



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
December 15th, 2015**

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.

II. Approval of Minutes

Mike Subin, Commissioner, made a motion to approve the November, 2015 Meeting Summary Minutes. Jim Campbell, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the November, 2015 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Welcome to David Coxe, Newly Hired Veterans Benefits Specialist for Montgomery County

David is a U.S. Army Veteran and served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990 to 1991. He is also a former employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration located at the Baltimore, MD VA Regional Office and The Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, DC. David's office will be located at the Montgomery College Service Center, 51 Mannakee Street, Counseling and Advising Building, Room CB 103, Rockville, MD 20850 Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Outreach has been suspended at the Silver Spring Vet Center and WorkSource Montgomery in Wheaton until further notice. You can contact David at 240-567-5405 (V), vbs.dcoxe@gmail.com.

IV. Introduction to the Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training, Inc. (MCVET), Baltimore, MD – Catherine O' Donovan, Director of Development, MCVET, and Sandi Dutton, President of the Board, MCVET

MCVET was founded in 1993 by four veterans who had connections to various Veterans Service Organizations. They envisioned a veterans program that was dedicated to veterans in need and specifically homeless veterans. The program was developed in a military model that empowers veterans, establishes an environment of teamwork and camaraderie and rewards hard work with success. MCVET operates four housing programs:

- The **Day Drop-In Facility** can accommodate up to fifty homeless veterans who have access to shower facilities, clothing, water, and crisis intervention counseling. The facility is open every day from 9:00am to 4:00pm.
- The **Emergency Shelter Program** is the first phase for veterans committing to the MCVET Program. The Emergency Shelter can house up to 50 veterans. They may reside in the Emergency Shelter for up to thirteen weeks, during which time their military status is confirmed, they receive VA benefits counseling, and they are assigned a case manager, who works with our veterans to identify the causes of homelessness and outline employment and education goals.
- **Transitional Housing** can accommodate up to 120 veterans. Veterans who have successfully completed their stay in the Emergency Shelter Program and who need continued supportive services in order to return to employment and permanent housing may stay in Transitional Housing for up to two years. Each veteran works with an assigned case manager to achieve goals established in their Individualized Service Strategy. Each veteran has access to services that include: vocational rehabilitation, life skills development, substance abuse counseling, mental health counseling, and employment and education placement.
- **Single Room Occupancy** can accommodate up to 79 veterans and is a permanent housing facility subsidized by section 8. The program continues to provide a full continuum of housing, counseling and job placement services

to achieve independent living. Veterans who are not currently enrolled in MCVET's program can apply to reside in one of the units.

The only two eligibility requirements are that you are a veteran and are homeless. MCVET will accept any veteran without reference to character of service from any place in the country. When a veteran first enters the MCVET program their cell phone is taken away and they cannot leave the premises for 30 days. There are thirteen case managers and three employment coordinators on site, two of whom work with the corporate community and the City of Baltimore and one which works with the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation for State employment. The program has capacity for 249 veterans and is currently serving 190 veterans. In 21 years approximately 9,000 veterans have completed the MCVET program. Veterans are tracked for two years and the program has a 70% success rate.

Since its inception MCVET has received money from Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the VA, and the Department of Labor (DOL). With recent changes to policies HUD MCVET has been asked to change to a "housing first" model. MCVET follows a treatment-based model and is at risk of losing \$1.2M (25%) of their operating budget from HUD. MCVET representatives have met with Senators Mikulski and Sarbanes as well as have had a visit from Senator Benjamin Cardin to discuss this issue. Betsy noted that Montgomery County has changed to a "housing first" model. By the end of 2015 Montgomery County will have housed 58 veterans and functionally ended veteran homelessness in the County. The County Council with support from the County Executive set aside \$500,000 to provide housing for ten veterans who were dishonorably discharged and not eligible to receive VA services.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, asked if MCVET accepts families. They currently do not, but they currently have a bid on 35 apartments that will be earmarked for veterans who have children. The building is close enough to MCVET for the veteran to receive services and the children would have a place to live.

