



Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs Meeting Summary Minutes - March 17th, 2015

I. Call to Order & Introductions:

Jerry Godwin, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Jerry 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:

A motion was made to approve the January, 2015 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Mission and Programs of Montgomery County's Public Information Office – Ohene Gyapong, Deputy Director, Public Information Office

The Public Information Office (PIO) consists of a Media Relations section that works with the news media to inform residents about the programs and services available to them. A Publications and Graphics section provides graphical support to the office and oversees the content and design of the County web site so that it is informative and easy to navigate. A Cable Programming section produces cable television shows for the Executive branch of County government on cable channel 6 – County Cable Montgomery. (Editor note: Comcast/RCN 6, Verizon 30)

Ohene Gyapong, Deputy Director, PIO, stated that PIO can assist with information sharing and promotion through print, radio, internet, and television. PIO can also assist with developing surveys that can be sent to the community via a hard copy mailer or conducted online. This can help to target specific audiences, gauge how our audience receives information and learn what information is important to them. Mr. Gyapong suggested that the Commission develop a clear and concise message. He can assist with promotion of activities and events planned through social media and press releases.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is responsible for bus card advertisements, although PIO does work with DOT on various County advertisements. The Commission would be responsible for all costs associated with the bus cards.

Just sending out via county social media, press release or putting on the website may not have the intended effect.

The Commission is currently developing a County cable program that will begin airing in April. After a few episodes have been taped PIO will begin to advertise the show through their various methods. This can include contacting Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and Fort Meade for them to advertise. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about the year of the veteran can be tied into this cable program.

The City of Alexandria proclaimed 2014 as “The Year of the Veteran”. Their goal was to augment the Alexandria Veterans Business Enterprise Center activities, which are business-focused, and encourage the entire community to celebrate the Year of the Veteran and build long-term connections. Alexandria did outreach to the community regarding reintegration of veterans. Their local Chamber of Commerce was also involved in outreach efforts. Betsy Luecking, Staff Manager, explained that Alexandria is committed to working to get veterans involved in community events vs planning events just for veterans.

Sarah Miller, Commissioner, suggested that the Commission host a booth at local community events such as food festivals, outdoor concerts, and the City of Rockville's Hometown Holidays.

Roland Kauffman, Commissioner, suggested educating veterans of their veteran status and informing them of the benefits they are eligible for. Many individuals who have served two years or were never deployed do not realize that they are

veterans. Rich Fales, former Commissioner, stated that approximately 17% of service members serve twenty years or longer in the military and qualify for retirement pay. There is no retirement benefit for the other 83% enlisted personnel.

Betsy stated that in addition to outreach to veterans about services available one of the outcomes the Commission has been tasked with by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was to increase the enrollment of veterans in to the VA healthcare system. Betsy added that perhaps the Commission and our partners connect with employers within Montgomery County to promote hiring veterans.

Jerry made a motion to adopt the logo purchased and then edited by Carly Clem, Staff, and Betsy as the official logo for 2015: Year of the Veteran and Their Families. Dan Bullis, Vice-Chair, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously passed. The logo will appear on all publications for the year 2015. In the future, the logo will be altered and the year will be removed for any permanent displays/decals.

IV. Mission Strategic Planning: 2015 Year of Montgomery County's Veterans and Their Families

Mike Walsh, General Public and Vietnam Veteran, reported that he met with Battley Harley Davidson in Gaithersburg. They are very open to the idea of assisting the Commission with a motorcycle event. Battley can arrange for police escorts and street closures as well as assisting with advertising the event. They are already hosting an event on April 18th that the Commission could possibly take advantage of by having an event later in the day, but given the time frame it may not be doable. It was suggested that Mike discuss with Battley Harley Davidson the possibility of an event in June. Dan Bullis, Vice-Chair, suggested having the motorcycle ride from the Battley Harley Davidson Gaithersburg location to American Legion Post 41 in Silver Spring. AL Post 41 could arrange for parking in the County garage and provide refreshments.

There is preliminary planning for an event at the Strathmore in September to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War and the 50th anniversary of the start of the Vietnam War.

A Veterans Service Organization (VSO) meeting is being held on April 14th at the Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville – 9th Floor Conference Room. The group will further discuss ideas for The Year of the Veteran and Their Families.

V. Chair and Vice-Chair Report:

Dan Bullis, Vice Chair, reported that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Project is still in the process of obtaining legal authority to use the land set aside by Montgomery County. The land will be near Wheaton.

The Commission meeting in April will be held at Easter Seals in Silver Spring. Sharon Hodge, Commissioner, will send the April meeting agenda to the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 641 distribution list.

VI. Unfinished Business: None.

VII. New Business:

Randy Stone, Commissioner, discussed the Commission having satellite meetings in the future. He proposed hosting a meeting in the community prior to the summer recess and another in the fall. Jerry suggested having a meeting at Leisure World and another at Montgomery Village.

VIII. Roundtable:

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in the State of Maryland is scheduled for Monday, March 30th at the Loews Annapolis Hotel. Hosted by Senator John C. Astle and Hospice of the Chesapeake. RSVP is required.

Adjournment: 7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting: ****PLEASE NOTE DIFFERENT MEETING LOCATION**** Tuesday, April 21st, 2015 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. at Easter Seals, 1420 Spring Street, Silver Spring, MD, 20910. Secretary Owings of the MD Department of Veterans Affairs will be the speaker. **Meeting to be followed with a tour of the facility.**

Respectfully submitted:

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