

LEARNINGS FROM MEMBERS OF THE VETERANS HOME

9-15-26

Dear Yountville neighbors,

As many know, there was a presentation on the Yountville Commons project on February 17, 2026, which concerned many Yountville residents, including me. I've attended every Town Council meeting since then and, on August 10, submitted my nomination papers as a candidate for Yountville Town Council. Since then, I have been speaking with community residents to learn what is on their minds.

Recently, I spoke with several members of the Veterans Home, and I was very distressed by what I heard. While the campus is large and beautiful and some members are very happy, most I spoke with are dissatisfied. Here are some reasons why:

- There have been recent changes to the 96-hour pass and 90 days of leave – an ongoing refrain of discontent and frustration that I heard consistently from members.
- The Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) – begun with great fanfare in 2022 at a cost of \$268.6 million – is not yet open; the opening date ([projected in 2024 and more recently 2025](#)) continues to be delayed.
- The Lincoln Theater – a valuable asset for the Veterans Home, Yountville, and beyond – has fallen into disuse and disrepair; as has the Armistice Chapel, built in 1918 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Likewise, the swimming pool and therapeutic aquatic pool are closed.
- Maintenance of other facilities is lacking: roofs leak (even perhaps in some residences!); pathways down to town used by scooters and electric wheelchairs are not ADA-compliant – and are in disrepair, some verging on dangerous; and sidewalks with tree roots raise the cement, making walking a challenge or worse.
- Facilities closed due to COVID are still not open (although the U.S. public health emergency officially ended on May 11, 2023). This includes Hero's Café, which used to be open to the public. The Hostess House, where guests could stay for a modest fee while visiting loved ones and friends who are members, was razed for the SNF and has not been replaced.
- In addition, facilities like the RV Park (with almost all hook-ups in working order) and storage units continue to be closed. This is particularly unfortunate because the modest income they generate would go to Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) activities, which are managed by Veteran members themselves.

- While the Veterans Home's pastoral grounds used to be open to the public, there is now a guarded gate to determine who is permitted to enter the premises. This is despite this [CalVet FAQ regarding visitors](#): "May I have visitors at a Veterans Home of California?" "Yes. We encourage visits by your friends and relatives..."
- Most recently, a candidate forum at the Veterans Home for November elections – to invite ALL candidates, so therefore impartial and non-partisan – has been prohibited, although such events have been held there in the past.
- A budget is not available for review of the members, who also have requested an independent audit to know where, I'm told, \$30 million – earmarked for repairs years ago – has disappeared.
- Numerous buildings and housing units have fallen into ruin or disuse; their repair and re-use could achieve multiple goals – and stop the downward spiral that seems to be happening: I regularly hear there are not enough help and caregivers to admit more members than those now onsite, which are less than 600. (In the mid-1950s, there were 2,000 members, and [nearly 1,000 in current literature](#)). However, the houses and buildings that might address this situation and accommodate caregivers are neglected and left to deteriorate. Importantly, if renovated, these housing facilities would help the affordable/workforce housing problems that the town of Yountville is facing – a seeming win/win for all involved!

So why is this matter important? First, the Veterans Home of Yountville, established in 1884, is the [largest veterans home in the nation](#) and, I'm told, used to provide the most amenities. The apparent decline in 2026 is happening on our watch, in our backyard, which is shameful. Second, the members of the home are those men and women who risked life and limb for the United States of America – and for US. When America needed them, they were there for us. Now, as they become older and less able, we must be there for them.

It seems that, even in beautiful Yountville and at the stately Veterans Home, the members' world is in decline, and getting smaller and more restricted. This is despite the stated goals and [commitment of CalVet](#), which "strives to ensure that its veterans of every era and their families get the state and federal benefits and services they have earned and deserve as a result of selfless and honorable military service." This passion is shared by Governor Gavin Newsom, who states in the *Veterans Resource Book*, 8th edition:

"California strives to provide the highest level of support and services to our nearly 1.6 million veterans. On behalf of the state of California, I express my sincere appreciation to all who have served in the Armed Forces. Your sacrifices and contributions have protected our nation's most precious assets: freedom. We owe you our deepest gratitude and unwavering support.

Many benefits and services available to you have been expanded and improved over the past decade. The California Veterans Resource Book provides a comprehensive guide for accessing your earned benefits. I encourage veterans and veteran families of every era to use this valuable resource and take full advantage of the benefits and services you have earned.”

These gracious words require action. So, coming full circle in this letter, I hope that we as a town, and perhaps I as a Town Council member, can help effect some changes on these many issues. I know that the Home administration, the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and others make decisions regarding the Veterans Home – NOT the Town Council or the town. However, it seems that Veterans Home members -- almost 20% of the town of [Yountville's population of 3,161](#) – can use some help. Can we fix these problems? Perhaps not. Can we bring attention to them? Absolutely. We can – and should. Let’s be advocates for our Veterans Home members and neighbors – and probably better yet, let’s be NOISY advocates. They need it.

Sincerely,

Jill Turner

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