



Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs Meeting Summary Minutes – May 19th, 2015

I. Call to Order & Introductions:

Dan Bullis, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Dan asked for all present to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and to remain standing for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged. A POW/MIA Empty Chair is placed at all official meetings of the Commission as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all wars and conflicts involving the United States of America.

II. Approval of Minutes:

Mike Subin, Commissioner, made a motion was made to approve the April, 2015 Meeting Summary Minutes. Wayne Miller, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the April, 2015 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Update and Planning for “Welcome Home: Montgomery County Salutes Vietnam Veterans” – Merlyn Reineke, Executive Director, Montgomery County Media, and Neil Greenberger, Legislative Information Officer, Montgomery County Council

In September, 2012, the County held a recognition event to honor Montgomery County World War II veterans. The event was simulcast live on many of the County’s public cable television channels. The stories of many veterans were also recorded for a documentary that aired on Veterans Day. The event had over 500 attendees, including 200 veterans.

The County is planning to hold a similar event for Vietnam veterans on Saturday, October 24th at the Universities of Shady Grove (USG) in Rockville. USG is donating the venue which has capacity for 1,000 people. The event would be approximately 90 minutes from 10:30 a.m. to noon. A full length documentary film is currently in production. The documentary is being produced by Dan Rankin, Instructional Television Video Producer/Director Montgomery College, and Barbara Grunbaum, Producer, County Cable Montgomery. It will feature ten different interviews and portray the war, the lives it touched, and how the country changed afterwards. The producers are asking for diversity in their interviews. Portions of the documentary will be shown during the event and will be aired in full on six television channels. The event will be broadcast live across multiple television channels and will be replayed as well as available online. They have reached out to Gary Sinise to moderate the event and are inviting public officials, including President Obama. Jane McCarthy, Commissioner, suggested inviting former Senator Max Cleland to speak at the event and to include a Gold Star Mother in the interviews. Recommendations for interviewees, event speakers, and other suggestions can be sent to neil.greenberger@montgomerycountymd.gov.

They are in the early planning stages and are seeking suggestions for the event. Meryln asked for assistance in reaching out to veterans to invite them to the event. They are in the process of establishing various social media sites. Jim Campbell, Commissioner, suggested reaching out to civic, home owners, and condo associations. Neil has list of 530 contacts regarding associations. Randy Stone, Vice-Chair, suggested asking associations to hold their own smaller tributes that could lead up to the larger event in October.

Fundraising campaigns will be set up for the event. Ron Drach, Commissioner, suggested setting up various levels of sponsorship such as platinum, gold, silver, etc. for donators.

Merlyn and Neil are available to present to other groups. Dan Bullis, Chair, suggested arranging to meet with local American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars groups. Dan also suggested changing the theme from “Welcome Home” to “Thanks and Remembrance” as some Vietnam veterans resent the ‘welcome home’ mantra.

Wayne Miller, Commissioner, suggested contacting the AL and VFW motorcycle clubs. Neil said they would like to include the motorcycle clubs in the event. Mike Walsh, General Public, added that Battley Harley Davidson in Gaithersburg is willing to advertise veteran events on their website and newsletter.

He met with his peers at a meeting of PEG, comprised of Montgomery County's public, education, and government channels. PEG will be assisting in advertising the event.

Merlyn and Neil will come back to the Commission to give updates and will share additional video clips, information and press releases.

IV. Strategic Planning for 2015 Year of Montgomery County's Veterans and Their Families

- **Vietnam Memorial** – Mike Subin, Commissioner, reported that the County has located a piece of land near Wheaton Plaza that will be set aside for a Vietnam memorial. The next step is to develop a concept plan. A fundraising campaign for the memorial will be set up in the future. It is unknown at this time if the County will seek a local nonprofit to hold the funds or if the County will have control.
- **Montgomery Cable TV Show "Homefront"** – Due to scheduling conflicts County Executive Isiah Leggett has been unable to tape the first show for "Homefront". It was suggested that other shows be taped in the meantime so there are several lined up to air once the County Executive tapes his show.
- **Veterans Education Partnership** – The group continues to meet and work on identifying student veterans. The focus is turning towards employment of veterans. The Universities of Shady Grove are working with a major employer within Montgomery County to identify jobs for veterans. It was noted that veterans find it difficult to translate their military skills to civilian skills.
- **Gazette** – Dan suggested contacting the Gazette to print a military-oriented column where the Commission can provide news and information.

V. Chair and Vice Chair Report:

Dan Bullis, Chair, reported that a letter regarding the Purple Line has been sent to Governor Hogan.

Dan reported that The Department of Veterans Affairs along with leaders from national and local veterans service organizations, corporate employers and government agencies, announced the launch of the [Veterans Economic Communities Initiative](#), an effort focused in a total of 50 U.S. Cities to promote economic success for veterans (VECI). Dan and Betsy will be meeting with a VA rep this week to discuss the possibility of including Montgomery County.

VI. Unfinished Business: None.

VII. New Business: None.

VIII. Roundtable:

Mike Subin reported that there was a meeting with homeless providers in Montgomery County to discuss "Zero:16", which is a campaign that will work with 50 communities to bring chronic and veteran homelessness to zero by 2016. The County has appropriated \$500,000 for this effort in FY16. A plan must be submitted to the County Council by July 15th detailing how the monies are to be allocated. At the last point-in-time count 24 homeless veterans were identified. 10 veterans are ineligible for HUD-VASH vouchers.

Dan Bolling, Commissioner, reported that he attended a graduation ceremony for eighteen veterans who completed a offered by a NS2 Serves, a nonprofit organization established by SAP National Security Services, Inc. that trains and employs veterans in high-tech careers. The course is open to post-9/11 U.S. military service veterans and reservists (including disabled veterans) and Gold Star spouses who meet certain eligibility requirements. Dan suggested contacting other technology companies in the County and asking them to join SAP or start a comparable program.

Mike is coordinating a trip for the County Executive to meet with leadership at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and take a tour of the facility.

Ron reported that the Project Management Institute recently came out with a dalliance encouraging vets to obtain their project certification to enhance their employability.

A jointly sponsored Memorial Day event will be held at the Wheaton Veterans Park located behind the Safeway. The event is sponsored by American Legion Post 41, American Legion Post 268, and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 562. Mike Subin will be the keynote speaker.

Mike Walsh reported that he spoke with Battley Harley Davidson and they have suggested that the County hold a veterans motorcycle ride the weekend before Veterans Day. Battley has offered to assist in sponsoring the event.

Adjournment: 7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting: Tuesday, June 16th, 2015 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, 9th Floor Conference Room, Rockville, MD 20850.

Respectfully submitted:

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