



# **HARFORD COUNTY COMMISSION ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**From**

**March 4, 2021**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Robert Brown at 6:31PM via MS Teams.

**Attending:** Bob Brown, Hayden Anthony, Lisa Brown, Art Kaff, Dennis Miller, Jennifer Button, Bill Montgomery, Robert Appleby, Deacon Vic Petrosino, Colonel Druell, and Rachel Pederson for Councilman Andre Johnson (liaison)

**Excused:** Scott Kearby Janice Cassady, Denise Perry, Pam Silcox, Mike Ray

**Guests:** John Cooper and Simon Ballard.

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jennifer Button. 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 February 4th meeting were approved. Hayden Anthony making the motion to approve and Dennis Miller second.

### **GUEST SPEAKERS:**

None.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- MOAA Community Project Update. The project is on hold for now. MOAA will have a new Point of Contact for the project, and they hope to kick off meetings soon. They are still planning on a November 13<sup>th</sup> award event during the Veterans Resource Fair. Lisa Brown and Jennifer Button will be the HCCOVA representatives for the project.
- Jennifer Button provided an update on the Veterans Discount Booklet project. Mike Ray is developing a survey for distribution to Chamber members, as well as deploying it on the Harford County Public Library website. Jennifer Button is developing the comprehensive list of all County businesses that offer discounts. If anyone has a list of businesses, please send it to Jenn. Bill Montgomery provided Jenn with a lead and point of contact.
- Meeting in Person discussion. The County opens to in-person business on March 1<sup>st</sup>. We will be allowed to meet in person if we choose to, but it is not a requirement. If we meet in person we must meet all social distancing and safety requirements, and, the requirements of the Maryland

Open Meetings Act. The question was raised about a hybrid meeting, where we could have in person as well as virtual attendees. Currently we do not have the technical capability to do both from the conference room. Hayden Anthony will check to see if there is a way to access a public internet with enough bandwidth to conduct a meeting. It was noted that the average virtual attendance has been great than pre-COVID in-person meetings. A suggestion was made to table the discussion until we can develop a technical solution. We will remain meeting via Teams for now.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Legislative Issues. Links to current bills were provided in the agenda for individual review.
- Legal Issues. Information about the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program was briefly discussed. Art Kaff explained that the Pro Bono program is an important resource for our veterans, and he has made several veterans aware of the program and provided information. Colonel Druell announced that APG's Legal Client Services are open as of 22 February for Retirees.
- Programs and Outreach
  - The Commission provided support to veterans on a variety of issues. Rachel Pederson noted that she has been forwarding all requests to the Commission. Hayden Anthony aided veterans on tax and vaccine inquiries.
  - The federal VA Maryland website (<https://www.maryland.va.gov/services/covid-19-vaccines.asp>) and hotline (800-865-2441) are open for COVID-19 vaccine information and appointments. Veterans are being advised to check frequently as the information is being updated.
- Public Events and Recognition.
  - Mission BBQ will offer free meals to Viet Nam veterans on March 29<sup>th</sup>.
  - Simon Ballard provided information and a flyer on Maryland Department of Labor Hiring Veterans and training opportunities.
  - Colonel Druell described the event and said the proceeds will go to Gold Star Mothers Program.

## **MEMBER UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Hayden Anthony reminded members that the 2021 Veterans Resource Fair is scheduled for November 13<sup>th</sup> at the Bel Air Armory. He has coordinated for the facility.
- Jennifer Button reported that the Library is open beginning March 8<sup>th</sup> for visitors, 50% capacity, at three locations: Bel Air, Norrisville, and Aberdeen. More information is available on the library website.
- Art Kaff has been posting job information and vaccination updates on the Commission Facebook site.
- Bill Montgomery asked when the Soldier for Life TAP briefings will be returning to in-person. Colonel Druell said he would check.
- Colonel Druell said APG is working toward 100% services open on June 1<sup>st</sup>, but the date may need to be adjusted depending on conditions. Facilities are opening, with room capacity adjusted by social distancing requirements. Vaccines are being distributed as available. The Gold Star Spouses and Family Monument to Monument Run will be run virtually on April 9-11. So far 317 have

signed up, and there is room for 700. More information is on the APG Facebook page and Charm City Run Bel Air.

- 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.

### **FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Next meeting is scheduled for April 1, 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 7:30pm.

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](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)