



Commission on Veterans Affairs



Meeting Agenda

October 15, 2024

6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Michael Wilson, Chair

Anneke Vandenbroek, Vice-Chair

Join the meeting via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88203674287>

If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 882 0367 4287 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, Pledge of Allegiance, Moment of Silence & POW/MIA Remembrance, Approval of September 2024 Minutes – Michael Wilson, Chair**
- 6:10 Discussion and completion of the Committee Evaluation and Review Board (CERB) Questionnaire – All - please review attached and be prepared to discuss**
- 6:40 Review of the Two Policy Issues for the Upcoming Year for County Council HHS Committee Meeting on October 16, 2024 – Michael Wilson**
- 6:45 Plans for National Veterans and Military Families Month in November, Highlight the County's Veterans Day Plans Including Operation Green Light – All**
- 7:00 Requests for Pinning and Role of Commission – Michael Wilson and Wayne Miller**
- 7:05 Chair and Vice Chair Updates – Michael Wilson & Anneke Vandenbroek**
- 7:15 Updates from Commissioners**
- 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 call 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

October 15, 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.

Approval of September 2024 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the September 2024 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the September 2024 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

Discussion and Completion of the Committee Evaluation and Review Board (CERB) Questionnaire **Commissioners reviewed a draft of comments provided to date for the questionnaire and provided the following edits.**

- **Question 1:** Change Space X to Space Force. Spell out USPHS (Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service) and NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). Include that the Commission considers the needs of veterans and their families. Include the role the Commission has in serving gold star families and state the Commission needs to develop a plan to support more gold star families. Information from Commission is passed along to constituents at various veteran service organizations that Commissioners are members of and vice versa. Include sentence "The Commission acts as a conduit to local veteran service organizations."
 - Further discussion required if Commission should change name to Commission on Veterans and Military Families, similar to Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families recent name change.
 - Need to review Purple Star Schools and how Montgomery County Public Schools is supporting children of military service members, veterans and deceased veterans.
- **Question 2:** Need to revisit in-person meetings as all Commissioners will have to agree and be comfortable. Rooms we have access to do not allow for hybrid meetings. Most County Boards, Committees and Commissions are still meeting virtually.
- **Question 3:** Suggestion to spell out VSO as it can mean veteran service organization or veteran service office. Include establishment of a plan of action to connect with veteran service organizations. Joanna Starling, Montgomery College, will send Betsy a response regarding the Commission's relationship with Montgomery College which has a connection to young veterans. Jameelah Johnson, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) reported she shares veterans information and resources from this Commission with DHHS managers that work at the Crisis Center and within Behavioral Health.
- **Question 4:** No edits.
- **Question 5:** Has this Commission collected quantitative data in the past? If not, this is an area we can work on in the future.

- **Question 6:** Include more marketing about Commission to the community. Another roadblock is capturing quantitative data.
 - ServingTogether could provide data relating to the number of veterans it has served or are currently serving in Montgomery County.
 - Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (MDVMF) could provide data regarding number of veterans served by Montgomery County Veterans Benefits Specialists as well as the amount of money. For example, MDVMF they brought \$1.2 million into the county through VA claims filed.
 - Number of veterans enrolled in VA healthcare has increased. The Gaithersburg VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic is serving 4,800 patients. Approximately 13% of veterans in the County are being served by this CBOC. Another 8,000 enrolled are receiving care in DC or other locations.
 - According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of veterans of Montgomery County has increased by approximately 6,000 from the years 2022 to 2023. First increase in population in 15 years. Montgomery County has the third highest veteran population in the state behind Prince George's County and Anne Arundel County. Why is the population increasing? How do we attract more veterans to the county? Suggestion to survey veterans and active duty personnel on why they stay in Maryland or why they are leaving. Suggestion to create a working committee to discuss how to obtain data to demonstrate performance or outcomes. Donny Williams, ServingTogether, reported Maryland Chamber of Commerce is currently working with politicians at the state level to change economic interests and angles to encourage veterans to stay in Maryland or to come here. He suggested the Chamber speak with the Commission.
- **Question 7:** No edits.
- **Question 8:** Include "Serve as a conduit to local veteran service organizations". Include organizations by name – Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, and Jewish War Veterans. Suggestion for the Commission to develop an outreach strategy.
- **Question 9:** Collaboration is valuable. Include Jewish War Veterans and Operation Second Chance.
- **Question 10:** Include liaisons to other Commissions (Commission on People with Disabilities). Include inviting representatives from other organizations to speak at meetings that provide information that can be included in the Commission's future planning and vision efforts.
- **Question 11:** No edits.
- **Question 12:** Clarification wanted regarding the term 'incentives'. Community survey would require funding and staff time. Commission on People with Disabilities commented incentives could include free Ride On Bus passes and free recreation center memberships. The County currently provides a \$10 flat rate for transportation for each meeting and a \$30 flat rate for dependent care for each meeting. What recruitment strategies could be used that do not require financial incentives? Suggestion to advertise on Ride On buses.
 - Betsy Luecking, Staff, reported she has an email subscription list of over 8,000 veterans that she uses when sending out information and resources. The Commission could use this list more to communicate and encourage veterans to participate in Commission activities. The Commission would access the County's email list to all residents. The Office of Public Information (OPI) does send out press releases for Commission recognition events including Black History Month, Vietnam Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Women Veterans Day, and Veterans Day. Suggestion to work with OPI to coordinate more Homefront programs including a segment on the services available at the Gaithersburg VA CBOC.

