



## Commission on Veterans Affairs



### **MEETING AGENDA**

**Tuesday, October 17, 2023**

**6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

**Wayne Miller, Chair – Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair**

Via ZOOM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85121307404>

**If you want to call into the meeting**, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 851 2130 7404 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 September 2023 Meeting Minutes – Wayne Miller, Chair**
- 6:15 Veteran Institute for Procurement through Montgomery Chamber of Commerce: Veteran Entrepreneurs – Mauricio Vera, Assistant National Director, Veteran Institute for Procurement (VIP) ([www.nationalvip.org](http://www.nationalvip.org))**
- 6:45 Operation Green Light and Plan for Outreach**
- 7:00 Vote to Have Fern St, Wheaton renamed to Veterans Way and getting 40 parking passes for VFW members – Richard Fenati, Commander, VFW Post 2562, <https://vfw2562.org/>**
- 7:05 Chair and Vice Chair Report**
- 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](mailto:carly.clem@montgomerycountymd.gov) or 202-853-1109.

**\*\*See 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 17, 2023**

**\*\*MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM\*\***

**Call to Order**

Wayne Miller, 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 Minutes**

A motion was made to approve the September 2023 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the September 2023 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva).

**Veteran Institute for Procurement (VIP) Through Montgomery Chamber of Commerce: Veteran Entrepreneurs – Mauricio Vera, Assistant National Director, VIP**

Website: [www.nationalvip.org](http://www.nationalvip.org)

Fact Sheet: <https://nationalvip.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2023-VIP-Fast-Fact-Sheet-4.pdf>

PowerPoint: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/VIPOverviewOct2023.pdf>

Mauricio reviewed the PowerPoint presentation.

The floor was opened to questions.

- Does the Maryland Chamber of Commerce offer a similar program? They do not. VIP is a unique national program funded by a grant from the Small Business Administration.
- How is VIP marketed to capture veteran-owned businesses? VIP works closely with federal agencies and the state of Maryland and participate in their outreach events, especially those events that focus on veteran-owned small businesses. VIP recently participated in an event hosted by the Maryland Department of Affairs where they received a number of applicants. VIP also manages a significant mailing list of veteran-owned small businesses nationwide. National Veterans Small Business Week is coming up and VIP will be participating in events nationwide. The University of Maryland will be hosting an event in the coming weeks. VIP also does outreach via LinkedIn and social media.
- How can the program help veterans who are considering establishing a small business? The U.S. Small Business Administration Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) program is designed to provide entrepreneurial development services such as business training, counseling, and resource partner referrals to transitioning service members, veterans, National Guard & Reserve members, and military spouses looking to start, purchase or grow a business (<https://innovate.umd.edu/resources/vboc>). SBA also offers the SCORE program, which is a network of volunteer, expert business mentors, is dedicated to helping small businesses plan, launch, manage and grow ([www.sba.gov/local-assistance/resource-partners/score-business-mentoring](http://www.sba.gov/local-assistance/resource-partners/score-business-mentoring)). It

was noted that Project Opportunity offers a free entrepreneurship training program designed solely for veterans, active duty, reserve personnel and military spouses who want to start their own business or expand their current small business ([www.project-opportunity.com/](http://www.project-opportunity.com/)).

- Suggestion that this information along with available resources be compiled and shared.

Mauricio asked for the Commission to assist in getting information out about VIP.

### **Operation Green Light and Plan for Outreach**

Press release: [www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press\\_Detail.aspx?Item\\_ID=44159](http://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=44159)

Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich and the County Council are supporting Operation Green Light, a program sponsored by the National Association of Counties to honor those who have made immeasurable sacrifices to preserve freedom. The program asks for displays of a green light, from November 6 through the 12, in a window of businesses or residences to honor veterans.

From November 6 through the 12, Montgomery County's Memorial Plaza, which is located adjacent to the County Executive Building at 101 Monroe St. in Rockville, will be lit with green lights.

