



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
April 19th, 2011**

I. Call to Order & Introductions: Bill Gray, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Bill asked for all present to stand 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 in and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of Minutes: Bill Gray, Chair, edited the March Meeting Summary Minutes to include Michael Higgs title as Commander, Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Chapter 12 and include Lt. Colonel Hunter Holliday, 50th Anniversary of Vietnam War Commemoration, Department of Defense.

III. Welcome to Montgomery College Interim Member – Paula Matuskey, Interim Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Services

Paula Matuskey has worked at Montgomery College for 44 years and has been serving as Interim Senior Vice President for Academic Students Services since 2009. In her current role, she is supervising the campuses as well as several other functions including the Office of Financial Aid and the Office of Admissions and Enrollment Management.

Paula began her career as Dean of Students at the Rockville campus. She was the veterans representative during registration and would assist veterans and returning service members with their benefits forms. She was also involved with an off campus credit program at the National Naval Medical Center and ran a center located at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

She has served on the County's Mental Health Advisory Committee and is interested in the veterans outreach programs offered by the Mental Health Association.

As a representative of Montgomery College, she has been involved with service member re-entry events sponsored by the Maryland National Guard and has attended re-entry sessions focused on the mental health perspective. These events are part of the consortium activities between the Maryland National Guard and the colleges and universities throughout the State.

Community colleges are noticing an influx of students who are returning service members and veterans as well as family members of veterans. Montgomery College currently has approximately 800 returning veterans enrolled. A large percentage of those new students have never attended college before and had chosen the military as their first career choice. Montgomery College is interested in continuing to provide activities and support services that are critical for returning veterans and their families.

Montgomery College's [Combat 2 College](#) program provides academic and social opportunities, as well as support services for veterans, and active/reserve service members. The program is located at the Rockville Campus. Paula has proposed to institute a holistic approach to providing veteran services, similar to the [Veteran Student Success Program](#) at Cleveland State University,

whereby there would be a single point of entry for all veterans to be connected to the services and programs available. Mauri Hamilton, Commissioner, suggested Paula review the veteran resources available at the [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#).

Montgomery College also faces the issue of veterans not self-identifying that they have served in the military. They recently updated the admission application to include a question about veteran status. If a veteran or service member identifies themselves as such, Montgomery College will assist in triggering the Servicemember's Opportunity College (SOC) agreement. SOC protects the soldiers credits and degree program as they transfer from duty station to duty station. Previously, it was the service member's responsibility to request the SOC agreement and often times they would opt not to.

IV. Montgomery County's Local Small Business Reserve Program (LSBRP) – A Procurement Program for Small Businesses – Jerry Godwin, Commissioner, Business Development Specialist, Wheaton Business Innovation Center, Montgomery County Dept. of Economic Development (DED)

DED's main goals are to attract, retain and create companies in Montgomery County. Jerry Godwin is involved with the [Local Small Business Reserve Program \(LSBRP\)](#). Under this program, Montgomery County's departments and agencies have made a commitment to allocate 20% of their purchases of goods and services for the small business community. The LSBRP will help foster the development of small businesses located in Montgomery County, leading to new employment opportunities, increased income, spending and greater tax revenues to support Montgomery County services and capital investments that improve infrastructure and meet other community needs.

Jerry gave a brief PowerPoint presentation about LSBRP. The presentation is available online: <http://montgomerycountymd.gov/content/DGS/Dir/OBRC/lbrp/Documents/LSBRPppt.pdf>. View it for information relating to eligibility guidelines and thresholds.

The LSBRP was created to enhance the competitiveness of and increase economic opportunities for Montgomery County-based small businesses by creating separately-defined County procurement opportunities for local small businesses. Once a solicitation has been designated as Local Small Business Reserve, only bids or proposals from certified local small businesses will be accepted. Therefore, a business will be in competition only with other certified small businesses, thus increasing its chances of winning County procurements.

Montgomery County is one of the first jurisdictions in the State to unbundle larger contracts into smaller contracts to allow for more small business participation.

As more service members return from Iraq and Afghanistan, more individuals will be starting small businesses and taking advantage of the LSBRP program. Procurement, at this time, does not have a reporting process for identifying veteran-owned small businesses. It was discussed how to proceed with altering the program to give a veterans preference, possibly through new legislation or a regulation.

Registration is available online at www.mcipcc.net. The County does not require a minority, female or disabled (MFD) owned business to provide federal certification. They simply have to check off that they are a MFD business on the form. Once registered, they will receive weekly or bi-weekly e-mails featuring new solicitations. Small businesses can also view current solicitations on the LBSRP website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/DGS/pro/public_solicitations_lbrp.asp.

