

**VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING**

March 18, 2023

10:00 AM

MINUTES

1. Meeting Called to Order at 10:02 AM

2. Chairman's Statement

Committee Chairman John Smith called the to order with the reading of the Open Public Meeting Act, the notice requirements have been satisfied. Meeting dates are confirmed at the Annual Meeting. Notices of this meeting will be posted on two municipal public notice bulletin boards, published on the website for the Borough of Bergenfield and the website for the Veterans Advisory Committee and on file in the Office of the Borough Clerk

3. Roll Call

Roll Call	Present	Absent	Excused
Edgar Garcia, Member	X		
Thomas Lang, Member	X		
Marc Pascual, Council Liaison			X
Richard Morf, Member	X		
Dina Moore, Member	X		
Willie Moree Jr, Member			X
Dr. Samuel Paul, Chaplin	X		
Fred Sahlberg, Member			X
Wilfred Selby, Member		X	
Joseph Sokol, Member		X	
John Smith, Chairman	X		
Benjamin Whaley, Member			X
Amos White, Member			X
Warren Williams, Secretary	X		

4. Flag Salute

Pledge of Allegiance led by Committee Member Thomas Lang

5. Invocation (Chaplin)

Invocation given by Committee Chaplin Dr. Samuel Paul

6. Agenda Changes (Additions/Deletion or Revisions)

Additions – New Business: Vietnam Memorial Moving Wall

7. Approval of Minutes (February 2023)

Motion Offered by Committee Member Thomas Lang and **Second** by Committee Member Dina Moore, to approve minutes for February 18, 2023, Regular Committee Meeting minutes to be and published on the website for the Veterans Advisory Committee. All present voting in favor and none oppose.

8. Treasury Report (March 2023)

The current balance of funds available is 2,086.63. There were \$200.00 donations to pay for ten (10) USO Dance tickets and no other expenses or billing transactions during this reporting period of February 18, 2023 - March 18, 2023. **Motion Offered** by Committee Member Richard Morf and **Second** by Committee Member Dina Moore, to approve the committee's treasury report for the period of February 18, 2023 through March 18, 2023. All present voting in favor and none oppose.

9. Presentation/ Correspondence

A. Presentation:

1. Welcome Councilman Marc Pascual as Committee Liaison – Table for April Meeting
2. Farwell Councilman Rafael Marte – Table for April Meeting

B. Correspondence:

1. DAV Van -Transportation for Veterans. (VA Guidelines)
2. New Jersey Honor Flight for Veterans

10. Unfinished Business

A. Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin Presentation (Update)

B. 2023 Grand Marshal Biographical Summary (Peter Mathews) Update

C. 2023 Memorial Day Ceremony and Parade (Update)

11. New Business

A. Vietnam Memorial Moving Wall

The Vietnam Memorial Moving Wall will be coming the Bergenfield. The scheduled dates are from August 31st to September 4th. This project will be hosted by the Bergenfield School District, which Dr. Tully, Superintendent of Bergenfield Schools.

12. Good of the Order

A. USO Dance (AAR)

The USO Dance held on the evening of March 10th, was a very successful event. Everyone who attended this event had a very good and fun time. The amount of 2,161.00 was raised which will be donated to the USO. The donation check will be presented to the USO Representative at the next VFW Auxiliary meeting on April 12th.

B. Veterans Service Assistance (Update)

VFW/Committee Service Veterans Assistance, been giving assistance to about 14 veterans with VA claims and health care system enrollment.

C. PACT ACT Enrollment Event (Pending)

The committee is trying to get the VA to schedule one of their PACT ACT Enrollment events here in Bergenfield. The plan is to reach out to the neighboring municipalities in getting veterans assistance with their VA Benefits claims and toxic exposures screening.

13. Verbal Communications

Gerald Ferra, resident from Dumont and VA Outreach Specialist informed the committee that Vietnam Moving Wall is schedule to arrive to Bergenfield in by August 31st. He would like to know more information on the pre-planning for the arrival of the moving wall. Committee Chairman John Smith stated the Bergenfield School District Superintendent Dr. Christopher Tully, request the Vietnam Memorial Moving Wall, as a school district project and learning experience for the students. Committee Chairman John Smith also stated that the committee will follow up Dr. Tully and the borough governing body to start preparations plan for the arrival of the moving wall.

14. Legislative Bills Update

A. NJ Legislative Bills

1. (S522/S1451 & A888/A1649) Letter Campaign to Elected Leaders

Letter campaign to our elected leaders in the State Senate and Assembly urging them to pass bills.

S-522 & A-888: Grants a property tax exemption to honorably discharged veterans having a VA disability percentage rating of at least 30 percent. The tax exemption on the percentage of disability and the exemption is capped at \$10,000. Compensation for a 100 percent disabled veteran remains the same under current law.

S-1451 & A-1649: The income eligibility limits for the senior citizens property tax relief program will increase to \$160,000 for single claimants and married couples. This increase in eligibility will allow veterans/seniors whose incomes exceed the current senior property tax income limits \$92,969 to remain in that important program. Additionally, veterans/seniors that were previously denied for the program, because of their income levels will be allowed to participate.

2. (S3492 & A4923) Upgrade Paramus and Menlo Park Homes wards

S-3492 & A-4923: these bills require conversion of wards in the Paramus and Menlo Park Veterans Memorial homes, into single occupancy rooms and require upgrades to their ventilation systems. Governor Murphy has authorized 5 million dollars toward the veterans' homes upgrades.

3. (A2493 & A2722) signed into law by Governor Murphy as of March 10, 2023.

A-2493: This bill for veterans who are unable to pay for their funerals may have the cost of their burial or cremation covered by the county government. To allow more veterans to qualify for this burial service. This bill expands discharge classification eligibility criteria from veterans who were honorably discharged to any veteran who was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

A-2722: This bill eases the path to licensure as a License Practical Nurse (LPN) for honorably discharged veterans with applicable medical training from their time in the military. Veterans who completed the Army Practical Nurse Program or the Air Force Practical Nurse Program (BMTCP-4N051) with 5 skill level or their equivalents will be eligible to apply for licensure in lieu of obtaining a diploma from the School of Practical Nursing. Both bills A-2493 and A-2722 were signed into law by Governor Murphy on March 10, 2023.

B. Congressional Bills

1. (HR1139) Governing Unaccredited Reps Defrauding VA Benefits Act

HR-1139: Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding VA Benefits Act or the GUARD VA Benefits Act. This bill imposes fines on individuals for soliciting, contracting for, charging, or receiving any unauthorized fee or compensation with respect to the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of any claim for Department of Veterans Affairs benefits. The attempted commission of such offenses is also punishable by fine.

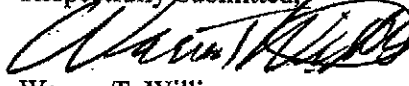
2. (S344) Receive DOD Retirement pay and VA Disability Compensation without offset.

S-344: This bill allows a veteran with a combat-related disability and fewer than 20 years of creditable service to receive retirement pay, without reduction, concurrent with disability compensation.

15. Adjournment

Motion Offered by Committee Member Thomas Lang and **Second** by Committee Member Richard Morf to adjourn the meeting. The next schedule committee meeting will be on Saturday, April 15th, 2023, time-10:00AM, at the VFW Post. There being no further business to come before the Veterans Committee. This meeting was adjourned at 11:04 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren T. Williams", written over a horizontal line.

Warren T. Williams
Sgt Major (Retired), USA
Committee Secretary