



Commission on Veterans Affairs



MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday, April 18, 2023

6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Wayne Miller, Chair – Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair

Join the meeting via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82742931333>

If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 827 4293 1333 followed by #. **If an attendee would like to speak during the meeting**, you can raise their hand if on video and Chair will recognize you or you can use the “hand raise” function under the reactions tab at bottom of page. If connecting via a smart phone, tablet or computer, please click on the middle of the page and the functions will be at the bottom of the page. Use the Zoom app to be able to access all functions, including raising your hand. If you are calling by phone, press *9 to raise your hand. Those calling into the meeting can press *6 to mute or unmute their phone.

- 6:00 Welcome, Pledge of Allegiance, Moment of Silence & POW/MIA Remembrance, Approval of March 2023 Meeting Minutes – Wayne Miller, Chair**
- 6:05 Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, or PACT Act Briefing – Antione Waller, Executive Director, Baltimore Regional Office, National Capital Region Benefits Office** (<https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>)
- 6:45 Chair and Vice Chair Updates**
- 7:00 Commissioner Updates**
- 7:20 Commission Planning for Next Meeting – Wayne Miller**
- 7:30 Adjourn**

ADA Reasonable Accommodation: If you need a sign language interpreter or any other reasonable accommodation to participate in this meeting, please contact betsy.luecking@montgomerycountymd.gov or 240-418-4865.

****See duties on next page**

Duties of the Commission on Veterans Affairs

The Commission duties include:

1. research, assemble, analyze and disseminate information and educational materials relating to activities and programs that will assist in meeting the needs of veterans and their families;
2. institute and conduct educational and other programs, meetings, and conferences to promote the rights and opportunities for veterans;
3. advise the Executive and the Council on the status of programs and services in the State and County related to the needs of veterans and their families; and
4. assist in planning appropriate public acknowledgement of the contributions made by veterans and assist in planning commemoration activities recognizing the contributions made by veterans.



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
April 18, 2023**

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

Call to Order

Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). He asked for all present to say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, or PACT Act Briefing – Antione Waller, Executive Director, Baltimore Regional Office, National Capital Region Benefits Office

Website: www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits

PowerPoint: https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/VBA_VHA_Consolidated_PACT_Presentation_April_2023.pdf

Handout: https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/Accessing_PACT_Act_Benefits_and_Services.pdf

Handout: https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/VA_PACTActDashboard_Issue4_041423_508.pdf

Antione Waller is responsible for the oversight of delivery of Compensation and Veteran Readiness and Employment benefits to over 383,790 veterans and their beneficiaries living in Maryland and the surrounding counties. In October 2016, Antione expanded his leadership responsibilities by overseeing the National Capital Region Benefits Office in Washington, DC. He served as a commissioned officer in the United States Army from February 1985 to August 1989.

Please review the PowerPoint presentation.

The floor was opened to questions and comments.

- **How can this Commission and veteran service organizations help the VA educate the public on the PACT Act?** The VA wants to get out into the community and work with advocates. The VA has brought in a team of specialized claim processors to various events and meet with individual veterans. Processors can assist with filing a claim with the PACT Act or with establishing updates on their previous claims. The VA is looking to create more opportunities to provide more outreach in the community.
- **Wayne reported that he filed a form but received a notice that he was denied due to an issue with the letter of intent form.** Antione will work with Wayne offline to address this issue. Wayne encouraged veterans to work with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) or other veterans service organizations when filing.
- **Comment that a veteran at American Legion Post 268 applied and was approved within two weeks.** Antione noted that approval times vary based on the complexity of the situation.

- **How do the presumptive conditions apply to a Gulf War veteran?** There is a list of 20 presumptive conditions listed. If a Gulf War veteran has been diagnosed with any of those conditions, served honorably in the Gulf War and are presumed to be service--connected based on that disability, then an examination will be given. As long as the diagnosis supports the current conditions, then the veteran would qualify. Antione reported that the VA will be adding three more presumptives in the list but does not know when as they have been submitted to the final registry for publication.
- **Should a service-connected Gulf War veteran apply?** Yes, as filing a new claim can increase your benefits. Phil encouraged the veteran to apply as they could have additional conditions that could be added.
- **Phil Munley, MDVA, shared a story of a surviving spouse of a Vietnam veteran who had served in Thailand that filed for DIC in 2016 and was denied.** Now that the PACT Act has added Thailand to the list of eligible locations, MDVA assisted the surviving spouse with filing a supplemental claim, which was awarded within two months with a retroactive payment of \$106,000 and \$1,800 per month moving forward.
- **Wayne spoke of a veteran that filed a claim with the PACT Act and it was approved within 3 to 4 weeks.** MDVA was able to assist the veteran with filing the claim.
- **Concern expressed by a commissioner that some veterans may not apply for the PACT Act as they are concerned the review could potentially downgrade their benefits.**
- **There are a number of veterans who have never used VA care for various reasons, including receiving care from the private sector. Should those veterans apply for the PACT Act?** It does not hurt for the veteran to apply for any benefit that their service entitles them to. Antione encouraged veterans to seek the support from veteran service organizations and other advocates for assistance.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the March 2023 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the March 2023 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

Chair and Vice Chair Report

Next Commission meeting is May 16 from 6pm to 7:30pm. Secretary Anthony Woods, MDVA, is going to join us for a discussion. It was suggested that the U.S. Census Bureau be invited to the June meeting to discuss why NOAA and USPHS are not included as veterans during census counts. They only count those who served in the Armed Forces as veterans.

Updates / Announcements

Ken Reichard, Representative, Senator Ben Cardin, reported he will be retiring from his position effective April 15. He has been asked to stay on as a consultant and to work on special projects and events.

Adjournment: 7:30pm

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

Attendance on next page.

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Josephine Bahn; Elwood Gray; Jameelah Johnson; Robert Koffman, Vice-Chair; Cynthia Macri; Wayne Miller, Chair; Scott Schlesinger; Joanna Starling; Michael Subin; Susan Webman; Michael Wilson

Commissioners Absent: Reggie Mitchell; Anneke Vandenbroek

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Present: Joseph Eyong (Congressman Jamie Raskin); Austin Morris (Senator Chris Van Hollen); Ken Reichard (Senator Ben Cardin)

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Absent: Vikki Garcia (Congressman John Sarbanes)

County Staff Present: Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging & Disability Services, Department of Health and Human Services

Commission Liaison: Sam Korper, Commission on People with Disabilities

Commission Staff Present: Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison; Carly Clem, Program Specialist II

Public Present: Antione Waller, Department of Veterans Affairs; Dina Karpf, Maryland's Commitment to Veterans; Destiny Nettles, ServingTogether; Phil Munley, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA); David Skisano, MDVA; Bill Gray; Jane McCarthy