

Melrose Veterans Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

Date: September 16, 2025

Location: City Hall, Melrose, MA

Attendance

- Jim Mushett – Army veteran, board member for 12 years
- Lisa Lord – Daughter of a veteran; Social Studies teacher at Melrose High School; leads the Veterans Memory Project
- Robert Driscoll – Retired Air Force, board member for 20 years
- Mike Buggy – Former Marine, board member for 12 years
- Karen Burke – Retired Air Force veteran, non-Melrose resident, board member for 7 years
- Jim Kean – Veteran, board member for 17 years
- Marie Ryan – Widow/Gold Star spouse, board member for 12 years
- Kathy Childress – Army veteran and Gold Star wife, board member for 2+ years
- Lauren Grymek – Chief of Staff, City of Melrose, Office of the Mayor
- Tamara Shovelton- Director of Veteran Services, City of Melrose

Opening

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Old Business – Updates from June 2025 Meeting at the Knoll

- Korean War Memorial – weeding, edging, align stones, adjust spout, tree trimming, pea stone, treatment.
- World War I Monument – pruning, weeding, fence straightening, walkway sealing.
- Gold Star Memorial – irrigation, weeding, lighting.
- Vietnam Reflection Area – ant issue, rosebush, flag replacement, irrigation, white stone, accessibility, grant funding.
- Brick Program – no new Vietnam bricks; explore Flag Retirement Area.
- Additional Initiatives – landscaping plan, QR codes, Welcome Home sign, POW/MIA Memorial, walkway sealing.

New Business

- Property Tax Work-Off Program – VSO to investigate.
- Student Engagement – Lisa Lord to involve students and gardening club.
- Parking at the Knoll

Updates

- Legislative Matters – meetings with Senators Jason Lewis and Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian; COLA, reciprocity, medic licensure proposals.
- American Legion Post 90 – fundraiser Comedy Night with Lenny Clarke, October 11, 2025.
- Medal of Fidelity – Robert Driscoll preparing two applications.

Veterans Day & Community Initiatives

- Veterans Day Ceremony – Tamara Shovelton keynote speaker; Lisa Lord arranging singers.
- Veterans Day Food Drive – November 8, 2025; cash to pantries, gift cards to VSO, food divided.
- No motions or formal actions were taken.
- Lauren Grymeck, Chief of Staff, clarified that staffing decisions are made by the City administration and are not under the authority of the Board or other boards and commissions.
- Discussion included questions about the Board's role in decision-making, particularly related to financial matters and the use of veteran-related funds, as well as the hiring process for the Veterans' Services Officer position.
- Members raised concerns regarding communication and collaboration between the Veterans Advisory Board and City administration.

Financial Reports

- Veterans Revolving Fund: \$2,275.17; cap \$15,000 annually.
- World War II Donation Fund: \$10,940.13
- Veterans Monument & Restoration Fund: \$33,548.78.
- Veterans Emergency Fund: \$72,726.97
- Civil War Grant Fund: report requested.
- Parade Fund: uncertain balance.
- Brick Fund: corrected after misallocation.

Web & Outreach

- Board raised concerns about missing content from prior webpage.
- Suggested revisiting Adopt-a-Flag program.
- Board requested veteran email distribution list be put together; VSO to consult legal/IT.

Cemetery & Memorial Policy

- Flags placed Memorial Day to Veterans Day; permanent flags remain.
- Cemetery audit of veteran graves ongoing.
- Board suggested Cemetery Commission consultation.

Veterans Memory Project

- First meeting at Melrose High School completed; Activities Fair Sept 17 recruiting students.
- Collaboration with Michelle Carson at The Residence discussed.
- Lisa Lord purchased pea stone; weed block planned.

Closing Items

- Board acknowledged illnesses among members.
- Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 pm
- Next meeting: October 21, 2025, at 6:30 PM, City Hall.

Prepared by:

Tamara Shovelton

Director of Veterans' Services, City of Melrose

Reviewed/Approved by

Robert Driscoll , Chair, Veterans Advisory Board