



Date: August 20, 2025
To: Governing Body
From: Daniel Lopez Jr., RAS ADA and Equity Manager
Via: Regina Wheeler, Public Works Department Director *RW*
Subject: Veterans Advisory Board Appointments

ACTION:

Appoint Steven Brenigar, Elizabeth Rickert, Gary Donato and Stephen Kapin to the Veterans Advisory Board.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY:

Steven Brenigar served tours with both the Navy and the Army and is active in the community supporting veterans in many ways.

Elizabeth Rickert is the widow of an Air Force veteran and is active in community affairs in Santa Fe.

Gary Donato has served on the VAB since May 2023

Stephen Kapin has served on the VAB since May 2023

Appointment of these candidates to the VAB is recommended by VAB Chair James Williams and staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

Steven Brenigar Resume
Elizabeth Rickert Resume
Gary Donato Resume
Stephen Kapin Resume

Steven Brenigar



- Served with the Naval Academy Band from 1977 – 1989
- Joined the DC National Guard in 2004, where he served in their band until 2014.
- Currently performs with the Eternal Summer Symphony Orchestra and the Santa Fe Community Orchestra.
- Steve has been the board's point man in coordinating the musical program for the upcoming Veterans Day ceremony.
- Mr. Brenigar is engaged in implementing recommendations from the Syracuse University study, working with local veteran groups to identify entry points for veterans into a new services database developed by the Syracuse team.
- He was selected by the board in February 2025.
- Steve is a native of Santa Fe.

Liz Rickert



- **Liz Rickert is the widow of an Air Force veteran who served with the Strategic Air Command from 1959 to 1963.**
- **BA from Carson Newman University in Tennessee with a major in English**
- **BS from Graceland University in Iowa in Addiction Studies**
- **Taught middle school English in Massena, NY**
- **Taught eighth grade in Suriname, South American**
- **Addiction counselor in Marshalltown Iowa**
- **Volunteers at the Santa Fe Animal Shelter**
- **Liz is active in community affairs in Santa Fe, being a member of the TUGAN Veterans lunch group, the local chapter of the NAACP and the Northern New Mexico Quilters Guild. The Guild makes Quilts of Valor for our local veterans, and with the board's participation, presents them to veterans at a quarterly ceremony at the New Mexico Military Museum.**
- **Liz has arranged for the guild to have a display table at this year's Veterans Day ceremony. Liz was selected by the board in March 2025.**

Stephen H. Kapin



Education:

- **Rutgers University - BA**
- **University of Pennsylvania – DMD**
- **Boston University -Advanced Graduate Degree, Prosthetic Dentistry**

Additional Advanced Degrees

- **Diplomate, International Congress of Oral Implantology**
- **Diplomate, American College of Implantology**
- **Steve is a native of Santa Fe.**

Faculty Positions:

- **Assistant Clinical Professor of Prosthetic Dentistry, Boston University School of Graduate Dentistry**
- **Associate Professor, Department of Continuing Education Boston University, School of Graduate Dentistry**
- **From 2015 – 2021 was head of security for Georgia O'Keefe Museum.**

Currently a Staff Member of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary (Positions held):

- **Public Affairs Officer**
- **Human Resources Officer**
- **Awards Committee Chairperson**
- **Recruiter, United States Coast Guard Academy**

Military Record:

- **Captain, United States Army Dental Corp, 1965-1967**
- **United States Army Dental Reserves, 1961-1965**

Dr. Gary R. Donato (short version)

Education

Ph.D. Univ. of Connecticut 2005 (Diplomatic Hist.; Am. Gov't; Int'l Politics) (*The Nixon Doctrine: A Differentiated Assessment of U.S. National Interests*)

Ordained reverend – Universal Life Church 2005

MSSc Syracuse University 1989 (International Politics)

MS (equivalent) Naval War College, 1985 (National Security Strategy & Policy)

BA Florida Southern College, 1982 (History)

BS Univ. of State of New York, 1979 (Engineering)

Faculty Appointments

Bentley University

Boston University PEP/Metropolitan College)

Clark University

Connecticut College

Eastern Connecticut State University

Mass Bay Community College

Mitchell College

Northern New Mexico College

Rhode Island College

Three Rivers Community College

United States Coast Guard Academy

University of Connecticut

Wesleyan University

Areas of Teaching

American History (I & II)

American Foreign Policy

Amistad as a case study

Am History Advanced/Honors

American National Politics

American Politics Advanced/Honors

Cold War History

Comparative Politics

Executive-Legislative Relations

International Relations

Millennial Studies – (nexus of religion/sociology/politics)

National Security Policy

Homeland Security Policy

Presidency

Research Methods

State and Local Politics

Western Civilization (I & II)

World Civilizations (I & II)

World Religions

United States' Presidential Task Force Assignments

Homeland Security/Homeland Defense Core Competencies Workshop – Pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 13434 (National Security Professional Development), Office of Personnel Management, Shepherdstown WV 6/27-6/29/2007

Team Leader – Responder Corps Advisory Team – Operations Group – National Council on Readiness and Preparedness 2005/2006

“Homeland Security Strategic Studies – Professional Development”

Facilitator/Participant: Washington DC 8/8-11/2005

“Charting a Course for Homeland Security Strategic Studies,” Participant/Facilitator:

Senior Military Institute Working Group, Facilitator/Presenter U.S. Coast Guard Academy, Nov 2004.

Marine Law Symposium/Oceans Symposium – “Marine Education as a component of Oceans Act 2000,” Facilitator/Participant: Roger Williams Law School, Sept 2004

Assistant Coordinator: National Security Strategy Studies Working Group: Washington D.C. Aug 2004

Honors and Awards

Bentley University

Innovation in Teaching and Learning Bentley University (Team Award) 12/14/2016
Nominated - Cronin Excellence in Academic Advising Award (2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019).

Joseph M. Cronin Award for Excellence in Academic Advising – Bentley University – 2012 (10 year preclusion for another awarding)

Other Universities/Colleges

Certificate of Appreciation – Student Development, Mass Bay Community College, 6/11/2019

Distinguished Service Award – Mass Bay Community College, 5/23/2019

Advisor of the Year – Mass Bay Community College IMPACT Award for Veterans Club Advisor 2017

Student Development Spotlight Mass Bay Community College 11/14/2016 for work with student veterans on campus

Presidential Letter of Appreciation Mass Bay Community College 11/11/2016 for post-election conversations with students, staff and faculty.

TOP Military School: BEST FOR VETS 2014 - 2017 for accomplishments at Mass Bay Community College

Inclusion and Civility Award – Mass Bay Community College – Nominated 2014

Making A Difference Award – Mass Bay Community College – 2012, 2013, 2015

Mary Tucker Thorp Professorship – Rhode Island College nominated 2/2012 (unable to accept as an adjunct)

Meritorious Team Commendation Award for New War Threat Exercise, U.S. Coast Guard Academy (2001, 2003, 2005)

Letter of Appreciation Norwich Bulletin “Mock Trial” of Bill Clinton – 1/9/1999

Letter of Appreciation - Speaker/Tour guide of Norwich City Hall 1999

Letter of Appreciation – American Bar Association - Speaker – “Law and Politics” 1999

Coordinated Congress to Campus Program; Ambassador Boothby, Adm. Watkins, Pres. G.H.W. Bush visits to U.S. Coast Guard Academy 1998-2004

Civic/University Engagement

Community

- Judge – New Mexico History Day Project (2022 – present)
- Election Worker/Presiding and Election Judge – County of Santa Fe NM (2022 to present)
- Election Integrity monitor – New Mexico (2022 – Present)
- Appointed to Independent Citizen Redistricting Committee City of Santa Fe 2022
- New Mexico Military Museum – Board member (2022 – 2024)

- New Mexico Veteran Legacy Project – Oral History Team and Outreach Subcommittee (2022 – 2024)
- Center for the Study of the Presidency – Student Fellows Program - Mentor/Judge (2001-present)
- Reader – ETS College Board Scoring Services for AP Government & Politics (2001 – present)
- Academic Advisory Board – McGraw Hill Contemporary Learning Series (2009 – 2025)
- Academic Advisory Board – Pearson Longman Publishers (Government & History) (2009 – 2024)
- Reviewer – Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (2007 – 2021)
- Lifetime member Norwich CT Historical Society (Oral History Project)
- Lifetime member Veterans of Foreign Wars (presently Post 2951 Santa Fe)
- Lifetime member American Legion (presently Post 12 Santa Fe)
- Lifetime member US Submarine Veterans International (presently Bullhead Base NM)
- Lifetime member Military Officer’s Association America (presently Roadrunner Chapter NM)
- Election Worker – Town of Easton MA 2020 Election Cycle
- Committee Member Mass Social Studies Council – 2007 – Present
- Board of Electors (Ballot Checker) Town of Holliston 2007-2009
- Board of Directors Willowgate Rise Homeowners Association 2007-2009
- Lead minister – U2 Praise and Worship Concert Dean College Franklin MA 3/28/2007
- Judge/Mentor – Connecticut History Day – 1996-2007
- Consultant – New London Charter Revision Committee 2006
- Judge DAR Good Citizen Scholarship Contest – 11/27/2005
- Campaign Strategist 2000/2004 Diana Urban: State Legislator (R-N.Stonington CT)
- Campaign Volunteer Coordinator 2003 City Councilman J. P. Mereen, (R-Norwich CT)
- Campaign Advisor 2002 Councilman James Cavasino (R-New London)
- Campaign Volunteer 2000 Representative Robert Simmons (R-CT 2nd District)
- Board of Directors Norwich Heritage Discovery Center 1994-2007
- Lifetime member Norwich Historical Society (Director of Oral History Project)
- Community Advisor – Slater Memorial Museum – “The Norwich Galleries: The Heritage of the Rose City through the Inventions of its People”
- Advisor – Norwich Historical Society – “Our Forgotten Founders” – Pre-Constitutional Presidential Library and Museum project.
- Consultant – Mohegan Tribal Council – Constitutional Revision Committee, 2006
- Consultant – New London CT Charter Revision Committee - 2006
- Consultant – Norwich CT Charter Revision Committee - 2005
- Interview Team – Rhodes Scholar Program U.S. Coast Guard Academy 11/2/2004
- New War Threat Exercise – Coast Guard Academy - Facilitator/Coordinator of Office of Emergency Management (Governor State of CT) 2001-2005
- Norwich Bulletin “Mock Trial” of Bill Clinton – 1/9/1999 Facilitator/Presenter
- Norwich Public Schools – Teachers Memorial Career Day September 1999