



Commission on Veterans Affairs



Meeting Agenda

December 17, 2024

6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Michael Wilson, Chair

Anneke Vandenbroek, Vice-Chair

Join the meeting via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/7390017153?omn=83933148773>

If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 739 001 7153 followed by #. **If a commissioner 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 October 2024 and November 2024 Minutes – Michael Wilson, Chair**
- 6:10 Process of Renaming the Calvert County Commission for Veterans and Military Families and Challenges/Lessons learned to Consider a Similar Name Change – Dr. Brandon Temple, Chairman Calvert County Commission for Veterans and Military Families**
- 6:40 “Our Community Salutes” for High School Graduates Enlisting into Military – J. Gregory Jolissaint, MD, J Jolissaint Consulting, LLC, A Service-Disabled, Veteran-Owned Small Business**
- 6:55 Public School Holidays - Veterans' Day – Michael Subin**
- 7:00 Chair and Vice Chair Updates – Michael Wilson & Anneke Vandenbroek**
- 7:10 Updates from Commissioners**
- 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 carly.clem@montgomerycountymd.gov or call 202-853-1109 or via MD Relay at 711. ****See Commission 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 Minutes

December 17, 2024

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

Call to Order - Welcome, Pledge of Allegiance, Moment of Silence & POW/MIA Remembrance

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

Approval of October 2024 and November 2024 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the October 2024 and November 2024 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the October 2024 and November 2024 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

Process of Renaming the Calvert County Commission for Veterans and Military Families and Challenges/Lessons learned to Consider a Similar Name Change – Dr. Brandon Temple, Chairman Calvert County Commission for Veterans and Military Families

The Calvert County Commission officially changed its name from Commission for Veterans to Commission for Veterans and Military Families last month. The name change occurred to follow the lead from the state which changed its name to the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families. The Commission's name change codified what it already does in the community with reaching out to all military families and not just veterans. The Commission used the legislation to expand the number of members to include military spouses and veteran caregivers.

In February 2023, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted [COMAR 13A.06.10](#) Purple Star Schools Program. To attain Purple Star designation, schools must meet, at a minimum, the four criteria outlined in COMAR 13A.06.10. They are:

- 1. Military Liaison:** A staff member should be designated as military liaison, serving as the point of contact for newly enrolled military-connected students and their families. This person is also tasked with coordinating support programs for this population, connecting the students to needed resources, and generally aiding in their transition into the school. The school must have a process in place to identify and track military-connected students, including those with parents or guardians currently serving on active duty, in the reserves, or in the National Guard.
Digital Resources: The school's website must have an easily accessible page of resources for military-connected students and their families. This page should include information that facilitates a smooth transition to the school, including the process for enrolling in the school and transferring records, preparing for moving schools, academic requirements, and available support services.
- 2. Peer-Led Transition Program:** Whenever possible, schools should offer a student-led program tasked with orienting the student to both the physical and academic environments of the school through activities such as campus tours and military-connected student orientation. If requested, this program should also offer military-connected students the opportunity to have a student leader accompany them throughout campus during their first week of enrollment.
- 3. Staff Training:** School staff should receive appropriate training and professional development aimed at fostering an understanding of the unique challenges faced by military-connected students so that they may provide appropriate support. These training opportunities will be coordinated by the school's designated military liaison.

Schools seeking Purple Star designation should be prepared to demonstrate that they have taken supplementary measures to provide top-notch support to military-connected students in addition to meeting the criteria outlined above.

There are currently only 8 schools in the state designed as a Purple Star School:

<https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/PurpleStar/Purple-Star-Designees-2024.aspx>

The Calvert County Commission made Purple Star Schools a priority for 2024 to ensure that when military families move to Calvert County, they would have a military liaison to interact with and resources available to them. Brandon personally met with 18 of the 22 schools located in Calvert County. There is a Blue Star Family Group that has started to grow and has a very vibrant Facebook page. The Commission is helping to connect military families to this group. Military-connected families includes Reserve and National Guard. The Commission has received good feedback from families. Many schools are hosting military family nights and dinners for families to connect and create a community. Resources for active duty service members are provided by the federal government and schools are building those relationships in the county.

The floor was opened to questions and comments.

- **Does the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families provide the resources to place the military liaisons within the school?** The military liaison is appointed by the principal within each individual school. The liaison volunteers for the role.
- **The initiative is open to any public school in Maryland.** No schools in Montgomery County currently have a Purple Star School designation.
- Brandon and the Superintendent for Calvert County schools spoke at a joint Commission meeting hosted by Dana Burl, Deputy Secretary, MDVMF, and discussed the Purple Star School program in Calvert County and how they are working to connect elementary, middle and high school liaisons to each other and create a community of practice.
- **What were the cons or arguments against renaming the Commission?** There were no arguments against it from any Commissioner. The name change reflects the mission, goals and priorities of their Commission. There are negligible costs associated due to having some shirts and outreach items remade to reflect the name change. The last two years the Commission has been appropriated \$2,000 in the budget.
- **How did the Commission choose which schools would become Purple Star Schools?** One school took the initiative on their own as the principal is a Marine veteran. He created the system and other schools used that model. Brandon spoke with the Calvert County Public Schools Superintendent to gain his support and then he began cold emailing every principal and counselor for every school. Feedback was positive. Brandon met with all 16 elementary schools to explain that the program was available to them. The Commission plans to take a delivered approach next year to help with strategies. It is the Superintendents goal to have all schools designated as Purple Star Schools.
- **Calvert County is close to Joint Base Andrews and Naval Air Station Patuxent River.** Both have had staff come out to schools and provide training and establish key relationships. Every base has an educational liaison officer.
- **MDVMF have created guidelines and are developing a playbook with an approved application as an example.** This information is available to anyone. They will also answer questions by phone or email. Katelyn Quigley has also made herself available to meet individually with schools. Technical application sessions are also available.
- **Applications are accepted on a yearly basis.** The application window is open now through March 2025. It is expected that approved schools are announced in April during Month of the Military Child.
- **Do school impact aid funds based on military dependents help with renovations and constructions?** It is not clear what the federal funding allocations are for each year.

