

**Town of Somers
Veterans Park Ad-Hoc Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 4, 2026
Town Hall Auditorium**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 PM by Chairman Sherri Marquis. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Roll Call.

Roll Call was conducted by the Secretary.

- Members' Present: Sherri Marquis, Vito Riccio, David McCaffrey, Gary Prior, Joseph Kelley, Melville Thorne, Robert Socha, Robert Thiesing (Zoom), Steven Ellis (Zoom), and Town Liaison Todd Rolland.

- Members' Regrets Received: William McGurk
- Members' Absent: Michael Murdza

A quorum was declared present. In accordance with committee procedures and Robert's Rules of Order, Gary Prior was seated as a voting member for this meeting in place of William McGurk.

3. Urgent Items

No urgent agenda items were raised. Agenda proceeded as published.

4. Approval of Minutes

A Motion was made by Gary Prior to approve the prior meeting minutes as presented. Motion seconded by Joseph Kelley. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Old Business

a. Site Selection Scoring Results conducted January 21, 2026:

- **41 School Street:** 188 points
- **Vision Boulevard & Ninth District Road:** 137 points
- **Library site:** 38 points
- **Kibbe Fuller site:** 30 points

These results were noted and carried forward for discussion under New Business.

6. New Business

a. Town Liaison Report – Todd Rolland

Mr. Rolland provided a detailed report on the remaining potential sites, particularly the **Vision Boulevard & Ninth District Road** location. Topics included:

- Heavy athletic and school-related use of the property
- Limited parking and pedestrian safety concerns
- Maintenance responsibility remains with Somers Public Schools maintenance due to school ownership
- High visibility but limited suitability for quiet reflection
- Risk of accidental damage due to traffic, sports activities, and winter maintenance

b. Security, Vandalism, and Maintenance Discussion

- Occasional vandalism has occurred at nearby playgrounds but is generally minor
- Veteran presence and community ownership were noted as strong deterrents
- Potential use of signage or cameras was discussed, if needed.
- Snow removal would likely follow a Tier 3 priority, similar to the cemeteries –limited winter access depending on design

c. Site Evaluation and Committee Discussion

The committee reviewed the **Location Scoring Worksheet** in detail, referring to the project's Mission and Vision Statements and evaluation criteria, including:

- Accessibility & parking
- Visibility & civic presence
- Healing & reflection potential
- Education & civic mindedness
- Layout flexibility & long-term use

Extensive discussion compared the two remaining sites. Consensus highlighted:

- **41 School Street** as better suited for serenity, healing, walking paths, and reflective use
- **Vision Boulevard** as more visible but less appropriate for reflection due to traffic and activity

d. Site selection vote. A Motion was made by Robert Socha to recommend 41 School Street, Somers, CT (specifically located between the youth soccer fields, the Scantic RiverBoat Launch Access area, and the new Angels Park playground) as the site for the Somers Veterans Memorial Park and Healing Garden. Motion seconded by Joseph Kelley. Motion passes unanimously.

7. Cost & Funding Considerations

- Architects previously presented preliminary cost estimates of \$200,000-\$300,000, depending on final design and materials.
- The committee reviewed earlier materials addressing funding readiness, construction, operation and maintenance.

- Chairman Marquis' reported that a dedicated separate 501(c)3 organization has been established and approved by the State of Connecticut; IRS EIN is pending. Once EIN is issued, early fundraising will begin.

8. Funding Subcommittee

A Motion was made by Steve Ellis to establish a Funding Subcommittee. Motion seconded by Vito Riccio. Discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Volunteers identified:

- Steven Ellis
- Mel Thorne
- Vito Riccio

9. Architectural Renderings – Follow-Up Vote

The Secretary will distribute both architectural renderings:

- Option 1: Structure-based (barn/tobacco shed concept)
- Option 2: Circular memorial with walking paths

Members will vote electronically and reply to Secretary Dave McCaffrey

Voting deadline: Friday, February 6, 2026, by 6:00 PM

10. Committee Report to Board of Selectmen

A Motion was made by Dave McCaffrey to authorize Chairman Sherri Marquis to finalize and submit the committee report recommending 41 School Street, as the site for the Veterans Memorial Park and Healing Garden, including renderings, cost estimates, and architects invoice to the Board of Selectmen, and to request the Board consider the recommendation at their next meeting. Further, we request that the Board of Selectmen approve payment of the architectural invoice from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG) grant funds. Motion seconded by Robert Thiesing. Discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

The report will be provided to the Board of Selectmen at their next meeting, Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 6:00 PM. Committee membership is encouraged to attend the Board of Selectmen meeting.

11. Public Comment

No members of the public were present. Public Comment was closed.

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting the Veterans Park Ad-Hoc Committee will be held:

Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 3:00 PM

13. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn was made by Robert Socha and seconded by Joseph Kelley. Meeting adjourned at 4:27 PM.



Respectfully submitted,

David McCaffrey

Secretary, Veterans Park Ad-Hoc Committee