



Braintree Town Council

Committee on Elder Affairs & Veterans' Services

One JFK Memorial Drive
Braintree, Massachusetts 02184

MEMBERS

Joseph Reynolds, Chairman
Shannon Hume, Vice-Chairman
Peter Morin, Member

AGENDA

Tuesday, February 18, 2024

Starting Time – 6:30 p.m.
Johnson Chambers

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence

Roll Call

Approval of Minutes

- January 30, 2024

Old Business

- None

New Business

- 035 24 Councilor Reynolds: Elder Affairs and Veteran Services Committee Discussion/Update or take up any action relative thereto (*list of topics to bring before the committee*)

Drainage Project at the Elder Affairs

Adjournment



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January 30, 2024

MINUTES

A meeting of the Committee on Elder Affairs & Veterans' Services was held in Johnson Chambers, on Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at 6:30p.m. This meeting was also available via Zoom for viewing.

Chairman Mackin asked there be a moment of silence for all those serving in our military both home and abroad.

Chairman Mackin was in the Chair.

Clerk of the Council, Susan Cimino, conducted the roll call.

Present: Joseph Reynolds, Chairman
Shannon Hume, Vice-Chairwoman
Peter Morin, member

Also Present: Kara Nyman, Chief of Staff
Vincent Fountaine, Veterans Agent
Mary Ficociello, Assistant Veterans Agent
Frank Collins, Pond Meadow Park Commission
Elsa Buccini, Elder Affair finances
Michelle Metro, Coordinator Elder Affairs
Frank Defrancesco, Council on Aging
John Thompson, Veterans/Elder Affairs
Pedro (Commander Pete)
Edward 'Bink' Belyea, Veteran
Tim Burke, member of Advisory Board Elder Affairs
Hank Joyce, Chair Elder Affairs
Tom Devin, Braintree Historical Commission
Ron Frasier, Braintree Historical Commission
Donny Delaney, Braintree Police officer
Peter Schivone, former Veterans Agent
Greg Wilson
Mark Kurzberg, Asst Wrestling Coach BHS
Tom Badger
Katherine Kilraine

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- October 3, 2022

Motion made by Councilor Hume to Approve Minutes of October 3, 2022

Motion: by Councilor Hume to Approve Minutes of October 3, 2022

Second: by Councilor Morin

Roll Call Vote: For (3 – Hume, Morin, Reynolds), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

OLD BUSINESS

- None

NEW BUSINESS

- **006 24 Councilor Reynolds: Elder Affairs and Veteran Services Committee Discussion or take up any action relative thereto** (*list of topics to bring before the committee*)

Chairman Reynolds stated this committee begins this term to fully seek to understand the current state of affairs fully the Veterans Affairs and the Elder Affairs fully. I ask you all to think about what you would like to hear about for you. The committee would like to hear about what is going on presently that you enjoy and want to see continue. What events are scheduled and what you would like to request to be scheduled to honor or address the needs in the Elder and Veterans community. What are your ideas? We are here to listen. What can this committee do to help facilitate the wishes of the community. We will give an opportunity for all to speak. We would like to hear your ideas.

What we would like to do as a community to undertake a veterans memorial and recognition appreciation program. We have not done anything to physical upgrades to our sites in terms of how we honor our veterans. There is a number of ideas. Lets see if we can build a consensus going forward as a community.

Councilor Hume thanked everyone for being here. We do just want to gather information and see what you all need and what are your specific interests.

Councilor Morin stated I am very interested in hearing from all of you. I wanted to be on this committee to see what we can do to provide property tax relief to seniors and veterans. In Norwell we set it up to give approximately \$1,100 relief per eligible resident off their taxes. I would like to work on that. I feel it is necessary for a great deal of those who have lived and devoted a great deal of their lives to this town. They deserve to be recognized with a little bit taken off their taxes.

Chairman Reynolds stated the Governor has rolled out the hero act for a number of upgrades to veteran benefits and care. One is an increase in a local tax break for veterans.

It is noted Sharmila will be away for a few weeks, so will not be able to attend the meeting. Two Elder Affairs staff, Frank DeFrancesco and Michelle Metro are present at the meeting.

Mary Ficociello, Assistant Veterans Agent stated we have the hometown hero banner program to honor living and veterans we lost in the Town of Braintree.

Greg Wilson read a letter in regards to Vice Admiral Colin Kilraine written by our former Mayor Kokoros, who is notably a big supporter of all things veterans.