### **Discussion – Rename Fern Street in Wheaton to Veterans Way / Parking Spaces or Passes for VFW Post 2562 Members**

The Commander for American Legion Post 268, which is also located on Fern Street, has not yet been consulted with on these requests made by VFW Post 2562. Parking is an issue for both Posts as well as the businesses located along Fern Street. Parking is available on the street, in a paved lot next to a strip mall and a parking garage on Amherst Avenue that offers 605 spaces. Allotting 40 parking spaces specifically for Post 268 will take away available parking for businesses where there is already a severe shortage. It was asked that the Commission determine how many parking spaces are currently available within the parking garage as perhaps a percentage of them could be set aside for the VFW. The County may not have the authority to provide free parking passes depending on how drivers pay for their parking, such as via a mobile application, as there may not be a ticket to be validated.

Changing a street name will impact all businesses located on Fern Street which could incur significant financial costs. It was suggested that Richard Fenati, Commander, VFW Post 2562, speak with the businesses first to get their input and support.

It was suggested using Fern Street to hang banners or flags that honor veterans instead of renaming the street. Mike Subin, Commissioner, offered to speak to the Department of General Services about this.

It was reported that the state has currently closed VFW Post 2562 and it is unclear at this time if they will reopen.

The discussion was tabled for the time until more information can be obtained.

### **Chair and Vice Chair Report**

The Commission will hold its next meeting on Tuesday November 21. It was suggested that Dr. James Bridgers, newly appointed Director for the Department of Health and Human Services, be invited to be the speaker for the Commission's November meeting.

### **Updates / Announcements**

Audrey Severn, Representative of Senator Chris Van Hollen, reported their office is working heavily on the war in the Middle East. Veterans in need of assistance can contact Audrey via email: [audrey\\_severn@vanhollen.senate.gov](mailto:audrey_severn@vanhollen.senate.gov).

Betsy Luecking, Staff, reported the County now has 34 homeless veterans. The Housing Opportunities Commission applied for more HUD-VASH vouchers but were denied. Betsy asked Audrey to attend the Commission's November meeting as John Mendez, Bethesda Cares, will be attending to discuss this issue.

Senator Van Hollen and Senator Ben Cardin were instrumental in the past in assisting the County in obtaining HUD-VASH vouchers.

American Legion Post 41 is hosting a VA benefits fair on Saturday November 18 from 12pm to 3:30pm. Free admission and free lunch. Spouses and families welcome. Learn about VA, plus state and local services. File, update, and appeal your VA disability claim. Learn about VA's new "PACT Act" VA benefits. Enroll for VA healthcare. Learn about VA benefits for spouses and children of veterans, and Maryland and County services. Learn how to obtain your DD214 and military records. RSVP by Monday November 14 to [VAbenefits41@gmail.com](mailto:VAbenefits41@gmail.com).

Dan Bullis, former Chair, is the Vice President of Patient Services and Warrior/Family Support Fund with the Walter Reed Society. If Commissioners know of any veterans that need assistance, they can contact Dan at [danbullisWRS@gmail.com](mailto:danbullisWRS@gmail.com).

The American Minority Veterans Research Project will be hosting an event on November 28 in recognition of POWs and MIAs. It will be held at the Silver Spring Civic Building. The U.S. Army military band are scheduled to play.

Jewish War Veterans will be hosting a dining out ceremony in full dress uniform on Thursday November 16. Former Chief of Staff U.S. Air Force General Schwartz will be the guest speaker as well as the National Commander for JWV. Cost to attend is \$75.

The Gaithersburg-Rockville Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi will be hosting a community health event on March 2, 2024. Michael Wilson, Commissioner, asked for a contact at the VA Gaithersburg Community-Based Outpatient Clinic to invite someone to attend.

Dr. Cynthia Macri, reported she co-chaired a panel on women's health for a National Congress conference on VA healthcare and IT modernization. She suggested having a discussion about these topics at a future meeting.

**Adjournment:** 7:24pm

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

#### **Attendance**

**Commissioners Present:** Josephine Bahn; Elwood Gray; Jameelah Johnson; Robert Koffman; Cynthia Macri; Wayne Miller, Chair; Scott Schlesinger; Joanna Starling; Michael Subin; Anneke Vandenbroek; Michael Wilson

**Commissioners Absent:** Reggie Mitchell; Susan Webman

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

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

**County Staff Present:** Jen Hodge, Local Behavioral Health Authority, DHHS

**Commission Liaison:** Sam Korper, Commission on People with Disabilities

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

**Public Present:** Dan Bullis; Stan Seidel, Maryland Veterans Commission; Mauricio Vera; Bill Gray; Michael Theard; Mauricio Vera, Veteran Institute for Procurement