



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs  
Meeting Minutes  
December 21, 2021**

**\*\*MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM\*\***

**I. Call to Order**

Wayne Miller, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Wayne asked for all present to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Wayne recognized prisoners of war and asked 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.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made to approve the November 2021 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken, and the November 2021 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva).

**III. Coping with the (Happy) Holidays – Anneke Vandenbroek, Ph.D., ABPP, Clinic Director & Senior Vice President, The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Easterseals**

**PowerPoint Presentation:** <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/HolidaySelfCareMCCVA-Dec2021.pdf>

The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Easterseals provides high-quality and accessible behavioral health care to veterans, active duty service members, their families and caregivers. Our services are available to any person who has served in the U.S. Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, regardless of role or discharge status.

The Cohen Clinic uses evidence-based practices with a holistic approach to improve the quality of life for veterans and their families. Services are provided by trained and credentialed staff. Veterans and their family members are able to receive services individually and as a family unit at the same place with the same treatment team.

The Cohen Clinic will also help connect veteran families to community resources and services, as necessary.

**IV. Chair and Vice Chair Report**

Wayne reported Joe Giordano, Owner and Founder of Project Opportunity, will present to the Commission in January. Project Opportunity provides free entrepreneurship education, training, coaching and a supportive community for veterans in pursuit of owning a successful small business. Joe is looking to start offer the program in Montgomery County. Michael Wilson, Commissioner, noted that he completed Project Opportunity program when it was offered in Prince George's County.

Dr. Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair, said January is National Women's Empowerment Month and suggested Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner, present the goals of the Women Veterans Workgroup.

**V. Updates / Announcements**

Austin Morris, Representative of Senator Chris Van Hollen, reported the "Accelerating Access to Critical Therapies (ACT) for ALS Act" passed the Senate and has been sent to President Biden's desk for signature.

**Update:** President Biden signed this legislation into law on December 23, 2021. The bipartisan legislation will

fund essential research into fast-progressing, rare neurodegenerative and terminal diseases, like amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), and promote early access to promising investigational therapies for patients. The bill will authorize \$100 million annually to implement these priorities. Betsy Luecking, Staff, thanked Austin for notifying Senator Van Hollen about this important legislation. She has heard from several individuals who have ALS who are hopeful that they will be able to take advantage of research medications.

Austin also reported the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2022 passed the Senate and she will share more information on it once it is signed into law.

Mike Subin, Commissioner, asked Austin if she had information regarding the relationship between VA disability payments and retirement benefits. He has received conflicting information that one has no effect on the other but disability payments can reduce an individual's retirement. Austin generally speaking it may be dependent on factors including an individual's service. She will look into this issue. Dr. Koffman said the degree to which an individual's disability is service-related and specifically combat-related can alt

Dr. Cynthia Macri, Commissioner, reported President Biden signed "a bill to require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on disparities associated with race and ethnicity with respect to certain benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes," into law during a ceremony at the White House on November 30, 2021. Dr. Macri was disappointed that the bill did not mention gender given that there is a huge discrepancy between what men are given percentage-wise versus what women are given. Anneke said the Cohen Clinic has had many female clients who were denied "combat" status because of their military occupational specialty (MOS), even though their injuries or trauma occurred while they were under attack. Similarly, the military sexual trauma was not regarded as a military sexual trauma or regarded as a source of trauma.

Mike asked about updated data on Veteran's employment. Anneke said in general Veteran's employment continues to be worse compared to the general population.

**Adjournment:** 7:25pm

**Next Full Commission Meeting:** Tuesday, January 18, 2022 via Zoom from 6pm to 7:30pm. Please view the agenda for information on how to join the meeting. Agenda to be announced.

Respectfully submitted: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I; Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

## Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs Attendance Report January 2021 – December 2021

<b>VOTING MEMBERS</b>			JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	ABSENCES
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Form on File with Risk Management P = Present / A = Absence / C = Conference Call / M = Military Active Duty P* or C* = Ex-Officio Member Alternative Attended W = Waived Absences by County Executive / R = Waiver Requested													
1.	Bahn, Josephine <input type="checkbox"/>	General Public	2 <sup>nd</sup> term expires 10/31/2023	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	A	C	1
2.	Gray, Elwood <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	1 <sup>st</sup> term expires 10/31/2021	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	A	1
3.	Johnson, Jameelah	Director Designee – Dept. of Health & Human Services	1 <sup>st</sup> term expires 10/31/2021	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	A	1
4.	Koffman, Robert <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	2 <sup>nd</sup> term expires 10/31/2022	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
5.	Macri, Cynthia <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	2 <sup>nd</sup> term expires 10/31/2023	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
6.	Miller, Wayne <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disabled American Veterans	3 <sup>rd</sup> term expires 10/31/2021	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
7.	Mitchell, Reggie <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	1 <sup>st</sup> term expires 10/31/2022	A	C	C	A	C	C	C	C	C	2
8.	Pollack, Susan <input type="checkbox"/>	Public - <i>RESIGNED</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> term expires 10/31/2023	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9.	Schlesinger, Scott <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	1 <sup>st</sup> term expires 10/31/2022	C	A	C	C	A	C	--	C	C	2
10.	Schuster, Lisa <input type="checkbox"/>	Public	Partial term expires 10/31/2022	X	X	X	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
11.	Starling, Joanna <input type="checkbox"/>	Ex-Officio Representing Montgomery College	2 <sup>nd</sup> term expires 10/31/2021	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
12.	Subin, Michael L.	Ex-Officio Representing County Executive	4 <sup>th</sup> term expires 10/31/2020	A	A	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	3
13.	Vandenbroek, Anneke <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	Partial term expires 10/31/2022	X	X	X	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
14.	Webman, Susan <input type="checkbox"/>	General Public	1 <sup>st</sup> term expires 10/31/2021	C	C	A	C	C	C	C	C	C	1
15.	Willis, Steven <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	1 <sup>st</sup> term expires 10/31/2023	X	X	X	--	C	C	A	A	A	4
16.	Wilson, Michael <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	Partial term expires 10/31/2022	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	C	C	1

**Attendance Policy:** A Voting Member may miss up to 3 meetings within a one year rolling period. Voting Members who miss more than 3 meetings in that period or who miss 3 consecutive meetings will be automatically removed. Waivers may be requested for absences caused by extenuating circumstances.

### Non-Voting Congressional Representatives

1.	Burton, Christa – Office of U.S. Congressman Jamie Raskin	A	P*	A	A	A	C	A	A	A	A	A	8
2.	Garcia, Vikki – Office of U.S. Congressman John Sarbanes	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	C	A	A	A	3
3.	Morris, Austin – Office of U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen Hendricks, Karen – Alternate / Samuels, Jeff - Alternate	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	C	C	C	C	1
4.	Reichard, Ken – Office of U.S. Senator Ben Cardin	A	A	A	C	C	A	A	A	C	A	A	7