



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

## **Meeting Minutes**

**From**

**February 3, 2022**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Robert Brown at 6:32 PM.

**Attending:** Hayden Anthony, Simon Ballard, Bob Brown, Lisa Brown, Jennifer Button, Ryan Koch (representative for Councilman Johnson), Art Kaff, Dennis Miller, Bill Montgomery, Denise Perry, COL Casiano, (APG Garrison Commander)

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

**Guests:** No guests

**Pledge of Allegiance** lead by Hayden Anthony

**Opening Prayer** read by Robert Brown (on behalf of Deacon Vic Petrosino)

### **Welcome & Opening Comments:**

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

**Mission:** *To advocate for our veterans and their families and connect them to resources through outreach and education.*

**Vision:** *A Harford County community that is responsive to the needs of Veterans and their families.*

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Minutes from the December 2, 2021, meeting were approved. Denise Perry made the motion to approve, and Hayden Anthony seconded the motion. Ryan Koch will post the minutes and agendas to the website.

**GUEST SPEAKERS:** None. Chairman Brown encouraged members to invite guest speakers to meetings that can present information of interest & importance to veterans.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- **Wreaths Across America** – December 18<sup>th</sup>
  - coordinates wreath-laying ceremonies at more than 2,100 locations to honor veterans, including at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.
  - local ceremony & wreath laying held at Bel Air Memorial Gardens-approximately 1200 wreaths placed on veteran graves (total of 1600 veteran gravesites)

- Havre de Grace: after an opening ceremony at Mt. Erin Cemetery, wreath laying continued at Angel Hill Cemetery and at St. James Cemetery. COL Casiano was guest speaker at Havre de Grace ceremony.
- DAV funds all the wreaths for Havre De Grace cemeteries & can assist with additional wreaths for BA Memorial Gardens.
- wreath laying also held at Aberdeen cemetery
- several commission members attended 1 or more of these ceremonies
- **Harford County Veterans Collaborative**
  - held on January 11<sup>th</sup> - virtual meeting
  - Simon reported this session was attended mostly by providers, but informational & good networking opportunity
  - speakers included Crisis Center, VA Perry Point, APG, & the Veterans Center
  - plan to attract more veterans to attend future sessions
  - next Central MD Veterans Collaborative session: “Housing & Shelter” -virtual meeting on Tuesday, February 8<sup>th</sup> from 1-2:30 PM
  - Harford County element will focus on information sharing & collaboration between agencies at the local level, including the Community Action Agency, HC Housing & Economic Development, APG Credit Union (VA loans)

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- Legislative Issues – Robert Brown provided follow-up about the Maryland Military Coalition 2022 goals, including:
  - reduction/elimination of state tax on Uniformed Services Retired Pay (HB461)
- Legal Issues. None.
- Programs and Outreach
  - Point in Time Count – helps identify the number of homeless veterans & provide care packages, information & services. VA didn’t conduct this year; however, Harford Family House completed count with assistance of the HC Sheriff. Pam Silcox will coordinate with Harford Family House to gather items & create care packages for distribution.
  - Health services:
    - VA Maryland – currently promoting use of telehealth appointments & curtailing elective surgeries
    - VBA – public contact, in person visits by appointment
    - CRC (Baltimore VA) -walk-in clinic operational with focus on mental health; Heather Mitchell (Director/Social Worker) requests donations of underwear, socks & women’s clothing for the Clothing Closet.
  - Harford County Property Tax Credit: retired military service members over the age of 65 can apply for a 20% property tax credit; renewable for up to 5 years

- Assistance requests received during January – several requests received by Councilman Johnson’s office & referred to Veterans Commission for action/follow-up, including requests for help getting DD214 (available through request to National Archives.)
- Information for the County Executive and/or County Council – Janice Cassady retired, so opening for Harford Community College representative on Veterans Commission
- Public Events and Recognition
  - Unaccompanied Veterans Burial: Friday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at 1 PM at Garrison Forest Cemetery. Art & Denise will attend.
  - APG MWR offers free webinars on a variety of topics

### **MEMBER UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Bill Montgomery attended the Pre-Retirement Briefing at APG & joined the APG Retirement Council, as well as the HC Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee; suggested that commission could be synergy point for various veterans connected organizations & events.
- Art Kaff mentioned that he continually posts items on Facebook including job postings, as well as resources to help veterans during these trying times. He also provided information on the Korean Ambassador of Peace Medal: medal offered by the South Korean government in gratitude to Korean War veterans for their service. Veterans or their next of kin can apply for this medal.
- Lisa Brown announced the HCPS BOE voted to make Veterans Day an early dismissal for students and staff members. Although they discussed the possibility of a school closure for the holiday, BOE members expressed that it was important to be in school on Veterans Day for students to learn about our military service members.
- Denise Perry reported that she is tracking several legislative bills, especially those centered on disabled veterans & the Women Veterans Memorial.
- Dennis Miller said he joined the Goddard Veterans Advisory Committee which coordinates events & activities for veterans.
- Colonel Casiano announced the US Army Garrison launched a Facebook page, adding another information source to the communication & messaging priority for the post. He also reported the next APG Community Exchange will be held on February 24<sup>th</sup> at the Top of the Bay. Attendance is still limited to 50 people but anticipate being able to expand number of attendees for the April/May meetings.
- Simon Ballard (now official commission member) discussed Project Homeless Connect – Harford County collects toiletry items every Fall, with items donated to VA Perry Point & travel size items donated to homeless project(s).

### **FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Next meeting is scheduled for March 3, 2022. Information will be presented with the agenda on any specific meeting requirements.
- Meetings are scheduled for the first Thursday of the month unless otherwise announced. The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.