

MINUTES

LOWELL VETERANS COMMISSION

DATE: Wednesday, 8th of April 2026 at 5:00 PM

Location: Senior Center Lowell, MA

Meeting:

- a. Call to Order: 5:00 PM
- b. Pledge of Allegiance
- c. Roll Call Attendance
 - PARADISE, PAUL
 - GAFFNEY, JAMES III
 - COTE, RICHARD A.
 - HARMON, JAMES (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)
 - PEEPLES, MICHAEL
 - CEROVAC, ROBERT
 - GAUTHIER, PHILIAS
 - PIMENTEL, NAYELI (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)
 - PEEPLES, JEAN, SUB COMMITTEE MEMBER
 - ERIC LAMARCHE, DIRECTOR OF VETERANS' SERVICES

Discussion:

1. The Veterans Commission election of the position of Vice Chairperson.

- a. Vote: All members voted in favor.
- b. No one opposed
- c. Unanimous approval, Robert Cerovac is elected Vice Chairman of the Veterans Commission.

2. Potential guest speakers:

- a. Chairman Paul Paradise reported that Danielle McFadden of the City of Lowell School Committee offered her assistance with inviting Lowell school children to participate in honoring Veterans by writing letters about their favorite Veteran and why he or she is their favorite Veteran. Please feel free to attach a photo of your favorite Veteran. They can be any veteran. A family member, friend, or historic figure and the Veterans Commission will honor them. Letters will be displayed at the Veterans Park in Lowell during the Memorial Day observance and other Veterans Commission events, as well as used for the Veterans Recognition Program. A letter of invitation was suggested to be put together and Secretary Michael Peeples offered to do so. A copy of the letter is attached. Chairman Paul Paradise offered to forward the letter.
- b. Chairman Paul Paradise reported an update on the Bridge Club of Lowell and the new Veterans housing in Lowell. A guest speaker may speak at the next meeting of the Veterans Commission May 13, 2026.
- c. Commission member Jay Gaffney has been in contact with Elisabeth Parrot of the Vet Center who has expressed interest in attending the Veterans Commission meeting. A letter of invitation was put

together by Secretary Michael Peeles and a copy is attached. Jay is reviewing and keeping in touch with Elisabeth Parrot.

3. Chairman Paul Paradise reported on a recent event which he participated in at Hanscom Air Force Base called Military Children's Month. A parade was held which included the Lowell Police Department, the Patriots Mascot, Fed X, as well as others offering a truck load of gifts to Military families.
4. The meeting place of future Veterans Commission meetings was discussed as the Lowell Telecommunication Center is still under construction following a water leak. Member Jay Gaffney has taken the lead and acquired the Mayor's Reception Room for our next meeting, May 13, 2026. Eric LeMarche, Director of Veterans Services mentioned that the Senior Center is available if needed.
5. **Upcoming Events: Memorial Day** at the new Veterans Park Lowell, 150 Douglas Road, Lowell, MA on May 22, 2026, at 10:00 AM.
 - a. Troop 25 of Lowell will attend and assist the Gold Star Mother of Lowell to lay a wreath at the Veterans Memorial. Eric LeMarche reported he is in contact with the Gold Star Mother regarding an invitation.
 - b. Chairman Paul Paradise reported that the Veterans Police Department Escort (in uniform) will also assist the Gold Star Mother.
 - c. Eric LeMarche, Director of Veterans Services reported that the City of Lowell will provide a wreath. He also reported that two porta pottys from Throne Depot are on order and the permits are in place for the event to block off the street with seating in the street (adjacent to the park). He also reported that the ROTC Commander will attend with the ROTC troop who have a new routine to perform.
 - d. Chairman Paul Paradise and Commission member Phil Gauthier are working on having the State Police Detail Unit and the Horse Mounted Honor Guard showcased during the event. A letter of invitation is needed and Chairman Paul Paradise will take care of it and send a copy to Eric LeMarche, Director of Veterans Services.
 - e. Additional ideas for event speakers, other organizations participation, and other logistics discussed included:
 1. Veterans Vehicle and Humvee.
 2. Invite the Fire Department
 3. Find a bugle to play taps.
 4. Flyer of the event.
 5. Invite Reverend Imogene Stulken of UML to read a list of the recently fallen US Military Soldiers lost in the War with Iran.
 6. Invite the new Secretary of Veterans Services of Massachusetts to attend.
 7. Order American Flags for the children to hold.
 8. Order 13 Roses for the recent fallen soldiers to be put on display along with the memorial wreath.
 9. Decorations and bunting.
 10. Suggestions for guest speaker.
 11. Pledge of Allegiance.
 12. Moment of silence.

