

Watchung Historical Committee  
Minutes of the March 16th, 2022 Meeting

**Attendance:** Chris Vander Fliet, Stephen Pote, Bob Mayers, Maureen Greenbaum

**Absent:** John Malchow, Christine Ead (Liaison), Rick Stomber, and Bob Mayers, Tim Logan, David Scharf, Fred Hayeck.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm.

A quorum was not present, therefore the minutes for the February 16<sup>th</sup> meeting could not be approved. They will be deferred to the April meeting for approval.

**CHAIRPERSONS REPORT – C. Vander Fliet**

Vander Fliet mentioned that the Memorial Day Opening and the October Weekend Journey Through the Past events at the Texier House Museum are two of the largest events we hold each year when the greatest number of people visit the Texier, and we will need coverage by all committee members, even if that coverage is staggered. We will also need continuing coverage and support on Sunday open houses as well. We will be closed on Sunday April 17<sup>th</sup> for Easter Sunday.

The Historical Committee will also participate in the Harvest Festival. The committee at the meeting liked the idea of setting up a table. Bob Mayers could do a book signing for Historic Tales of Watchung, and we could use this event for fundraising for the final installation of the mural. It will be both educational and will raise funds.

Vander Fliet provided an update on the Garden Club (Marta Blumberg, Vonnie Mott, and Ann Departo) and the Tiby Wotherspoon display at the Texier House. The goal is to have the display complete for Memorial Day. Garden Club is scheduled to meet at the Texier Building on 3/27 to help finalize the display in honor of the late Tiby Wotherspoon, long-time resident and survivor of the General Slocum disaster off NY East River in 1904.

Vander Fliet mentioned that Maureen G. worked to revise the Watchung Borough website information and that will be submitted to the Borough soon for review.

Bob Mayers will be doing a Book Signing for Open Houses on March 20<sup>th</sup> & May 1<sup>st</sup>. Publicity for this event has been coordinated through the Borough and Facebook; we expect a good turnout.

Vander Fliet thanked those who have assisted with the open houses in the recent past and included: Steve Pote, Betse Titus, Bob Mayers, Tim Logan.

It was suggested that all visitors, who are already being asked to sign in when visiting the museum, also now include their email address.

Comment was made that, in general, more marketing is needed to appropriately “advertise” the existence of Watchung’s Historical Museum at the Texier Building; everyone who visits comments that Watchung’s museum is one of the best local museums in the state. More should be done to encourage schools to organize school trips; children would visit to learn various aspects of Watchung’s role in our country’s history.

It also was suggested that the committee contact the high school, to encourage high school students who are involved with video technology, to participate in video efforts at the museum; the committee would benefit from the assistance in filming various people, events and displays; in exchange, the high school student practices various technology skills, and also gets credit for volunteer hours.

Vander Fliet provided a reminder that Jason Ng’s Court of Honor is on March 23<sup>rd</sup> – and Historical will attend and provide a framed Thank you Note as well as a small speech.

Vander Fliet mentioned again that the Historical Committee ByLaws are in need of updating, and he handed out to the Committee a rough draft of the ByLaws to the members that were present for review before the next meeting. These need to be discussed, revised, and approved.

#### **VICE CHAIRPERSONS REPORT – J. Malchow**

No Report. (Not present)

#### **LIAISON’S REPORT – C. Ead**

No Report. (Not present)

#### **PROJECTS/NEW BUSINESS**

##### **Hometown Heroes Veterans Banner Discussion - Guidelines for Qualifying:**

Vander Fliet began the discussion on the banners mentioning that he had met with Liaison Christine Ead in January of 2022, and promised to use time in the February and March historical meetings to discuss the guidelines for the Veterans Banner project. Chris, on behalf of the committee, offered to Christine the committee’s guidance. While the project was rolled out by the Borough without this feedback, Chris reiterated the importance of having a strong set of guidelines for the program. Chris said he will fulfill the promise of discussing the guidelines with the committee members, and will continue to offer the committee’s support.

Steve Pote was asked again to review the prioritization guidelines for the creation of veteran banners. He began his discussion on the guidelines by reviewing a print out of the veterans banner form that can be found on the Borough website. It was mentioned that it appears the focus of the initiative now is to include the nomination of “heroes” who may not necessarily have been veterans; the Borough website is unclear as to everyone who might qualify for a banner. The committee discussed and as a whole strongly believes

that the focus should remain on nominating only Watchung resident veterans.

Steve was asked to again review the starting point criteria which previously has been provided to Christine (previously distributed word document: ***Pote Recommendations for Veteran Priorities***), which represents the recommended prioritization that should be given to Watchung veterans as it relates to the creation of banners for them.

