



**Harford County Commission on Veterans Affairs (HCCOVA)
Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2020**

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

Attending: Bob Brown, Robert Appleby, Lisa Brown, Jennifer Button, Janice Cassady, Art Kaff, Scott Kearby, Bill Montgomery, Mike Ray, Deacon Vic Petrosino

Excused: Councilman Andre Johnson (Liaison), Hayden Anthony, Dennis Miller, Denise Perry, Pam Silcox

Guests: Simon Ballard, Harford County Department of Community Services

Kiple — Carol, Senator Andy Harris' office
Randy Chapman, veteran

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 and welcomed guests to the meeting.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes from the December HCCOVA meeting were sent to commission members for review prior to the February meeting (Note: No HCCOVA was held in January). As no corrections were noted, Scott Kearby motioned for approval of the minutes and Robert Appleby seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved by commission members.

Guest Speakers: None scheduled.

OLD BUSINESS

Veteran Access for military privileges–

Chairman Brown provided information about the new Veterans Health identification card. Veterans who have this card can use it for access to the PX, commissary, MWR facilities and other services. Chairman Brown shared an article on the card with commission members. Carol (Senator Harris' office) said that his office will also disseminate information about the card.

HC Public Schools Observance of Veterans Day 2020 – Lisa Brown reported to commission members the following information:

- Calendar Committee proposed calendar included schools closed on November 11th in observance of Veterans Day.

- Individuals & representatives from veteran's organizations sent in comments &/or spoke at BOE meetings in support of the school closure. This would provide an opportunity (as this past year) for school-aged children to participate or attend an event honoring our veterans.
- After lengthy debate about the start date of the school year, BOE members (5-3 vote) chose to start the school year after Labor Day, requiring several other changes to the school calendar.
- The final BOE approved revision has Veterans Day as an early dismissal, with elementary schools dismissing at either 12:30 or 1 PM (4th tier schools).
- Due to change in designation & late nature of dismissal times, community events will either not take place on Veterans Day or will preclude participation/attendance of school-aged children and their families.

NEW BUSINESS

Veterans Information

Benefits Fair – Thursday, April 30th at Havre de Grace American Legion

No detailed role for HCCOVA except publicity & support at the fair if available.

Legislative Issues

Army Alliance Legislative Tracking Report – this report provides information on current legislative issues affecting active military service members, veterans & their families. Under consideration in upcoming weeks is income tax credits and exemptions for veterans

Programs & Outreach Events

United Way personal care boxes – boxes containing basic household goods & personal care items were compiled by the United Way and available for distribution to veterans in transitional housing at Perry Point as well as for homeless outreach. Hayden coordinated HC transportation to pick-up boxes from warehouse in Baltimore & deliver to Perry Point.

VFW "Sports Clips Help a Hero Scholarship" program. Applications for the fall semester will be accepted January 1st through April 30th. Additional information can be found at HelpAHero@vfw.org.

Information for the County Executive and County Council

Annual Report – the HCCOVA Annual Report will be presented to the County Executive & County Council in June. The format of the report will be somewhat different this year & Chairman Brown requested HCCOVA members to forward pictures of veteran-related events & activities they have participated in during this past year.

Public Events & Recognition

Veterans Resource Fair – Saturday, October 31st at Bel Air Armory. Theme for the Fair : Year of the Woman Veteran

DAR Outstanding Veteran Volunteer – State winner is Capt'n Jim. Date for the ceremony TBA; will find out in the spring if he is the national winner.

Comments from Appointed Members:

Jennifer Button – provided information on the Bel Air Downtown Alliance's *Hometown Heroes* banners program. Banners honor military service members who are currently serving or have previously served. Banners are displayed for 3 years & then given to the person who submitted the request. Application & fee information is available on the BA Downtown Alliance website.

Jennifer also shared HCPL has information cards on the veterans & senior citizen tax credit (property taxes); MG Kilgo read to children during the HCPL Fairy Tale & Superhero Festival; and the Chesapeake Therapeutic Riding Center has a *Horses & Heroes* program to assist veterans (under care at Perry Point) suffering from PTSD, traumatic brain injury, loss of limb, sexual assault or substance abuse recovery.

Art Kaff – recently posted on the Facebook page: various resources available to veterans; Wreaths Across America; VA ID card (PX & commissary privileges); Sgt. Hinton recognition; job opportunities; Veterans Benefit Fair in Havre de Grace. Currently 448 Likes on the HCCOVA Facebook page.

Bill Montgomery – participated in Soldier for Life TAP (Transition Assistance Program) class & stated the program has been allocated additional funding so there will be TAP classes 6 times/year at APG.

Janice Cassady – provided information on a bill coming up for vote at the state legislature that allows veterans, spouses & dependents of veterans to only be charged with in-county tuition rates, even if they live outside the county. This would include on-line courses.

Mike Ray – stated the Chamber of Commerce Military Appreciation Luncheon will be held on May 21st at Richlin Ballroom.

Deacon Vic Petrosino – presided at 3 military service/veteran funerals: Zachary Owen (Army veteran); Bernie Clausen (Navy veteran); and Franklin Barnes (Korean War veteran).

Final Announcements

The next HCCOVA meeting will be held on Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 6:30 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Prepared by Lisa Brown