

**MATTHEWS VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**  
**September 7, 2016**  
**Minutes**

Chairperson Fisk Outwater called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

The Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moving reading of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm by John Ramseur in remembrance of George Fossett, MVAC's first Chairman, who died on August 29, 2016.

**Committee Members present:** Fisk Outwater, Tom Cannon, Greg Smith, Jack Santaniello, Angelo Renguso, Amanda Kohout, Janet Perkins, Larry Stawicki, John Ramseur, Kathleen Wilsbach, Ed Dement, Freddie Baylor and Raymond Gaskins. A quorum was declared.

**Guests:** Rad Pate, Gary Aljets, Carol Aljets, Joseph Bochicchio and Dessi Defreshne

The minutes were approved as transmitted by Town email.

**New Business:**

1. Chair report
  - a. Fisk met with Town Staff regarding SOPs and establishing a Secretary and Treasurer position.
  - b. Financial assistance from the Town for a banner, and other signs was discussed. Fisk briefed the Mayor on why a banner was needed – Veteran's Day and other Town celebrations and meetings. The Town has agreed to help fund Committee needs which precludes the Committee from becoming a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization.
  - c. Permission was given by the Town for a Committee name change. Fisk stressed the point that the Committee is a working committee and not a social group but committed to locating resources and opportunities for our "customers."
2. Vice-chair report
  - a. Tom Cannon, after having attended the Mecklenburg County Veteran Services Council, expressed that many veterans are frustrated about finding the resources needed. Jenine McGee, Director of The Mecklenburg County Community Support Services Veterans Services Division could be a possible speaker for our committee. In addition, Fisk said he would put a request into Representative Brawley's Office for more of the Veteran Resource guides. It was noted by Tom that the robust rental market is tough on homeless veterans. Fifty known veterans are affected.
3. SOPs. A discussion about having one month off for the Committee during the year resulted in agreement that this would happen, but it would be an unwritten policy and month to be announced.
4. Name of Committee. After much discussion, Kathleen Wilsbach suggested that our official name should be, "Matthews Veterans Advisory Committee" which seems more in line with our Committee By-laws and Town expectations. A motion was made by Tom

Cannon to change our committee name to Matthews Veterans Advisory Committee (MVAC), seconded by Janet Perkins. A vote was taken. There was one dissent by Larry Stawicki. The motion passed.

5. Instruction on Town Email. Rad Pate, Town Staff Liaison, will set up a 30-minute session before our next meeting on October 5th with the Town's IT staff member to help members better navigate the Town email system. Fisk will want to receive input to find out the problems to address including shortcuts, etc.

6. Ed Dement requested MVAC ID cards from Rad.

7. Guests and potential members Dessi Defresne, an employee of Edward Jones and Joseph Bochicchio, an attorney specializing in veteran issues were introduced. They both spoke about their backgrounds and their desire to be on the Committee. A motion was made by Greg Smith and seconded by Tom Cannon to send the names of both Joseph Bochicchio and Dessi Defresne with their applications to the Town Council for approval as new members of the Matthews Veterans Advisory Committee. A vote was called and the motion was carried.

8. Subcommittee Reports as follows:

a. Subcommittee 1 – Tom Cannon held an outside committee meeting to discuss changes for the banner, MVAC name change and what service emblems that may be used because of the possible inclusion of the National Guard and Reserve. The banner still in process will be two sided and used for occasions like Veterans Days and Memorial Day.

b. Subcommittee 2 – Ed Dement held an outside committee meeting and committee will meet monthly. They have been discussing where MVAC can participate at local events and will present a three-month spreadsheet of local events to consider as well as local veteran group meetings. Ed suggested that the Town of Matthews have a signature event such as National Armed Forces Day (May 21, 2016) or a Military Appreciation Day.

c. Subcommittee 3 – John Ramseur reported that the committee would like to connect with the Matthews Chamber of Commerce and businesses in Matthews, and seek out veteran owned businesses. Another goal of the committee is to advise the Town Board and Chamber of transition organizations that can assist in veteran/military service members for hiring. Fisk added that he would contact the NC Business Center about a program to help military personnel transition back to being civilians.

d. Subcommittee 4 – Greg Smith would like to see MVAC be a clearinghouse for information about veteran services by bringing back brochures from other veteran organizations. Start having a table at the Matthews Chamber and a specific location in Town Hall to place veteran information. Rad Pate will take the last item for immediate action. The goal is to better know the veteran community. He noted that table skirts could be purchased at Exhibit World on Independence Blvd. They also give military discounts.

9. Town Hiring of Veterans. Rad Pate was asked if the Town had a hiring practice of giving preference points to hiring veterans for open Town positions. Greg Smith and others commented that other businesses assume this practice. Rad was not sure and would take it up with Town staff.

10. Janet Perkins, president of the nonprofit organization Veteran Transportation Services announced that this nonprofit is a top-ten finalist of Wells Fargo Fast Philanthropy Contest. She requested that those who know employees of Wells Fargo request them to vote on line for her nonprofit for much needed funds.

**Old Business:**

1. A funding request has been initiated by Fisk to the Mayor. Fisk said that when MVAC receives funds it would have a fiduciary responsibility to the Town.
2. Fisk will give a midterm update and an Executive Summary at the end of the year to the Town Council reviewing the 2016 MVAC goals and progress.
3. Fisk confirmed that telecom calls to MVAC meetings is possible and would count as a “present” for members needing to use this feature while traveling.
4. Reminder of remaining MVAC meetings for 2016. October 5<sup>th</sup>, November 2<sup>nd</sup> and December 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Public Comments:**

1. Guest Carol Aljets advised the group about the Traveling Vietnam War Exhibit that can be made available as this year is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that war.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 pm.

Submitted by: Kathleen Wilsbach, Member

