



Commission on Veterans Affairs



MEETING AGENDA **Tuesday, March 15, 2022**

6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Wayne Miller, Chair – Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair

Join the meeting via ZOOM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89164255830>

If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 891 6425 5830 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 February 2022 Meeting Minutes – Wayne Miller, Chair

6:05 [Duties of the Commission on Veterans Affairs](#) – Wayne Miller and Bob Koffman

6:20 Review of the Commission’s websites – Carly Clem and Betsy Luecking
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva www.montgomerycountymd.gov/veterans

6:45 Update on Women Veterans Recognition – Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner
Kate Watson, Founder www.yournexstage.org

7:00 Commission Work Priorities for Upcoming Year – Wayne Miller

7:15 Updates

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.

Commission’s Website – www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva
Veterans Network Directory – www.montgomerycountymd.gov/vnd
Commission on Veterans Affairs Facebook – www.facebook.com/MCGCVA



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
March 15, 2022**

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 February 2022 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken, and the February 2022 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Duties of the Commission on Veterans Affairs – Wayne Miller and Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair

Wayne reviewed the duties of the Commission which are listed in the [enabling legislation](#):

Commission duties include:

- 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;
- institute and conduct educational and other programs, meetings, and conferences to promote the rights and opportunities for veterans;
- 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
- assist in planning appropriate public acknowledgement of the contributions made by veterans and assist in planning commemoration activities recognizing the contributions made by veterans.

IV. Review of the Commission's Websites – Carly Clem, Administrative Staff, and Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager, Commission on Veterans Affairs

Carly gave a review of the Commission's websites:

- [Commission on Veterans Affairs](#):
Website includes information about the Commission, enabling legislation, agendas and meeting schedules, approved meeting minutes, annual reports, new Commissioner orientation materials, veterans resource directories, and a section on VA benefits.
- [Veterans Key Contacts](#)
- [Veterans Network Directory](#)
- [Veterans – Featured Programs, Resources, Recognition and Tributes](#)
Website includes a welcome message from County Executive Marc Elrich as well as language regarding the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Featured programs include the Commission's website; the Commission's Facebook page; information on the DC VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Gaithersburg; VA benefits and veterans resource directories; and the County Cable Montgomery show Homefront. Recognition and tributes include:

- [Montgomery County Fallen Hometown Heroes](#) (Highlighted in May for Memorial Day)
 - Carly reported that the digital display with the names and photos (if available) of servicemembers killed in action located at the Silver Spring Civic Building is being moved from the vestibule from when you first enter the building to the back wall of the lobby on the lefthand side. This area has a bench for visitors. She will report to the Commission once the new display is running. Carly also continues to research servicemembers killed in action in WWI and WWII to identify photos and additional information for profiles.
 - Betsy Luecking, Staff, added that we may be the only county jurisdiction in the United States that has compiled lists of all county residents killed in action from World War I to present. The fallen heroes website was created after family members of servicemembers killed in action attended a Commission meeting in June, 2015 and asked the Commission for assistance in having the Rockville Library be renamed to the Rockville Memorial Library. The website and the digital displays were developed by commission staff in response to the family members to honor county residents who were killed in action in service to our country
 - Carly noted that Howard County is currently working to create a fallen heroes list and she is working with their staff person to provide research information.
 - There is also a digital display with the names and photos of servicemembers killed in action that runs in the lobby of the Rockville Memorial Library. The library Director will be ordering a plaque to be installed near the digital display. Dedication Plaque Language Draft:

Rockville Memorial Library

To honor County residents Killed In Action in service to our Country in military conflicts since the County's founding in 1776, the Rockville Library was renamed to the Rockville Memorial Library at the request of Global War on Terror Gold Star family members and the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs.

The proclamation was signed by County Executive Ike Leggett on November 10th 2009. A formal renaming ceremony took place on May 28th 2010.

"It is fitting that this magnificent library stand in name and purpose as a tribute to the memory of the brave women and men from Montgomery County who gave their lives so that we and future generations may enjoy the benefits of such a facility."

