



# JAMES V. "CAPT'N JIM" MCMAHAN COMMISSION ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

## Meeting Minutes

From

**April 7, 2022**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Robert Brown at 6:33 PM.

**Attending:** Bob Brown, Hayden Anthony, Simon Ballard, Lisa Brown, COL Casiano, Councilman Johnson, Art Kaff, Dennis Miller, Bill Montgomery, Denise Perry, , Pam Silcox

**Excused:** Deacon Vic Petrosino, Scott Kearby, Jennifer Button, Mike Ray

**Guests:** No guests

**Pledge of Allegiance** lead by Robert Brown

**Opening Prayer** lead by Robert Brown

### **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 March 2, 2022, meeting were approved. Bill Montgomery made the motion to approve, Pam Silcox seconded the motion. Ryan Koch will post the minutes and agenda to the website.

**GUEST SPEAKERS:** None.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- Donations for Homeless project
  - No updates at this time; awaiting response from agency
- Lion's Club
  - Bob was asked to be the guest speaker at Bel Air chapter monthly meeting
  - Presented information about services & resources available to veterans
  - many of the attendees did not know the extent of resources available

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Legislative Issues –
  - Federal:
    - Burn pit exposure legislation: bill passed by the House of Representative to expand benefits for veterans who served near burn pits in Iraq &/or Afghanistan. Legislation being reviewed/considered in the Senate; if passed, legislation would become part of the PACT Act.
  - State:
    - Discussion on current and proposed reduction of state tax on retired pay
  - Additional legislative issues discussed: Women’s Memorial & NARFE (National Association of Retired Federal Employees)
- Legal Issues. None.
- Programs and Outreach
  - Gilchrist Salute to Service and Welcome Home – We Honor Veterans
    - Topic: hospice issues with focus on veterans
    - Councilman Johnson was invited to the event
    - Event was held at Martins West with approximately 500 people in attendance; normally close to 2000 attendees
    - Various veteran age groups were present
    - Next steps: Meet with their leadership team and discuss possible collaboration to help facilitate programs for veterans – establish footprint in Harford County (<https://gilchristcares.org/events/welcome-home-celebration/>) and [We Honor Veterans](#)
  - Aetna Insurance (CVS = parent company)
    - Councilman Johnson has been in discussion on collaboration in a possible veteran housing initiative
    - County has been reporting low counts on homeless veterans
      - Biggest issue is identification
    - Simon suggested linking up with the Homeless Veteran planning committee
    - Some funding is available through the state.
    - CVS wants to provide employment, education & training opportunities
      - Offering free 16-week pharmacy tech program
    - Request to add both programs/initiatives to APG TAPS program and Serving Together network
  - Serving Together
    - Working with corporations, profit and non-profit
    - Working on building county network
  - VA Mental Health Council (VAMHCS)
    - Bob attended meeting on April 6<sup>th</sup>
    - Seeking to build network
    - Looking for feedback from users on their experience with VA mental health services
  - Harford County & State VSO’s:
    - Maryland VA: finalizing resource guide on assistance programs for veterans
    - Maryland VFW: Working to upgrade medal for Dorrie Miller from Navy Cross to Medal of Honor (1<sup>st</sup> African-American to receive Naval Cross for valor during Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor)

