



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

January 14, 2025

Leon's Restaurant in West Hartford

Minutes

1. Call to Order/Roll Call – Chairman Knoll called the meeting to order at 1910 hrs. (7:10 PM). The following persons were present:
 - Members: Inga Bowes, Patrick Harrell, Matt Hart, Rolf Knoll, John Mele, Jon Coss, Chad Licht, Rachel Avenick and Nicola Rubinow
 - Town of West Hartford staff: Keren Paquette, Social Services Manager
2. Public Comment – none.
3. Approval of Minutes from December 10, 2024 – Mr. Mele made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Licht. Motion passed unanimously.
4. Reports – none.
5. Business Items
 - a. Election of Officers: The slate of officers naming Rolf Knoll as Chairman, Matt Hart as Vice-Chairman and John Mele as Secretary was approved unanimously.
 - b. Chairman Knoll reviewed some of the accomplishments of the Commission during 2024: restructuring the leadership of the Commission and adding new members; compiling a list of all veterans in the town from the data bases of the American Legion, the state Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, the office of the Tax Assessor and the Town Clerk; conducted a mass mailing to 1,445 veterans in town regarding a Veterans Resource Fair; held a Veterans Resource Fair in May 2024 attending by over 130 veterans and family members; held meetings with the Tax Assessor and Town Manager of West Hartford to discuss tax benefits for veterans and Gold Star families; made a recommendation to the Town Council to exempt Gold Star families from taxes on their dwellings; hosted Sherri Vogt, Veteran Liaison for Hartford Health Care and Trustee of the Board for the State Commission on Veterans Affairs.
 - c. Chairman Knoll reviewed some of the goals of the Commission for 2025: increase the tax benefits for Gold Star families; discuss strategy to increase tax benefits for all veterans at both the state and local levels; revise the Veterans Affairs Commission web site on the town's platform; improve the Commission's visibility on social media and revamp the "West Hartford Veterans" Facebook page; upgrade the memorial on Sterling Field; conduct a

mailing to all veterans advertising the Veterans' Stand-Down hosted by DVA at multiple sites in the state in September and the World War II Veterans' Celebration at the State Armory on May 19th also hosted by DVA. Members of the Commission then held a discussion on many other initiatives for the upcoming year.

6. Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Host CWO Patrick Nelligan, Chairman of the Department of Veterans' Affairs Board of Trustees.

Discuss the Town Council's action regarding improved tax benefits for Gold Star families.

Discuss progress in contacting state representatives regarding improved tax benefits for all veterans in the state.

Discuss progress in revising and improving the Web Site for the Commission on the town IT platform.

Discuss progress on improving the Facebook page for the Commission and our social media presence.

Discuss improving access to the Veterans' Memorial on Farmington Avenue.

7. Correspondence – none.

8. Adjournment – Dr. Knoll adjourned the meeting at 2030hrs. (8:30 PM).

Respectfully submitted,

John Mele, Secretary