~Isiah "Ike" Leggett~

- [Montgomery County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Dedication](#)
- [Honoring Montgomery County Veterans: Black History Month](#) (Highlighted in February)
- [Honoring Montgomery County Vietnam Era Veterans](#) (Highlighted in March)
- [Honoring Montgomery County Women Veterans](#) (Highlighted in June)
- [Honoring Montgomery County Veterans: Veterans Day](#) (Highlighted in November)

Carly asked Commissioners for feedback.

It was suggested that the Commission issue a resolution stating they are in support with Ukraine. This resolution would replace the language regarding Afghanistan on the website. Wayne said the combat veterans in his support groups have a lot of compassion for the Ukrainian people. Betsy asked Mike and Wayne to draft a resolution.

Scott Schlesinger, Commissioner, suggested including the Space Force seal to the website footer with the seven other U.S. Uniformed Services and Armed Forces seals.

Jane McCarthy, former Commissioner, asked that the [National Vietnam War Veterans Day Observance](#) scheduled on March 29 be added to the website. The event will be held at 1pm at the East Knoll of the

Vietnam Veterans Memorial in honor of the 40th anniversary of The Wall. Bill Gray, former Commissioner, reported he is attending the [Southern Maryland Vietnam War Veteran 50th Anniversary Salute](#) in Chesapeake Beach on March 29. Wayne reported Gilchrist will be hosting a [Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration](#) on March 20 at Martin's West in Annapolis. Carly will add all three events to the Vietnam War Era Veterans website.

Dr. Cynthia Macri suggested adding Terry Shima to the Veterans Day tribute website. He is a World War II U.S. Army Veteran who served with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a segregated Japanese American Unit and the most decorated in U.S. military history. Carly asked for more information to draft a bio. Betsy said that veterans posted on the tribute websites are either sent in by the veteran themselves or are nominated by a friend of family member. There is no one list to locate information on County veterans.

Commissioners are encouraged to continue reviewing the websites and provide feedback and recommendations.

V. Update on Women Veterans Recognition – Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner

Jameelah reported the Women Veterans workgroup met on March 10. They discussed the best way to provide for the needs of Montgomery County women veterans. One issue is how women were not included in a federal bill that requires "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". Jameelah suggested drafting a letter to advocate for women to be added to the study and to ask local veteran service organizations if they want to sign on.

In terms of recognition, Dr. Cynthia Macri said discussing an individual's accomplishments is important when honoring someone. The renaming of the library is a great example of recognition.

The workgroup also discussed chronic pain management training and other types of workshops that empower veterans to not only do self-care and manage their chronic conditions but train them to be peer leaders. Healthcare providers may underestimate the capacity for self care. One of the best ways to practice mindfulness is to help others. Workshops can be offered virtually and may be an outlet for the individual while they wait for clinical care. Dr. Macri noted there are many talented individuals on this Commission that could offer their knowledge regarding self-care, behavioral health and mental health. Jameelah said she participated in a six-week chronic pain management class that has changed the way she accomplishes task and has lowered her stress levels. She also enjoyed the camaraderie component of the class. She suggested that this class may be beneficial for veterans receiving services at the Silver Spring Vet Center.

Dr. Macri was encouraged by Jameelah's enthusiasm and signed up for flame working art classes at Mary Washington University. She noted that the [VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment \(VRE\) program](#) will pay for educational and training needs for veterans with service-connected disabilities.

VI. Commission Work Priorities for Upcoming Year – Wayne Miller

Betsy sent out a list of [accomplishments since the start of the Commission in 2009](#).

It was suggested that the Homefront series be continued. Show topics could include women veterans.

Cynthia suggested having a presentation on the movie "The Lucky Few: The Fall of Saigon and the Rescue Mission of the USS Kirk", which recounts the role of the USS Kirk in the rescue of remnants of the South Vietnamese fleet and the refugees on board. Mike Subin, Commissioner, suggested inviting Diane Vu whose father one of the last to leave Vietnam. He stayed behind as his mother would not leave and was a guest of North Vietnam for five years. Diane could share her family story.

