



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

MEETING MINUTES - Tuesday July 26, 2022 - 6:00pm

Searles Building, City Hall, 41 Pleasant St. Methuen, MA 01844 *Great Hall, 3rd Floor*

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA
 - CALL TO ORDER: Veterans Affairs Committee Chair Finocchiaro called the meeting to order at approximately 6pm.
 - ROLL CALL: Councilors Michael Simard and Committee Chair Jessica Finocchiaro present. Councilor Joel Faretra absent. Present: Rebecca Ferreira (veteran), Dick Lecasse (veteran), Ed "Hoppy" Curran (veteran).
 - ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA: Motion by Simard, Finocchiaro, unanimously passed.
2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
 - None
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - 2/17/2022, 3/30/2022
 - Motion to table meeting minutes, Simard, Finocchiaro, unanimously passed.
4. PRESENTATIONS/OTHER
 - Committee Membership - Welcome to Veteran Rebecca Ferreira
 - i. Rebecca Ferreira: 8 year Air Force veteran, husband is also a veteran Sergeant Major, served as a Veterans Service Officer. She thanked the committee for steps made for veterans in such a short time, and mentioned that she appreciates that Methuen is now a Purple Heart community.
 - ii. Curran: Welcomed Rebecca Ferreira and gave overview of recent accomplishments in favor of veterans in Methuen
 - iii. Simard: Unaware of Ferreira's VSO background, even more enthusiastic for her assistance on the committee, as she brings so much experience.
5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS



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- Gold Star Parent Tax Exemption Clause 22H (Passed)
 - i. Fully passed now, committee members are supportive.
 - Veterans Parking Spaces at City Hall (Implemented)
 - i. Finocchiaro: Completed, noted location of parking spaces.
 - ii. Simard: Seeing these parking spaces more throughout the community, great to see honoring our veterans.
 - Additional Purple Hearts Signs (Implemented)
 - i. Finocchiaro: Had additional signs go up, we have some signs left, VFW updating additional sign locations, if any need additional permissions will assist. Reach out if you have location recommendations.
 - ii. Curran: Merrimack Street and Simon recommendation, spoke to Dave O'Neil, VFW, will reach out to the family. (Purple Heart recipient)
 - iii. Finocchiaro: Don't have a Merrimack Street location yet, so would be great
 - iv. Simard: Noted need address.
 - v. Curran: Will provide.
 - vi. Dick Lecasse: Noted he was in the Army, 1967, landed in Vietnam Christmas Eve in 1967, left in August 1969, then was out of the military for 3 years, then joined the National Guard 15 years, got married and raised a family.
 - vii. Committee members thanked Lecasse for his service to his country.
 - Goals and Objectives for 2022
 - i. Finocchiaro: Written draft, extending list of goals to keep going with progress. Both immediate and long term goals. Noted monuments, expanding membership of committee, bringing together veterans organizations.
 - ii. Ferreira: Monuments Mission Continues inspire service project clean ups



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- iii. Lecasse: Reaching out to younger people, recruitment, awards if joining the military
 - iv. Simard: Agree
 - v. Lecasse: VFW scholarship, need more responses for scholarships, getting into the schools more.
 - vi. Simard: Maybe through this committee to move this forward? Increase awareness. Great option for young adults.
 - vii. Ferreira: Do we do a reading program for bringing veterans into the schools?
 - viii. Simard: Agrees.
 - ix. Lecasse and Simard: Discussing realities of service.
 - x. Curran: Spring 2022 Finocchiaro, Larry Giordano, and myself went to Marsh School 7th and 8th graders about Memorial Day, very positive experience, students very attentive. Planning discussions regarding the Wall that Heals in September at Methuen High.
 - xi. Finocchiaro: Top priority to engage the next generation of veterans in our community. A lot of work goes into veterans organizations, and need to reach out to the next generation. Lack of numbers of young veterans in community groups is a concern for the future.
 - xii. Lecasse: Supportive of welcoming committee for returning veterans.
 - xiii. Finocchiaro: Agree, high numbers of PTSD, suicides after coming home, and we need to make a connection with returning veterans, and new veterans that move into Methuen, to better advocate all of the resources available, and to offer friendships and connections. Add to goals and objectives list.
 - xiv. Lecasse: Want community to thank the National Guard.
 - xv. Simard: Important for students to know that the military also has a variety of career paths...flying planes, fixing planes, IT, Human Resources for example.



