

**Town of Somers
Veterans Park Ad-Hoc Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 21, 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.

Roll Call was conducted by the Secretary.

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

- Members' Regrets Received: Robert Socha, William McGurk

- Members' Absent: Michael Murdza

A quorum was declared present. Gary Prior was seated as a voting member for this meeting.

3. Public Comment

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

4. Urgent Items

A Motion was made by Robert Thiesing to move Public Comment to follow New Business for future meetings to allow public comments to reflect topics presented. Motion amended to allow the public to provide comments at any time during the meeting. Motion seconded by Gary Prior. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of Minutes

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

6. Old Business

Membership Update: Gary Prior was formally acknowledged as an appointed alternate member.

7. New Business

a. Restatement of Committee Charge

1. The Chair restated the committee's charge from the Board of Selectmen.

2. Primary deliverable: Identify one recommended location for a Veterans Memorial Park and Healing Garden.

3. Subsequent phases (designs, cost estimates, maintenance, and funding strategy) are dependent on-site selection.

Committee materials, evaluation criteria, and scoring sheets were distributed in advance and at the meeting.

b. Architectural Presentation

Joshua and Gabrielle Guertin, local architects, presented conceptual designs and site feasibility input. Highlights included:

1. Review of multiple municipal sites, and elimination of non-viable locations based on size, access, safety, parking, and suitability for reflection.
2. Recommendations of town property behind 41 School Street, and alongside the Scantic River/Mill Pond area as the most suitable site.
3. Presentation of two conceptual design options:
 - a. A structured memorial pavilion inspired by the history of Connecticut Valley Tobacco Farming.
 - b. A landscape-focused monument design centered around an open contemplative space.
4. Preliminary cost estimates:
 - a. Range of approximately \$200,000-\$330,000, depending on materials and design approach.
 - b. Included rough allowances for sitework, materials, lighting, frost-proof underground pipe for watering (plants and trees), and contingency.

During the architectural presentation, a member of the public asked a question regarding the renderings that depicted an American flag centered within a small fountain. The architects provided a response.

The committee expressed strong appreciation for the presentation and the architect's sensitivity to veterans' service and community use.

c. Site Evaluation Process

The committee proceeded with the agreed upon evaluation process:

1. Members completed Location Scoring Tables for remaining feasible sites, rating each against established criteria on a 1-5 scale.
2. Scoring sheets were submitted to the Secretary for tallying.

d. Motion Regarding Site Scoring Results

A Motion was made by David McCaffrey and seconded by Melville Thorne to:

1. Complete scoring and tally results internally.

2. Have the Town Liaison consult with the Superintendent of Schools and relevant town department regarding feasibility of remaining site consideration – corner of Vision Blvd., co-located with sports fields next to Mabelle B. Avery Middle School.
3. Present the compiled results and liaison report at the February 4, 2026, meeting, at which time a final site recommendation may be adopted.

Motion carried unanimously.

e. Informational Update – Grant and Planning History

The Chair provided an informational overview of:

1. Architectural planning work completed to date.
2. Hartford Foundation Grant funding (\$10,000), including scope and timing considerations.
3. Challenges related to municipal processes, committee status, grant administration, and payment sequencing
4. Clarification that this item was informational only, with no action taken.

8. Next Meeting

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

Wednesday, February 4, 2026, at 3:00 PM

The meeting will focus on:

1. Presentation of site scoring results
2. Town liaison report
3. Final site selection
4. Initial cost, funding readiness, and formation of a funding subcommittee

9. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn was made by Robert Thiesing and seconded by Gary Prior. Meeting adjourned at 4:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



David McCaffrey
Secretary, Veterans Park Ad-Hoc Committee