



TOWN OF SUFFIELD

**MEETING MINUTES
VETERANS MEMORIAL EXPANSION COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
June 13, 2022 6:00 p.m.
IN-PERSON MEETING ONLY**

**Location: Suffield Police Station Conference Room
911 Mountain Road Suffield, CT**

Meeting Name: Veterans Memorial Expansion Committee

By: Rebecca Sypek - Recording Secretary

Type of Meeting: Regular Meeting

Veterans Memorial Expansion Committee Members Present

Dave Gauthier, Chairman
Chris Matejek, Treasurer
Kevin Goff
Tom Elmore
Raymond Hartford

Veterans Memorial Expansion Committee Members Absent

William Moryto, Vice Chairman
Fredrick (Fritz) King
Salvatore Covino
Chris Nikolis
David Shute

Dave Gauthier called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and began with the Pledge of Allegiance. He asked for a roll call identifying members present at the meeting.

Public Comment

None

Approval of the Minutes

Prior minutes could not be approved due to lack of quorum. This will be pushed until next meeting.

Finances

Chris Matejek discussed the funds allocated towards this project. Currently the town has budgeted \$35,000 towards the memorial project and another \$50,000 was just approved to be added to that budget as of the

upcoming fiscal year. One thing to keep in mind is that the prior memorial was privately funded so this may be brought up in future discussions when it comes to the budget and any future funding.

Discuss timeline/schedule

August 1st is the cut off for Phase 1 applicants and no additional applications have come in since the last meeting. As of August 1st the committee can go out to Rogers Memorial to contract putting the names the committee does have approved (3 thus far) on there. The other batch of names the committee had outstanding (6-8), will be decided upon after August 1st to determine eligibility. Chris Matejek mentioned it might be good to contact Rogers Memorial sooner than later to lock them in before their schedule gets too crazy. Dave Gauthier agreed and said it may be good to try to get them scheduled for roughly a September/October timeline.

As far as Phase 2, should the end date be decided upon then move backwards from there to set the timeline? In the next few months, the committee should have eligibility criteria listed, then potentially by January the committee may have some names to approve, then by July of next year the committee may be able to have a proposal for the new memorial to go to the town for a budget request, and, hypothetically have a memorial up by Veterans Day 2024.

Tom Elmore asked, with the economy is it even reasonable/feasible to have a hypothetical conversation about funds at this point? Should the committee be requesting names and then hold off for a few years to see how the economy goes?

Kevin Goff asked if there's a chance the committee knows approximately how many names may come in for Phase 2? Dave said it's hard to say because you can't go by the town's records because that's only people who volunteer to give their information and the state recommended he go to the town for that info so there's no real potential amount to reference.

The future goal for the committee, after Phase 2 is complete, is to have a roughly yearly meeting of the committee to go over and approve/deny names based on the eligibility criteria. That way there shouldn't be another problem where it's a 20 year wait for future eligible people.

Tom also commented that the committee can always request a bid for estimates on the Phase 2 memorial expansion and, if it's not feasible cost wise at that point, the committee can always just decide not to proceed. Chris also mentioned that the expansion can be designed and the committee can ask for a quote from Rogers Memorial just to get a ballpark estimate and decide from there. There was also mention that if the memorial expansion design wanted to expand toward the library it could hypothetically be done but that would require permission from the town and more time.

Applicant review status

Dave Gauthier heard of one more potential applicant through the grapevine of the town but it was determined he wouldn't be eligible anyways due to when he served.

Discuss Phase Two requirements

The prior committee didn't include Lebanon, Grenada or Panama conflicts and Dave Gauthier's not sure why... The committee will need to decide if these should be added for eligibility or not and if they should add these to the new memorial. The issue with these is the three conflicts are such small timeframes that there may be no one eligible in town anyways but if there are, these people would want to be recognized.

Another potential discussion would be if the committee wants to include an "Other Armed Conflicts" option.

This is potentially vague so it could be difficult to determine; however, the DD214 does show medals earned which could help determine eligibility. Tom Elmore mentioned that the committee may need to determine and show a definition of “conflict” or “combat support role” in this case.

Another potential discussion going forward is where will the committee put peoples names considering the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars since the timeframes overlap? The committee will need to think about this and make some kind of determination in this case.

Ray Hartford mentioned that the committee might not even want to worry about all this criteria discussion until the committee has applicants to review; however, if the committee leaves it open they’re going to have to explain to each person why they did or did not get approved, so the committee is going to have to set up criteria for each potential scenario (for example, if someone puts “Other Armed Conflicts” the committee will need to determine what criteria the person will need to show to prove they were in an Armed Conflict) to rationalize their decisions.

There was also mention that general stones with no specific names listed can be included in the expansion to honor peacetime veterans, those who support/ed veterans, and potentially disabled veterans; however, a note should be added to specify that the disability needs to have been a result of active duty.

Discussion on honoring veterans who moved to Suffield after service

The idea of this is to include names of those who weren’t residents of the town when they entered active duty. Dave Gauthier commented the criteria should be the same as others aside from that, except the addition of “must be a current primary resident of Suffield,” and “have lived in Suffield for the previous x amount of years”.

Dave mentioned that Southwick has this and their criteria is 40 years of residency. Chris Matejek said that 20 years seems like a more reasonable amount; however, there will be more discussion on these requirements. Again, the future goal is to have a roughly yearly meeting of the committee to go over and approve/deny names based on the eligibility criteria this committee decides on. This specific group of potential applicants would be especially ongoing as people reach the x amount of years of residency requirement.

Discussion of honoring Cold War and peacetime veterans

This was discussed in a prior section and will continue to be discussed in future meetings.

Other Business and Next Steps

Phase 2 will need to be hammered out further in future meetings.

Public Comment

None

Executive Session to discuss personal data of applicants

Executive Session was not taken due to lack of quorum.

A Regular Meeting of the Veterans Memorial Expansion Committee will be held on Monday, July 11, 2022 at 6 p.m.

Dave Gauthier adjourned the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Sypek
Recording Secretary