



Commission on Veterans Affairs



MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday, December 21, 2021

6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Wayne Miller, Chair – Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair

Join the meeting via ZOOM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84020754911>

If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID: 840 2075 4911 followed by #.
If an attendee would like to speak during the meeting, they 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 November 2021 Meeting Minutes – Wayne Miller, Chair**
- 6:10 Coping with the (Happy) Holidays – Anneke Vandenbroek, Ph.D., ABPP, Clinic Director & Senior Vice President, The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Easterseals**
- 7:00 Goals of Women Veterans Workgroup – Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner**
- 7:15 Updates**
- 7:30 Adjourn**

If you need a sign language interpreter or any other reasonable accommodation to participate in this meeting, please contact betsy.luecking@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Commission's Website – www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva
Veterans Network Directory – www.montgomerycountymd.gov/vnd



**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.

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/HolidaySelfCareMCCVADec2021.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

7:25 p.m.

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

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Josephine Bahn; Robert Koffman; Cynthia Macri; Wayne Miller; Reggie Mitchell; Scott Schlesinger; Lisa Schuster; Joanna Starling; Michael Subin; Anneke Vandenbroek; Susan Webman; Michael Wilson

Commissioners Absent: Elwood Gray; Jameelah Johnson; Steven Willis

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Present: Austin Morris (Senator Chris Van Hollen)

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Absent: Christa Burton (Congressman Jamie Raskin); Vikki Garcia (Congressman John Sarbanes); Ken Reichard (Senator Ben Cardin)

Commission Staff Present: Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison; Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I