



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs  
Meeting Summary Minutes  
March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**I. Call to Order & Introductions**

Dan Bullis, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Dan asked for all present to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and to remain standing 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. A POW/MIA Empty Chair is placed at all official meetings of the Commission as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all wars and conflicts involving the United States of America. There was a moment of silence in memory of Fred Cherry, Colonel and Command Pilot in the U.S. Air Force. A career fighter pilot, he served in the Korean War, the Cold War and the Vietnam War where he was a POW. He passed away February 16, 2016. Also, there was a moment of silence for Prince Georges County Police Officer Jacai Colson who was killed in action on March 13, 2016.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Wayne Miller, Commissioner, made a motion to approve the February 2016 Meeting Summary Minutes. Jim Campbell, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the February 2016 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva).

**III. Incarcerated Veterans Pre-Release and Reentry Services – Gale Starkey, Deputy Warden, Inmate Services, Detention Services Division (MCDOCR), and Shawn Huntley, Vice President of Community Services, WorkSource Montgomery**

Handouts:

- [Veteran Re-Entry Search Service \(VRSS\) FAQs](#)
- [Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Re-Entry Search Services \(VRSS\) – DOCR Inmate Population Report – March 15, 2016](#)
- [DOCR VRSS Report \(Redacted\) – March 11, 2016](#)
- [Veteran Justice Outreach Program](#)

Gale Starkey gave an overview of the pre-release and reentry services that MCDOCR provides. In 2013 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) made available to MCDOCR a system known as Veterans Re-Entry Search Service (VRSS). By entering in vital information, such as name, social security number, and date of birth, the VA can help DOCR identify individuals for whom it has a record of military service. See handout on VRSS for more detailed information. This report is run quarterly, but will soon be run monthly. The latest data from March 11<sup>th</sup> indicates that there are 28 Veterans total at the following facilities: the Montgomery County Detention Center, the Montgomery County Correctional Facility, Pre-Trial Services, or Pre-Release and Reentry Services. Two of the individuals are located at the Springfield Hospital Center receiving mental health treatment.

Data regarding the 28 Veterans:

- 27 are male, 1 is female.
- 21 identified as African American, 5 identified as White, Non-Hispanic, and 2 identified as Hispanic.
- Age range: 1 veteran 18 to 24; 7 veterans 25 to 34; 9 veterans 35 to 44; 7 veterans 45 to 54; 3 veterans 55 to 65; and 1 veteran 65 to 74.

- Average length of stay: 20 days for females, 114 days for males.
- Average number of Veterans on a monthly basis varies between 20 and 28.
- Veterans make up 17% to 17% of the total incarcerated population.
- Charges vary from traffic to murder.

MCDOCR works with Karen Carrington of the VA Veterans Justice Outreach Program, which assists eligible Veterans to have access to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) mental health and substance abuse services. The list of identified Veterans is shared with the Veterans Justice Outreach Worker and individuals who need services are connected with the VA hospital. Gale has learned from Betsy Luecking, Staff, about David Coxe, Veterans Benefits Specialist, located at Montgomery College. Gale will reach out to David to form a partnership with him.

Shawn Huntley gave an overview of services WorkSource Montgomery provides within the jail system. Montgomery County has three One-Stop Career Centers – one in Wheaton, one in Germantown, and one at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility in Boyds. Montgomery County was the first in the country to offer a one stop center in a secure maximum correctional facility.

Shawn noted that nationwide data for 2011 to 2012 indicates that individuals in jail who have had experienced combat made up 31% of the population in jails.

In July 2015, President Barack Obama cited the jobs training program in the Montgomery County correctional system during an [address he made at the NAACP convention in Philadelphia](#). There are two job coaches that work within the jail Monday through Friday. One full-time job coach and one part-time job coach work specifically with the male program while one full-time job coach works specifically with the female program. Outside of the jail system a full-time job coach works at the Wheaton One Stop Center and a half-time job coach works at the Germantown One Stop Center to provide services to the inmates once they have left the correctional facility. While employment is a good indicator of success, housing is the biggest indicator of non-recidivism. It is a huge issue specifically for individuals who cannot pass a background check due to their criminal record. Data indicates that if housing is not in place within three months of release there is a 67.7% chance the individual will go back into the jail system.

The floor was opened to questions.

Ron Drach, Commissioner, asked what type of job preparation services they offer inmates and how far within their sentence are they provided. Inmates must have less than 8 months left on their sentence to participate in the program. There are several programs within the jail system that inmates can participate in to receive a decreased sentence time frame. Inmates who participate in the WorkSource Montgomery program do not receive time that would decrease their sentence. Despite this the program has the highest number of participation and the highest number of retention. Inmates are taught that life ready is job ready. This Thursday an employer is scheduled to speak with the participants and will return on Friday for live interviews. Job preparation services include resume writing as well as assessments of their skills, abilities and interests to show participants the types of jobs they could pursue. Participants are asked at the beginning of the program to speak to their offense and describe it to a potential employer. At the end of the program the participants are asked once again to complete this task. The tasks are videotaped and the participant is shown the first video followed by the second video. It is a powerful tool used to show the participant how much they have progressed in the program.

It was asked if Montgomery County has enforced “Ban the Box”, a Fair Criminal Record Screening Standards Law that assists in the successful reintegration into the workforce people with criminal records by removing improper barriers to employment. The law helps to make sure that employers make hiring decisions based on relevant work qualifications without improperly considering a person’s criminal record. The law does this by restricting when during the application process an employer can inquire about someone’s criminal history. “Ban the Box” was enacted by Montgomery County Council October 28, 2014 and signed into law by the County Executive on November 10, 2014. Mike Subin noted that it does not prevent employers from using the online Maryland Judiciary Case Search engine to review applicant’s criminal backgrounds.

Julie Riggs, Serving Together (ST), asked about County diversion programs to keep individuals out of the jail system. Department of Health and Human Services provides therapeutic services for incarcerated offenders through programs like Clinical Assessment and Triage Services (CATS). The STEER program is for those with substance abuse that will be deflected from jail. An officer will be able to make a determination prior to arrest whether or not the individual needs to be taken in for an evaluation. Gale suggested inviting Officer Scott Davis, Montgomery County Police Department, Crisis Intervention Team to a future Commission meeting to discuss the work of his unit.

It was asked if the program offers information or assistance on how to start your own business. The program currently does not, but Shawn agrees that it would be a good addition. She is interested in entrepreneurial and business co-ops that would allow an individual to buy into a business to gain experience that would enable them to launch their own business in the future. Dan Bolling, Commissioner, noted that the University of Maryland has a co-op program that works on academic and practical co-op projects. Ron suggested connecting with [VET-Force](#), an organization provide additional assistance to Veterans, particularly service-disabled Veterans, with creating and expanding their own small businesses.

Gale added that MCDOCR has partnered with Montgomery College and their Workforce Development and Continuing Education program as well as the Montgomery College Foundation to offer scholarships to inmates, a bridge to college program, academic advising, and assistance with financial aid and paperwork as they get closer to their release date.

It was asked what permanent housing sources are utilized to provide housing for Veterans once they have left the jail system. Shawn noted that there are very long waiting lists for traditional housing programs across the board for all populations. The issue of finding permanent housing exists for all offenders. Unfortunately, some individuals will not stay at a shelter if it is available as an option. Mike Subin, Special Assistant to the County Executive, reported that Congressman Van Hollen has been critical in the last few years in helping the County obtain 86 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers for homeless Veterans and their families. Last year the County Council allocated \$500,000 to supplement housing for those Veterans whose discharge status made them unqualified for VASH vouchers. Bethesda Cares has also been critical in acquiring additional housing for homeless Veterans.

It was asked if PTSD counseling is offered at the Correctional Facility. It currently is not, although if a Veteran experiences a mental health crisis while in the jail system mental health staff will work with the individual or send them to a hospital for further treatment. Wayne Miller, Commissioner, and Lead Worker for the Silver Spring Vet Center offered counselors to provide education and counseling at the Correctional Facility.

C-SPAN featured the Montgomery County Correctional Re-Entry Program in October 2015:  
[www.c-span.org/video/?328611-2/washington-journal-robert-green-montgomery-county-correctional-facility](http://www.c-span.org/video/?328611-2/washington-journal-robert-green-montgomery-county-correctional-facility)

The Commission discussed visiting the Correctional Facility in Clarksburg for a tour on a weekend.

