



Harford County Commission on Veterans Affairs Meeting Notes

May 2, 2019

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Robert Brown at 6:30 p.m. in the Conference Room, 220 S. Main Street, Bel Air, Maryland.

Attending: Bob Brown, Hayden Anthony, Robert Appleby, Lisa Brown, Janice Cassady, Dennis Miller, Bill Montgomery, Deacon Vic Petrosino, Mike Ray, Councilman Andre Johnson (liaison)

Excused: Jennifer Button, Art Kaff, Scott Kearby, Denise Perry, Pam Silcox, Rick Scavetta

Guests: Carol Kiple (Senator Andy Harris' office)

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Brown. Prayer was led by Deacon Vic.

Welcome & Opening Comments:

Chairman Brown – presented the HCCOVA Mission and Vision statements. He also welcomed Carol Kiple, representing Senator Andy Harris

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes from the April HCCOVA meeting were sent to commission members for review prior to May meeting. No corrections were put forward; Bill Montgomery motioned for approval of the minutes and Hayden Anthony seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved by commission members.

Opening Comments from Appointed Members:

Hayden Anthony – ordered shirts for new HCCOVA members. He also attended the veterans book club at the Bel Air branch of HCPL & distributed the *Save the Date* flyer for the Resource fair in November.

Robert Appleby – reminded members of an additional education benefit for veterans who have exhausted their Post 9/11 benefits – “Dependents Educational Assistance Program.” He noted the veteran must be 100% disabled to qualify, and more detailed information can be found on the VA home page. He also suggested that veterans check on their Post 9/11 benefits to see if they are exhausted. Benefits are calculated by days used (vs just months), so may have remaining benefits to use/pass onto another child. Members noted school registrars are a good resource & to check your statement that VA sends out every year with updated information.

Bill Montgomery – showed members a copy of the *Veterans Resource Directory* and stated he will get additional copies to hand out at the APG Retiree Fair (May 18th).

Janice Cassady – registration for summer & fall classes at HCC is now open. The number of veterans taking classes remains steady (approx. 150-200), but the number of Chapter 35 (dependents) & Chapter 31 (rehabilitation) students are increasing each semester.

Mike Ray – stated he is still collecting old cell phones (recycled for phone cards for troops). Also, his company is participating in the job fair on APG on Saturday, May 4th as part of APG Discovery Week.

Vic Petrosino – reminded members of the veterans' workshop being held at Upper Chesapeake Hospital.

OLD BUSINESS

Grave Site Donation - Donation of gravesites: someone wants to donate 4 gravesites at Bel Air Memorial Gardens to veterans. Denise Perry contacted Jarrettsville VFW where the donor's father was a member & helped coordinate the donation

Memorial Day activities - HCCOVA will lay a wreath at the Bel Air ceremony (Shamrock Park starting at 11 AM on Monday, May 27th) & host a light refreshment tent (lemonade & cookies); will also pass out Save the Date flyers for Veterans Resource Fair.

Maryland's "Year of the Veteran" – no updates or special events planned at this time.

Resource Fair Status – Saturday, November 9th at Bel Air Armory; Pam sent out save the date & initial inquiries to vendors who attended the fair last year; many already responded positively to participating this year. We'll discuss subcommittees/assisting with event at future meeting.

Outreach Events:

- **APG Retiree Fair** – Saturday, May 18th from 8:30 AM to 12 PM at APG Rec Center; this event is addition to, not substitute for Department of the Army retiree event in the fall. Bill Montgomery will represent HCCOVA at the event & man the HCCOVA table.
- **"Give an Hour Change Direction"** - Denise Perry discussed this program that assists veterans, active duty, and their families with no-cost, confidential mental health counseling. Give an Hour is a non-profit organization that provides counseling in person, by phone or through video. Online training is available for those who are interested in joining this effort.

Benefits Fair for Veterans & Spouses – committee members discussed the possibility of having a resource fair focused just on benefits as a supplemental activity to our resource fair in November; Bob stated the Perry Point VAMC commander is willing to provide resources; members voted to move forward with this opportunity to provide benefit information to veterans/spouses. Hayden will check on possible locations; Janice checking into using HCC.

Veterans Treatment Court – very successful program in other counties in Maryland, including 100% success rate in Baltimore City (no recidivism). Mr. Peisinger (State's Attorney, Harford

County) is strongly in favor of Veterans Court & is willing to assist HCCOVA in revisiting this initiative. The Director of the VA Medical System is also willing to meet to discuss the benefits of this program & provide support. If approved the court would take place at the end of a docket (vs a separate court) and would assist anyone that has served in the military and is willing to comply with the treatment plan.

Election of Vice-Chairperson and Recording Secretary:

- Hayden Anthony (current Vice-Chairperson) was nominated & unanimously approved by commission members present.
- Lisa Brown (current Recording Secretary) was nominated & unanimously approved by commission members present.

NEW BUSINESS

4th of July Parade – HCCOVA will march in Bel Air's parade on Thursday, July 4th; volunteers are needed to march – will gather list of names at next month's meeting; any veteran is welcomed & invited to march with HCCOVA.

Duties & Roles of Commission Members – Chairman Brown

- 4 basic roles: information for veterans; programs & outreach; advise the County Executive & County Council; public events & recognition
- Reiterated the Veterans Resource Fair is our capstone event each year, but should plan other events throughout the year.
- Need to realign our subcommittees/individual commitment to charter missions to accomplish goals of commission/fulfill all the duties & roles of the HCCOVA.
- Current & newly appointed members need to think about which area of the HCCOVA they would like to focus their efforts.

Senator Andy Harris – Carol Riple (representing Senator Harris) stated his office is currently addressing over 100 cases involving veterans & issues about benefits, treatment, etc. This is a significant increase & may be due in part to clarification of the VA Mission Act of 2018. Bill also asked Carol to ask Senator Harris about his stance on several veteran-connected bills, including the *Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act*, and the *Military Widow's Tax*.

Final Announcements

- MG Taylor is scheduled to PCS in June to STRATCOM.
- May 18th: Retiree Day at APG 9 AM – 1 PM. Bill Montgomery will be setting up a table for the Veterans' Commission
- The next HCCOVA meeting will be Thursday, June 6th at 6:30 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Prepared by Lisa Brown