

HARFORD COUNTY COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
(HCCOVA)

2015 - 2016 Annual Activity Report
of
HARFORD COUNTY COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
(HCCOVA)

Harford County Councilman: James V. McMahan Jr., Liaison
Chair: Mr. Johnny Boker
Vice Chair: Mr. Larry Owens

Presented:
Council Legislative Session on June 21, 2016

HARFORD COUNTY COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS (HCCOVA)

Purpose and Authority:

Charter:

To research, assemble, analyze and disseminate information and educational materials relating to activities and programs that will assist in meeting the needs of all veterans and their families;

To institute and conduct educational and other programs, meetings and conferences to promote the rights and opportunities for veterans;

To advise the County Executive and County Council on the status of programs and services in the state and County related to the needs of veterans and their families;

To assist in planning appropriate public acknowledgement of the contributions made by veterans and assist in planning commemoration activities recognizing the contributions made by veterans.

Bottom Line Upfront

The Commission is a volunteer organization formed of several well educated as well as decorated Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen as well as close family relatives of veterans who have served in their own meaningful capacity. Each member has dedicated and volunteered since the forming of the commission. Most Commission members still hold day jobs, attend school and are part of other veteran related clubs in support of veterans such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and many others

Over **500** hours of outreach service by scheduled meetings, walk-ups & cold meetings in the public and during city functions such as First Fridays, city held Farmers Markets, VA hospitals and interactions on Aberdeen Proving Grounds just to name a few.

Functions, Activities & Accomplishments.

Highlights as an outreach commission

- Gold Star Mothers Recognition
- Memorial Day Representation
- APG Retirement Day
- Flag Day & US Army Birthday
- Veterans with PTSD & Maryland Conservatory of Music
- Baltimore VA efforts with Director Dr. Sarah for PTSD and Music Therapy
- Veterans Court's Meetings with judge & staff
- Outreach to 327 by name veterans in Harford County, 623 without name.
- Briefings to DLLR

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- Briefings from the DLLR
- Attend Veteran's funerals
- Hospital and Citizens Care visits during holidays
- Social Media; Facebook

The Commission by Section and Sub-Committee

Chaplain

Deacon Vic	410-688-7105	deaconvic@stmargaret.org
Rabbi Kushi Schusterman	443-353-9718	rabbi@harfordChabad.org
Reverend Rick Haynes	410-752-2450	revrick19@yahoo.com

Veterans Benefits

Bill Suchting	410-652-1431	suchtingh@battelle.org
Bob Brown	410-322-2760	Brownr6@juno.com
Jim Castelli	410-838-3280	jpcastelli@yahoo.com
Hayden Anthony	443-417-7278	haydenanthony@msn.com
Pam Silcox	410-459-2003	pssilcox@comcast.net

Technology (including social media)

Art Kaff	443-528-2805	ackaff@verizon.net
Bill Elliott	410-838-9893	belliott@harford.edu

Education

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Jim Castelli	410-838-3280	jpcastelli@yahoo.com

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Bill Montgomery	717-701-1194	jdoe8015@gmail.com

Employment

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Bob Brown	410-322-2760	Brownr6@juno.com
Mary Worthington	443-866-3419	mkmoses50@gmail.com
Larry Kimble	410-952-2610	samrman@aol.com

Legal

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Larry Kimble	410-952-2610	samrman@aol.com

Community Outreach

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Scott Kearby	410-734-6548	sakearby@harfordcountymd.gov
Larry Kimble	410-952-2610	samrman@aol.com
Larry Owens	410-937-4438	larrylowens@comcast.net (vice)

Facebook and social media

The Commission took itself to new 21st century leadership in many ways. Empowering one such subcommittee was the Facebook site.

The HCCOVA Facebook site.

<https://www.facebook.com/HarfordVeterans12>

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With over 175 new articles and post(s) relating to the successes of Harford County Government as well as opportunities and outreach for our veterans, this free website has enabled both young and leveled veterans to gain information on events as well as keep up with current veteran and Harford county veteran related stories. The site boasts 230+ likes which equates to Harford County Veterans who follow the news feeds and relay them to others by way of sharing.

