

Thursday, March 28, 2019

Meeting opened at 7pm by Doug

Attendance: Richard Clement, Bob Lezer, Rita Clement, Peggy Akers, Bud Buzzell, Clarence Smith, Martha Morrison, Peter Morgan, Doug Rawlings, Peter Woofruff, Dan Ellis, John Morris, Bill Leonard, Don Kimball.

Doug reported that Tarak Kauff and Ken Mayers were granted bail and released from jail in Limerick, Ireland but are still not free to leave the country pending trial on charges of illegal entry onto and destruction of property (cutting a fence) on a restricted military area at Shannon Airport.

Secretary's report: February minutes accepted as written.

Treasurer's report: Net worth as of 3/28/19 was \$4,053.86.

Membership report: 107 total, 57 currently paid up. Dan has sent reminder letters to 39 members who have paid no dues since 2018.

March actions by members:

Peter Morgan, Doug, and John attended a Moms Demand Action rally in Augusta in support of a bill to reduce gun violence (red flag bill).

Several members took part in a Spring Celebration for New Mainers at the U U Church in Brunswick.

Suzanne and Richard attended an antidiscrimination breakfast at the Holocaust Center at UMA in Augusta.

Peter Morgan and Peggy took part in a show of support for Muslims (in the wake of the New Zealand massacre) at a Lewiston mosque. Peggy did likewise at a mosque in Portland.

Peggy distributed flowers at Monument Square in Portland as part of a celebration of International Women's Day.

Discussion was held on JROTC programs in public schools. A bill, LD750, has been introduced in the Maine legislature to allow ROTC courses to be taught in Maine high schools by instructors without proper certification by the state. Public testimony in opposition to this bill was submitted by the Maine Education Association and at least two individuals. It has yet to be reported out of committee. Don Kimball will address the issue as part of his weekly radio show on WMPG.

Discussion was held on the protest of the "christening" of the third Zumwalt class destroyer at Bath Iron Works on April 27th. Attendance is strongly encouraged at this event. In the meantime, everyone is encouraged to request tickets (and then not use them) in order to reduce actual attendance inside the shipyard as no one will be admitted without a ticket. To request tickets log on to gdbiw.com and click on upcoming events. More details concerning the protest will be forthcoming at the next meeting.

Doug reported on VFP sponsored actions against U S military intervention in Venezuela, specifically a call to all military members to refuse illegal orders to take part in such intervention. They are urged to contact the National Lawyers Guild Military Law Task Force at (619) 463-2369 and/or help@militarylawhelp.com for assistance.

Doug introduced a letter concerning the elevated risk of suicide by service members who received less than honorable discharges. VFP agrees that this is the case. The National Suicide Hot Line at (800) 273-8255 is available when help is needed.

Discussion was held on the documentary film "Combat Obscura". This film covers actual combat scenes in Afghanistan filmed by a military photographer and includes footage that does not necessarily reflect favorably on the troops. Other films were mentioned including "Sir, No Sir", a documentary which chronicles GI resistance during the Vietnam War. Bob Lezer will contact the theater in the Tontine Mall in Brunswick in the hope that they would show one or both of these films.

Review of the Spring Celebration for New Mainers included the following points:

\$400 and eight boxes of donated items were given to Catholic Charities.

\$150 for the band. Their music was a highlight of the evening.

Rental cost for the use of the church not known yet. Will be less than \$300.

Dunkin Donuts gift certificates given to Doug and Martha for organizing the event.

Number of New Mainers in attendance was disappointing. Portland and Lewiston not represented.

VFP members and Brunswick area residents made up the bulk of the roughly 100 attendees.

The childrens' play area was not a success. Young children were reluctant to leave their parents and activities were not geared toward older ones.

Cathey Cyrus (U U Church member) did an outstanding job of organizing the tables and food distribution. It was agreed to give her a letter of thanks and flowers for her efforts.

Martha will send thank yous to the dozen or so establishments in Brunswick that donated food. Many individuals also provided food and the variety of dishes made for a meal of gourmet quality.

Don delivered leftover food to Preble Street in Portland and reported that it was received with enthusiasm.

Band member Dave Bullard raised the possibility of holding another similar event in Portland sometime in late June. We agreed to lend our support but not to take responsibility for its organization.

It was agreed to provide \$300 to Ellen Davidson for a flight to Ireland to visit Tarak and Ken. Dan cautioned that we should be judicious in our donations to causes, however worthy they may be.

VFP supports the campaign to end the practice of separating family members of asylum seekers on our southern border. Relevant websites are: thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/387/953/389/ and howlonghavethechildrenbeengone.com.

You may also contact the email address: refugeechildrenseparations@gmail.com.

Dan raised the possibility of revising the chapter website (vfpmaine.org) in order to make it easier to navigate. Changing the software would be time consuming and would possibly result in the loss of some content. The site apparently gets little use but it is not certain whether this is due to the difficulty of navigating the site or simply because of lack of interest. Dan suggested keeping track of the number of visits to the site to determine if the change would be worthwhile. It was decided that the revision should be done and Dan will make the necessary changes.

Doug referenced several articles in the latest issue of Peace in Our Times and provided copies to all present for distribution wherever they deem appropriate.

Don reported on the plight of Chelsea Manning who has been imprisoned by our government for refusing to testify before a grand jury regarding classified information she provided to Wikileaks. Letters of support may be sent to her at the following address:

William J. Truesdale Adult Detention Center
2001 Mill Road
Alexandria VA 22314

Meeting adjourned at 8:47pm. Next meeting in Augusta (Holocaust Center at UMA) on April 25th at 7pm.