

Garner Veterans Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes - Monday – Dec 4, 2023
White Deer Park Nature Center

Attendees:

- Committee Mbrs:
 - John Foster (Chair)
 - Matt Pedone (Vice Chair)
 - Helen Carter (Secretary)
 - Don Searles
 - Willis McKoy
 - Tim Stevens
 - Jeff Hicks (absent)
- Ex-officio Members:
 - VFW - Bob Carter (absent)
 - AL - Terry Chatfield
 - DAV - Robert Gregory (Absent)
- Town Representative - Phil Matthews (Town Council member)
- Town Staff:
 - Megan Young (Operations Superintendent/committee liaison)
 - Colleen Bockhahn (Recreation Program Manager – Parks & Nature)

Meeting opening: The meeting opened at 9:04 ^{AM} by Chairman John Foster

Minutes of last meeting: Motion made and seconded to approve the minutes as sent of the Aug meeting. Motion approved.

A) Report from Committees:

a. Observances:

- Memorial Day - May 27, 2024 – Megan updated on behalf of Kayla
 - Pray for better weather this year
 - Tim has a volunteer to be a possible keynote speaker, a Major who spoke at Arlington. Send keynote info to Kayla
- Independence Day - July 3, 2024
 - Tours at the Memorial from 1730-1930 – by VFW and Legion mbrs
 - Town to provide tent, chairs, water for workers. If you have any special requests, let the town staff know.
 - VFW & Legion members will again need passes to get on to Jeff's street for parking
- Salute to the Troops – March 10 - Tim Stevens
 - Show N Tell's Salute to the Troops. Aversboro Road Baptist Church, 1600 Aversboro Road, NFL's Nyheim Hines, Miss North Carolina, military vehicles, inflatables, free hot dogs. 4 ^{PM}. (This may change to 3 ^{PM}. Tim should know the week of 1/29)
 - Previously tried to move it to March 31. Not sure if it will be at 4:00 or 7:00 ^{PM}. 4:00 sounds better for older people due to driving at night. Planning for a musical group, but Sunday is usually their day off. The HS band is also very good.
- Veterans Day at Aversboro Baptist - Nov 11, 2024
 - Committee feedback was this year's speaker was great. Had trouble getting up the stairs but insisted on doing it.
 - For 2024 Willis knows a Lt. Col in his neighborhood that might be good.

- Vets will give out programs and flags at the door again.
- Need a keynote speaker. Before booking, inform the committee and Kayla.
- Gold Star Family wreath laying – Tim Stevens
 - Scheduled for Dec 16 at 10^{AM}.
 - A tree has been purchased and planted at the park, so we don't have to buy one each year. But it is a little short for this year. We have the fake tree for this year. The live tree will have to be pruned and shaped occasionally to keep it looking good as it grows.
 - We have new stars this year to use in the ceremony.
 - Event timing may vary depending on the weather. Reading of the names will happen if the weather is nice.
 - Boy scouts are lined up to assist.

B) Reports from Local Veterans Organizations

- VFW and Aux – Terry Chatfield and Helen Carter
 - We are in the newly remodeled building, but there are some outside items still not finished – parking lot and back side of the building. There is talk of putting a cover out there for shade and bad weather and a railing around the deck. The smaller room (original bar) is now a game room. TT&E paid for most the remodeling. The Post paid for upgrades to the alarm system and a few other smaller items.
- AL and SAL – Terry Chatfield
 - On the 21 of Dec. they will have their Christmas Party. This year it is the Legion's turn to pay for the Police Officer of the Year, and the Fire Fighter award will be moved to April.
 - SAL donated money to Toys for Tots and veterans in need.
- DAV – Willis McCoy
 - They are experiencing growing pains – although they are not growing (up or down).
 - At the recent Exec Board meeting they had 7 people, although they traditionally have 20-30 members, and 50 or 60 at the regular meeting. They have 1400 members. So, they need to reorganize again.
 - If you are over age 80 you can join any DAV chapter for free for life.

C) Old Business:

- Memorial bricks are still \$125 for the 4"x8" and \$200 for the 8"x8". The prices have not changed from last year. The flags are also up.

D) New Business:

- The pathway around the memorial cannot be paved due to EPA restrictions, but the Town is aware of needing a solution to keep people from weating down the bricks and pavers.
- Terry asked if there was any way to increase the handicapped parking at the Memorial during special events? There are rules about paved parking for this. During big events we can put up signs to direct them to somewhere separate, but not on a daily basis.
- Willis suggested at the March meeting we look forward at what we want to do at the memorial to make it better.
- John suggested the committee bring ideas on how to improve the memorial and attract new events. One suggestion was celebrating the birthdays of each of the branches as a new event.
- Willis noted that when you go to a claims person at the VA, you may get someone knowledgeable or maybe not. But everything is in writing on VA.gov so you can learn what is available for your needs even if your claims person doesn't.
- The Harley HOG group does a lot with veterans since most are vets. They contacted John

about doing something at our Memorial. They meet monthly at the Tobacco Road Harley location (previously Ray Price Harley), and they have a chat group. They used to lay a wreath in Raleigh, but that was cancelled since the city canceled vehicles in the Vets Day parade now. Terry did the parade in Raleigh for years. Terry will contact the city of Raleigh to find out if that rule still applies. The HOG group already contacted John Foster about doing a wreath laying event at our memorial. Maybe this could be on Veterans Day. We could reach out to them and let them know that they are welcome in Garner, but first we need to see if the Town would be interested in our doing it and how that affects our own Veterans Day events. Willis moved that Terry ask Raleigh if they were going to have a Veterans Day parade in 2024, and if not, can the Town of Garner hold it instead.

- Tim Stevens is holding a free breakfast on Jan 9 at 8:00 ^{AM} at Big Ed's in Garner to recognize veterans who served during the Global War on Terrorism (Gulf war, Afghanistan, etc.) whether deployed or not. There will be no program or speeches. The only question is would they like to do it again. Biggest problem is letting people know.

Meeting closed at 10:05 ^{AM}

Submitted by Helen Carter, Secretary