ROTC Efforts due to strong support:

The president of Susquehanna Chapter, MOAA stated that through diligent efforts on behalf of the Harford Commission on Veterans Affairs produced an update on JROTC. At the Board of Education meeting the board approved the submission of an application for JROTC by the superintendent and that means movement forward

Many thanks to the commission members that attended past 11 April (Board of Education), BoE meeting and to Jim Castelli for speaking positively about his experience working with JROTC, during the public comment portion of the meeting.

Speakers and lectures that have educated the commission:

Harford County /MD Veterans Business Start-ups (MR. Henry, HC office of Economic Development Rt. 40)

Ms. Janice Cassidy, Harford Community College (HCC) Coordinator for Military and Veteran Services gave a presentation to the Commission on educational benefits and services at HCC for veteran students, military members, and their families

MD Dept. of Employment security

Mr. Ingram, direct hire coordinator

Mrs. Edmonds, Employer recruiter for Veterans Hiring (now retired)

MS Cassidy from HCC: VA Educational Benefits

LTC(r) Comeau (MD Attorney General office): Veterans Court

Presented to HC Courts presented for Veterans Courts in Harford County ; Establishment pending

Mr. Russell Biondo: MD State Veterans Service Office;

Ms. Christine Brown, Cybersecurity Career Navigator, Harford Community College, was introduced to the group. (chbrown@harford.edu/ 443.356.0363) Ms. Brown highlighted the “Cyber Defense Certificate Program” at HCC.

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Events enabling outreach by the commission:

- **Retiree Appreciation Day** Saturday, May 14, 2016 –on Aberdeen Proving Ground
- **Bel Air Independence Day Parade** – Mary Worthington is coordinating this
- **Veterans Information Fair** – scheduled for Saturday, October 8

Veterans Fair (Oct. 2016)

The fair will bring outreach to all services and information from education to health benefits as well as others for veterans as well as their families.

Future Missions: Items under Action:

Toys for tots:

The Commission is attempting to help the Marine Reserves Toy for Tots in finding a suitable storage area for next Christmas (2017) toys. We are working to bring this to the attention of the County Admin and a letter of support would follow if needed.

JROTC

In direct support with and from Mr. Jeff Brock, the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Committee Chairman for the Susquehanna Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). The MOAA is composed of former and retired officers and warrant officers of the military services in Harford and Cecil counties.

The Commission as well as the JROTC Committee have worked with the Harford County Public School (HCPS) system the last two years to establish the first JROTC unit in Harford County. On the 9th of May, the School Board approved the school system to submit an application and they are in the process of completing the application.

There are over 240 applications pending, so it may take significant time before HCPS is offered an opportunity to start a unit. Budget shortages and the continuing sequestration budget caps are impediments to starting new units. We remain bright and optimistic that the future holds an opportunity for Harford County.

HCPS is submitting an application for establishing a unit at Joppatowne High School. We would formally request funds and support of funds for a JROTC start up.

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Bel Air MD Independence Day Parade

The Harford County Commission on Veteran's Affairs will be in attendance in the **Town of Bel Air Independence Day Parade**. The theme for this year's parade is "Honoring our Home-Town Heroes."

Ms. Mary Worthington has stated that we are registered for Monday evening, July 4, 2016, beginning at 6:00 pm.

Future plans, missions and follow-up actions

- July 2016: VA burial benefits (Chaplin VIC) ; VA Nursing Home (Elder Health Care solutions)
- Art Kaff of Legal: Spousal rights and benefits under VA, and VA home loans.
- Disabled American Veterans requested a wreath be placed at the HC School board Veterans Monument
- July 2016 – Janice Chance (American Gold Star Mothers); Michael Farlow (Survivor Outreach Services, APG)
- Gold Star Mothers Memorial in Havre de Grace's Tydings Park (2017)