#### **IV. Chair and Vice-Chair Report:**

None.

#### **V. Old Business:**

Mike Subin reported that he and Betsy Luecking, Staff, had a conference call with Brian Hawkins, Medical Center Director, DC VA Medical Center, to discuss the Montgomery County Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). It is slated to open in December 2017. Ken Reichard, Representative of Senator Ben Cardin, noted that the VA should have a location chosen by June 2016. Mike spoke with Mr. Hawkins about having the Veterans who are accepted into the mental health court to receive services from the CBOC. Mr. Hawkins is in favor of this plan.

In regards to the mental health court, Mike sent a memo to the States Attorneys Office and the court system about establishing a Veterans track within the mental health court. It was not met with a good reception. Mike contacted Raymond Crowel, Chief, DHHS Behavioral Health and Crisis Services, about the issue as their division will be involved in the program. Dr. Crowel said that his case managers will ask whether or not the defendant is a veteran and if they are they will be linked up with the services they need.

Mike reported that the Respect the Space Program will begin again. Volunteers will be trained on accessible parking spaces and how to report parking lots that are not in compliance. Completed forms will be given to Betsy for review. If the parking lot falls under Title III (private sector) the report will be given to the Office of Human Rights who will contact the parking lot owner to try and remediate. If the parking lot falls under Title II (County owned parking lots) the report will be given to Nancy Greene, ADA Compliance Manager to remediate. By bringing parking lots into compliance police officers will then be able to ticket individuals who are illegally parked in accessible spaces.

Recently the issue of service animals in training was addressed by the County when an employee requested that they be allowed to bring their service animal in training to work with them. Maryland law states that a service animal in training and their trainer should be given the same rights as a person with a disability and their service animal.

#### **VI. Roundtable:**

Kira Dentes, Financial Coach for Veterans, discussed her role with the federally funded Financial Coaching Program from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. There are no eligibility or DD-214 requirements to receive assistance. The program is open to any veteran from any era. Kira is based out of Arlington, VA. Her office may offer telecoaching in the future for those who are unable to drive to Virginia. View handout for more information:  
[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/FCPHandoutMarch2016.pdf](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/FCPHandoutMarch2016.pdf)

Joanna Starling, Montgomery College, reported that there will be a ceremony on Friday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> to dedicate the opening of the Veterans Women's Center. Invitations will be sent to Commissioners.

The Rotary Club of Montgomery Village and Gaithersburg will be hosting their 3<sup>rd</sup> annual [Flags for our Heroes](#) event on Memorial Day weekend (May 27<sup>th</sup> through May 30<sup>th</sup>). Flag sponsorships can be purchased from community members to honor military service members or other heroes. Flags are placed at Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg.

The premiere of "[Honor & Gratitude: Chronicles of Montgomery County Vietnam Veterans](#)" will be held on Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Montgomery College Cultural Arts Center in Takoma Park / Silver Spring. A reception will precede the screening. A question and answer session with a Vietnam Veteran panel will follow the documentary. Free event. Registration is preferred.

Roland Kauffman, former Commissioner, reported that the Maryland Correctional Institute in Hagerstown will be having a ground breaking for construction of a Vietnam memorial.

[Senate Bill 660 – Income Tax – Subtraction Modification – Military Retirement Income](#) would expand the existing military retirement income tax subtraction modification by exempting 100% of specified military retirement income. The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and American Legion (AL) have testified in support of this bill before the Maryland General Assembly.

Julie Riggs, Serving Together (ST), reported that they had good attendance for their Veterans benefits seminar. ST will be hosting educational seminars quarterly. Please send her topics of interests you would like to see covered.

The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) will be hosting a wreath placing ceremony on Tuesday, March 29<sup>th</sup> in commemoration of the Vietnam 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To be held from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Memorial Plaza located on the Government Complex Center Terrace between the new Courthouse annex and the Executive Office Building in Rockville along Route 28.

**Adjournment:** 7:30 p.m.

**Next Full Commission Meeting:** Tuesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Health & Human Services, 401 Hungerford Drive, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Large Conference Room, Rockville, MD 20850

Respectfully submitted:

Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I

Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager