

**Town of Garner**  
**Veterans Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, September 8, 2025**  
**9:00 am, White Deer Park Nature Center**

Attendees:

Committee Members: John Foster (Chair), Don Searles (V Chair), Jeff Hicks (Sec), Robert Gregory, Tim Stevens, Brian Rietvelt, Russ Kessler.

Ex-Officio: Willis McKoy (DAV), Phil Mathews (ToG Mayor Appointee). Ben Hernandez III (VFW), Terry Chatfield.

Town Staff: Maria Munoz-Blanco (Director PRCR), Shelby Paustian (Events), Colleen Bockhahm (White Deer/Lake Benson Park Rec Program Mgr.), Terri-Jones (Counsel), Morgan Pierce (Counsel),

Alternates: Gerry La Chance, Chris Adams

- I. Call to Order: 9:03 am, John Foster - Chair
  - a. Introduce around the room.
  - b. Approval of Meeting Minutes (March 10, 2025) Terri, Brian. (unanimous)
  
- II. Report from Standing Committees and Staff
  - a. Observances
    - i. Veterans Day Observance: November 11, 2025 at 11 am, Aversboro Road Baptist Church
      - Keynote for 2025 - BG Samuel Meyer
      - Master of Ceremonies - Phil Mathews
      - Color Guard - Chris Adams to coordinate
      - AL, AL-aux, VFW, VFW-aux ushers 9:30 am
      - Tours by AL 232 & VFW 10225 from 9:30-12:30 at GVM.
      - Honoring WWII vets: Phil to reach out to Warren "George" Shaw, Terry to reach out to Spencer Caldwell. They and family will be seated in the front row with Speakers. Point of Contacts please put together biographies.
    - ii. Wreaths Across America and Gold Star Families: December 13, 2025, 10 am, at GVM. Additional advertising requested from ToG social media.
      - 7 wreaths, PW to install mounts.
      - Gold Star ceremony: New, larger tree to be installed. Susan Hicks and Susan Mickey to decorate. Tim Stevens to provide decorations.
      - Tours by AL 232 & VFW 10225 from 9:30-12:30 at GVM.
    - iii. Salute to Troops May 2, 2025
      - Tim Stevens to screen his production of movie: PTSD The Invisible Enemy at GPAC.

- Movie edited since first screening. Edits from viewer feedback.
- Multiple awards received from around nation for first edition
- iv. Memorial Day Observance: May 26, 2025, 9:30 am.
- v. July 3<sup>rd</sup> Independence Celebration at LBP 5-10:30.
  - Tours GVM, 5:45 - 7:45 pm. 80 tours, 250 people.
- b. VFW, Aux - VA Clinic opened July 29. Volunteers sought to help veterans. A food/clothing pantry is planned for opening catering to the homeless. Donations sought in the form of gift cards/etc. so that the pantry can buy the needed supplies. They do not have storage capacity to store direct donations. Contact VFW or AL for further info on the above.
- c. AL, SAL, Riders, Aux
  - i. ToG sponsored Holiday boxes will be delivered in December. Target audiences are the veterans in the 5 Garner Rest Homes, Meals on Wheels veterans and the long-term care patients at the Durham VA.
  - ii. Garner American Legion (Senior Division) baseball took 2<sup>nd</sup> in NC. Their coach, Chris Cooke, was honored by the Town when he was enshrined into the NC American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame.
- d. DAV
  - i. Facility renovation complete. Please come by and visit at 1700 Hodge Road, Knightdale.
  - ii. Military Mission in Action Warrior Wagons is raising funds for wheelchairs for veterans.
  - iii. 9/18-9/20 Winston-Salem VA is holding a claims clinic in Cary at the Herbert Community Center.

### III. Old Business

- a. Memorial brick order - Colleen Bockhahn - 9 bricks ordered this year and will be installed by Veterans Day. New orders being accepted for next year.
- b. GVM east end, unengraved panels approved by committee for a Memorial to War Dead who died in Garner but were not from Garner. Tim Stevens lead, initial design to be presented at future meeting.
- c. Lake Benson Master Plan Update. Meeting held between ToG and VAC Chair on 8/18. Area from entrance to east and to south of existing Memorial reserved for future Memorial expansion.
- d. Tomb of the Unknown Soldier traveling exhibit explored and not recommended for Garner by Tim Stevens.
- e. Tim brought up a 5k/10k race at White Deer Park and surrounds, not crossing roads, to attract younger veterans' attention to the Veterans Memorial and events. Dates/course TBD.
- f. Event Subcommittees: VAC Officers, other members as requested or if interested and Town stake holders will meet 3 weeks in advance of events. Colleen is ToG for non-town wide events, Shelby for town wide (Memorial Day and Veterans Day). Next meeting is on 10/27, 9:00 am at WDP Nature Center.
- g. Bylaws. Changed incorporated by Counsel and distributed the week before meeting. Additional changes discussed. Additional changes to involve:
  - i. Adding/defining Alternate Members to the bylaws and defining quorums for subcommittees.

- ii. Additional changes to be coordinated between Counsel and Jeff and distributed prior to next meeting for possible vote.

IV. New Business

- a. Terri introduced having a 9/11 "Stair-climb" at the Garner VA Clinic starting in 2026 to honor the NYC First Responders. This is a nationally recognized event.
  - b. Phil invited town counsel to attend meetings in the future.
  - c. Phil praised the VAC as a committee that is working together well.
- V. Meeting adjourned at 10:32 am.
- a. Next Meeting: December 8, 2025 - 0900, 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month (every third month), White Deer Park Nature Center.