

Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee

PUBLIC MEETING

**241 18th St. S., Suite 101
Arlington, VA 22202**

September 20, 2018

MEETING MINUTES

The Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee, hereafter known as the “Committee,” is a Federal advisory committee within the Department of Defense. The Committee operates pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, the Government in the Sunshine Act of 1976, and other relevant Federal regulations. The Committee meets at least twice a year. This is the tenth public session for the Committee.

AGENDA

1:00	Meeting called to order DFO Statement	<i>Chairman and Marcia Moore, Designated Federal Officer</i>
	Welcome Message	<i>Michael L. Rhodes Director of Administration Office of the Deputy Chief Management Officer</i>
	Opening Remarks	<i>James T. Jackson, Major General, U.S. Army, Retired Director, Vietnam War 50th Commemoration</i>
	Explanation of the tasks	<i>Larry Brom, Assistant Director for Plans and Operations</i>
	Committee Discussion	<i>Moderated by Larry Brom, Assistant Director for Plans and Operations</i>
2:25	Meeting Adjourned	<i>Chairman</i>

ATTENDANCE

Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Committee Members:

1. The Honorable Tom Ridge, Chairman
2. Mr. Paul W. Bucha, Vice Chairman
3. Commander Everett Alvarez U.S. Navy (Ret.)
4. Colonel Clarence R. Anderegg, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
5. Chief Warrant Officer Three Donald M. Clarke, Army National Guard (Ret.)
6. Mr. Morton Dean
7. Ms. Jeanette B. Early
8. General Larry Ellis, U.S. Army (Ret.)
9. Vice Admiral James Hull, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.)
10. Ms. Ann Mills-Griffiths
11. Command Sergeant Major Andrew McFowler, U.S. Army (Ret)
12. Mr. Jan Scruggs (departed at approximately 1:30 p.m.)

Public attendees: NONE

(No public comments were received for this meeting.)

Office of the Vietnam War Commemoration:

Designated Federal Officer: Marcia Moore

General James T. Jackson	General Arnold Fields	Will Kaiser
Larry Brom	General Peter Aylward	
Yvonne Schilz	John Radke	
Deborah Grays	Debora Cox	
Mark Franklin	Sharon Deane	
LTC Nicole Hayes	Jon LaDue	

Others: Michael L. Rhodes

MEETING SUMMARY

Ms. Marcia Moore, the Designated Federal Officer, introduced the Honorable Tom Ridge as the Chair of the meeting, and stated that General Jim Jackson and Mr. Larry Brom would be the two main speakers. She also announced that members from the public were not in attendance. The Chairman, Governor Ridge, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Ms. Moore provided a brief introduction and important announcements to the committee members, as follows:

- Focus of this afternoon's meeting is to discuss types of events during the Closeout phase of the Vietnam War Commemoration (VWC) "A Concept for Events" to be held during 2023-2025.
- The next Advisory Committee meeting will take place February 8, 2019, per Governor Ridge and Mr. Rhodes.
- Individual Committee members will submit their Closeout event(s) suggestions to Gov. Ridge prior to February 8, 2019.
- The VWC Final Report to Congress is due December 2025.

Ms. Moore emphasized that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Committee's recommendations for the close-out phase of the Commemoration from 2023 to 2025. She encouraged Committee members to submit their comments, ideas, and suggestions before the next meeting scheduled on February 8, 2019.

General Jackson began his opening remarks by introducing Mr. Larry Brom who would lead the discussion, and emphasized the importance of the "sustainment phase," especially as the Commemoration finishes out 2018 and transitions into 2019. He stressed that 2019 is a transition year for the Commemoration and he has instructed the Commemoration staff to build the structure and identify resources.

He reiterated that the Commemoration does not run events, but simply "advises, assists, and provides resources," while encouraging others to take the lead in thanking and honoring veterans and their families, and reminded the Committee, "...focus on the veteran, veteran, veteran...and the families. . ."

General Jackson stressed two points looking ahead to the close-out beginning in 2023: 1) keep true to tenets by remaining hometown-centric, and 2) work with all 50 states and 6 U.S. Territories, and specifically the Capital region. "Whatever we do in the Capital region, we are looking at 2023 for the beginning of the close-out."

He added that we need to "Let the states decide what to do" and allow them "...a degree of flexibility. . ." in conducting these events and recommended giving each state 3-6 months to decide what to do and when to do it.

He concluded his remarks by reminding that the goal of today's meeting is to "look for good ideas, concepts, and plan now."

Commander Alvarez took this opportunity to inform the Committee that, "Our POW group is looking at 1973 and connecting to the 50th Anniversary of [the POWs] release from Vietnam; building our plan to coincide with that date [1973]." He also mentioned that they were expecting help with the planning from the Richard M. Nixon Presidential Museum & Library.

Mr. Larry Brom began his presentation referring to the Memorial Day event at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in May 2012 as an example of a large-scale event. With more than 6,000 people in attendance, Mr. Brom emphasized the proportion of the event including the police escorts and the "plethora of volunteers," as well as the number of buses that took people to/from the Pentagon parking lot to The Wall. General Jackson also stressed that the event required all of the Commemoration staff to participate, and everyone had to stop everything else they were working on to focus 100% on the kickoff event.

