



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs  
Meeting Minutes  
May 21, 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.

**Appointment of New Chair and Vice Chair**

County Executive Marc Elrich has appointed Michael Wilson as Chair and Anneke Vandebroek as Vice Chair. Michael expressed his appreciation for former Chair Wayne Miller and former Vice Chair Bob Koffman.

**The Role of the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team / 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion / Military Intelligence Service Full Integration of the US Armed Forces – Cynthia Izuno Macri, M.D., FACS, FACOG, CAPT MC USN (Ret.) Member, Japanese American Veterans Association**

Japanese American Veterans Association: <https://java.wildapricot.org/>

PowerPoint Presentation: [https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/Minutes/CVAPresentationLegacyofthe442nd\\_100th\\_MIS.pdf](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/Minutes/CVAPresentationLegacyofthe442nd_100th_MIS.pdf)

Please review the PowerPoint presentation.

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team was an infantry regiment of the U.S. Army. The regiment including the 100th Infantry Battalion is best known as the most decorated in U.S. military history, and as a fighting unit composed almost entirely of second-generation American soldiers of Japanese ancestry who fought in World War II. Many of the soldiers from the continental U.S. had families in internment camps while they fought abroad. The unit's motto was "Go for Broke".

In total about 33,000 men served (18,000 in 442<sup>nd</sup> and 6,000 in Military Intelligence Service) during WWII, ultimately earning approximately 9,486 Purple Hearts, 8 Presidential Unit Citations, 559 Silver Stars, 52 Distinguished Service Crosses and 1 Medal of Honor and. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team was the most decorated unit for its size and length of service in the entire history of the U.S. Military. Like other segregated units, many medals were downgraded or not awarded.

The Japanese American Veterans Association (JAVA) is an educational, patriotic, fraternal organization dedicated to maintaining and extending the institutions of American freedom. Members include veterans of WWII, Korea, Viet Nam, and the Gulf Wars. Although the majority of their members are Americans of Japanese Ancestry, members are not exclusively Japanese Americans. "Friends of JAVA" include spouses, friends, relatives, and other supporters of JAVA's goals and objectives which include providing assistance, as needed, to member veterans and their widows and dependents; perpetuating the memory of deceased Japanese American veterans; conducting educational programs to emphasize the contributions of Japanese American war veterans including speeches, and discussion panels for various civic, religious, political and educational groups; sponsoring social and recreational activities in keeping with the patriotic spirit of national holidays; promoting the spirit of patriotism and national pride among the younger generation, particularly those of Japanese ancestry; providing financial assistance and scholarships for

needy and deserving dependents of deceased Japanese American veterans, and liaising with other veterans' organizations, including Japanese American Military Intelligence Service, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Infantry Battalion groups.

Terry Shima, a veteran of WWII who served with the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, became the Executive Director of JAVA. Shima is 102 years old and a resident of Gaithersburg. View Terry Shima's profile: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/Veterans/TerryShimaPortrait.pdf](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/Veterans/TerryShimaPortrait.pdf)

During World War II, the United States forcibly relocated and incarcerated about 120,000 people of Japanese descent in ten concentration camps operated by the War Relocation Authority, mostly in the western interior of the country. Approximately two-thirds of the detainees were United States citizens. Dr. Macri's father lived in an internment camp and he recalled playing baseball every day because it was another way to prove they were Americans.

The floor was opened to questions and comments.

Dr. Macri was thanked for her transparency regarding the history of Japanese Americans. The achievements are admirable despite the challenges they faced. It is important history is not repeated. Unfortunately, there was an increase in suspicious activity against Chinese Americans during COVID.

It was noted that former Senator Daniel Inouye from Hawaii had told stories of being injured during WWII and only being given blood from blacks because they were not allowed to be given blood from whites. Senator Inouye founded the Daniel K. Inouye Graduate School of Nursing as he credited nurses for saving his life. Former Commissioner Jane McCarthy developed the Nurse Anesthesia program in the late 1990s as chair of the Department of Anesthesia Nursing at the Graduate School of Nursing.

The documentary "For the Love of Liberty" was recommended which focuses on America's black heroes and their pivotal role in the U.S. military, from the Revolution through modern times.

### **Approval of April 2024 Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made to approve the April 2024 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the April 2024 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva).

### **Discussion on Bill to Reduce Property Taxes for Veterans with Severe Disabilities (Bill 6-24) – <https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccllms/BillDetailsPage?RecordId=2829&fullTextSearch=6-24>**

The County Council will be holding a public hearing on June 11. Michael will testify on behalf of the Commission.

While Commissioners do support Bill 6-24, these are the following concerns:

- The income cap is too low. Eligibility is for the federal adjusted gross income not exceeding \$100,000. The median income in Montgomery County is well over \$100,000. Suggested that a cap on house value should be altered instead of having an income cap. Question about the current Maryland adjustable gross income versus federal.
- It was noted that 100% disabled veterans currently do not pay property tax in Maryland.
- Women veterans are disproportionately married to other veterans and their total combined retirement income is more likely to be over \$100,000 and make them ineligible for the tax credit.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, reported Councilmember Fani Gonzalez knows there could be improvements to Bill 6-24 but the County must follow what is currently noted in the state law. If Bill 6-24 passes, Councilmember Fani Gonzalez wants to get the law changed at the state level to update the disability ratings and income caps.

