



# City of Methuen, Massachusetts

## Veterans Affairs Committee

### OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Searles Building 41 Pleasant Street Room 308 Methuen, Massachusetts 01844  
Council Office Telephone (978) 983-8510 Fax (978) 983-8975

Joel Faretra, Central District City Councilor  
Jessica Finocchiaro, At Large City Councilor, Committee Chair  
Michael Simard, West District City Councilor, Veteran

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#### METHUEN CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING

#### Veterans Affairs Committee

Date: Wednesday, March 30, 2022 - 6:00pm

Location: Searles Building City Hall, 41 Pleasant Street Methuen, MA 01844  
Great Hall, 3rd Floor

#### AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, Clr. Simard, Clr. Finocchiaro present. Clr. Faretra absent. Also present: Veterans Services Director Paul Jensen, Ed "Hoppy" Curran, Dave O'Neil,
2. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA Simard, Curran, unanimous in favor, passed.
3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
  - O'Neil: Purple Heart signs timeline, wants sign at every entrance/exit to the City ASAP.
  - Curran: Member of the VFW, spoke to Clr. Finocchiaro about the condition of squares in the City, square across from CVS on Broadway, stone there, the pole is rusted and there's no sign there. Wondering about lists of all locations to improve the status of squares. Around 2001 City had a program where on Memorial Day Parade and Veterans Day Parade City would allow \$1500+ to veterans organizations. 10% of the City is veterans and their families. Discussed would like \$1,000 to each organization for both, cost of \$4,000 per year total. So appreciate all that the City Council has done, want to see the signs, parking signs, and appreciate all of the tax assistance.
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - 2/17/2022
  - Finocchiaro: Noted why Councilors don't answer items in public participation but that we can answer them later in agenda.
    - i. Motion to table Simard, Jensen, unanimous in favor, passed.
5. PRESENTATIONS/OTHER - None
6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS



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- Update - Committee Membership.
    - i. Finocchiaro: Thanks to Butch Dion, Dave O'Neil, Ed Curran, from VFW thank you for your input and for being here. Goal is to bring people together, but also provide direct access to fixing issues for veterans that we bring to the full City Council. Spoke to Commander Dowd will make sure there's representation from the American Legion.
    - ii. Curran and O'Neil: Agree.
    - iii. Simard: Also looking for veterans from recent conflicts, will need to cultivate and invite.
    - iv. Finocchiaro: Encouraged members to spread the word.
    - v. Simard: Just received a volunteer.
    - vi. Jensen: Inquired about membership and voting.
    - vii. Finocchiaro: Covered Council rules regarding quorum being a minimum of two councilors, but consider more of a conduit.
    - viii. Jensen: People who participate automatically as members or otherwise?
    - ix. Finocchiaro: Open to do whatever the committee's choice, but we could take a vote of approval for example.
    - x. Jensen: Would be good to make sure to have representation from each organization.
    - xi. Curran: Think representation from each group makes sense.
    - xii. Finocchiaro: Also to be clear for residents listening at home, either way anyone is welcome at our meetings, and can also do public participation at any meeting. Can also ask the City Solicitor once we decide too.
  - Update - Gold Star Parent Tax Exemption Clause 22H
    - i. Finocchiaro: Resolution put forward Clrs. Finocchiaro, Simard, Faretra, Saffie, passed first read, requires second read at this time. Gives parents and legal guardians of Gold Star veterans a full tax exemption for the property they occupy. It's a state



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program with certain qualifications through an application, and then that benefit will be given.

- ii. Curran: Does this also apply to sons and daughters of Gold Star families or just parents?
  - iii. Finocchiaro: Parents and legal guardians.
  - iv. Jensen: Has the assessor's office prepared documentation for receiving these yet?
  - v. Finocchiaro: No because it needs to pass second read first, but have asked for a list of exemptions to be given at that time. Then once it passes it gets notified to the Assessor's Office and the state as well.
  - vi. O'Neil: Is this City wide or statewide?
  - vii. Jensen: This is city wide, but it's a program statewide.
  - viii. O'Neil: If they move into Methuen after, do they still qualify?
  - ix. Finocchiaro: Yes as long as they meet the other qualifications, including living in Massachusetts for the required amount of time.
  - x. Curran: Does that state pay for this program?
  - xi. Finocchiaro: Some they do, this one they don't. We did get the estimate of the cost, it's resident's homes not businesses so the financial impact is low.
  - xii. Curran: Agrees.
- Update - 2022 Calendar
    - i. Met via Zoom previously, but things have been opening up so I wanted to have a meeting in person. My understanding is folks prefer quarterly meetings approximately, and more as needed, does that still work for the group, and if so we can do a calendar for the rest of the year?
    - ii. Committee consensus in favor.

