



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

JANUARY 2024



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING JAN. 10, 2024

At Chapter 1's January meeting, held on the Zoom app and in person at our office at the VFW, attendees included Bill Ellwood, president; Tim Lonergan, vice president; Richard Reed, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; Directors Dick Doyle, Michael Murphy and Carl Baldwin; members John Pisanelli, Dave Potter, and Shawn Bryan; and associate member Joan Ellwood. Shawn has been a Chapter 1 member for some time but had never heard from the chapter until our recent efforts to update membership contact information. He lives in Berlin, Vt., but was taking part by Zoom from Arcadia, Fla.

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors was held; no business was transacted.

Bill Ellwood began with a president's report. He thanked everyone for their efforts in 2023, judging it to have been a "very successful" year. Highlights included the two social events, the "Honor Our Vietnam Veterans" luncheon Oct. 11 and the meet-and-greet event Dec. 13 at the chapter offices. The chapter is "financially secure," Bill said, as the treasurer's report below makes clear.

Bill noted mention of the chapter in the national VVA magazine, *The Veteran*, in the November-December issue. In it, Region 1 (New England) Director Justin Lantini reported on his visit to Chapter 1 at the October luncheon.

Via the Chapter 1 website, Bill heard from the Students for Research school in California, where youngsters were seeking to help veterans. The students came across the Chapter 1 site and used links on the site to further their study.

Bill also reported we have three more names to add to the Honor Roll at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Rutland. Anyone who entered the service from Rutland County and served in Vietnam is eligible.

The minutes of the December meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter.

Richard Reed presented the treasurer's report, which was unanimously approved.



Stephen Box (center, with white beard) cuts the ribbon Nov. 21 at an eight-unit housing project he developed for veterans at 140 North Main St. in Rutland. A couple of Chapter 1 members attended. We have offered to help with furnishings, if needed.

As an add-on to the financial report, Bill Ellwood noted that between meetings and with approval of board members and officers the chapter had assisted a member with a fuel oil payment amounting to \$550. The money was provided to the oil dealer and followed a personal visit by Bill Ellwood to the Chapter 1 member to verify the need.

John Pisanelli, who is commander of VFW Post 648 as well as a Chapter 1 member, said the post has raised \$6,740 for the VFW's Fuel Fund, the goal being \$10,000 to cover heat for the winter. Chapter 1, as a tenant in the VFW building, has expressed a willingness to help pay the heating costs but has been waiting to learn the unmet needs of the post. With the funds in hand for the immediate fuel costs, John said he would keep Chapter 1 posted on the post's need for fuel assistance as the winter proceeded.

Bill Ellwood reported that the chapter's efforts to provide Rutland's Open Door Mission with chairs that the mission said it needed have met with a lack of response from the mission, despite efforts of Mike Murphy and Bill to cut through any red tape and acquire the chairs. Promises from the mission to provide the information we need have been unfulfilled, Bill said. He proposed that the offer of the money by the chapter, \$1,127, be withdrawn in light of the mission's lack of follow-through. No formal motion was deemed necessary.

Membership chair Dick Doyle said he's hoping the next membership roster from VVA national includes Andrew Moyer and James Philbrook, whom Dick has been working to get on our rolls since October. Bill Ellwood chimed in that Tom LaFond and Bill Whiteman are two other new members the chapter is trying to get onto the official membership roster after submitting the proper documentation.

Dick noted that our email and "snail mail" address lists still have some errors, as evidenced by undeliverable emails. Dick asked that each member try to recruit one new member during the current year. He noted the chapter has members from about 20 states. Bill Ellwood reminded everyone that vets serving from 1965 to 1975 are eligible for VVA membership regardless of whether they actually were in Vietnam. Dick noted that a life membership now is just \$50. He also observed that in updating the chapter membership list over the last six months, we learned of four or five deaths of members. The chapter has about 130 regular members and seven or eight associate members. Bill is hoping to increase the AVVA (Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America) membership. AVVA members can participate in chapter activities but do not have voting powers.

Bill noted that elections take place in April. Jack Crowther agreed to again handle nominations for officers and directors and will present a list at the March meeting. He noted that anyone interested can put their name in for an office. Otherwise, Jack said, his practice is nominate current officers and board members who have been active, but suggest replacements for those who have not been active. Replacements would come from members who have shown an interest in the chapter, usually by attending meetings. Anyone wishing to put their name forward for an office or board position can email Jack at jack_cr2 @ yahoo.com.

