



HARFORD COUNTY COMMISSION ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Meeting Minutes

From

April 1, 2021

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Robert Brown at 6:30PM via MS Teams.

Attending: Bob Brown, Hayden Anthony, Lisa Brown, Art Kaff, Dennis Miller, Jennifer Button, Bill Montgomery, Robert Appleby, Denise Perry, Colonel Druell, and Councilman Andre Johnson (liaison) Janice Cassidy

Excused: Scott Kearby, Pam Silcox, Mike Ray, Deacon Vic Petrosino

Guests: Bart Kennedy, Simon Ballard, and Joe Giordano.

Welcome & Opening Comments:

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Minutes from the March 4th meeting were approved as amended. Bill Montgomery making the motion to approve and Hayden Anthony second.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Joe Giordano, Project Opportunity, provided an update on the ongoing course. There are eight veterans in the course who are due to graduate May 19th. Mr. Giordano gave a summary of their business ventures. In 2022 there will be two courses including one for military spouses.

OLD BUSINESS:

- MOAA Community Project Update. MOAA will be contacting the HCCOVA team of Jennifer Button and Lisa Brown soon to begin planning the poster and essay contest project.
- Jennifer Button has been meeting with Mike Ray to continue developing the Veterans Discount Book. She asked if anyone could assist with contacting Karen Austin since Ms. Austin developed a discount book previously.

NEW BUSINESS

- Legislative Issues.
 - Congressional Budget Office Proposals, listed in the agenda were read. Mr. Bart Kennedy said he would check into them for the next meeting.

- Art Kaff acknowledged the legislation passed to expand coverage under the Saves Lives Act to spouses and caregivers. The SAVE LIVES Act allows the VA to continue to vaccinate all veterans, anyone who served in the U.S. military regardless of their Character of Discharge.
- Bill Montgomery asked if anyone was providing Maryland State legislative updates. No one is specifically responsible to do that. Hayden Anthony suggested we contact Maryland Senator Bob Cassilly's office to see if they could provide updates. Councilman Johnson said he would assist with any protocol issues with contact the Senator's office.
- Legal Issues. Information regarding the three new presumptive Agent Orange conditions were briefly discussed. Impacted veterans are encouraged to submit claims now.
- Programs and Outreach
 - The Commission continues to provide support and assistance to veterans for claims, health care questions, vaccination information and employment.
 - The 2021 Veterans Resource Fair is scheduled for November 13th at the Bel Air Armory. A "Save the Date" flyer was shown. The committee will be monitoring Covid-19 restrictions to see if a different venue may be required.
 - The VBA office in Baltimore is still by appointment only.
 - Chairman Brown provided an overview of the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Virtual Implementation Academy he attended. There will be several state-wide and some local initiatives that will start over the next year. More information will be forthcoming.
 - Chairman Brown introduced the Crisis Intercept Mapping project that Harford County Government will be starting with the Maryland VA and the Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Technical Assistance Center. Harford County will be one of 10 local governments in the US participating in this pilot to map crisis care systems in the community.
- Information for the County Executive and/or County Council. The Veterans Commission Annual Report will be presented in June. All Commission members are requested to provide an approximate number of volunteer hours and a list of projects they participate in, in support of veterans and their family members. Information should be submitted to Chairman Brown no later than 21 May.
- Public Events and Recognition.
 - The Bel Air Memorial Day ceremony will be held May 31st, but at a limited scale. The Veterans Commission will set up a pop-up tent and serve refreshments that meet Covid-19 protocols. Hayden Anthony will contact the County Executive's office to secure a wreath for posting during the event. If anyone knows of other Memorial Day ceremonies, please send the information to members and Art Kaff for posting on Facebook.
 - Colonel Druell gave information on the Gold Star Families Monument to Monument run, which was conducted April 5-11. There were 722 runners registered, including 31 Gold Star families. Funds will go back to the Gold Star Veterans Survivor Outreach program.
 - The Bel Air 4th of July parade is a "go." The Veterans Commission will march in the parade, and family members can march as well.
 - Colonel Druell will change command on 23 July. During the transition CSM Drewitt will provide continuity to the Commission. Colonel Johnny Casiano will be the new Garrison Commander, coming from 2nd SFAB, Ft. Bragg, NC.

MEMBER UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Jennifer Button reported that the Library is fully open with hours of 10am-6pm Monday through Friday and 10am-3pm Saturday. At this time, all the programs will remain virtual. Check the HCPL website for more information.
- Art Kaff posted information about the Covid-19 vaccinations, training programs and jobs on the Commission Facebook site. There has been a lot of interest in the vaccine information.
- Bill Montgomery will reach out to Senator Cassilly's office once he is cleared to do so.
- Denise Perry is working with a group that is developing survivor benefit seminars for retirees and veterans. She will update our group once more information becomes available.
- Janice Cassidy stated that Harford Community College has discussed reopening, but nothing firm.
- Colonel Druell gave updates for Aberdeen Proving Ground. The Army Emergency Relief (AER) campaign is ongoing and active. AER provides back to veterans. Let him know of any APG issues or items for support we need help with. Referring to the Crisis Intercept Mapping project, he said he would check on support from someone in the Army Substance Abuse Program office.

FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Next meeting is scheduled for May 6, 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