

VETERAN'S SERVICES

Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 115 requires that the selectmen of each town in the Commonwealth annually appoint a Veterans' Services Officer (VSO) "...to act for them in the disbursement of veterans' benefits..." (Until a change in state regulations in 2005, this position was known as the Veterans' Agent.)

The Town of Stow, as well as the federal and state governments, honors the dedicated and selfless service performed by members of all branches of our armed forces. With the continuing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, it becomes increasingly clear that the town will see its share of responsibilities to military veterans increase.

There are various benefits available to military veterans residing in Stow. These services/benefits are separate and distinct from those administered by the federal Veterans' Administration. Some are direct financial assistance benefits determined by a "needs-based" formula. This assistance is paid by the town with a subsequent 75% reimbursement from the state. Other programs are available without regard to any "means" test of the applicant and which do not require the expenditure of municipal funds.

Various services were provided to eligible Stow resident veterans during 2006. Temporary financial aid was provided (anonymously) in accordance with state regulations governing eligibility requirements and level of support. Assistance was provided to family members in applying to a federal program that provides grave markers for deceased Stow resident veterans. The VSO also serves as a liaison to other federal veterans' programs, and works in conjunction with the full-time VSOs in neighboring towns and cities.

Inasmuch as the VSO is a part-time position in Stow town government, regular office hours are not scheduled. However, I am available on request to discuss individual situations and to determine eligibility for various local services. Stow veterans (or their surviving spouses) may contact me directly at (978) 562-6630, by email at Donhawkes@Comcast.net, or through the Town Clerk's office.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald P. Hawkes, Veterans' Services Officer