

## **REPORT OF THE WEST SUBURBAN VETERANS' SERVICES DISTRICT**

The West Suburban Veterans' Services District includes the Towns of Needham, Wellesley, Weston and Wayland. The central office is located in the Wellesley Town Hall with other offices located in the Needham Town Hall, the Weston Council on Aging and the Wayland Town Hall. Information is available on the W.S.V.D. website at [www.westsuburbanveterans.com](http://www.westsuburbanveterans.com) or the office may be contacted at 781-489-7509 with questions or to schedule appointments. A full range of benefits and services are available to veterans' and their families based on certain qualifications and eligibility requirements.

## **REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES**

The Department of Veterans' Services operates under the provisions established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 115. This office provides to veterans and their dependents, the maximum allowable benefits and services at a minimum of cost, utilizing all available agencies of the Federal, State and Town governments. Veterans' Services assists and advises the Selectmen in planning for Memorial Day and Veterans' Day. In addition, the department monitors the care and maintenance of veterans' monuments and veterans' graves.

### **Benefits**

Veterans' Services renders financial assistance to qualified veterans, widows, orphans, etc., who are in need of benefits in order to sustain themselves. Benefits are provided by the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services and the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs. Aid is divided into several categories which include; food, housing, clothing, medical and burial benefits for those in financial need. There are financial benefits available such as war service bonuses, annuities and various tax exemptions for qualified veterans. In Fiscal Year 2014, the benefits issued by the Town to veterans and their families totaled \$26,918.70. The Department continues to use alternative sources of assistance for clients. The Town is reimbursed from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for seventy-five (75) percent of all approved costs incurred. The complexity of an individual case(s) must be considered when issuing benefits. The current U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) statistical report revealed that between \$2,000,000 and \$2,500,000 was disbursed or expended to over 980 veterans and their families living in the Town of Wellesley. Many of the awards and benefits include: education, burial, compensation, pensions, loans, hospitalization, etc.

## **Services**

Departmental services involve numerous telephone calls, investigations, personal visits to veterans' homes, hospitals, VA State facilities, nursing homes, attendance at seminars, workshop sessions, cemeteries and grave sites. The Department responds to many veteran related queries which may be generated on a day to day basis. During the past year services were provided in a timely manner to all veterans and their families requesting assistance. Some of those services included assistance with: VA appeals, headstone applications, hospitalization, disability annuities, housing, service records, military decorations, graves markers and flags, etc. The Department maintains the necessary files and records required in the normal operation of the office. In conjunction with State and Federal agencies, Veterans' Services maintains a file or provides access for any required forms and regulations needed in the processing of claims. Assigned additional duties and responsibilities as Graves Registration Officer and Veterans' Burial Agent for the Town of Wellesley, as well as to insure maintenance and care for veterans' monuments and veterans' graves. We presently have a total of twenty-seven (27) veterans buried in the Town Section of Woodlawn Cemetery.

## **Memorial Day**

The Department is responsible to the Board of Selectmen for the administration, support and function of the Town's annual Memorial Day observances. Because of inclement weather the Ceremonies were held at the Wellesley High School auditorium on May 30th with the assistance of Wellesley veterans. Veterans' Services insures that in accordance with Paragraph 9, Chapter 115, Massachusetts General Laws, a United States Flag is placed on all Wellesley veterans' graves. Over one-thousand (1,400) flags, including a number of replacements, were distributed between three local cemeteries, sixteen (16) memorial monuments and numerous funerals over the past year with assistance from Wellesley residents, veterans and private service organizations. The Town is reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for seventy-five (75) percent of the cost of the graves flags.

## **Veterans Monuments**

We have sixteen (16) monuments erected in the memory of Wellesley veterans which require care, maintenance and honor. The Department was still searching for Wellesley residents who served in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War to add to the Vietnam memorial placed in front of the Town Hall.

### **National Patriots Day**

Veterans Services participates with the Fire and Police Departments in the planning and function of the Town's annual National Patriots Day observances. Ceremonies were held at the Fire Department Headquarters beginning at 9:55 A.M. on September 11th.

### **Veterans Day**

The Town's annual Veterans Day observances were held in the Great Hall of the Wellesley Town Hall at 11:00 A.M. on November 11th with the assistance of Wellesley veterans.

### **Veterans Organizations**

As the Wellesley Veterans' Council attends their monthly meetings to render guidance and assistance in planning and implementing ceremonies and veterans functions.

The Director of the WSVD is a member of the Disabled American Veterans, the Massachusetts Veterans Service Officers Association of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and a Past State Commander 2009-2010.

The Deputy Director is a member of the VFW in Needham and is currently the Commander of District 5.