Roland Kauffman, former Commissioner, noted that a veteran that was released from the Montgomery County Correctional Facility went through and successfully completed the MCVET program.

The Commission was invited to tour the facility.

Handout: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/MCVetHandout.pdf

Handout: 21st Annual 5K / 10K Race on Sunday, May 20th, 2016 - www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/MCVET5K10KRace.pdf

V. Veterans Issues in Maryland for Calendar Year (CY) 2016 - Harvey T. Kaplan, Ph.D., Colonel, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Ret.), Immediate Past President, Montgomery County Chapter, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

Harvey discussed the issues outlined in the following handout: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/KaplanHandout.pdf

MOAA State Report Card November 2015: www1.moaa.org/uploadedFiles/MOAA_Main/Main_Menu/Publications/Books_and_Guides_-_MOAA_Info_Exchange%20AE/State_Report_Card/StateReport_4Web.pdf

VI. Chair and Vice-Chair Report

Congressman Sarbanes took the time to visit with us. Met in Mike's office with Betsy, Mike and I. wanted to learn what the commission was up to.

VII. New Business

Mike Subin, Commissioner, reported that the Department of Justice recently published a new report "[Veterans in Prison and Jail, 2011-12](#)". One of the report's major findings helps illuminate why Mental Health Courts can be of benefit to many veterans: "About half of all veterans in prison (48 percent) and jail (55 percent) had ever been told by a mental health professional they had a mental disorder. Incarcerated veterans who saw combat were more likely than non-combat veterans to have ever been told they had a mental disorder. Veterans in prison and jail were more likely than non-veterans to report ever being told they had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Twice the proportion of veterans compared to non-veterans in prison (23 percent of veterans and 11 percent of non-veterans) and jail (31 percent of veterans and 15

percent of non-veterans) reported that a mental health professional had ever told them they had PTSD." The Montgomery County Mental Health Court Planning and Implementation Task Force is looking to include veterans as they develop a Mental Health Court in Montgomery County.

VIII. Roundtable:

Mike Subin, Commissioner, reported that the County will be hosting Coming Together for Peace: A Rally to End Gun Violence on Sunday December 20th from 5:00pm to 6:00pm at the Old Gray Courthouse in Rockville. Mike made a motion for the Commission to support the rally. Jim Campbell seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was approved.

Mike reported that the Department of Transportation and the Department of General Services are currently meeting with a design consultant for the Wheaton Redevelopment project. There is a discussion to swap the land of the current Veteran Park with a County building and developing a new plaza with a Vietnam Veteran memorial. Current design plans for the memorial include a smaller scale eternal flame that mirrors the one at Memorial Plaza behind the Executive Office Building and to include the names of all 130 County Vietnam fallen heroes at the base of the flame.

Commissioners Dan Bolling and Bill Gray have spent the last two weeks in Spencerville, Maryland knocking on doors to connect with veterans and to provide outreach about the Commission and available services. Spencerville is the smallest zip code in the County with the highest percentage of veterans (13%). Once they have finished Spencerville Dan and Bill will discuss outreaching to other cities. Betsy indicated that she does not answer the door when someone she does not know knocks. She suggested that we look into have Finance send out Veteran information in the property tax bills or have a table at local grocery stores and have hand outs on the Commission and services.

Jim Campbell, Commissioner, brought green light bulbs for Commissioners to use as part of the [Greenlight A Vet](#) campaign, which was established to show visible national support for our veterans by changing one outdoor light to green. Octavia Dixon, Commissioner, asked if the Commission work with the Commission on Common Ownership Communities to send a courtesy letter to home ownership associations to explain the program and allow residents to participate if they choose to do so. Mike said he will work with Octavia on this issue.

The Montgomery County Chapter of the MOAA is writing to all Montgomery County Delegation members asking them to become members of the Maryland General Assembly Veterans Caucus. MOAA is asking the Commission to write letters encouraging delegation to join.

Adjournment: 7:45 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted:

Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I;

Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager