

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE HOLYOKE SOLDIERS' HOME

Whereas, in 1952, the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke opened and has provided "Care With Honor and Dignity" to thousands of Massachusetts Veterans for over 68 years; and

Whereas, in 2010, Veteran rooms at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home were determined by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs to be non-compliant with the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standard; and

Whereas, in 2012, the Massachusetts Division of Capital Assets Management commissioned a Needs Assessment Study that determined that "of the 278 current beds, less than 5% meet VA Standards"; and

Whereas, in 2013, a design to add 120 private rooms, as well as convert existing rooms, thus creating 278 fully compliant beds, was approved by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) for 65% federal funding; however, the state has repeatedly failed to commit its 35% share of matching funds, required to allow for the start of construction; and

Whereas, in 2016, a project to create an Adult Day Health Care Program at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home was also approved by the VA for 65% funding; however, it also has never received Massachusetts' commitment for the 35% matching funds; and

Whereas, in November 2017, with the support of Governor Baker and the Legislature, the state approved \$199 million to build a new 154-bed long-term care facility at the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, while disregarding the long- documented deficiencies at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home; and

Whereas, the lack of sufficient space and staff at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home were major contributing factors in the rapid spread of the Novel Corona virus-19 at the Home which resulted in the deaths of 76 Veterans who tested positive for COVID-19; and

Whereas, this atrocity is one of our country's worst Veteran tragedies and contradicts Massachusetts' claim of being the best in the nation for Veteran benefits; and

Whereas, all Veterans deserve equal treatment in Massachusetts state-funded Veteran Homes; to include the same living conditions as well as proportionate funding to provide for a safe and efficient level of staffing in all departments.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Amherst Town Council urges Governor Baker and the Legislature take immediate action to ensure sufficient staff, equipment and supplies to provide safe care; and to expedite the design of the new Soldiers' Home in Holyoke to allow for the construction of fully compliant rooms for 250 Veterans, including a toilet and shower in each

bedroom, and the establishment of an Adult Day Health Care Program to meet the VA project submission date of April 15, 2021 in order to provide the best in care for “those who have borne the battle” and sacrificed their safety and well-being to preserve our nation’s freedom.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the Amherst Town Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to Governor Charlie Baker, Massachusetts Department of Veterans’ Services, the Superintendent of the Soldiers’ Home in Holyoke, Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance Commissioner Carol Gladstone, State Senator Josephine Comerford, and State Representative Mindy Domb.

Voted this _____ day of August 2020.

Lynn Griesemer,

Town Council President