Bill said he would like to establish a couple of committees to carry out certain tasks. One is a Liaison Committee to "reach out to other organizations." He mentioned the VFW, Visiting Nurses Association, Civil Air Patrol, and Rutland Historical Society as organizations Chapter 1 might work with. Also, a Digital and Technical Committee could take on the task of "sprucing up" the chapter's website. He also mentioned a fledgling visitation program for shut-in veterans. Chapter 1 Chaplain Pete Hults and Bill have made a couple of visits, as a start.

Jack Crowther brought up the matter of putting some of the chapter's money into CD-type accounts as a way of earning some interest on chapter funds. Current CD interest rates are in some cases above 4 percent. Bill Ellwood has looked into the matter and plans to propose investing \$100,000 into such an account. Some discussion followed. Richard Reed will pursue the matter.

Richard Doyle talked about the Leatherstocking Honor Flights taken by four members of Chapter 1 in September to spend a day, expenses paid, in Washington, D.C. Not having a specific figure in mind at the moment, Dick said he'd like to propose a donation to the organization in the future. The next Honor Flight

will be in April. Speaking of his own flight, which included Bill Ellwood, Dick said there were about 100 on the plane, about 65 percent Vietnam veterans. People can check out the program at leatherstockinghonorflightny.org. Bill encouraged Chapter 1 members to consider applying.

Richard Reed suggested that the chapter purchase its own Zoom account following Saturday's VVA State Council meeting, instead of waiting. The chapter has been using Jack Crowther's account, reimbursing him recently, but still dependent on Jack's access name, password and verification codes. This has caused some problems, as it did with this meeting. The subscription should simplify running zoom sessions from the Chapter 1 office. Bill Ellwood made a motion to set aside up to \$200 for the chapter's own Zoom account. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Passed unanimously.

Bill brought up the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, mentioned above. As part of an effort to build up the organization as a wing of Chapter 1, he proposed setting aside \$1,000 for expenditures of the group as it gets going. Dick Doyle moved to appropriate the money. Seconded by Mike Murphy. Passed unanimously.

Guidelines for handling financial requests was the final item up for discussion. Richard Reed had suggested the establishment of guidelines to clarify the process of responding to requests to the chapter for assistance. His suggestions were in the November newsletter. Richard made revisions and submitted them to this meeting for consideration. Jack Crowther reviewed Richard's draft and suggested it take the form of changes to the chapter bylaws. Bill Ellwood then had these suggestions:

— As, suggested by Jack, allow members attending a meeting to vote on a proposed expenditure. This was a change from Richard's proposal of having the board and officers only vote. Letting all members at a meeting vote met with approval.

— Don't put the guidelines in the form of bylaws changes because that could needlessly tie the Chapter's hands.

As secretary involved in some of the back and forth on this question, I'll offer the following for further discussion at the next meeting:

1. Adopt the following **GUIDELINES** (not bylaws changes). These are basically Richard's suggestions. I'm okay with Bill Ellwood's preference to have "guidelines," rather than bylaws.

Requests for Chapter 1 assistance . must include:

- a. Amount requested and statement of need.
- b. Proof of veteran status (individual) or veterans services (organization) or other charitable purpose of the applicant.
- c. Individual grants must be made with a co-payee, i.e., landlord, utility company, etc.
- d. Organizations must show involvement with veterans or be deemed appropriate by the Chapter 1 Board of Directors.
- e. All grant requests must be approved by the Chapter 1 members during regular meetings, except as allowed under Article XI of the Chapter 1 Bylaws.
- f. Grant applicants are responsible for providing needed documentation to the Board. It is not the responsibility of the Board or individual members to chase them down.
- g. Third party requests may be considered when presented by known parties, i.e, Veterans Outreach, Vet Center, clinic workers, etc.
- h. No individual may receive more than three grants unless otherwise approved by the Board.

2. Adopt a **BYLAW** change to allow the chapter more flexibility in responding to requests for assistance between meetings. This would be a change in Article XI, Paragraph 2, allowing the expenditure of up to

\$2,000, instead of the current \$1,000, between meetings if a majority of officers and board members approve.

I will offer the above at the March meeting as a starting point for further discussion. Note: I have left off a bylaw change I proposed concerning special meetings. Checking the VVA National Constitution, I see that chapter meetings are governed by that.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

**THE NEXT CHAPTER 1 MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, AT 4:30 P.M.
BY ZOOM AND IN PERSON AT THE CHAPTER 1 OFFICE AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND**

Here's the Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86468713736?pwd=ZEhybFk3SVMrWDd2STdnQzM1a2ZFUT09>

Meeting ID: 864 6871 3736

Passcode: 487704