- **Question 13:** No edits.
- **Question 14:** Do not have access to data to adequately respond to the question. Need for more robust discussion to determine a performance matrix.
- **Question 15:** When the Commission was established in 2009, it was going to be put under Behavioral Health. Due to pushback from Commissioners, it was then placed under Aging & Disability Services, which is the unit that Betsy works under. A discussion was had if this was appropriate and if the Commission should be housed under the Office of the County Executive due to the large population and to increase visibility. It may give the Commission more authority and access to more services.
- **Additional Comments:** This Commission asked DHHS to include a question regarding military service during intake. Staff can connect residents to available services such as the Silver Spring Vet Center and Gaithersburg VA CBOC.

Review of the Two Policy Priorities for the Upcoming Year for County Council HHS Committee on October 16, 2024

Michael will present the following two policy priorities to the County Council:

1. Education Veterans and their families on how to access all federal, state, and county funded programs for Veterans and their families and advocate for any needed programs and services not funded by the federal or state government at the county level.
2. Plan and conduct education and community outreach efforts for programs and services for Veterans and their families.

The Commission will testify on budget items in April. It was asked if the County will continue to provide \$650,000 annually for homeless veterans. There is always potential for budget cuts. It was noted that the County will have to increase the budget for the school system due to [Maryland Blueprint](#), which is landmark education legislation designed to transform public schools in the state of Maryland over a 10-year period. This increase in budget could reflect in budget cuts in other programs.

Plans for National Veterans and Military Families Month in November, Highlight the County's Veterans Day Plans Including Operation Green Light

Virtual veteran tributes are posted online via the [Commission's Veterans Day website](#). Also available online is a list of Veterans Day events happening around the County. Events can be added by contacting Carly Clem, Staff.

Montgomery County Department of Transportation this year is adding a bus wrap for Veterans Day to one of the Ride On busses. The design was sent to Commissioners for comment. It was suggested that the graphic include a female veteran. The graphic was changed to reflect this and was finalized last week. The design includes ServingTogether's phone number and the Commission's website.

Michael and Betsy are scheduled to speak at the Montgomery County Veterans Collaborate tomorrow.

Scott Schlesinger, Commissioner, also serves on the Governor's Commission for Veterans Affairs. He can read a Governor's proclamation for Veterans Day for any event by request.

The County Council will be presenting a proclamation for Veterans Day. Betsy will be finalizing wording of the proclamation tomorrow.

Christopher Thomas, Commissioner, reported the Darnestown Civic Association is hosting a free Veterans Day breakfast at the Darnestown Presbyterian Church on Monday November 11 at 9:30 a.m.

Wayne Miller, former Chair, will be singing the National Anthem at Mission BBQ in Rockville on Veterans Day, Monday November 11 at noon.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Jewish War Veterans, and American Legion post will be hosting a Veterans Day event at Veterans Park at 11am.

Requests for Pinning and Role of Commission

The Commission request an inquiry from Lynn Nash, Maryland Military Coalition, regarding pinning a veteran at Hebrew Home. Betsy asked Wayne to research the topic:

www.wehonorveterans.org/wp-content/uploads/Veteran-Pinning-Ceremony-Guide.pdf

Veteran Pinning Ceremonies provide an opportunity to acknowledge the military service and sacrifices made by a Veteran and their family. Hospice organizations are uniquely situated to offer a final expression of gratitude and appreciation for a Veteran's service. This act of recognition and appreciation can provide a Veteran with a sense of meaning and purpose at end of life while simultaneously providing comfort and closure to a Veterans' loved ones.

This Commission will not be conducting pinning ceremonies and will need to advise which organizations in the county can provide it. Every hospice is supposed to know how to conduct a pinning ceremony, but if they do not have veterans in their facility they may not know about the ceremony.

Gilchrist, a nonprofit provider of serious illness and end-of-life care, offer pinning ceremonies for veterans in their hospice care and for the community at large:

<https://gilchristcares.org/services/hospice-care/specialized-hospice-programs/whv/whv-pinning/>.

Chair and Vice Chair Updates

Michael reported he met with American Legion Post 295 last week to speak about the Commission's mission, efforts and accomplishments. He suggested that the Commission develop an outreach strategy that includes documentation and photos.

Updates from Commissioners

Mike Subin, Commissioner, recently met with Scott Wallace, Attorney, and Vipin Desai, Developer, who is interested in donating 27 acres of land in the Norbeck area to develop a Veteran Village. He asked for the number of beds at Charlotte Hall as well as the number of veterans in assisted living facilities in the county. Christopher reported Charlotte Hall has 318 skilled nursing beds and 126 assisted living beds (444 total beds). He distributed the following Charlotte Hall fact sheet after the meeting:

www.charhall.org/content/front/CHVH%20Quick%20Fact%20Sheet%20August%202024.pdf

Warrior Canine Connection has a program for service dogs that do not become certified. These dogs become therapy dogs for various facilities. Mike Subin suggested that the Commission discuss having these therapy dogs placed in the courts' day care centers for children whose parents have to attend trial or placed within sheriffs offices.

Meeting Adjourned

7:34 p.m.

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Grace Caulfield; Elwood Gray; Jameelah Johnson; Miguel Sapp; Scott Schlesinger; Joanna Starling; Michael Subin; Christopher Thomas; Anneke Vandenbroek, Vice-Chair; Charles Von Goin; Michael Wilson, Chair

Commissioners Absent: Bernard Chesman; Drew Garza; Veronica Pei

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

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

County Staff Present: Josi Makon, Department of Health and Human Services

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; Wayne Miller; Donny Williams, ServingTogether; Shantol Coleman