- Crisis Intercept Mapping (CIM) for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) Suicide Prevention:
  - National program; Harford County is pilot for the Maryland
  - Objective: provide effective crisis care by creating visual map of local crisis systems & identify resources, gaps & opportunities for implementing best practices at each intercept point.
  - Goal: diverting at risk SMVF to appropriate & effective prevention & support services, including: first contact, acute care, care transitions, & ongoing treatment and recovery
  - Connecting resources within Harford County and identify gaps
    - Nodes, resources, and outreach
    - Issues: do organizations try to identify veterans?; would a veteran benefit more from VA resources or community resources?
  - Military competency training for caregivers
    - How to talk to veterans
    - “translating” military experiences/competencies
- Harford County Veterans Collaborative
  - Joint effort between Serving Together, HC Department of Community Services, & County Executive Barry Glassman’s office
  - Goal: collaboration between service providers & community organizations to provide resources & information to HC veterans and their families
  - Next session: April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1:00-2:30pm (virtual)
  - Theme: Housing – presenters/attendees include VA home loans, Harford County Planning Committee
  - Challenge: marketing the Collaborative sessions for increased end-user (veteran/families) attendance – flyers posted at HCPL branches; Facebook
  - <https://servingtogetherproject.org/COLLABORATIVES/>
- Website and social media
  - Request to track county website traffic
    - Bob will reach out to website POC
  - Facebook traffic is being tracked
  - Discussion on setting up other multiple social media accounts
    - Discussion on linking multiple accounts
    - Need permission from county government
- Other outreach
  - Discussion on cards to hand out with resource information
    - Some cards are on hand for general information, not veteran specific
- Resource guide
  - A county specific guide does not currently exist
- Assistance requests received during March
  - several requests were received – primarily about VA claims
  - veterans are encouraged to work with VSO when submitting claims; DAV representatives will go to veterans house to assist with the claim paperwork
- Information for the County Executive and/or County Council

- Public Events and Recognition
  - Veterans Resource Fair: Saturday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, Bel Air Armory
    - Save the Date flyer in final stages
    - Another event is scheduled shortly after
    - A smaller vendor list will be easier to manage
    - Recommendation to serve lunch and finish lunch earlier to ease on cleanup
    - Discussion on possible theme: “Remembering the Families of our Fallen Heroes”
    - MOAA Poster/Essay Contest winners will be announced at Resource Fair
  - APG Retiree Event May 21
    - Will be held at the Rec Center on APG
    - Focus: benefits
    - Retiree Council
      - Possible synergies between councils
      - Focusing on what to do between events
      - Council is limited to focus on retirees (not all veterans) according to Army Regulations
        - Linked to funding
      - APG Retiree Services Office – resources for retirees & spouses
      - Discussions being held on future of Kirk Clinic
  - Memorial Day Program at Shamrock Park, Bel Air
    - Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup>
    - Wreath laying ceremony & water, cookie and Save the Date flyer distribution
      - Volunteers to participate: Dennis and Hayden
  - Women Veterans/Inclusion Program (MDVA Women Veteran/Inclusion Program) and survey
    - Panel discussion slated for June 8<sup>th</sup> from 10am to 12pm
    - Request for panel members, women veterans
      - Volunteer: Denise Perry
    - [MDVA Women Veterans/Inclusion Program](#)
  - Fallen Heroes Tribute Project
    - Discussion on taking new project.
      - Tabled until next month’s meeting
      - Need volunteer to lead

## **MEMBER UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Art Kaff stated a veteran healthcare webinar will be held on April 27<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM sponsored by the VA, with focus on Post 9-11 veterans’ health care & mental health. He also attended an event celebrating the month of the military child.

- Dennis Miller stated he has been appointed primary lead to the External Subcommittee for Goddard's Veteran Advisory Committee
- Pam Silcox attended at a FORSCOM recruit military program and upcoming hiring fair – providing employment opportunities for veterans & their spouses. She also spoke about the looming housing crisis and how BAH is not keeping up with rising rental rates.
- Colonel Casiano questioned if the APG Public Affairs Office (PAO) is doing enough to amplify & streamline communications about events, programs, resources. May need to set-up a conduit to improve communication up the chain of command, as well as out to the end user. He has also been hearing that some mental health providers in the area are not accepting TRICARE insurance, making it harder for family members to find mental health services.
- Bob Brown has received word that Harford Community College has hired a new person to fill the veteran's services/coordinator vacancy & serve as the HCC representative to the HCCOVA.

### **FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Next meeting is scheduled for May 5, 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 8:00 pm.