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- xvi. Curran: Noted funding for the City (Chair noted on tonight's agenda)
 - xvii. Simard: Support VSO Jensen, members agreed.
 - xviii. Finocchiaro: Increase awareness of new traditions in Methuen, for example the Veterans Salute.
 - xix. Curran: Follow up on monuments, extending plans.
 - xx. Finocchiaro: Great idea by Ferreira, asked for details.
 - xxi. Ferreira: Need to brainstorm a time of year that isn't competing with holidays, but warm enough, will follow up. Example of Haverhill's tribute.
 - xxii. Finocchiaro: VSO Haverhill contact.
 - xxiii. Finocchiaro: August 7th next Purple Heart Day planning, VFW Post 8349, request volunteers for future cleanups.
 - xxiv. Curran will follow up with VFW.
 - xxv. Lecasse: Discussed veterans who were deserving and didn't receive Purple Heart
 - xxvi. Finocchiaro: Agreed with Lecasse, and working with a veteran currently with this issue, we need to solve local examples of this.
 - xxvii. Curran: Grateful Purple Heart community, support this.
 - Letter requesting local VFW/American Legion funding
 - i. Finocchiaro: Previously had a small stipend that helped towards the costs of food at the American Legion 122 and VFW Post 8349, and was cut from the City's budget. Letter from this committee was sent to Mayor Perry requesting this to be put back into the budget. Request was denied, but the committee has discussed wanting to bring this back. These two groups took a huge hit financially with COVID-19 and the shut downs, will revisit in the future, or come up with another way to fund.
 - ii. Curran: Stipends were around for many years, at one point it was \$1500 per parade for Veteran's Day to offset the costs



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- (doesn't cover it all but helps), even \$750 would be helpful, it's a community event.
- iii. Simard: \$1,500 believe Council would support.
 - Memorials, Flag Replacement, Memorial Day Parade
 - i. Finocchiaro: Discussed a lot of this earlier in the agenda in some ways. Would like to increase the number of volunteers for the flag replacement program. Does anyone have any recommendations on that?
 - ii. Simard: Support, they do a great job.
 - iii. Lecasse: Agrees, his family volunteers for the flag replacement program.
 - iv. Curran: Disappointed by low numbers of residents watching the Memorial Day Parade
 - v. Lecasse: Bring back National Guard trucks, football team, etc.
 - vi. Simard: Agree, need more involvement for this.
 - vii. Finocchiaro: Will check in with the schools regarding involvement. Thanked Mayor Perry and VSO Jensen for having the Memorial Day Parade this year.
 - "The Wall That Heals" 9/29/2022-10/2/2022 at PFC Richard Potter Field on Pelham Street in Methuen, Volunteers Needed
 - i. Finocchiaro: Simard had a great idea for cleanups for the Wall that Heals, and asked him to share his plans with committee.
 - ii. Simard: Want to solicit volunteers to watch the wall during the night to stand watch, great way to honor your country. Also need to have a cleanup with volunteers one or two Saturdays before the event with DPW workers, and volunteers to clean up the brush and litter.
 - iii. Curran: Agree, brush will make it harder to see the wall too.
 - iv. Simard: Want to ask for donated golf carts between parking and the wall, working on that.
 - v. Curran: Veteran's Den Band then a vigil for fallen veterans.
 - vi. Discussion on tentative dates, Simard to confirm.



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- vii. Lecasse: Recommended could be for school volunteer hours.
 - viii. Simard: Yes we should let Principal Barden know.
 - ix. Finocchiaro: Draft Goals and Objectives once passed, will put on our Committee page on the City's website
 - x. Ferreira: Wall That Heals paid refreshments?
 - xi. Finocchiaro: As always need to check with the City Solicitor before finalize
 - xii. Simard: Likes the idea.
 - xiii. Curran: mentioned the Committee for the Wall That Heals is working on it.
 - xiv. Finocchiaro: Once we have dates, we could have flyers.
6. NEW BUSINESS
- o Student Action Committee Council
 - i. Finocchiaro: Group of great students at Methuen High that wanted a subcommittee of the City Council focused on youth issues ages 14-18 that live in Methuen, increased communications, good transition to getting the next generation involved wherever there's overlap in our goals.
 - ii. Lecasse/Simard: Agree, support increased awareness.
7. UPDATES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMUNITY RESOURCES, EVENTS
- o Simard: IVCS Kelly Frazier now in Methuen, great resource for Methuen veterans
 - o Finocchiaro: Yes they had a coffee event today, additional event August 10th at 10am for 3rd annual Agent Orange Awareness Event at Bellevue Cemetery in Lawrence.
 - o Finocchiaro: Methuen just had the Sunset Salute, went well. VNOG event advertised on VSO page, reminder Wall That Heals dates, and the Field of Honor on Methuen Day event.
 - o Simard: Wanted to thank the Katter family and staff for Sunset Salute.
 - o Committee agreed and noted support of the event.
8. NEXT MEETING: AGENDA ITEMS & DATE/TIME/LOCATION



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- Finocchiaro: Asked committee if time of meetings, location, etc. still work for the committee, and invited veterans to participate.
 - Curran/Simard: Good with current location and time, next date TBD.
 - Curran: Next agenda - American Legion Post 122 Boys State Program
9. ADJOURNMENT: Simard, Curran, motion passes, adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Finocchiaro, City Councilor

Chair, Veterans Affairs Committee

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Phone: (978) 566-1786

Minutes provided by: Clr. Finocchiaro

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