

Veteran's Advisory Council, June 19, 2012

SCITUATE VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes – June 19, 2012

Location: Scituate Maritime Center

Members Present: Joseph Kelley (Chairman), Edward Covell (Vice Chairman), Michael Scott (Secretary), Robert McHugh (Treasurer), Vincent Fountaine, James Hunt, Richard Johnson, Jack Manning, John Miller, Dennis Badore, Keith Jermyn (VSO – ex officio), Ben Summers, Thomas Edwards

Members Absent: Robert Young, VFW Commander

Guests: John Lunn (Boy Scout director)

Noel Reccha (Boy Scout)

Sarah Keller-Likens (Exec. Director, Military Friends Foundation)

Meeting called to order at 7:03 pm by Chairman Kelley

Pledge of Allegiance recited

Chairman Kelley recognized outstanding Memorial Day ceremonies

Minutes

Motion made to approve the 5/15/2012 meeting minutes as drafted

Motion seconded

Motion passed unanimously – minutes approved and accepted

Flag replacement

General discussion of progress

Chairman's Report

Chairman Kelley announced that he met with Town Administrator Patricia Vinchesi regarding status of Veterans Services in Scituate

Ms. Vinchesi informed Chairman Kelley that she will recommend to the Board of Selectmen that Scituate break-away from veterans service district with Hingham

Ms. Vinchesi informed Chairman Kelley that Don Knapp will become a full-time Veterans Services Officer for Scituate

VSO Report

VSO Jermyn reported that the unidentified marker that was located in archives of Town Hall has been identified as belonging to a Mr. Withem, who is buried in Union Cemetery; the marker was placed at Mr. Withem's burial plot on the day before Memorial Day

VSO Jermyn explained guidelines for financial and medical benefits being paid to veterans and spouses pursuant to chapter 115; nine people in Scituate receiving benefits currently; "veteran" is more than 90-180 days active duty service; income guidelines for single person eligibility is not more than \$1,850/month, with

not more than \$3,200 in assets; married person eligibility is not more than \$2,225/month with not more than \$7,000 in assets

VSO Jermyn reported that his understanding is that Scituate and Hingham will allow the intermunicipal agreement which created the Scituate/Hingham Veterans Services District to “sundown” as of July 1, meaning that Scituate and Hingham will provide veterans services independently from each other; Scituate has seen a 125% increase in its veterans client base since January 2012; the need for a full-time VSO seems apparent and Scituate is moving in that direction, subject to approval by the Board of Selectmen

Mr. Hunt expressed concern that Scituate breaking away from district with Hingham without proper input from the VAC; Secretary Scott echoed Mr. Hunt’s concern that the Town Administrator seems to have unilaterally chosen to recommend dissolution of the veterans services district without any real public input and seems to have done an end-around the open meeting law by meeting with Chairman Kelley without public notice

Mr. Johnson asked what may be downsides of leaving district with Hingham; VSO Jermyn responded that there is no downside to Scituate providing veterans services on its own; extra pay to VSO Knapp will not come from veterans benefits budget; VSO Jermyn said he will remain available to consult/confer with the VAC and VSO Knapp as needed; VSO Jermyn suggested that VAC begin process of placing two warrant articles before Town Meeting: (1) excise tax exemption for prisoners of war; and (2) real estate tax exemption during active service for reservists/guardsmen called to active duty

Chairman Kelley stated that he supports the Town Administrator’s decision, stating that she wants a full-time agent in the office at Town Hall and that because the agreement was due to expire at the end of the month, she needed to make a decision

Mr. Miller suggested that there has been a process problem with the decision to split with Hingham; Secretary Scott strongly asserted that public process, though at times tedious, must be followed in order to prevent bad or unpopular judgments

VSO Jermyn reminded VAC that VFW member should be present at meetings so that their voice is heard; Chairman Kelley stated that VFW has been unresponsive to repeated invitations to attend meetings

VSO Jermyn informed VAC of state procedure for when flags should fly at half-staff

VSO Jermyn reviewed Eagle Scout project in Hingham that involved creating inventory of military markers and flags for service members buried in Hingham cemeteries; VSO Jermyn explained the various methods used by different scouts at each cemetery; Noel Reccha, a Boy Scout from Norwell, and John Lunn, a Boy Scout director, were present to hear VSO Jermyn’s presentation as a possible Eagle Scout project for Scituate cemeteries

Chairman’s Report (cont.)

Chairman Kelley recognized Mr. Fountaine and thanked him for getting the ball rolling on finding out to whom the missing military marker belonged to (Mr. Withem).

Per Town Administrator, VAC Facebook page cannot be linked to town website

Chairman Kelley reported that he attended the Hingham VAC meeting on June 1 and learned that they have \$4,000 in their treasury; Chairman Kelley proposed putting a warrant article together for Town Meeting that would authorize a “check-off” on excise tax form to allocate money to veterans services

Chairman Kelley reported that Massachusetts commuter trains will be wrapped with stars to “recognize the fallen” and a train will be coming to Scituate as a rolling tribute to the fallen

Chairman Kelley reported that the Run for the Fallen will be September 8 in Scituate; he stated that

Scituate has improved its vision for veterans; VSO Jermyn suggested that VAC members be visible at public events like the train for the fallen and the run for the fallen to inform and recruit

Chairman Kelley reported that he recently had a nice visit with a WWII veteran who was home caring for his wife

Independence Day celebration

Vice Chairman Covell updated the Council on the plans for July 4; begin at town common (Lawson Common) at 9:30 am with recorded military music; ceremonies will commence at 10 am; invocation by Chaplain Grossman; welcome by Vice Chairman Covell; welcome by Selectman Joe Norton; welcome by Representative Jim Cantwell; reading of Declaration of Independence; address by Major Brendan Cullinan, SHS grad and veteran of three tours in Afghanistan; keynote address by General Casey; lower flag, taps, rifle salute, raise flag, national anthem; benediction; military music
Run for the Fallen

Chairman Kelley recognized Sarah Keller-Likens for an update on the run; September 8 at 10:30 am; DAV is first official sponsor; 5K race with ceremony on town common; general discussion of race logistics, catering, traffic control, speaker

Public Comment

None

Next meeting date set for July 17, 2012, at 7 pm, at Maritime Center

Motion to adjourn meeting made and seconded; vote unanimous and meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Scott, Secretary