While DED does not assist small businesses with developing their websites, the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC), which Montgomery County provides funds for as well as office space at the Wheaton Business Innovation Center, offers seminars on developing a website and possibly grant dollars available to pay for the creation of a website. SBDC also offers small business counseling services. The Small Business Administration (SBA) focuses more on financing and loans.

V. Chair and Vice Chair Report – Bill Gray and Jerry Godwin

Bill Gray, Chair, reported on the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans 2nd Annual Reunion held March 30th, 2011 at the Silver Spring Civic Building. The event was well attended by an estimated 85 persons. County Executive Isiah Leggett gave a presentation about his 2009 return trip to Vietnam. A member of Florentine Films, the production company of the documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, was at the event and has shown interest in speaking with Leggett about his experiences in Vietnam. A short news clip featuring the event can be seen on the County's YouTube site (segment begins at marker 11:55): www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-NYO_K2hBs.

Pete Esker has resigned as Commissioner as he will be relocating to another state.

Rear Admiral (Sel) Michael S. Devany, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Corps, will speak at our May 17th Commission meeting about NOAA's mission and activities.

Eric Rogers, Executive Director of Give an Hour, is scheduled to speak at our June 21st Commission meeting. Give an Hour is a non-profit organization that provides critical mental health services to U.S. troops and their family members.

VI. Unfinished Business

None.

VII. New Business

A discussion was held regarding the installation of a Commission Speakers Bureau. There has been interest in the past by Commissioners to speak at schools and other engagements. Betsy Luecking, Staff, asked for a volunteer to draft an outline of guidelines for speakers.

Mauri suggested that speakers that come before the Commission have guidelines as to the information they are able to present to us and how it relates to the goals of the Commission.

VIII. Announcements

Cindy Buddington, Commissioner on the Commission on People with Disabilities (CPWD), would like to set up a time at a future meeting to speak about accessible housing and the County's Design for Life Montgomery program. She would like to discuss the possibility of CVA joining the CPWD on housing issues. She encouraged Commissioners to review the [Design for Life Montgomery](http://www.designforlifemontgomery.com) website to learn more about the program.

Jim Campbell, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), reported that the MOAA is seeking to require that a veteran's status be listed on their driver's license. If this information was documented, the Department of Motor Vehicles would be able to give a more accurate count of Veterans in the area. Jim encouraged Commissioners to contact their elected officials regarding this issue.

Michael Higgs, Commander, DAV Chapter 12, gave an update on the Veterans Benefits Information Fair scheduled for Saturday, May 21, 2011 that will be held at BPOE Elks Lodge, 5 Taft Court, Rockville, Maryland. The DAV is running advertisements in several publications, including the National Naval Medical Center's *The Journal*, Walter Reed Army Medical Center's *Stripe*, and Fort Detrick's *The Standard*.

Lorrie Knight-Major, Commissioner, reported that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) site visit took place on Friday, April 15th. Organizations present included Easter Seals, The Community Foundation, the Mental Health Association, and Bethesda Cares. Also in attendance were Lt. Col. Gavney, Maryland National Guard; Jerry Boden, Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs; Chuck Short, Special Assistant to County Executive Isiah Leggett; Stephen Maguire, director of Walter Reed's Soldier Family Assistance Center; Rose Sachs, Chairperson, Disability Support Services, Montgomery College; and Wayne Miller, Team Leader/Supervisor Social Worker, Department of Veterans Affairs Readjustment Counseling Services/Vet Center.

The site visit included a tour of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) with the military partners. The second half of the day was spent with community partners and local foundations that have committed to providing funding. Montgomery County has committed to providing \$75,000 for the project. It was a great show of support for veterans in Montgomery County. RWJF will give the results of the grant within the next two weeks. Ten of the 15 finalists will receive a grant. Easter Seals is \$40K short of their target funding for the first year. If Commissioners have suggestions for possible local foundations, private donors, or corporations (especially defense contractors), please contact Lorrie at lkmajor@gmail.com.

Adjournment: 7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting:

Tuesday, May 17th, 2011, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Silver Spring Civic Building (SSCB), One Veterans Place, Silver Spring, MD. Location changed to coincide with a Consumer Protection Forum being hosted at the SSCB that will include information for veterans. The event is being hosted by Congressman Chris Van Hollen.

Respectively submitted:

Carly Clem, OSC
Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison