



HARFORD COUNTY COMMISSION ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Meeting Minutes February 4, 2021

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Robert Brown at 6:33PM via MS Teams.

Attending: Bob Brown, Hayden Anthony, Lisa Brown, Art Kaff, Dennis Miller, Denise Perry, Jennifer Button, Bill Montgomery, Mike Ray, Robert Appleby, Deacon Vic Petrosino, Pam Silcox, Colonel Druell, and Janice Cassidy

Excused: Councilman Andre Johnson (liaison), Scott Kearby

Guests: Joe Gioradano (Founder of Project Opportunity), John Cooper (Schedule A Job Opportunities), CSM Drewitt-APG, Randy Everett, Simon Ballard.

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice-Chairman Anthony. Prayer was led by Deacon Vic Petrosino.

Welcome & Opening Comments:

Chairman Brown – presented the HCCOVA Mission and Vision statements and welcomed members and guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Minutes from the January 4th meeting, in advance, were approved. Art Kaff making the motion and Pam Silcox second.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

John Cooper, former HR Specialist at the Department of Veterans Affairs (Perry Point) and a Veteran, explained the Schedule A hiring process as a way for veterans to quickly be hired into jobs in the federal government, and the eligibility information. He further explained the Veterans Recruitment Authority (VRA) and who is eligible for VRA. Mr. Cooper said he will help veterans by reviewing resumes. He does this work as a volunteer to give back, not for any compensation.

Joe Giordano founded Project Opportunity to give veterans who want to start their own businesses, or need assistance if they have just started, training in business skills and the “how to” of entrepreneurship. He has 310 graduates so far for the 10-week program where participants meet for 3 hours a week and is starting his first program in Harford County. He plans on conducting one program a year in Harford County. The program is open to veterans, however currently not for spouses of veterans.

Cathy Hampton, President of the Susquehanna Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and Mike Early, MOAA Personal Affairs Chair, discussed the Harford County Student Poster and Essay contest. They are asking for assistance from the Veterans Commission to help them outline a

strategy, determine milestones, firm up details, and help get sponsors for the project. Jenn Button and Lisa Brown have volunteered to help. Mr. Early provided the project overview, mentioning a tentative date for selection of winners would be in May to coincide with Armed Forces Month. A suggestion was made to consider an award date in November to provide more time to plan, time for students to return to school, and to use the Veterans Resource fair as a possible venue to announce winners. Colonel Druell added that the project team can work with APG and the SMWR team at APG, working through the school liaison. MOAA will be contacting Jenn and Lisa for next steps. Mr. Early next provided information on the MOAA grant to assist those who need financial aid due to COVID related difficulties with rent, utilities, and other items. They can contact Mike by going to the MOAA website at <http://www.mdmoaa.org/>.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Pam Silcox updated the Commission on support to the County's Point in Time Count and the donations of items. We will try to make this project an annual event.
- Denise Perry gave details on the National Association of Black Veterans (NABVETS) of which she is a member. They can provide claims and other assistance to veterans. Started in 1973, they also preserve records of minority veterans, and they are working to establish a chapter in Harford County. Denise, now a member of the Maryland State Veterans Commission, was honored at the NABVETS Buffalo Soldier Memorial Banquet s one of 14 Veteran of the Year honorees.

NEW BUSINESS

- Chairman Brown reminded members of the 20% Real Property Tax Credit for Retirees who are 65 and over. For more information call 410-638-3450.
- Legislative Issues. Two bills in the Maryland House and Senate were mentioned: Senate Bill 574 and House Bill 734. The subject of both is a partial exemption for taxes on military retired pay. Denise Perry discussed the bill to build a Women Veteran Monument in Maryland.
- Programs and Outreach
 - The Commission provided support to veterans for tax assistance, claims referrals, healthcare information to include COVID-19 vaccinations, military records, and employment. After answering a veteran's request for assistance completing taxes, Vice Chair Hayden Anthony reported that APG was not currently providing tax assistance. Colonel Druell said he would investigate so support would be provided.
 - Mike Ray and Jenn Button will be working on a project to develop a list of businesses in Harford County that provide discounts to veterans.
 - Mike Ray updated the Commission that the Military Appreciation Event will be virtual this year.
- Public Events and Recognition.
 - The Gold Star Spouses and Family Monument to Monument Run will be run virtually on April 5th. Colonel Druell described the event and said the proceeds will go to Gold Star Mothers Program.
 - Dennis Miller announced that this upcoming weekend the VAMC in Baltimore will hold a walk-in vaccine clinic for veterans 65 and older who are registered in the VA Health Care System. The clinic will be open 8am-2pm on Saturday and Sunday.

MEMBER UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Jennifer Button reported that the Veteran Book Club was starting again at the Harford County Public Library. Space is limited, and information/registration is on the library website.
- Art Kaff will assist the MOAA-HCCOVA team working on the Poster and Essay contest to publicize the event through the Commission's Facebook page. Art mentioned the interview and story WMAR/ABC TV did for the morning news about the Harford County Veterans Commission. Art posted information about the Mission BBQ food give away, jobs information, and upcoming events on the Commission Facebook site.
- Deacon Vic continues to make telephone calls to veterans and others in Upper Chesapeake Hospital. Once he receives his vaccine, he will be making some in-person visits.
- Simon Ballard has hard copies of the Harford County Community Resource Books. He will provide the link so people can view it online (<https://www.harfordcountymd.gov/414/Resource-Guide>).

FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Next meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2021 and will be held via MS Teams.
- Meetings are scheduled for the first Thursday of the month unless otherwise announced.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:51pm.

Full link to Teams Meeting:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_MWY2Y2VhY2QtMzFmNi00MmQ5LThhMjktMjQ2MWQ3OWVjY2Yx%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22756eb95a-68e1-4b7a-9607-685e1277368e%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22c088a1ce-0105-43a7-bfc1-824daeffaf53%22%7d