



**Town of West Hartford
Commission on Veterans' Affairs**

December 10, 2024
West Hartford Town Hall, Room 407

Minutes

1. Call to Order/Roll Call – Chairman Knoll called the meeting to order at 1900 hrs. (7:00 PM). The following persons were present:
 - Members: Inga Bowes, Patrick Harrell, Matt Hart, Rolf Knoll, and John Mele
 - American Legion: Heidi-Ann Mooney
 - Town staff: Keren Paquette, Social Services Manager
 - Guests: Rachel Avenik, Jon Coss, Steven Gorss, and Sherri Vogt
2. Public Comment – none.
3. Approval of Minutes from September 3, 2024 – Mr. Mele made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Harrell. Motion passed unanimously.
4. Presentation by Sherri Vogt – Ms. Vogt, Veteran's Liaison Officer at Hartford Healthcare, provided an overview of the services available through the program she administers. The Veteran's program is affiliated with the Center for Health Aging. The program employs 13 Veterans Service Officers and is looking to hire 10 more. The program staff work to help veterans access benefits, with a focus on various healthcare services, including mental health. Mental health and preventing suicides are major areas of concern. Ms. Vogt is available to assist commission members with questions and to attend future meetings. Mr. Knoll acknowledged Ms. Vogt for her work on behalf of the region's veterans community.
5. Reports
 - a. Meeting with Director of Assessment and Town Manager – Mr. Knoll reported on his separate meetings with Joe Dakers, Director of Assessment, and Rick Ledwith, Town Manager. The main focus of both meetings was the property tax relief programs available to veterans in the community. One program in that the commission may wish to advocate for is codified under Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 12-811. This statute, referred to by some as the "Gold Star family exemption," enables a municipality to provide a tax exemption for the parent or surviving spouse of a person killed in action while on active duty. Mr. Knoll will continue his conversation with the Town Manager and report back to the commission.
 - b. Bloomfield Armed Forces Resource Fair – Mr. Knoll reported that he attended the fair, held on November 14. Approximately 40 veterans attended the event.

6. Business Items

- a. Status of Commission Vacancies – Mr. Knoll reported that the Town Council was likely to appoint Ms. Avenik and Mr. Coss as members. The town may have other candidates too, which would enable the commission to reach its full contingent of nine members.
- b. Sterling Field Memorial – Mr. Harrell reported on his recent conversations with the town regarding the potential to add a second memorial to Sterling Field.
- c. Approval of 2025 Meeting Calendar – By consensus, the members endorsed the 2025 meeting calendar.
- d. Activity Planning for 2025 – Following some discussion, the members settled on the following priorities for 2025:
 - Local tax exemptions
 - Preparing a letter to local veterans informing them of available resources and services
 - Updating the Town's Veteran's Services web page

7. Agenda Items for Next Meeting – Mr. Knoll and Mr. Hart will coordinate a special meeting to welcome new members.

8. Correspondence – none.

9. Adjournment – Mr. Knoll adjourned the meeting at 2023 hrs. (8:23 PM).

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew W. Hart, Secretary