

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
VETERANS MEMORIAL EXPANSION COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 12, 2022
6:00 P.M.**

**Suffield Police Station Conference Room, 911 Mountain Road, Suffield CT
In-Person Meeting Only**

Veterans Memorial Expansion Committee Members Present:

Dave Gauthier, Chairman
Fredrick (Fritz) King (7:03p.m. departure)
Kevin Goff
Tom Elmore
Chris Nikolis

Veterans Memorial Expansion Committee Members Absent:

William Moryto, Vice Chairman
Raymond Hartford
David Shute
Sal Covino

Other Attendees:

First Selectman Colin Moll (6:35 p.m. departure)

Mr. Gauthier called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and asked everyone to join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

None

Approval of the minutes from the Regular Meeting held on July 11, 2022

Mr. Goff motioned and **Mr. Elmore** seconded to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held on July 11, 2022. **Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of the minutes from the Regular Meeting held on August 8, 2022

Mr. King motioned and **Mr. Goff** seconded to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held on August 8, 2022. **Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.**

Discuss timeline/schedule

- Rogers Memorial is scheduled to engrave 4 names on the current memorial within the next two weeks
 - One (1) veteran who has passed and three (3) veterans who are now living out of state

Applicant review status

- The two (2) applicants who were reviewed in Executive Session at the last meeting have been denied. Mr. Gauthier has signed the denied applications and needs a second signature from one of the committee members in order to complete the process.

Discuss and approve honoring peacetime veterans

- **Mr. Gauthier** noted that agenda items 8, 9 and 10 were technically not actions that were asked of them when this committee was created. He referenced the resolution that was voted on at the May 5, 2021 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. The resolution reads 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.

- **Mr. Gauthier** feels that they have completed the tasks that were asked of them in the original resolution and expressed concerns that anything further the group takes on could be considered outside of the scope of the original resolution. He wants to ensure the committee has approval from the Board of Selectmen.
- **Mr. Gauthier** will be on the agenda of the next Board of Selectmen Meeting to present actions taken thus far by the committee and their recommendations. He also hopes to get Board of Selectmen approval to move forward with recommendations.
- Brief discussion ensued as to whether honoring such individuals would be done with a generalized plaque or individual plaques determined by circumstance
- **Mr. Gauthier** noted that although it has been discussed numerous times, the committee has not officially voted on honoring peacetime veterans and he feels that is something that should be done at this time. All were in agreement.

Mr. Elmore motioned and Mr. King seconded to approve honoring peacetime veterans.

A friendly amendment was made to add “and refer to Board of Selectmen” to the motion being presented.

Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discuss and approve honoring veterans who became disabled as a result of service

Mr. Gauthier noted that this agenda item falls into the same category as the honoring of peacetime veterans just discussed and should also be recognized with a plaque that honors all.

Mr. Goff motioned and Mr. Elmore seconded to approve honoring veterans who became disabled as a result of service and refer to Board of Selectmen. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Gauthier motioned and Mr. Elmore seconded to amend the agenda to add item 9a. “Discuss and approve Veterans who die on active duty who are not eligible to have their names placed elsewhere on the memorial; to have a separate “non-combat loss” area. Vote: 5-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Discuss and approve honoring Veterans who die on active duty who are not eligible to have their names placed elsewhere on the memorial; to have a separate “non-combat loss” area

- This area would be designed to honor non-combat losses. It would include those veterans who die in service but not during war time. For example: a veteran who died in an accident while on active duty.
- One requirement is that the family would have to request that their family member’s name be added.
- **Mr. Gauthier** felt that more discussion should occur prior to officially voting on this item, especially with half the committee not in attendance this evening.
- **Mr. Gauthier** plans to discuss this idea at the Board of Selectmen meeting on September 21st.
- The committee discussed whether or not to vote on this item tonight in order to present it to the Board of Selectmen or leave it open for further discussion until the recommendation has been solidified.
- All committee members were in agreement that no vote would occur at this time, however, it may be discussed as an option item at the Board of Selectmen meeting on September 21st.

