



**Department of Veterans Affairs
State of Connecticut**

**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – Special Meeting re: DVA Veterans Subcommittee
Cemetery Proposals
September 2, 2020**

(Minutes subject to review at next Board Meeting)

I. Convene Meeting:

The Meeting (conducted via Teleconference) was called to order by Chairman Thomas at 1:00 PM.

In attendance: Paul Barry, Richard Benson, Philip Cacciola, Juan Cruz, Steven Harris, Alyssa Kelleher, Sharad Samy, Heather Sandler, Michael Thomas and Kjell Tollefsen.

Absent: John Banks, Richard Dziekan, Peter Galgano, Frederick Leaf, Patrick Nelligan, Mark Spranzo, Sherri Vogt and Dawn Works-Dennis

In attendance from the DVA: Commissioner Thomas Saadi, Michael Clark, Darlene Deschaine, and Tammy Marzik.

Chairman Thomas stated that this meeting concerns the DVA Cemetery Subcommittee proposals. Chairman Thomas then asked for Trustee Barry to address the board with the proposals.

Trustee Barry reported that the DVA Board of Trustees Cemetery Subcommittee recommends that the Board pass two resolutions as follows: (1) That the DVA implement a spousal internment fee of \$350 for burial at the State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown, with the funds specifically dedicated to a budget line item for the perpetual care and maintenance of the DVA Cemeteries. Trustee Barry explained that the recommendation is based on the common practice of most state veteran cemeteries in the northeast region and that of Federal Veteran Cemeteries, Also, there is a clear need for additional funds and resources to maintaining the State Veteran Cemetery; and (2) Recommending that the General Assembly Veteran Affairs Committee introduce legislation to allocate the Federal Plot Allowance Fees directly to a line item in the DVA budget for perpetual care and maintenance of the CT State Veterans Cemeteries. This allocation shall not reduce the cemetery budget, except for the DVA cemetery staff salaries shall be reallocated to DVA salaries line item to the new cemetery operations line item. The motion was seconded by Trustee Cacciola.

Chairman Thomas recognized Trustee Benson who then recommended additional language to the Spousal fee proposal to have different fees based on type of interment such as traditional burial or cremation. Trustee Barry accepted the proposal by Trustee Benson as a friendly amendment and encouraged approval of the motion as amended which reads, the CT DVA Board of Trustees Cemetery

Sub Committee recommends the Board pass a resolution recommending that the DVA implement a Spousal Internment Fee of \$350 for cremation burials and \$500 for full burials for CT State Veterans Cemeteries. These funds shall be specifically dedicated to Cemetery Operations line item for perpetual care and maintenance. This recommendation is based on the best and common practices of many State Veterans Cemeteries in our region and that of the federal Veterans Cemeteries and as there is a clear need for additional funds and resources to maintain our CT State Veterans Cemeteries.

Trustee Samy asked the board's sentiment to the proposed resolution, primarily cremation vs. burial and the opening up of spousal's burial and the spousal fee. Commissioner Saadi stated that spousal internments are currently permitted and therefore the only issue is whether there should be a fee. Trustee Barry asked for input as to whether this spousal charge should be prospective only so that anyone who has already made arraignments will not be subject to the fee. Trustee Benson suggests that the spousal fee charge be prospective only.

Chairman Thomas then asked for a vote on the proposal as amended which passed unanimously.

Chairman Thomas asked for a motion on the proposal regarding the recommendation that the General Assembly Veteran Affairs Committee introduce legislation to allocate the Federal Plot Allowance Fees directly to a line item in the DVA budget for perpetual care and maintenance of the CT State Veterans Cemeteries. This allocation shall not reduce the cemetery budget, except for the DVA cemetery staff salaries shall be reallocated to DVA salaries line item to the new cemetery operations line item. The motion was seconded by Trustee Cacciola. Trustee Benson made a motion and Trustee Cacciola seconded. During discussion Trustee Barry stated that this would bring approximately \$465,000 to this line item. Commissioner Saadi explained that these matters would require legislative action in order to direct any such funds to the DVA as all such federal allowances, reimbursements and fee go to the General Fund. Motion was made and passed unanimously.

II. Closing

Chairman Thomas asked the sub-committee to send him the final text so that he may forward to the General Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee for consideration. There being no further business before the BOT a motion was made to adjourn which passed unanimously at 1:34 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:



Michael Thomas, Chair
DVA Board of Trustees

Date 9/11/2020