



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

## **Meeting Minutes From September 1, 2022**

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

**Attending:** Bob Brown, Hayden Anthony, Simon Ballard, Jennifer Button, Art Kaff, Scott Kearby, Dennis Miller, Bill Montgomery, Deacon Vic Petrosino, Pam Silcox, Ryan Koch (representative for Councilman Johnson), Barbara Travers

**Excused:** Lisa Brown, Denise Perry, Mike Ray, Colonel Casiano

**Guests:** Quinten Johnson (APG PAO)

**Pledge of Allegiance** led by Robert Brown

**Opening Prayer** led by 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 August 4, 2022, meeting was approved. Scott made motion to approve, Jennifer seconded the motion. Ryan Koch will post the minutes and agenda to the website.

**GUEST SPEAKERS:** None

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- Veterans Resource Fair, November 12, 2022
  - Date locked in, working with events manager for the armory
  - Working permits for banners and health dept for food services
  - Sent save the date notifications to the vendors
  - Essay and poster contest, added new categories to be more inclusive
    - Posted on Facebook and APG
    - Lisa is working with the food provider
  - Theme is recognizing sacrifice of military and family members
- Veterans Claims Clinic, September 7, 2022
  - Registration and sign up filled up within a couple days

- The claims people can process up to 20 claims an hour
  - Hours will be from 9-3
  - About 130 people total have registered
- The location is the Harford community College auxiliary gym
- We have asked for another Claims Clinic since this one filled up so quickly. The Veterans Alliance can only handle so many, though, and we are the second county to host one.
- A point was made that this county is underserved because we have only one State of Maryland VSO. Mike Cantrell, who serves Cecil County as well
  - Harford and Cecil counties have just under 10% of the adult population who are veterans
- Perry Point VA Donations
  - After discussing with County Officials, decision was made to defer donations now, and will roll up with the county wide November program
- Project Opportunity
  - Chairman Brown attended the first meeting. There are seats for 10 people, after a selection process. The time commitment for participants is about 10-20 hour a week
- APG Immersion Day
  - Bob and Hayden attended, along with several political leaders from the area.
  - It was an opportunity to receive briefings by APG North and South officials and learn more about what goes on at APG and how that tie into the surrounding community.
- Maryland VA Collaborative: Interactive Discussion on Behavioral Health
  - The format for the virtual meetings is changing.
    - There will now be a single monthly collaborative, with each county hosting the meeting on a rotational basis.
    - Harford County will host the November 9<sup>th</sup> meeting with “Legal help” as the subject. Veterans court may also be included in this topic

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Legislative Issues
  - PACT Act. New legislation expands presumptive disabilities, VA care, and benefits to Veterans suffering from more than 20 toxic exposure-related conditions. Learn more by visiting [VA.gov/PACT](http://VA.gov/PACT) or calling [1-800-MyVA411](tel:1-800-MyVA411).
    - Burn pit conditions are now presumption
    - VA will not start to process until January 1<sup>st</sup>
  - Major Richard Star Act
    - If someone is medically retired before 20 years
      - Benefits will now not be taxed
  - A note was made that in Delaware they have reduced property taxes as an incentive to encourage military retirees to relocate to Delaware
  - Arlington will be full for in-ground burials soon
    - There are proposals before the Secretary of the Army to change the interment rules for who may be buried at Arlington National Cemetery.
- Legal Updates
  - PACT info is posted on Facebook
  - Question on Facebook asking about spouse benefits. The Commission discussed with the VA and provided an answer.

- Programs and Outreach
  - VAMHCS VSO Congressional Stakeholder Information. Email with attachments sent to all Commission members on 19 August.
  - VA Information online “Welcome Kit” [Print Out Your VA Welcome Kit | Veterans Affairs](#)
  - Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Information sheets and rack cards were made available during the meeting. If anyone wants more, contact Chairman Brown.
  - Military Veterans Outdoor Showcase September 17<sup>th</sup> at North Point Park beach area. 10am-2pm. Registration: 410-282-6144, or [steven.fyfe@va.gov](mailto:steven.fyfe@va.gov)
  - The VA now has a Website to check status on claim or appeal: <https://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status/>
  - VAMHCS Baltimore MC is undergoing renovations to the parking garage. Currently parking is at Metro west, with a shuttle provided. Renovations should be complete by October, 2022
  - VA removing kiosk used to sign in
    - Moving to using App, with posters showing how to register.
    - In person registration is still available at the clinic desks.
    - Information sheets were provided at the meeting.
- Assistance requests received during the past month
  - Continue to receive several requests for help with claims assistance and asking about signing up for healthcare.
  - Assisting with finding claims help for an out of county relative of elderly Harford County resident who recently passed away.
  - Working with relative from WW1 veteran regarding donation of medals and other memorabilia not wanted by family
- Information for the County Executive and/or County Council
  - Green Light Project
    - Green Light Project is a national program promoted by the National Association of Counties to recognize veterans during the period 7-13 November. The Chamber of Commerce asked if the Veterans Commission would take this on.
    - Veterans Commission agreed that we would support and coordinate.
    - During the period 7-13 November, government buildings are lit in green for military appreciation
    - Request to bring to Councilman Johnson’s attention. Harford County Governmental and Community relations Director offered to help. Hoping for the County Executive to issue a proclamation.
- Public Events and Recognition
  - Veterans Collaborative September 14<sup>th</sup> on Employment Opportunities
  - Project Opportunity. Orientation is August 17<sup>th</sup>. First class September 7<sup>th</sup>
  - Suicide Prevention Proclamation Signing, 15 Sep. 1030, Myer Auditorium, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD. Working to bring resources to post

**MEMBER UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Ryan Koch (representative for Councilman Johnson)
  - Currently discussing amending the property tax bill for veterans and elderly. Bill will be introduced on 13 September
- Simon Ballard
  - Rack card developed for suicide prevention by the Harford County Community Services office
  - Training being coordinated for those who work with veterans by the Community Services Office. Training provided by the VAMHCS.
    - 45 signups to date
  - Office of disabilities
    - Luncheon opportunity information provided
- Arthur Kaff
  - VA Small Business grant information was posted on Facebook
- William Montgomery
  - Commissary looking into expanding hours to include Monday now
  - Transition assistance classes at APG
    - Volunteers on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday a month
    - Dress for success
    - Resume building
    - VA disability submission
  - Chamber of commerce event, Spirit of Thanks
    - Hopkins Farm
    - October 4, 5-7pm
    - Focus on APG families and veterans
    - Bill sent the flyer with registration information
- Dennis Miller
  - Attended Reveille in Baltimore, passed info on groups that attended
- Vic Petrosino (Chaplain)
  - Continuing to provide services to veterans in hospitals
    - Mostly face to face now
- Colonel Johnny Casiano –Aberdeen Proving Ground Garrison Commander? Quinten Johnson (APG PAO)
  - Oct 1<sup>st</sup> APG Fall fest, still planning
    - Will be pushing out info on APG Garrison Facebook
- Barbara Travers – Harford County Community College Representative
  - Leading edge tech training center
    - Scholarships are available for residents

## **FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Next meeting is scheduled for October 6, 2022, at 6:30 PM. 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 7:40 pm.