Wayne asked if the Commission could be involved with the upcoming dedication and renaming of the Silver Spring Library to Brigadier General Charles E. McGee Library. Betsy was on the planning phone call for the signing of the executive order to rename the library. She suggested that the library install the American flag, Maryland flag, and the County flag and noted that not all libraries have them. She suggested that the Commission could advocate that these three flags be installed at all libraries.

Jameelah suggested that the Commission could highlight various Veterans on the website.

VII. Chair and Vice Chair Report

Wayne reported Dr. Macri has been appointed by VA Secretary McDonough to the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans and has been charged with providing advice to the Secretary on the administration of benefits and services for women veterans. Dr. Macri encouraged Commissioners to notify her of any issues and she will share them with the Advisory Committee.

VIII. Updates / Announcements

Carly reported she was recently contacted by a resident whose husband was a Vietnam War veteran that passed away in 2015. The widow wanted to have his name added to the Vietnam Veteran Memorial Wall in Rockville. Carly said that the memorial wall in Rockville is for servicemembers who were killed in action during the Vietnam War, similar to the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. She offered to add his name to the Vietnam War Era Veterans tribute website and also let her know that the Vietnam Veteran Memorial Fund has an [In Memory program](#) that honors all who served in Vietnam. The program has an online personal remembrance page for each honoree with their photo and biographical information and the names are read at an annual event held at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. Wayne said there is a plaque on the grounds of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall that honors these veterans that was dedicated in 2004 and reads: *In Memory of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War and later died as a result of their service. We honor and remember their sacrifice.* The plaque is located next to the statue of the three soldiers. Betsy suggested that the Commission discuss installing a similar plaque at the County's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Rockville.

Betsy asked for suggestions for the April meeting. She suggested on discussion on recreation that promotes health and mental wellness. Dr. Macri could update the Commission on the work of the Audubon Naturalist Society. Bob Green, Montgomery Parks, could talk about the accessible launch at Riley's Lock and other programs. Wayne added that veterans and gold star families receive free entrance to all national parks. Jameelah suggested inviting the Workhouse Arts Center (WAC) to give a presentation on their Workhouse Military in the Arts initiative, which offers free weekly therapeutic and/or fine arts open studio opportunities that are exclusive to the military community for veterans and their families and caregivers to explore their creativity through structured and open-ended art experiences such as painting, sculpture and drawing. WAC also offers tuition assistance to veterans to attend other available classes.

Wayne suggested having a presentation and update on veteran homelessness during the fall.

Dr. Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair, reported the national crisis response line 9-8-8 is set to be released between April and June. There will be statewide campaigns to educate people. Dr. Macri is on the Montgomery County Coalition for Suicide Prevention and noted that there has been a delay in funding for the new line as well as a delay in training individuals who answer the calls. Currently calls will only be answered in English or Spanish. The release date may be pushed back even later. There is a national deadline for all states to adhere to.

Dr. Elwood Gray, Commissioner, reported an event titled "Your Health is Your Wealth" is scheduled to be held Saturday June 25 at the Brigadier General Charles E. McGee Library in Silver Spring. Doctors and practitioners will be there to promote health awareness. Dr. Macri volunteered to attend and provide information on women's health.

Dr. Macri reported Pfizer will be submitting an emergency use authorization form to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to provide a fourth dose (additional booster) for adults 65 years of age and older and people with chronic conditions. While many mandates have been lifted, the CDC still recommends mask wearing and social distancing. There is still a need to make sure younger individuals including teens receive their booster doses. Dr. Macri noted that another variant named Deltacron is causing spikes throughout Europe currently.

Adjournment

7:30pm

Next Full Commission Meeting

Tuesday, April 19, 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; Elwood Gray; Jameelah Johnson; Robert Koffman, Vice-Chair; Cynthia Macri; Wayne Miller, Chair; Reggie Mitchell; Scott Schlesinger; Lisa Schuster; Joanna Starling; Michael Subin; Michael Wilson

Commissioners Absent: Anneke Vandenbroek; Susan Webman

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Present: Vikki Garcia (Congressman John Sarbanes); Ken Reichard (Senator Ben Cardin)

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Absent: Christa Burton (Congressman Jamie Raskin); Austin Morris (Senator Chris Van Hollen)

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