



**Town of Garner
Veterans Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 9, 2024
0900 hrs, White Deer Park Nature Center**

I. Call to Order

Chair John Foster called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

Committee Members present were: John Foster (Chair); Matt Pedone (Vice Chair); Helen Carter (Secretary); Jeff Hicks, Don Searles, Robert Gregory; Tim Stevens.

Ex Officio Members present were: Bob Carter (VW); Terry Chatfield (AL); Willis McKoy (DAV); Phil Matthews (Town of Garner Mayor Appointee).

Town Staff present were: Maria Munoz-Blanco (PRCR Director); Kayla Phillips (PRCR Special Event Coordinator).

- a. Approval of Agenda
- b. Approval of Meeting Minutes (September 9, 2024)

II. Petitions and Comments from the Public

III. Report from Standing Committees and Staff

a. Observances

- i. Veterans Day Observance: Nov 11, 2024 - Committee noted the church was packed; Kayla said that around 200 programs were handed out, attendance was higher than prior years. Able to Serve also attended. Attendance was approximately 300. Mr. Matthews noted that the speaker was good. The speaker had a chance to talk and share details that he hadn't done before. The crowd appreciated it. After 17 years of trying, this is a man with Silver Stars... everything went extremely well. Council members and Mayor were in attendance as well as Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager. Post event tours also went well. Redirecting people to the church. Shoeboxes presents for post-event for the Veterans.
 - Keynote for 2025 - any suggestions. Two colonels if interested.
- ii. Wreath Across America and Gold Star Families: December 14, 2024 - will get with Tim for details. Kayla clarified she had received email from Tim with 10:30 am start time, that is what is the information that has been posted. Parking on the grass for the event. Need a port-a-potty for the event. Interest in a three-person portable restroom, check with fundraising event. Use Wreaths Across America as the official name.
- iii. Salute to Troops: March 2025 - Will not happen in 2025.
- iv. Memorial Day Observance:
 - May 26, 2025, tours 8-11am - start thinking about speakers. Lash Hocutt lives in neighborhood, or Jerome Williams, retired Air Force. Committee member McKoy will reach out to both of

them. PW to clean shelter pre-emptively. Mr. Matthews will M.C. Keep Kayla up to date with keynote. Question about National Anthem singer (Hannah), whether to ask her again; committee agreed. Kayla will follow up with Mayor and Honor Guard. And also reach out to Scouts for their bugle. Shelter as back-up in case of weather.

- v. Independence Day Celebration: July 3, 2025, Lake Benson Park, tours 5-7:30pm
 - Recap of 2024 - Kayla asked if anything needed to change; Committee noted preference for their tent be located in the shade. Shuttle drop-off needs to be handicapped accessible.
- b. VFW, Aux - Wednesday night at 7 pm is regular meeting date, will be honoring the Law Officer of the Year, Kevin Kenan (check spelling?). American Legion will be there also. Location is the VFW post. Expecting Chief of Police to attend. Fire Dept honoree will be later. Green Core League in Boone reached out to a member here and asked for financial assistance to help hurricane relief. VFW donated \$1,000, to help veterans in the affected areas.
- c. AL, SAL, Riders, Aux - Shoebox for Vets this Saturday, filled with toiletries, etc. have already delivered to the V.A. This will be following the Wreaths Across America event. Five assisted living facilities in Garner, only 4 have veterans residing in them. We go every other month and visit the veterans, the Christmas shoebox is an extra event. Many of the veterans in assisted living do not have family or visitors. Sons of American Legion - pretty much in line with the same thing. Back to the Legion, Dec 19 is our Christmas Party. Santa Claus will be there. Jeff Hicks is in charge of that information. Children under 12, ask for their name and gender, we buy age and gender specific gift, Santa will call out the child to get their gift.
- d. DAV - Is there a new representative for this organization? Two committee members are in the DAV. Asking who was the representative for Wake? Willis is the representative.

IV. Old Business

- a. Memorial brick order - Colleen Bockhahn - no change
- b. Pathway around Memorial - PW handling signage to direct bicyclists and runners; long-term need to have permanent surface
- c. Veteran's Day Parade - Mr. Chatfield reported that the City of Raleigh made decision not to have a parade this year. Wake Council plan is to have a parade for 2025. Have been in contact with the Christmas Parade organizer and will talk to them what problems they encountered. There will be a parade in downtown Raleigh. Will start working on the parade in June.
- d. Memorial Plaque - people who have died who are not Garner residents; will defer that to the LBP Master Plan process. Benches that are out there, they are virtually useless because of the birds - can't sit on them. Staff to follow up with PW for regular cleaning of the benches near the memorial.

V. New Business

- a. Discussion of Politicians Speaking at Veterans Committee events -

Prior to Veterans Day approached about Congressman Nickel speaking at the event. Do we need to have a formal motion - how to handle. Elevating PAC till to Medal of Honor state. A politician who is a veteran, yes, but the day is not for politicians. If they want to speak they should be a veteran. People will bring up politics. Jeff Hicks - motion that we allow Town of Garner politician and any other politician we approve as a Committee. Clarify politician is current elected official from Town of Garner. Clarify to speakers that they cannot be political. Motion approved unanimously.

- b. Cleaning of benches at the Rose Garden donated by veterans (bird feces).
- c. There is a Tomb of the Unknown traveling exhibit. Committee to look into this for future booking.
- d. Next Meeting: March 10, 2025 - 0900, 2nd Monday of the month (every third month), White Deer Park Nature Center

VI. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 10:04 am.

Mr. Matthews expressed his appreciation for the hard work of the Committee.

Question about the Veterans Clinic - discussion about its opening. Mr. Matthews updated the Committee that the clinic opening is planned for March 2025. Meeting hosted by Congressman Nickel, Greer Martin Secretary of Veterans Affairs for NC, also Amy Breedlove and other federal officials.