Mr. Brom reviewed some of the potential concepts and possible events addressed, as well as reiterated the Commemoration's commitment to support Partner events until 2025. He offered 1973 as a pivotal point in Vietnam history, and mentioned Operation Homecoming and the withdrawal of the troops as historical examples. Mr. Brom mentioned the last combat mission on May 15, 1975 involving the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Marines in an attempt to rescue the crew from the *USS Mayaguez* which had been captured by the Khmer Rouge off the coast of Cambodia.¹

He then opened the meeting up for discussion.

Morton Dean declared the events should be "simple and profound," as well as meaningful throughout the nation, and suggested working with the White House to draft a presidential proclamation encouraging churches, schools, fire stations, and public institutions to pick a day across America and ring bells fifty times in honor of the Vietnam War 50th Anniversary along with a moment of silence/prayer as a way to reflect on the veterans' service and sacrifice.

Vice Admiral Hull asked why we wouldn't use, March 29, 2023, as a date to be remembered, and added, "Focus on the perpetuity" to ensure Vietnam veterans are remembered long after the culminating event.

Chairman Ridge opined that, "March 29th, National Vietnam War Veterans Day should be added to calendars" to remind the nation to honor Vietnam veterans.

¹ Congress did not tie Commemoration funding to any historic event. The dates November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975 were determined by the VWC as eligibility dates for receiving the Vietnam veteran lapel pin.

Mr. Clarke added, "It is in the U.S. code; that part has been done. How do we elevate it?"

Ms. Ann Mills-Griffith shared how the National Prisoners of War-Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Recognition date came about, "Persistence. Keep persisting! We [National League of POW/MIA Families] are writing a letter to thank every publisher who put it on their calendar. They can do it for political things, then they can do it for this."

Vice Admiral Hull recommended the Commemoration encourage schools to conduct an educational program about the Vietnam War on March 29th, leading to "an event to memorialize it." He also suggested making the event televised on Good Morning America.

Mr. Dean remarked that it would be important to contact the White House for coordination of the President's calendar so he/she can participate in the event at The Wall on March 29, 2023.

Mr. Brom expressed his appreciation for ideas discussed, and reviewed the Terms of Reference, as it relates to the following:

- 1) Providing the necessary information to the Committee;
- 2) Phasing and Planning; and,
- 3) Considerations for Completion.

He then encouraged the members to share all of their ideas and "not hold back," but asked that they correspond with the five main objectives of the Commemoration.

A brief discussion ensued among several Committee members about how we are addressing Objective Four, highlighting advances in medicine and technology.

Mr. Franklin explained that the History and Legacy Branch is meeting this objective with primarily two initiatives: 1) educational posters, and 2) oral histories.

Mr. Brom also reminded everyone that our Vietnam War allies would be invited, just as it was done for the kickoff event in May 2012.

Vice Chair Paul Bucha recommended using public service announcements (PSA) to inform people about the national Closeout event. He proposed that "every major network produce a PSA (14-15 major networks) and coordinate an event (on March 29th for example) with ringing bells [50 times] and stop to say thank you." Mr. Bucha further suggested working with the 51 Medal of Honor recipients and 400 POWs in every state across the country to plan an event.

Mr. Bucha also suggested using PBS to "raise awareness to kids in every classroom" for the Closeout events, and proposed that every television screen and every school provide a moment of silence followed by a moment to thank veterans and their families. He further suggested getting Google to do its doodle for that day in honor of Vietnam

War veterans, and recommended getting digital/social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter on board with the Commemoration's mission. He emphasized that it was important to say "thank you" along with the ringing bells.

Chairman Ridge encouraged members to develop a lengthy list by February in order to discuss them in more depth at the next Committee meeting. He asked members to think about "a powerful concept and other events."

Chairman Ridge concluded the discussion by recommending less reporting at the next meeting, and allocating more time for considering recommendations between now and February, leading to a master list of recommendations.

Ms. Moore reported that she would send each Committee member a sheet with some of the ideas via email. She also recommended that the ideas offered by members should answer "Who, What, When, Where, Why" along with background activities from inception to completion.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 2:25 p.m.

CHAIRMAN'S CERTIFICATION

As Chairman of this meeting held on September 20, 2018, I hereby certify, to the best of my knowledge, that the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

 

The Honorable Tom Ridge Date

SPECIAL NOTE: The meeting was not recorded via audio. If relevant comments or information is not included in this document, please note that omissions are not intentional.

HANDOUTS:

The handouts distributed at this meeting included:

1. Committee Meeting Agenda. February 8, 2017
2. Terms of Reference
3. VWC Activity Planning
4. Meeting slides as presented by Mr. Larry Brom
5. Article distributed by Mr. Jan Scruggs, *Full Metal Racket: How an Honest Bid to Preserve the Legacy of Vietnam Sold Out*
6. Article, Association of the U.S. Army article announcing Governor Tom Ridge as this year's recipient of the *General Creighton Award*.
7. Flyer: *POW/MIA Day*