residents of Suffield at the time of induction into the Service which has elicited some complaints over the years.
- **First Selectman Mack** has reached out to CCM for information on what other Towns have used for criteria for who is included as a point of discussion as well as the State of CT Veterans Affairs for guidance

Discussion ensued among the group about eligibility, criteria and items for consideration. Upon completion of the discussion **First Selectman Mack** asked for a motion to approve the scope/resolution as drafted and presented this evening.

Selectman Harrington motioned and Bill Moryto seconded to approve the scope as drafted be presented to the Board of Selectmen for consideration. Motion passed unanimously.

Connecting with Suffield's Veterans

- **Municipal Veterans Representative**

- **MVR Lisa Trase** did not have any new updates for the group at this time.
- **First Selectman Mack** noted that Fritz King has graciously offered to assume the MVR Role for the Town of Suffield and explained the steps that would be taken in order to revamp this position and what it will include
- The MVR position is required under the CT General Statutes and we are grateful that Mr. King has offered to "pick up the reigns" and help us improve our communication and service to our veterans

- **Suffield Veterans' Stories Update**

Fritz King provided an update on his Suffield Veterans' Stories project. He is looking for additional ways in which to connect with veterans to let them know about the project and the fact that he will be gathering information and conducting his interviews through the end of December 2021.

- **Update on reopening of VFW Post 9544 and Cantina dedication**

Bill Moryto provided an update on the reopening of VFW Post 9544 in mid-March and the Cantina dedication which was a very successful event. He reported that slowly the older veterans are starting to return to the facility and the hope is to get younger veterans as well. Bringing the VFW Post back into

the community is their goal and with renewed interest in the banquet hall facility upstairs, karaoke events, live music and food being served on certain nights the hope is that this goal will be realized.

Preparations for Memorial Day Observance

First Selectman Mack discussed the upcoming Memorial Day Observance and gave information regarding community involvement this year and social distancing measures to be implemented. **Executive Assistant Kris Lambert** provided a status update on the preparations and veterans **Bill Moryto and Fritz King** weighed in on possible changes to the parade route and proposed changes to the program.

Other Business

First Selectman Mack invited Bill Sullivan of the Suffield Historical Society to present the idea of placing a Witness Stone Memorial on the edge of Bridge Street and North Main Street, which is the current site of the Veterans Memorial Park. Mr. Sullivan, also a History Teacher at Suffield Academy, provided historical information obtained during an on-line class he taught. This class was researching colonial-era slaves, and came across an enslaved woman named Tamer. Tamer was the daughter-in-law of Venture Smith, an enslaved man who was owned by a number of businessmen in Connecticut until eventually saving enough money to buy his freedom. Tamer was owned by a man named Luther Loomis who lived in Suffield, CT during the late 1700's. The Loomis home, where Tamer is thought to have lived, was originally built on the corner of Bridge Street and North Main Street but has since been relocated further down Bridge Street and is now known as the Suffield Masonic Building. Mr. Sullivan is hoping to get approval to install a Witness Stone Memorial in her honor at the very edge of Veterans Park as this would be the most historically accurate location based on the historical information obtained during the class research. The Witness Stone would be a 4" x 4" bronze plaque with Tamer's name and dates of birth and death. Mr. Sullivan provided background on the Witness Stone Memorial Program, Venture Smith, Tamer and Luther Loomis, as well as information on enslaved life in general during this time period. Discussion ensued as to the proposed location as well as alternative location options. The item will be presented to the Board of Selectmen in May for further discussion.

Dustin L. Doyon Memorial Bridge Dedication

On June 12th we will be dedicating the Dustin L. Doyon Memorial Bridge, formerly the Remington Street Bridge. It will be a beautiful memorial for the community to show lasting support for the Doyon family and gratitude for Dustin's ultimate sacrifice.

Public Comment

None

First Selectman Mack motioned to adjourn at 8:22 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary