



Commission on Veterans' Affairs (WHCVA) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 10, 2026 – 7:00 p.m.
West Hartford Town Hall Room 407

1. Call to Order/Roll Call: The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairman Knoll

Present: Commissioners Rolf Knoll, John Mele, Nicola Rubinow, Rachel Avenick, Patrick Harrell and Chad Licht; Elaine Kotler, American Legion Auxiliary President; and Phyllis DiGioia and Christopher McKee of the Honor Wellness Center.

Absent: Commissioners Matt Hart and John Coss; Karen Paquette, West Hartford Veterans' Affairs Representative

2. Public Comment: None.

3. Approval Minutes of December 9, 2025: Motion made, seconded, and minutes approved.

4. New Business:

Suicide Prevention Program: Phyllis DiGioia, CEO/Clinical Director of the Honor Wellness Center and Christopher McKee, Chairman and President of Honor Wellness Center Board of Directors presented a summary of the clinical services available at the Honor Wellness Center for veterans, policemen, firemen, first responders and their families. They also described their work in the area of suicide prevention and answered a number of questions from the Commissioners. They were asked to develop a plan for a Suicide Prevention Program that could be held for West Hartford veterans and all first responders in the town. The Commission will then speak with representatives of the American Legion Post 96 and the Town Manager to discuss this plan.

5. Reports:

Veterans' Memorial Access: Chairman Knoll stated that Duane Martin, Director of Community Development, is working with town officials and engineers to improve access for handicapped veterans to the Veterans' Memorial.

West Hartford America 250th Celebration: A schedule of events was distributed to all Commissioners. Chairman Knoll asked Commissioners to consider marching in the Memorial Day Parade and attending the Military Inductee Ceremony on 5/26/26.

Sterling Field & WWII-Vietnam Memorial Plaques: Patrick Harrell reported on the plans to commission and dedicate a commemorative bronze marker in recognition of 2LT Gordon Sterling and 140 West Hartford lives lost in WWII at Sterling Field. He also proposed the relocation of two abandoned WII and Vietnam stone monuments with plaques to suitable West Hartford location. projects would need to be coordinated with town officials.

Military Appreciation Recognition @ Celebrate West Hartford: The Commissioners discussed a number of ideas regarding military appreciation events to be held at Celebrate West Hartford in conjunction with the American Legion Post 96. More planning will be required.

Respectfully submitted,

John Mele, Secretary