The following discussion includes further changes to the guidelines (priority number listed corresponds to priorities in revised Word document, now called ***Historical Committee Recommendations for Veteran Banner Priorities – Second Draft***):

(1) The discussion on guidelines for qualifying for a Veteran Banner starts with honoring and recognizing those who are currently still living having served during World War II. The suggestion was made that of equal “first” priority was the remembering of any and all Watchung veterans who fought and were killed-in-action, as well those who have received the Purple Heart.

(2) It was then suggested that second, any applicant who served during subsequent wars/conflicts (Korean War, Bay of Pigs, Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam, etc.) be accepted.

(3) It was agreed that next all other veterans who may have served but who did not see action (active during peacetime) be prioritized next.

(4) While technically not yet “veterans”, some on the committee felt that anyone currently in the service should be given the next priority. There was a consensus to support this.

(5) Those veterans who recently relocated and moved out of Watchung but who still have family in Watchung also qualify.

(6) All other veterans who were residents during their time in service, who are deceased and now without family in town, should be remembered on the Memorial Wall in front of the Texier Building.

### **Other Related Comments**

No branch of federally recognized military service should be restricted. Merchant Mariners (sometimes also called “merchant marines”), however, are not an official part of the military and are not considered veterans.

The committee felt that anyone nominated must be a resident of the Borough of Watchung to qualify; those who work in the Borough, but who do not live in Watchung, should be honored by their own respective hometowns. There was the belief, however,

that there should not be requirements placed on how long a person is to have lived in town in order to qualify, unless it is absolutely necessary in order to further prioritize potential recipients.

There was discussion about a potential cap on the number of veteran banners that can be displayed both initially, and potentially each year thereafter, based on the limited number of current spaces for veteran banners. It was discussed that each banner could potentially be used for two veterans (one on each side); it would be helpful to discuss this with how other towns approached this. There are 32 existing lamp posts that can be used, potentially providing 64 spots to begin the program. Since the Borough website offers for free the creation of a banner for a veteran, could a veteran also pay for a banner and therefore have his/her picture on both sides of the banner?

There was discussion again on whether lawn sign type signs of Veterans could be temporarily installed if there was no room for the potential backlog of requests for veteran banners. This also should be considered as a last resort, as some may feel “slighted” by not being represented on a banner. The committee believed this should be avoided.

There was concern that we may not be able to find photos of some of the older veterans. Also, the committee would like the application form to have a check box that will give the Historical Committee permission to display the veteran’s photograph within the Texier Museum.

The committee felt that there was a need to speak to Veterans to clarify if those who served only in the reserve and who never had “active” status should be included in the potential candidates for the Veterans banners. If so, they would be, relatively speaking, a lower priority.

The committee believes that a small picture of the Purple Heart should be added to the banner of anyone who received one during combat.

With suggested changes the committee still believes that Steve Pote’s approach (in attached word document) still makes sense. This pyramid approach expands group eligibility as you work down the pyramid.

Additionally, there was the idea that a sign or banner be used to remember those who are buried in Gods Acre, who either served during either the Revolutionary War or Civil War.

#### **Legend of Watchung Mural Report Discussion:**

Vander Fliet mentioned again that the restoration/preservation of the face of the mural was completed and that the final conserving that must be done to the mural will be completed once a location for the mural has been chosen.

What is really important is that the committee review and suggest changes to the report Vander Fliet created which outlines information including the story of the mural, thoughts on historical value, pictures of what has been done to save the mural, donations previously made, future costs and needs, educational curriculum goals, and recommended next steps, including a specific recommendation on where the mural should be placed. Once reviewed and revised by this committee, this report draft should be finalized and presented to the Council; these next steps should be presented to the Council for requested action.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 pm.

Submitted by: Stephen Pote (Secretary)

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday April 20<sup>th</sup> @ 7 pm.**

Attachments:

- 1. *Historical Committee Recommendations for Veterans Banner Creation Priorities – Second Draft*** (Word document – 2<sup>nd</sup> revision based on comments from the 3/16/22 Meeting)
- 2. *Hometown Heroes Veterans Banner Projects: Qualification Guidelines Summary***