"I write to you today to express my strong support to erect a statue to honor Vice Admiral Colin Kilraine, distinguished Braintree veteran, native and retired United States Navy hero. Vice Admiral Colin Kilraine's extraordinary career and steadfast dedication to our country is truly remarkable. Over his decades of service in the United States he exemplifies the values of honor, integrity, selflessness that we hold dear in Braintree. His impressive list of awards, decorations including the defense service medal, the legion of merit, multiple bronze star medals, reflects the bravery he demonstrated throughout his military service. What makes Vice Admiral Colin Kilraine even more inspiring is extensive experience in naval specialist warfare. Particularly Seal Team3, Naval Special Warfare Development Group Seal Team 6 and his numerous deployments in regions of conflict including Iraq and Afghanistan. His service as the deputy commander of the state department office of counter terrorism as well as his role as the military advisor to the Secretary of State, Anthony Blinkin underscores his exceptional leadership and devotion to our country. In addition to his impressive career achievements, Vice Admiral Colin Kilraine has always maintained a strong connection to our community. As a native of Braintree he embodies the values of our town and serves as a source of inspiration to our residents; particularly our youth who might inspire to follow in his footsteps. The proposal to erect a statue in Vice Admiral Colin Kilraine's honor to be placed in the north end of the green in front of town hall, is not only contributed to his exemplary service but also an opportunity for our town to celebrate one of it's own son of Braintree. Such a statue would serve as a source of pride to Braintree reminding us all the incredible contributions individuals of our community can make to our nation and the world. I kindly request that you consider this proposal with the utmost seriousness. The idea of honoring Vice Admiral Colin Kilraine through a statue is just not an act of recognition but an investment in the commitment of our community, inspiring our youth to dream big and work hard to achieve their goals. I am confident that the Braintree Historical Commission will recognize the significance of this project and the positive impact it will have on our town. I wholeheartedly support this proposal and hope you would join me in endorsing it. Together we gain a lasting tribute to a true Braintree hero.

Greg Wilson stated Vice Admiral Colin Kilraine was an accomplished individual. You wouldn't think he was as accomplished as he was because at his level of achievement, he shows none of the ego. When you ask him about personal questions he will answer with short polite answers and then redirect the conversation to something about you. He is perhaps one of the most humble human beings you will ever meet.

Vice Admiral Colin Kilraine military career reflected his work ethic and dedication to the United States. Much of what he did in the Seals will never be known as it is classified top secret. From the time of 9-11 to the time he retired he was either on the ground or responsible in the execution of everything

that revolved around global terrorism. What we do know is he is extremely accomplished and highly decorated.

This monument would be a fantastic asset to the town of Braintree. It would bring much local, state and national recognition when unveiled and would be the perfect place to showcase it to all the towns citizens as well as visitors to our town.

People have said to me when this was unveiled the governor would be here, state and federal senators, people from the white house would be here, admirals and generals from around the country would be here. It would be a fantastic opportunity for our town to get the recognition that it deserves. Vice Admiral Colin Kilraine's wife is a jet fighter pilot and she was a two time astronaut this speaks volumes.

Support for this is the same as support for your town. How can anyone not be 100% in support of this.

Chairman Reynolds stated there is still some discussion to have on this.

Councilor Morin stated I had the privilege of going to school with Colin Kilraine. I was his backup on the football team. He's an unbelievable guy. He was the greatest wrestler that ever came out of Braintree. It was a privilege to know him and grow up with him. I have no objection to seeing him honored. We have to do it in a way that doesn't divide the community. Let's find the right place and the right way to honor him and other veterans.

Councilor Hume stated I am in favor of this and with all the information we have, he is well deserving of it.

John Thompson, Pilgrim Avenue stated a more appropriate location might be by the harbor having to do with the navy.

Ron Frasier stated it is no problem to recognize anyone but the problem becomes the location. The location is determined by the Historical Commission which was never contacted by anyone regarding the location. This topic is currently under on an agenda with the Historical Commission for discussion.

Tom Devin stated nothing major has been done up here for 40-50 years. I don't think we are properly giving the due to you gentleman here who are veterans. Colin Kilraine is a spark to look at what we've done and do more.

Peter Schivone stated this monument of Colin Kilraine is so well deserved. We don't have any monument on all who served the war on terror/9-11. Our honor roll next to the Tax Collectors wall is ridiculous. A Colin Kilraine monument should be at town hall and not at the harbor. It should be at the center of town.

Mary Ficociello, Asst Director of Veterans Services stated it is a no-brainer to honor Colin Kilraine. I have the pleasure of knowing him as well. There needs to be a protocol in place. You don't want everyone coming in saying I want a statue too. I am all for Colin though. Nobody has a better bio/resume than him.

Mark Kurzberg, Asst Wrestling Coach Braintree High School, Colin doesn't know this is happening today. He is still having an impact today with this meeting. There are other veterans who are worthy. It would be good to put a protocol in place with different accolades. Colin is a great place to start. I endorse the project.

Tom Badger, resident stated I proudly support the Kilraine erection in front of town hall. I thank everyone for their service tonight.