Betsy will draft testimony in support of Bill 6-24 and send to Commissioners for feedback and input.

### **Chair and Vice Chair Updates – Memorial Day, Plan Date for New Member Orientation and Future Meeting Planning**

The County will be issuing a press release this Thursday about Memorial Day events being held throughout Montgomery County. The Commission also has a list of events being held locally as well as in DC on the Fallen Hometown Heroes website, which pays tribute to County residents killed in action:

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fallenheroes](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fallenheroes)

New Commissioners were asked about their availability for orientation. A new member orientation will be held virtually on Thursday June 6 from 4pm to 5pm. Individual orientation will be held for members who are unable to attend. Betsy will send a Zoom link to Commissioners.

Commissioners were asked for speaker suggestions for the June meeting. It was suggested that new members introduce themselves and discuss their background and interests. As June is Men's Mental Health month, it was suggested that staff from the Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic present. Other topic suggestions included wheelchair cleaning for veterans, state educational benefits available to disabled veterans, and Department of Health and Human Services Public Health staff.

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday June 18.

The Commission does not meet in July or August.

It was decided that the Commission will hold a planning session at their September meeting to set goals and priorities for the upcoming Commission year.

Discussions for when to hold an in-person meeting will continue. The option to host a hybrid meeting depends on the technological capabilities available at our regular in-person meeting location.

### **Commissioner Updates**

Scott Schlesinger reported Kemp Mill Jewish War Veterans will be hosting a Dining Out Banquet on June 2 featuring guest speaker General Norton Schwarz, USAF (Ret.), 1<sup>st</sup> Jewish Air Force Chief of Staff. To be held at Young Israel Shomrai Emunah Synagogue, 1132 Arcola Avenue, Silver Spring. For more information and to sign up for tickets, visit [www.kempmilljwv.com](http://www.kempmilljwv.com).

### **Adjournment - 7:23pm**

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

# Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs Attendance Report

## June 2023 – May 2024

<b>VOTING MEMBERS</b>			JUNE	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	ABSENCES
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Form on File with Risk Management P = Present / A = Absence / C = Conference Call / M = Military Active Duty P* or C* = Ex-Officio Member Alternative Attended W = Waived Absences by County Executive / R = Waiver Requested													
1. Bahn, Josephine	Public - <b>RESIGNED</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> term expires 10/31/2023	C	A	C	A	A	A	X	X	X	X	X
2. Caulfield, Grace	Public	Partial term expires 10/31/2025	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	C	C	0
3. Chesman, Bernard	Veteran	Partial term expires 10/31/2025	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	C	C	0
4. Garza, Drew	Veteran	1 <sup>st</sup> term expires 10/31/2026	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	C	C	0
5. Gray, Elwood	Veteran	2 <sup>nd</sup> term expires 10/31/2024	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
6. Johnson, Jameelah	Director Designee – Dept. of Health & Human Services	Appointed March 21, 2017	C	C	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	C	1
7. Pei, Veronica	Public	Partial term expires 10/31/2024	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	C	C	0
8. Sapp, Miguel	Veteran	Partial term expires 10/31/2024	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	A	C	1
9. Schlesinger, Scott	Veteran	2 <sup>nd</sup> term expires 10/31/2025	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
10. Schuster, Lisa	Public - <b>RESIGNED</b>	Partial term expires 10/31/2022	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
11. Starling, Joanna	Ex-Officio Representing Montgomery College	Appointed February 4, 2014	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
12. Subin, Michael L.	Ex-Officio Representing County Executive	Appointed November 25, 2008	A	C	C	A	C	C	A	A	C	A	5
13. Thomas, Christopher	Veteran	1 <sup>st</sup> term expires 10/31/2026	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	C	C	0
14. Vandenbroek, Anneke	Veteran	1 <sup>st</sup> full term expires 10/31/2025	C	C	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	C	1
15. Von Goins, Charles	Veteran	Partial term expires 10/31/2025	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	A	C	1
16. Wilson, Michael	Veteran	1 <sup>st</sup> full term expires 10/31/2025	A	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	1

**Attendance Policy:** A Voting Member may miss up to 3 meetings within a one year rolling period. Voting Members who miss more than 3 meetings in that period or who miss 3 consecutive meetings will be automatically removed. Waivers may be requested for absences caused by extenuating circumstances.

<b>Non-Voting Congressional Representatives</b>			JUNE	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	ABSENCES
1. Eyong, Joseph – Office of U.S. Congressman Jamie Raskin			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
2. Garcia, Vikki – Office of U.S. Congressman John Sarbanes			A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	10
3. Reichard, Ken – Office of U.S. Senator Ben Cardin			C	C	C	A	C	C	A	C	C	C	2
4. Severn, Audrey – Office of U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen Eisenstat, Diana - *Alternate			X	C	C	C*	C	C	C	A	A	A	3