



Commission on Veterans Affairs



Meeting Agenda

May 21, 2024

May is Asian American History Month & Mental Health Awareness Month

6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Michael Wilson, Chair

Anneke Vandenbroek, Vice-Chair

Join the meeting via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87456044413>

If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 874 5604 4413 followed by #. **If an attendee would like to speak during the meeting**, you 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, Welcome of New Members, Pledge of Allegiance, Moment of Silence & POW/MIA Remembrance, Approval of April 2024 Minutes – Michael Wilson, Chair**
- 6:10 The Role of the 44nd/100th/MIS 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 - Home \(java-us.org\)](http://java-us.org)**
- 6:45 Bill to Reduce Property Taxes for Veterans with Severe Disabilities (Bill 6-24) – Council will hold a public hearing on June 11, 2024, at 1:30pm. – Discussion on Testimony for the Bill**
- 7:00 Chair and Vice Chair Updates – Memorial Day and Plan Date for New Member Orientation**
- 7:15 Commissioner Updates**
- 7:25 Commission Planning for Next Meeting – Michael Wilson**
- 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 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

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 Vandenbroek as Vice Chair. Michael expressed his appreciation for former Chair Wayne Miller and former Vice Chair Bob Koffman.

The Role of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team / 100th 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 442nd 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 442nd Regimental Combat Team, became the Executive Director of JAVA. Shima is 102 years old and a resident of Gaithersburg. [View Terry Shima's profile.](#)

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.

Discussion on Bill to Reduce Property Taxes for Veterans with Severe Disabilities (Bill 6-24) –

<https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccllims/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

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.), 1st 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.

Adjournment

7:23 p.m.

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

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Grace Caulfield; Bernard Chesman; Drew Garza; Elwood Gray; Jameelah Johnson; Veronica Pei; Miguel Sapp; Scott Schlesinger; Joanna Starling; Christopher Thomas; Anneke Vandenbroek; Charles Von Goins; Michael Wilson

Commissioners Absent: Michael Subin

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

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

County Staff Present: Jen Hodge, Local Behavioral Health Authority

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

Public Present: Bill Gray; Janice Freeman; Cynthia Macri; Wayne Miller; Jane McCarthy; Idong Essiet-Gibson; Sarah Huang