Frank Collins, 4th generation Braintree guy, 22 year marine veteran. I believe exceptional, exemplary performance warrants exceptional consideration. We the people of Braintree need to step up and take care of one of our own. One that has certainly made its mark in our proud history. I believe this is plenty of room in our memorial crown out front for another jewel.

Katherine Kilraine (Colin's niece) and Kathleen Kilraine (Colin's sister) stated Colin would be so humbled and would probably say what are you doing. He would not want this attention and he certainly wouldn't want anyone to feel any disdain about the site of the memorial. He served for 40 years in the military. A long career. We thought of 2 JFK because it is a beautiful site. It could use some sprucing up. I have great respect for veterans. They should be cared for and honored while they are alive and when they are dead. It's too bad we wait sometimes to honor people. A beautiful site is where we start and we grow upon it.

Pedro (Commander Pete) the seals can't talk about anything they did. They deserve a lot of respect.

Donald Delaney stated I want to thank all the veterans in here. I want to thank Greg for shining a light on this issue. Whatever they do for the admiral would be great. There are a lot of people in this town that you wouldn't believe because they don't talk about it. It takes a civilian to come up and start the conversation. We need to do better in this town.

A resident stated town hall is the heart and soul of Braintree. Any monument needs to be right here.

Greg Wilson stated we are the overwhelming majority to move forward with this. This is totally privately funded.

Tom Devin stated I want to do this for Colin but there has to be follow up for the other veterans. We can't forget about that and what we do for the other guys.

Dan Clifford asked for the opportunity to talk about the plague of remembrance and the torch of remembrance. He is unable to be here so the update is:

Councilor Clifford started that project in 2014. Dan pushed that forward and it was a great program. The chair of honor represents the 91,000 MIA POWs that never came home. They deserve to be recognized. This will be rescheduled to a date during the football season to pass the torch of remembrance. It is a long line of football players and cheerleaders and they pass the torch and the chair of remembrance is on the football field and they touch the chair as they pass it and go onto the

field. They pass the torch and it is how we remember those who did not come home. It is educating the young people. The football player says "Least we forget" as they pass by and touch the chair of remembrance.

Chairman Reynolds stated we are the greatest country in the world because we care for our veterans and our elderly.

Chairman Reynolds asked what more can the town do for the Elder Affairs Community. Your department has done such a great job. Any wish list?

Hank Joyce stated 2 things that bother me the most is the affordability for seniors and veterans to live in this town and how do we solve that problem. We talked about tax rebates. We see these seniors day in and day out and we know how little they have. We need to diversify and grow the senior center and show this town that we need a bigger building. We need to get housing and do more for them.

Councilor Morin asked how old the vans are.

Frank DeFrancesco stated the newest is 2018 and the oldest is 2009.

Councilor Morin explained a little about senior circuit breaker tax breaks where seniors are eligible for more of a tax break from the state. I would like to meet this with a local option to give seniors an additional break on top of that. In Norwell we used supplemental revenue to fund the program. We do not have much supplemental revenue here in Braintree so we need to dig in and fix that. That is what I want to work on. When we replenish our reserves we share them with people that need them the most.

Frank DeFrancesco stated we were made the villains with the parking lot. The seniors needed it and it was approved by the town. We want to compromise and see what we can do with this thing to move on.

Vincent Fontaine stated I want to recognize all the employees at the Elder Affairs/Veterans Services. In particular Frank DeFrancesco who would bring a shut into the doctors and then do his grocery shopping for him. Frank goes above and beyond.

Ron Frasier reiterated the deplorable condition the veterans wall is on the main floor at town hall.

Chairman Reynolds stated on idea is about a phased approach of a veterans memorial and recognition upgrade program. I love educating the younger generations and appreciating what the past generations did. A medal of honor recognition is long overdue. The interactive veteran stories or media center that tells the story of men and women and what they have done for the country. We owe it to pay it forward and what makes this all worthwhile being the love of family and country. We need more individual countability. We need to recognize the self-lessness of us helping others.

Hank Joyce stated town hall is the center of town and it should be better.

Chairman Reynolds stated the banner program of veterans is great and has given the town a big boost.

Councilor Hume stated I agree with upgrading the veterans wall. Maybe move it and then clean it up. Great ideas tonight. Thank you for all the feed back and ideas.

Councilor Morin stated thank you I have enjoyed listening to you all. I look forward to working with you and for you.

Chairman Reynolds asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

A Motion was made by Councilor Hume to adjourn.

Motion: by Councilor Hume to adjourn

Second: by Councilor Morin

Roll Call Vote: For (3 – Hume, Morin, Reynolds), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

Meeting adjourned at 8:10PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Cimino
Clerk of the Council