Discuss and approve honoring veterans who moved to Suffield after service

Mr. Gauthier discussed the town’s Ethics Ordinance which excludes individuals on boards and commissions from voting on any issue that involves them directly, indirectly, personally or financially. With this in mind, **Mr. Gauthier** stated that he would be unable to vote on this item. He explained that he spoke with the First Selectman and asked him to consult with the Town Attorney on this subject and provide guidance. **Mr. Gauthier** stressed the need to have all 9 members of the committee in attendance to vote on this issue to avoid any sense of impropriety. **Mr. Gauthier** reviewed the criteria that had been discussed at the last meeting in August and the group discussed the suggested time frames and agreed to include them as follows:

- Veterans name must not be on another memorial in the municipality listed on their service records with the exception of Suffield. (Bridges, Post Offices, etc...)
- Veteran must be a current primary resident of Suffield and living in Suffield for twenty (20) years or moved to Suffield within five (5) years of discharge and lived in Suffield the remainder of their life. This would indicate that the individual has passed away.
- Residents who later move outside of Suffield because of the need for assistance with daily living may have that time considered.

No decisions will be made this evening as all are in agreement that the entire group should be in attendance.

Discuss and approve Phase two war/conflict requirements

Under Phase Two are “other armed conflicts.” The only question remaining has to do with the dates to include and whether or not they want the dates to overlap Afghanistan and Iraq. **Mr. Gauthier** stated that he feels the dates should *not* overlap and explained his rationale.

Discussion ensued amongst the group as to how the dates will impact those who fought in other conflicts such as Somalia and what criteria will be required to determine which conflict an individual is attributed to and what plaque will hold their name. **Mr. Gauthier** explained that the veteran or their family would need to provide information pertaining to the conflict and the supporting paperwork, ensuring that they meet the set criteria. This gives anyone an opportunity who is not in a designated war, but they were in a

combat operation, to be recognized. The individual must have served in a theater of combat operations which can be proven by providing proof of imminent danger/hostile fire pay or an issued combat medal.

Discussion continued about the actual monument to be considered, the amount of room needed for known conflicts, along with conflicts yet to come. **Mr. Goff** recommended date options for consideration and wording was revisited. Another important topic was designation/choice of conflict for those who served in more than one conflict. The current application allows for the individual to select one conflict. All were in agreement that if an individual served in more than one conflict they should be able to have their name placed on the memorial under each conflict. The “boots on the ground/in country” criteria was considered and it was agreed that this topic requires all members to be involved in the decision.

Mr. King left the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Mr. Gauthier expressed that he is not opposed to having an individual who had “boots on the ground” in more than one conflict having their name on a memorial under each conflict. All committee members in attendance were in agreement.

Discuss Preliminary Design

Mr. Gauthier referred to historical Board of Selectmen minutes again to bring attention to the fact that the Board of Selectmen “never asked the committee to design anything.” The committee had been asked to work with Public Works and the Permanent Building Commission on an RFP scope of work, design and installation. It was noted that **Mr. Goff** is a member of the Permanent Building Commission and **Chris Matejek**, former committee member, is the Public Works Director and will be able to assist the commission on this task. **Mr. Goff** explained that this committee will need to come up with a baseline scope which will then go before the Permanent Building Commission for review and then on to the Board of Selectmen for approval and then out to RFP. **Mr. Gauthier** elaborated on the process and the role the Board of Selectmen will play in the design to recognize the approximately 400 additional veterans that have been identified, especially in light of the cost implications involved in creating something like this.

Other business and next steps

Mr. Goff is currently working on the application layout. He is currently looking for feedback on the aesthetics of the document. Discussion ensued among the committee members as to the current layout as well as how the application will be accessed and how the information will be kept secure once it is ready for roll out as there are concerns with data security and keeping the veterans DD214 information private.

Public Comment

None

Mr. Elmore motioned to adjourn at 7:25 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen O. Lambert
Substitute Recording Secretary