# **Hometown Heroes Veterans Banner Projects: Qualification Guidelines Summary**

## **Recommended Qualification Guideline Summary (Watchung Historical Committee Recommendations):**

- A. The Watchung Historical Committee believes that only those who have lived in Watchung, for any given amount of time, should be considered for the “Hometown Heroes” banners. If the veteran is no longer living in Watchung (moved out or passed away), but has a family living in Watchung, they should still be honored. It is our recommendation that those veterans who have never lived in the Borough of Watchung (including those who work in the Borough) should be respectfully honored by their hometown.
- B. The Watchung Historical Committee believes that there should be no restriction in branches of service, and that the National Guard should be included. We also recommend that the Merchant Mariners/Marines not be included or accepted as applicants; they are not veterans by definition.
- C. There is an attached Recommendations for Banner Creation Priorities document which is what the Watchung Historical Committee believes should be referred to and considered for applicants as they apply to this program. It should be noted that this priority list is just the recommendations from the Watchung Historical Committee and can and should be reviewed and revised by the Borough Council as necessary to better define the program. The attached list is the 2<sup>nd</sup> revision.
- D. It should be clearly stated that there is limited space for the banners at this time (64 spaces). While we may comfortably fill these spaces over the course of a couple of years, there needs to be consideration and justification for prioritizing those applicants if we receive more than 64 applications in the first year. The Watchung Historical Committee believes that serious consideration needs to be given to how to prioritize if there are more applicants than spaces. We believe that the attached Recommendations for Banner Creation Priorities is a starting point for this important step, and needs to be communicated as part of the program so there is a clear understanding that limited space is available. We also believe that a “first come-first serve” approach in conjunction with the priority list should be considered if there is limited space.
- E. Consideration should be given to the placement of a small logo or symbol on the banners for those who are Purple Heart Veterans, and special notation made if they were killed in action. We believe the symbol and notation could be placed in the bottom center of the banners, and that the families should have this option on the application form.
- F. The Borough should populate a list of those veterans who have been previously honored at Borough programs in the past. Some of the family members or veterans may no longer live in the Borough and may not be aware of the program. Consideration of where they would rank in the priority list should be considered.

### **Items that need additional discussion/clarification for program success:**

1. The Watchung Historical Committee believes that there needs to be existing funding in place to support the purchase of banners that the Borough will be purchasing. It is not clear where existing funds for the project are coming from. Clarification should also be given on if the same person can be honored twice. For example, if a veteran wants to be honored, they are entitled to a banner, but if they want to pay an additional \$125 for another banner, are they allowed to be displayed on both sides of a banner?
2. Please clarify what “banners will be two sided” means. Our understanding is that there is a different face on each side of the banner, but clarification should be given to this to avoid any miscommunication that one person will be featured on each side of the banner.
3. Under “Consent” on the application form, the Watchung Historical Committee would request that the Texier House Museum be listed as a place for photos to be used in the museum for future exhibits.
4. Consideration should be given to a sign at God’s Acre or signs/banner as part of the overall program honoring the veterans that are buried there.
5. There needs to be clarification on what “heroes” means. Originally this program was designed to recognize veterans; at the present time the website recently put up by Borough Hall gives the impression that “heroes” is to include people other than veterans. The committee believes that this program should be limited to veterans as traditionally defined and as originally discussed.

**Note:** The qualification guidelines summary outlined herein are the recommendations discussed by the Watchung Historical Committee. These are intended to be used as a starting point to further develop the Hometown Heroes Veterans Banner Program. They should be used, reviewed, discussed, and revised, as deemed necessary, by the Watchung Borough Council for the development of the Hometown Heroes Veterans Banner Program.

Recommendations for Banner Creation Priorities – Second Draft

Priority	Group Eligible	Commentary
( 1 )	World War II Veterans (alive)  All Veterans Killed in Action (all conflicts)  All Veterans who have received the Purple Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These are top priority to include.</li> <li>- Currently living in Watchung or deceased with family still living in Watchung are eligible</li> </ul>
( 2 )	Veterans of Other Conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Korean Conflict, Vietnam War, Cuban Missile Crisis, Persian Gulf, War in Afghanistan, and Iraq War Veterans.</li> <li>- Currently living in Watchung or deceased with family still living in Watchung are eligible</li> <li>- Also includes WW I veterans (all deceased)</li> </ul>
( 3 )	Veterans During Peacetime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Although they have not served in combat, if they were “active” military they are considered Veterans</li> <li>- Currently living in Watchung or deceased with family still living in Watchung are eligible</li> </ul>
( 4 )	Currently Actively Serving Military Personnel	Currently actively serving in the military; should be recognized, even though “veteran” status does not yet apply.
( 5 )	Recently relocated Veterans	Veterans (alive) who recently (last two years) moved out of Watchung but who still have family residing in Watchung
( 6 )	Other deceased Veterans who were former residents at the time of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Veterans are deceased</li> <li>- No family still exists in Watchung</li> <li>- Should make sure they are remembered on Memorial Wall</li> </ul>



## Recommendations for Banner Creation Priorities – Second Draft

- Priorities 1 through 6 describe the order in which “Group Eligible” Veterans are included on banners, IF there were a need to prioritize (this chart is a draft recommended prioritization of Veterans for whom banners should be created if demand for banners is greater than supply).
- Separate Effort: ensuring that all Veterans having served during a conflict are on the “War Memorial” outside of Texier Building
- We need to be able to find photographs of those who qualify
- A “cutoff” of those for whom initial banners are created depends on number of applicants and number of posts available for banners
- Other Consideration: Watchung Veterans Killed In Action and those awarded Purple Heart should be given special consideration and recognition on the banner.