



## Commission on Veterans Affairs



### **MEETING AGENDA**

**Tuesday, September 19, 2023**

**6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

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

**Join the meeting via Zoom**

**<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86022127714>**

***September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month***

**If you want to call into the meeting**, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 860 2212 7714 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 May 2023 and June 2023 Meeting Minutes – Wayne Miller, Chair**
- 6:05 Serving Together & Suicide Prevention – Christy Kenady, Program Director**
- 6:25 Planning for Veterans Recognition Events: September, Suicide Prevention Month, for Veterans Day or for Operation Green Light – Dr. Robert Koffman, US Navy Psychiatrist Retired**
- 6:45 Military Initiative Committee – Roweena Davis, Chair, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc., Eta Theta Sigma Alumnae Chapter**
- 7:00 Establish Goals/Priorities for Upcoming Year – Led by Wayne Miller and Bob Koffman**
- 7:25 Chair and Vice Chair Report**
- 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  
September 19, 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 May 2023 and June 2023 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the May 2023 and June 2023 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva).

**ServingTogether & Suicide Prevention – Christy Kenady, Program Director**

Website: <https://servingtogetherproject.org>

PowerPoint: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/ServingTogetherOverviewSeptember2023.pdf>

Serve active duty, National Guard, and Reserve service members as well as Veterans and their families who reside in the Metropolitan Washington DC and Greater Baltimore area are eligible for support. ServingTogether aims to support all individuals who have worn the uniforms of our military – regardless of age, era, branch or discharge status. Not all services are available to every member, however, their Care Coordinators will strive to find an appropriate local resource.

The floor was opened to questions.

- **Are mental health services confidential?** Yes, veterans can be referred to resources that are confidential. It was noted that the Silver Spring Vet Center and Military Cohen Clinic are great resources that can also be used by veterans, active duty servicemembers, spouses and their families.
- **Is ServingTogether connected with local American Legions (AL) and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) posts and do you provide outreach to local organizations?** ServingTogether is available to provide presentations as well as resources.
- **Is there an entity that recognizes veterans in the community who may have gone above and beyond?** Christy will have to follow-up.
- **Does ServingTogether work with other non-profits when referring someone for Team Rubicon, Habitat for Humanity or Wounded Warrior Project?** Upon intake, veterans are questioned about the things they enjoy doing or ways they want to give back to the community. If interested, they are referred non-profits where they can connect to their community.

## **Planning for Veterans Recognition Events: September, Suicide Prevention Month, for Veterans Day or for Operation Green Light – Dr. Robert Koffman, US Navy Psychiatrist Retired**

Dr. Koffman was featured in County Executive Marc Elrich's briefing on September is Suicide Prevention Month: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbRyu9f\\_wLc&t=845s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbRyu9f_wLc&t=845s) (video).

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) will once again join the National Association of Counties (NACo) on Operation Green Light: <https://veterans.maryland.gov/operation-green-light/>. Operation Green Light provides educational opportunities for governments, businesses, organizations, and individuals to learn more about military culture, suicide prevention, and things veterans want us to know about their service and their transition from military to civilian culture. Buildings are to be illuminated in green light from November 6 through November 13. Montgomery County participated in the initiative last year with green lights at Memorial Plaza.

Initiative includes "Challenge your team by completing free courses available on the Governor's Challenge Psych Armor Training Portal." Psych Armor offers free online courses, curricula, podcasts, webinars, live speaking engagements, social media and more on the topic of military cultural awareness.

(<https://psycharmor.org/>)

Betsy Luecking, Staff, will share information about Operation Green Light via her veterans e-distribution list which is comprised of approximately 8,000 individuals.

Wayne reported the Silver Spring Vet Center is participating in "Chalk the Walk" for suicide prevention and inviting Montgomery County residents to draw on the sidewalks and write inspirational thoughts in front of the Vet Center.

The Commission does compile a list of local Veterans Day events which are posted on the website and shared via email.

## **Military Initiative Committee – Roweena Davis, Chair, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc., Eta Theta Sigma Alumnae Chapter**

The Eta Theta Sigma Alumnae Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho, Sorority, Inc., primarily serves the Silver Spring area and works diligently to have a lasting impact by assisting those in need and working to better the lives of the communities they serve. The Chapter has previously partnered with the Montgomery County Coalition on Homeless and would like to identify other organizations or events to partner or collaborate with that specifically help veterans, women veterans, and military servicemembers.

Michael Wilson, Commissioner, introduced himself as the recently elected President of the Gaithersburg-Rockville (MD) Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated. The Chapter provides support to Fisher House at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. They are also interested in identifying other organizations to partner with.

## **Establish Goals/Priorities for Upcoming Year – Led by Wayne Miller and Bob Koffman**

Wayne will be presenting the Commission's FY24 priorities to the Chair of the County Council Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee on October 12. He will also be presenting the priorities to the HHS Director this Thursday September 21.

- Advertise Psych Armor and encourage individuals to enroll in the free trainings.
- Enhance economic opportunities and entrepreneurship training for veterans.
- Promoting social connectedness.
- Increasing participation of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans at ALs and VFWs.

Richard, Commander of VFW Post 2562 in Wheaton, reported the Post is temporarily closed. The location does not offer good parking and he would like to ask the county for 40 free parking passes to give to membership. He also suggested renaming Fern Street to Veterans Avenue. Once the Post reopens, Richard would like to host presentations and events that would be open to the community at large and create more engagement between veterans and civilians. Dr. Cynthia Macri, Commissioner, suggested

VFWs alter their membership application to allow veterans who did not serve in combat to become members.

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

The Commission will meet next on Tuesday October 17. Suggestion for presenters include the Silver Spring Vet Center and the Chamber of Commerce to discuss opportunities for veterans.

### **Updates / Announcements**

Audrey Severn, Representative, Senator Chris Van Hollen, introduced herself as the new liaison to the Commission and noted to advise her if there is legislation that Senator Van Hollen can assist with.

The Foxie G Foundation is hosting a Day of Ease for servicemembers, veterans and their families on Saturday September 23 in Union Bridge. Over 23 community resource tables will be there along with food trucks and family friend activities. Event is free to participate.

Jewish War Veterans Kemp Mill Post 260 will be hosting a Veterans Day event on November 16. More information to come.

The Disabled Veterans National Foundation is hosting a resource Fair being held November 8 in Silver Spring.

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.

### **Adjournment: 7:30pm**

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

### **Attendance**

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

**Commissioners Absent:** Josephine Bahn; 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:** Roweena Davis, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority; Christy Kenady, ServingTogether; Mallary Lass, Easterseals; Stan Seidel, Maryland Veterans Commission; Bill Gray