6. **The 4th of July Event.** Chairman Paul Paradise reported the idea of a 4th of July parade to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of our Nations Independence may not take place due to a budget shortfall. Further discussion was made about an alternative of having muscle car owners to chauffeur Veterans from the Vets Center of Lowell to the City of Lowell's 4th of July Event at LeLacheur Park proceeded by a Police escort. The muscle cars would be displayed on the plaza outside of the park and the Veterans would be honored by having their names and service to our country recognized. Additional ideas for event speakers, other organizations participation, and other logistics discussed included:

- a. Invite the Road Runner Club to participate.
- b. Having an old US Military Jeep on display.
- c. Permits are necessary.
- d. Invite Bridge Club members to attend.
- e. Honoring Veterans with a Pin from the City of Lowell.
- f. Naming the procession and display "Rolling Thunder".

7. **Veterans Day Event:**

- a. Planning for a date, time, and event activities are needed. Ongoing contacts about participation include:
 1. Isabella Channell at VA said if plan moves forward, she is happy to share information and opportunity to participate with Veterans.
 2. Addition contacts to share events with are Jeffrey Lewis Recreation Therapy & Creative Art Therapy Supervisor Boston VA, Andrew Geddry Supervisor Recreation Therapy Bedford VA, and Amy Cook Recreation and Creative Arts Therapies Service Chief VA who have been contacted and agreed to share information.

8. **New Business:**

- a. Commission member Jay Gaffney reported on his recent experience talking to the students at a Charter School about his service in Vietnam. Further discussion by the entire Veterans Commission included all in favor of participating individually, and as a whole, in any event to encourage children to honor Veterans and their service to our country.
- b. Eric LeMarche, Director of Veterans Services, reported on the Banners Programs and that 29 Banners will be showcased at the City Council meeting.
- c. The Veterans Commission participation in providing a float in the City of Lights Parade to honor Veterans was met with approval by all. Chairman Paul Paradise offered his truck and flatbed to provide the transportation. The Commission members will participate in decorating the float. An idea to have a holiday tree decorated in red, white, and blue lights, an eagle at the top of the tree, American Flags, bunting, US Military logos, and banners saying sponsored by the Veterans Commission of Lowell. Also, a banner "To All Veterans, Thank You For Your Service". A meeting with the City Manager and the Case Office is needed for approval and direction. A flyer and more details will be made after the summer break at the September meeting.
- d. Vice Charman Robert Cerovac discussed the possibility of donations for Veterans and how the Commission could go about that. His idea was to hold an event at one of the UMass Lowell Hockey nights (around Veterans Day). An idea to have a giant thank you card for guests to sign Honoring

the service of Veterans to be delivered to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center was discussed. In addition, the idea of “Pass the Helmet” to raise funds to help Veterans in need. Eric LeMarche reported about a program called Chapter 60 Community Funds for Veterans may be possible to help with donations.

- e. Chairman Paul Paradise reported the Coats for Vets Program has delivered the remaining coat packages to UMass Lowell, and the Bridge Club of Lowell.
- f. Chairman Paul Paradise reported the Homeless Veterans population of Lowell is 6. Which is amazing for the size of the City of Lowell.
- g. A Facebook page for the Veterans Commission was discussed. The City of Lowell is concerned about postings on the site. More discussion is needed to proceed.
- h. Approval of meeting Minutes of Veterans Commission meeting of 02/11/26 was made with unanimous approval.

9. Conclusion:

Move to adjourn.

Adjourned Time: 5:42 PM

- a. Move –Chairman Paul Paradise
- b. 2nd –Secretary, Michael Peeples
- c. Unanimous approval

Regularly scheduled meetings of the Lowell Veterans Commission are held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month Lowell TeleMedia Center, 246 Market St, Lowell, MA 01852 starting at 5:00 PM. The following is a list of scheduled meetings: September 10, 2025, October 8, 2025, November 12, 2025, December 10, 2025, January 14, 2026, February 11, 2026, March 11, 2026, April 8, 2026, May 13, 20256 and. June 10, 2026.