



Commission on Veterans Affairs



MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday, November 16, 2021

6 – 7:30 p.m.

Wayne Miller, Chair – Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair

Join the meeting via ZOOM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85628117974>

Please check out: [Commission Veterans Day 2021 Virtual Tribute](#)

If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 856 2811 7974 followed by #.

If you would like to speak during the meeting, you can raise your 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 2021 Minutes – Wayne Miller, Chair**
- 6:10 In Honor of Veterans Day: Veterans who Serve on the Commission Sharing Their Experience in the Military and as A Veteran – Discussion led by Wayne Miller**
- 6:45 Planning for the Work of the Commission: What issues should the Commission be working on in the upcoming year? – Wayne Miller and Bob Koffman**
- 7:05 Honoring Women Veterans – Jameelah Johnson**
- 7:15 Update Veterans Day Exhibit at Rockville Memorial Library and Silver Spring Civic Building – Michael Wilson and Bill Gray**
- 7:20 Updates from All**
- 7:30 Adjourn**

If you need a sign language interpreter or any other accommodation to participate in this meeting, please contact **betsy.luecking@montgomerycountymd.gov**.

Commission's Website – www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva
Veterans Network Directory – www.montgomerycountymd.gov/vnd



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2021**

****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 October 2021 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken, and the October 2021 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. In Honor of Veterans Day: Veterans who Serve on the Commission Sharing Their Experience in the Military and as A Veteran – Discussion Led by Wayne Miller

Commissioners introduced themselves and shared their experiences of being in the military, their experiences of being a Veteran, and shared their history with the armed forces.

Remarks included:

- Some had many family members who had served in the military while others were the first in their family to join.
- Some were deployed to combat zones while others were not – but that does not diminish each Veteran's service. ["Measuring your service to someone else's is setting yourself up for failure"]
- The military helped to structure who they are today in terms of career, personal and family life.
- Joined Commission to be part of a Veteran team and to give back and Veterans.
- Honored to be a part of this Commission and supporting Montgomery County Veterans.
- Commissioners have served all over the world including in Iraq, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Cameroon, Honduras, Liberia, and Turkey.
- Serving gave them the opportunity for higher education.
- Some have sought counseling for post-traumatic stress (PTS) and experienced post-traumatic growth.
- Proud to have served in the military and honored to have served their country.
- Really love the military culture and the feeling that you are a part of a family.
- Made friends for life.
- Through their employment they continue to serve military servicemembers and Veterans after exiting the military.
- The military did more for them than they did for it.
- Some felt the military had done more for them rather than they for the military.

IV. Planning for the Work of the Commission: What Issues Should the Commission be Working on in the Upcoming Year? – Wayne Miller and Bob Koffman

Mike Subin, Commissioner, suggested the Commission install a permanent plaque or recognition to honor black Veterans as well as women Veterans that would highlight their contributions. He offered to lead a Committee that will work on recognition of Veterans and various populations. Betsy Luecking, Staff, noted that Patrick Fromm, Director, Rockville Memorial Library (RML), is working on installing a plaque at RML that explains why the Rockville Library was renamed to RML. The plaque is dedicated to all County residents killed in action and we have recommended to say "To honor County residents Killed In Action defending the principles of freedom 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."

Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner, asked if this Commission could accept monetary donations from private companies. Mike said this Commission cannot solicit funds. He suggested working with a state Senator to have a bond bill introduced in state legislature. Betsy will look into this issue.

Wayne suggested this Commission also work on Veteran's employment issues. Betsy said this Commission could look into the private sector's employment initiatives. She also suggested a review of the County's hiring data. In 2009, a Montgomery County Government hiring preference for Veterans, Veterans with disabilities and persons with disabilities was passed. Since then, over 200 Veterans and approximately 40 Veterans with disabilities have been hired by the County. Many Veterans have been hired by Montgomery County Police Department and Public Safety. Mike noted that he worked on legislation that was passed in 2001 that provides County employees who are military reservists a supplemental salary to make up any difference between the employee's County salary and military compensation when they are called back to active duty. Jameelah said many County positions will accept experience in place of degrees. Dr. Cynthia Macri, Commissioner, added certifications can help jump start an individual's career or profession. Two- and four-year degrees oftentimes take a Veteran longer to complete. Joanna Starling, Montgomery College, agreed with Cynthia and said six years is the national average for a Veteran completing a two-year degree. This can be for many reasons including working while pursuing the degree, injuries, illnesses, or being called into active duty. Joanna added that in January this Commission will hear a presentation on Project Opportunity which provides free entrepreneurship education, training, coaching and a supportive community for Veterans in pursuit of owning a successful small business. Joanna is working to have Project Opportunity class available at Montgomery College.

Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair, suggested caregiver support as another issue for the Commission to address.

Michael Wilson, Commissioner, suggested Veteran health and wellness. Mike suggested that the Homefront episode focus on healthy living for Veterans. It was suggested that a panel discussion be held with Dr. Norvell V. Coots, MD, President and CEO of Holy Cross Health in Silver Spring, Maryland, Bob and Dr. Macri. Betsy will reach out to Neil Greenberger, Office of Public Information.

V. Honoring Women Veterans – Follow-Up and Next Steps – Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner

Jameelah asked for anyone interested in joining this Committee to email her. A meeting may be held next week to determine the mission and goals.

VI. Update Veterans Day Exhibit at Rockville Memorial Library and Silver Spring Civic Building – Michael Wilson and Bill Gray

Michael and Carly Clem, Staff, set up a Veterans Day display case at the Rockville Memorial Library which featured biographies and photos of several Commissioners as well as Montgomery County Veterans. They also set up a display case in honor of those County residents who were killed in action during the Global War on Terror (GWOT) including several full profiles of fallen heroes whose families were instrumental in the renaming of the Rockville Memorial Library.

Bill Gray, former Chair, and Carly also set up Veterans Day display cases at the Silver Spring Civic Building (SSCB) featuring biographies of several Commissioners and other Montgomery County Veterans. One display

case was dedicated to those County residents who were killed in action during GWOT. Bill reported that he sent pictures of the display at the SSCB to Tom and Carol Barbieri, whose son Army SPC Thomas Joseph ("T.J.") Barbieri was killed in action in Iraq. They were happy to see there was a display set up for those killed in action during the GWOT.

Austin Morris, Representative of Senator Chris Van Hollen, reported Senator Van Hollen attended the Veterans Day event hosted by Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 2562 and American Legion (AL) Post 268 joint event held at Wheaton Veterans Urban Park on Veterans Day. Senator Van Hollen spoke and highlighted several bipartisan pieces of legislation including his co-sponsorship for the bipartisan amendments for this year's NDAA which calls for the placement of a memorial on the National Mall honoring those we have lost in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). He also included information on the Gaithersburg VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in his speech. Austin noted that Dr. Macri presented a citation given by Governor Hogan.

Wayne spoke at the Jewish War Veterans ceremony held at the Rockville Jewish Community Center.

Ken Reichard, Representative for Senator Ben Cardin, reported the Mayor of Gaithersburg read a letter to the audience at the City of Gaithersburg Veterans Day event that was sent from Senator Cardin. Ken attended a Veterans Day event for the City of Rockville which was attended by approximately 250 people. He also attended the 13th Annual Tribute to America's Veterans concert which was virtual this year and streamed live via Facebook.

Elwood Gray, Commissioner, reported the American Minority Veterans Research Project hosted a Veterans Community Celebration and Health Fair on November 9. The keynote speaker was Dr. Coots, President and CEO, Holy Cross Health. President and CEO, Maryland Region, Trinity Health. He was hired in August 2016 after retiring from the United States Army as a Brigadier General. The event was held in collaboration with Montgomery County Government and the African American Health Initiative.

VII. Chair and Vice Chair Report

Wayne asked for speaker and topic suggestions for December Commission meeting. Jameelah suggested having a presentation on mental health and wellness during the holidays. Anneke offered to present. The Commission will have a further discussion at the January meeting about when Commissioners might feel comfortable about meeting again in public.

VIII. Updates / Announcements

Betsy reported former Senator Max Cleland passed away on November 9. He was a Vietnam Veteran, triple amputee and established the VA's Vet Center Program.

Anneke reported the Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic is sponsoring a webinar panel discussion tomorrow on pathways to resiliency.

Jameelah reported she attended the NAACP Veterans Day event held this past weekend at Rockville Memorial Library which included a viewing of the movie 'Red Tails' which details how the Civil Aeronautics Authority selected 13 black cadets to become part of an experimental program at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama during World War II and the struggles that African Americans have experienced in the military.

Adjournment

7:30pm

Next Full Commission Meeting

Tuesday, December 21, 2021 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: Elwood Gray; Jameelah Johnson; Robert Koffman; Cynthia Macri; Wayne Miller; Reggie Mitchell; Scott Schlesinger; Lisa Schuster; Joanna Starling; Michael Subin; Anneke Vandenbroek; Susan Webman; Michael Wilson

Commissioners Absent: Josephine Bahn; Steven Willis

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Present: Austin Morris (Senator Chris Van Hollen); Ken Reichard (Senator Ben Cardin)

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Absent: Christa Burton (Congressman Jamie Raskin); Vikki Garcia (Congressman John Sarbanes)

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