- **Have you addressed privacy issues regarding accessing the names of children in military families located within the schools?** The school has internal records that they keep. The Commission does not have access to these files, nor do they intend to have access.
- **It would be a much larger task to engage with Montgomery County Public Schools to get them on board with this initiative.** It was suggested speaking with the Montgomery County Superintendent who could then send information out to administrators.
- **Are there resources for mental health issues or for students with disabilities that need assistance, especially when transitioning from overseas?** All schools have those resources already available to all students regardless of military connectedness. The Purple Star Schools program assist by connecting families with local providers that may be able to fill any gaps from federal resources.
- **How many military families have children enrolled in Montgomery County Public Schools?** Brandon noted that Calvert County was able to obtain their school enrollment data from the Maryland State Department of Education. The U.S. Census does not count active service members or National Guard and Reserve members in their annual surveys. Walter Reed may have a database of information of where families are located.
- **The Purple Star Schools program does not serve Gold Star Families – does the impact form ask this question?** The form specifically asks about active duty.
- **It was suggested that the Commission for a work group to discuss this issue further and report at the next Commission meeting.**

“Our Community Salutes” for High School Graduates Enlisting into Military – J. Gregory Jolissaint, MD, J Jolissaint Consulting, LLC, A Service-Disabled, Veteran-Owned Small Business

Dr. Jolissaint currently serves as a member of the Howard County Commission for Veterans and Military Families. He reviewed the PowerPoint presentation.

Presentation: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/Minutes/OCSCentralMarylandInformation.pdf>

The floor was opened for questions and comments.

- **Several Commissioners noted that they would have appreciated recognition when they graduated.**
- **How many students did Anne Arundel County honor last year?** That information is not known, but the website does have photos from events: www.ourcommunitysalutes.org/communities-home/#local-ocs
- **It was asked if the keynote speakers are always flagged officers.** Yes, the OCS coordinates the keynote speakers for ceremonies. It was suggested that Senior enlisted servicemembers also be considered as speakers.
- **It was reported that Northwest High School has recognized students entering the military after graduation.**
- **Cord colors of red, white and blue were chosen as cords for each military branch could not be found.**
- **How are enlisting students identified?** The OCS has relationships with recruiting commands. Those commands tell OCS how many cords will be needed.
- **Why are students going into service academies not included?** Any student who receives an ROTC scholarship or academy appointment is honored at the end of the year during an academic ceremony.
- **The next ceremony will be held April 29.** Montgomery County can contact Dr. Jolissaint if any schools would like to participate.

Public School Holidays - Veterans' Day

Mike Subin, Commissioner, reported he has had several discussions with the Julie Yang, current president of the Montgomery County Board of Education. She was not in favor of having Veterans Day be a day off of school due to the number of days the schools must be open (180 days) and the existing number of days that schools are closed. Adding an extra day off would also incur budgetary issues. Julie was supportive in establishing a curriculum for students at all grade levels on Veterans Day. She is scheduling a meeting next Friday between her, Mike and MCPS social studies coordinator to discuss this further. Mike will see if other Commissioners can attend.

Chair and Vice Chair Updates – Michael Wilson & Anneke Vandenbroek

This Commission can establish ad hoc committees to work on specific issues. For example, if Commissioners want to work on the Purple Star Schools program or with the OCS graduation ceremonies.

Anneke reported the Strong Star Training Initiative is hosting an upcoming training designed for non-clinical individuals that support or interact with veterans. She will email the information to Betsy for distribution to Commissioners. Anneke also reported on an article in the New York Times regarding Navy Seals seeking psychedelic treatments for PTSD in Tijuana.

Updates from Commissioners

Scott Schlesinger, Commissioner, reported he heard Grace Caulfield, Commissioner, being interviewed by NPR. He suggested that the Commission develop a speakers bureau of Commissioners who are available to give interviews or speak at events.

Betsy reported that the Commission's membership includes four general public voting members. Oftentimes it is hard to fill these positions. She asked if the Commission should consider asking the County Council to amend legislation to change these positions to include veteran spouses, veteran caregivers or active duty members.

Adjournment

7:19 p.m.

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Grace Caulfield; Bernard Chesman; Elwood Gray; Jameelah Johnson; Veronica Pei; Miguel Sapp; Scott Schlesinger; Joanna Starling; Michael Subin; Christopher Thomas; Anneke Vandenbroek, Vice-Chair; Michael Wilson, Chair

Commissioners Absent: Drew Garza; Charles Von Goin

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

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Absent: Vikki Garcia (Congressman John Sarbanes); Charles Richardson (Senator Chris Van Hollen)

Commission Liaison: Sam Korper, Commission on People with Disabilities Commission

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

Public Present: Bill Gray; Brandon Temple, Calvert County Commission for Veterans and Military Families; Janice Freeman; Greg Jolissaint