



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Minutes
January 16, 2024**

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

Call to Order

Wayne Miller, 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.

Property Tax Credits for Veterans (State and Local) and Other Key Veteran Legislation at Maryland General Assembly – Lynn Nash, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC, FAAN, Communications Director, Maryland Military Coalition (MMC)

Bill 45-23, Property Tax Credit – Individuals 65 and Above, Retired Military Service Members, and Disabled Military Service Members (bill begins on page 4):

https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccllims/DownloadFilePage?FileName=2823_1_25390_Bill_45-2023_Introduction_20231212.pdf

Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement for Bill 45-23:

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/resjis/2023/Bill45-23.pdf.

Bill 45-23 would: (1) alter the eligibility criteria for the property tax credit available to individuals 65 and above, and to retired or disabled military service members and their spouses; (2) alter the amounts of the property tax credit; and (3) generally amend the property tax credit for individuals 65 and above and for retired or disabled military service members and their spouses.

The lead sponsor of the bill is Council President Andrew Friedson. A public hearing is scheduled for January 23 at 1:30pm.

PowerPoint: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/MCCVAJan2024PropertyTaxPowerpoint.pdf

Lynn reviewed the PowerPoint presentation.

The floor was opened for discussion.

- If the individual has a service-connected disability, then there is no age requirement. Individuals, retired military servicemembers and surviving spouses have an age requirement of 65 years or more.
- Disability income received from the VA is not taxable and it is unclear if this income is considered as part of the income requirements.
- Only the income of the applicant is taken into consideration, not the household.
- Statistically, women veterans are disproportionately married to other servicemembers and typically are not married to a non-working spouse.
- Property assessments have gone up exponentially.
- The cost of healthcare is not factored into tax burden.

- The proposed legislation may be what is affordable in the budget given the current fiscal situation at the state and county level.
- Question as to why income is a factor for disabled veterans.
- Suggestion that service-connected disability rating be 70% and above.
- The Maryland General Assembly passed the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint) legislation in 2021. The legislation is designed to transform public education in the state into a world-class education system by increasing educational funding, enriching student experiences and accelerating student outcomes, as well as improving the quality of education for all children in Maryland. Counties are expected to fund this initiative. County Executive Marc Elrich added \$200 million in the operating budget for MCPS for this initiative.
- MMC's recommending is for the Commission lobby to amend Bill 45-23 to replace current language about disabled veterans and to incorporate the language of the enabling legislation.
- A fiscal impact statement has yet to be completed for this bill and it is expected to have real revenue impacts. Taxes may increase, more people may leave the County and County non-discretionary funds made be used to make up the difference.
- Bill does not include sustainability or gross income versus net income.
- Having a ten-year limit for the property tax credit could potentially force individuals out of their homes at the end of the ten-year period as the assessed value of the home continues to increase. Homeowners do not have control over the value of their house.
- How many people aged 65 and older are still serving in the Reserves or National Guard that do not have a disability? How many of these individuals will this bill benefit?
- The state of Maryland passed legislation in 2020 and counties are allowed to take advantage of that legislation or not. Up until this point in time, Montgomery County has not. (State legislation – Property Tax – Credit for Disabled Veterans: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/HB0257?ys=2020RS>).

Commissioners Mike Subin and Michael Wilson, Senator Ben Cardin's Representative Ken Reichard, and Staff Liaison Betsy Luecking will meet to draft testimony which will then be sent to Commissioners for review and comment.

Chair and Vice Chair Report

The next full Commission meeting will be held Tuesday February 20.

Updates / Announcements

The County Executive received a request from a resident asking for veterans to receive a discount at golf courses. It was noted that the Montgomery County Revenue Authority sets the fee schedules for County-owned golf courses. Some courses are owned and operated by Montgomery Parks. It was suggested asking the County to allow for a 10% discount to play golf, but only for the veteran and not for the guests. Mike Subin will research neighboring jurisdictions. Betsy will respond that the Commission is researching the issue and will provide a recommendation to the Council for their operating budget. Changes in fee schedules would not occur until July 1.

The Montgomery Parks Program Access Office in conjunction with Black Hill Regional Park submitted a grant application to the Christopher and Dana Reeves Foundation for funding to install another accessible kayak launch at the Black Hill Regional Park boating facility area. Funding was received and that project should be completed over the next year. MP is working on providing more adaptive kayaking programs in the spring.

The Commission is honoring Black County veterans with detailed virtual tributes displayed on the County's website as it recognizes February as Black History Month. The tributes of County veterans will feature photos, background information and details of accomplishments during their military careers and afterward. Press release: www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=44591.

Ken reported that there may be a partial deal on the budget to avoid a government shutdown.

Approval of Minutes

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

Adjournment: 7:20pm

Respectfully submitted: Carly Clem, Program Specialist II; Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

Attendance

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

Commissioners Absent: Josephine Bahn

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

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

County Staff Present: Jen Hodge, Local Behavioral Health Authority

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; Chandra Wilson; Cori Carfagno, ServingTogether; Angel Southall; Lynn Nash, Maryland Military Coalition