

**Town of Somers
Veterans Park Ad-Hoc Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 7, 2026
Town Hall Auditorium**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 PM by Chairman Sherri Marquis. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Roll Call.

- Members' Present: Sherri Marquis, Vito Riccio, David McCaffrey, William McGurk, Robert Thiesing, Melville Thorne, Steven Ellis, and Robert Socha. Also present was alternate Joseph Kelley, Town Liaison Todd Rolland, and attendee Gary Prior.

- Members' Absent: Michael Murdza

A quorum was confirmed.

3. Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

4. Urgent Items

No urgent items were added to the agenda.

5. Presentation – Todd Rolland

Town Liaison Todd Rolland provided an overview of potential locations for the Veterans Memorial Park. Key discussion points included:

Town-Owned Properties

- Cemetery area (79 Battle Street) near the flagpole
- Area in front of Kibbe Fuller School (corner of Main and Battle Streets)
- Area adjacent to the Historical Society (11 Battle Street)
- Corner of Ninth District Road and Vision Boulevard (Somers Public Schools Complex)
- Land behind the fire station/ambulance building along Ninth District Road
- Areas in front of and alongside the Somers Public Library (2 Vision Boulevard)
- Open space behind the former Somersville Elementary School (41 School Street)
- Camp Aya-Po area (Camp Road)

Considerations Discussed:

- Parking availability
- Visibility and educational value
- Flooding concerns
- Terrain grading requirements
- Compatibility with school property
- Noise levels and event conflicts
- ADA accessibility
- Potential for walking paths, benches, and reflective spaces
- Existing memorials in town and the possibility of relocating them
- Historical district constraints
- Private land donation or long-term lease options (e.g., 99-year lease with tax incentives)

Committee members agreed to review all suggested sites and narrow them to three preferred locations at the next meeting.

Town Liaison Todd Rolland will provide a compiled list of all candidate sites.

6. Vision for the Park

The Chair emphasized the committee's mission to create a legacy project that honors veterans, educates future generations, and provides a meaningful place for reflection.

Next meeting will include a structured discussion of the committee's vision, features, and goals for the park.

Architects who previously drafted conceptual designs will present two preliminary layouts at the January 21 meeting.

7. Cost & Funding Discussion

The committee reviewed initial considerations for construction, operation, and maintenance costs.

The Chair will distribute materials outlining:

- Typical Park development costs
- Veteran-focused grant opportunities
- Potential funding sources, including possible 501(c)3.

Options reviewed:

- Partnering with an existing nonprofit (not preferred due to administrative fees)

- Creating a new 501(c)3 dedicated to Veterans Affairs projects

Key points:

- A treasurer will be needed
- Officers must avoid conflicts of interest
- A nonprofit would allow independent fundraising and grant management
- Early fundraising could begin before final site approval

General support was expressed for forming a dedicated 501(c)3.

8. Site Visits

Members expressed interest in conducting field visits to evaluate potential park locations.

A group visit or individual visits will occur before the next meeting.

Dave McCaffrey will also gather photos of nearby towns' memorial parks for comparison.

9. Membership Clarifications

- Steve Marquis has resigned.
- Gary Prior will be officially appointed at the upcoming Board of Selectmen meeting (Dec. 18, 2025).
- Joe Kelley (alternate) will be seated as a voting member.
- Michael Murdza will shift to alternate status due to frequent work-related absences.

Motion by Robert Socha to swap Joe Kelley and Mike Murdza's roles, seconded by William McGurk. Motion passed unanimously.

Secretary, and Veterans Affairs Liaison Dave McCaffrey confirmed he may make motions but cannot vote.

10. Architectural Presentation. A motion was made by Robert Socha to have Joshua and Gabrielle Guertin present their proposed architectural rendition of two types of styled Veterans Parks at the next meeting on January 21, 2026. Motion was seconded by William McGurk. Motion passed unanimously.

11. Administrative Items

- Members reviewed and updated contact information.
- An effort will be made to send Meeting reminders earlier going forward.
- A Motion was made by Bob Thiesing to establish Zoom access as standard for all meetings (password-protected for committee members only). Motion seconded by Steven Ellis. Motion passed unanimously.

12. Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Bob Thiesing to approve the December 3, 2025, minutes as electronically transmitted. Motion seconded by Mel Thorne. Motion passed unanimously.

13. Next Steps

For the January 21 meeting:

- Review Town Liaison Todd Rolland's compiled site list
- Each member identifies top three preferred locations
- Discuss Park vision and features
- View architectural concept presentations
- Review funding materials
- Consider possible additional private site suggestions

14. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn was made by Bob Thiesing and seconded by Vito Riccio. Meeting adjourned at 4:23 PM.