#### 7. NEW BUSINESS

- Discussion - Goals and Objectives for 2022



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- i. Finocchiaro: Spoke about Purple Hearts Signs being a goal, and originally had a lot of reach out for the signs, and winter made it difficult for sidewalk work, have a commitment will be completed for us ASAP. The signs that were approved at the VFW meeting are going up, but the VFW agreed to create the list for the remaining signs. Need an inventory of how many signs are left, and get put up as soon as they are approved.
  - ii. Finocchiaro: Memorials. Steele square near CVS on Broadway, needs sign replacement, and refurbishment or replacement of the pole. Unclear if historic, will check.
  - iii. Jensen: Has a memorials list of 46, believes it's incomplete, would like to go out with DPW to take photos of every memorial, and prioritize concerns for each on a sheet of what needs to be done.
  - o Discussion - Letter regarding local VFW/American Legion funding
    - i. Finocchiaro: Brought up by Curran, funding for assistance with parades, and believe should be restored to at least what it was previously \$1,500 per parade. Since the Council can only advocate for funding, we have to request that it be allocated first.
    - ii. Simard: Definitely a no brainer, in support.
    - iii. O'Neil: funding was given to the American Legion from the Rotary Club, and he was wondering if it's done annually or not.
    - iv. Finocchiaro: They do give donations to all sorts of nonprofits, and usually changes from year to year, could certainly recommend.
    - v. Jensen: Recommend requesting above for the budgeting request since often tend to receive less than requested.
    - vi. Committee consensus agreed.
    - vii. Finocchiaro: Ok will put together a letter to the administration and forward that along.



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- Discussion - Veterans Memorials
    - i. Finocchiaro: We discussed this under goals and objectives, is there any other business on this item?
    - ii. O'Neil: Lawrence Vietnam veterans with Curran, and they have a service every year on Memorial Day. Methuen has a few Methuen Vietnam veterans who lost their lives. Small ceremony similar to what the Lawrence veterans have for Methuen. Perhaps the VFW could plan it? What Curran and his group do every year is amazing, and we could expand it to other conflicts.
    - iii. Finocchiaro: Great idea, folks on this committee well positioned to help you on this.
  - Discussion - The Wall That Heals. 9/29/2022-10/2/2022 at PFC Richard Potter Field on Pelham Street in Methuen.
    - i. Volunteers needed
    - ii. Jensen: Read all upcoming events, including May 21st flag replacement event, May 30th Memorial Day Parade, June 25th Veterans' cookout, July 23 Veterans Sunset Salute, Field of Honor at Nevins Library 25-9th, Veterans Day 11th, Santa Parade November 19th, Veterans Holiday Party December 8th. Help getting the word out. Press release for Memorial Day plan with students. Clr. Finocchiaro, Simard, Beauregard, Zeigler were mentors last year too, hopefully will sign up again. Students in leadership include Nathaniel, Amelia Faretra, Bertha Casada, Michele Henriguez. Had 400 volunteers last year and replaced 5,000 flags in a few hours, astonishing. Wall that Heals Committee: Steve Angelo, Gill Rodrigues, Dan Tulley, Diane Lasonde, Kim Hebert, Ryan Hamilton, Ed Hoppy Curran. Unique distinction of only tour in America that the location is also named for a Vietnam veteran PFC Richard E. Potter Field. Wall needs to be monitored 24 hours a day, in 4 hour blocks.



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- iii. Finocchiaro: If you could send these documents electronically, we can also add them to our webpage.
- iv. Jensen: Agrees.
8. UPDATES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMUNITY RESOURCES, EVENTS
- o Curran: Would like to thank Jensen regarding all of his work on getting the Wall that Heals to come to Methuen. We will all be here to help you with it.
  - o Jensen: Can we identify Purple Heart recipients in town?
  - o Curran: Noticed PFC Potter has a Purple Heart, maybe a Purple Heart sign should go there too.
  - o Jensen: Would be great to have a platoon of Purple Heart Veterans.
  - o O'Neil: Maybe advertise on MCTV.
  - o Jensen: Yes but not everyone watches that or social media, but signs in front of the Methuen Police Department would be good.
  - o O'Neil: Members at VFW, will put a slip on the board for volunteers for the Wall That Heals, should that go to you Jensen or Diane.
  - o Jensen: Need contact information and sign up list with cell phone.
9. NEXT MEETING: AGENDA ITEMS & DATE/TIME/LOCATION
10. ADJOURNMENT
- o Motion to adjourn Simard, due to the City Council meeting starting soon. unanimous in favor passed, adjourned at approximately 6:55pm.

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Respectfully submitted,  
**Jessica Finocchiaro, City Councilor**  
Chair, Veterans Affairs Committee  
E-mail: [jfinocchiaro@ci.methuen.ma.us](mailto:jfinocchiaro@ci.methuen.ma.us)  
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*Minutes provided by: Clr. Finocchiaro*

*Meeting Minutes Approved via: unanimous vote 10/27/2022*