



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
May 15th, 2018**

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Dan Bullis, Chairman, 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

A motion was made to approve the April 2018 Meeting Summary Minutes. A correction was made to the minutes: Arthur Holmes was listed as a Master General and should be changed to Major General. The motion was seconded with the correction. A vote was taken, and the April 2018 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Military and Veterans Health Programs of Holy Cross Hospital – Gregory Jolissaint, MD, MS CPE, FAAPL, Colonel, US Army, Retired (Soldier for Life), Vice President, Military and Veterans Health Program, Trinity Health (and Holy Cross Health, Maryland), and Norvell V. Coots, MD, MSS, Brigadier General, US Army, Retired, President, Holy Cross Health

Website: <http://www.trinity-health.org/military-and-veterans-health-program>

PowerPoint Presentation:

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

Staff Training Video: <https://vimeo.com/241759900/b8c73d5417> (This is brilliant, be sure to watch!)

Dr. Jolissaint explained how Trinity Health and Holy Cross are working together with the VA to provide services to military service members, Veterans, and their families. The theme of the Military and Veterans Health program is **servng you as you served us**. Please review the PowerPoint presentation for details.

Dr. Jolissaint noted that less than 9% of Veterans receive their care in the VA. The other 91% use private insurance or TriCare. Part of the presentation noted that data shows there are 1,000,000 Tricare enrollees residing in Maryland and DC, with 400,000 Tricare enrollees located in the Silver Spring area alone. This data represents Holy Cross' Silver Spring catchment area that includes a part of Prince George's County and a northern section of DC. This also includes those who are receiving care at Walter Reed. The data includes anyone who has served at any point in time. It was noted that some individuals may not identify themselves as a Veteran for census purposes. Trinity Health considers anyone who has ever served, whether or not they have VA benefits, as eligible for their services and that is how the data was compiled. Their data also shows that there are 400,000 Veterans residing in Maryland and DC, with 154,000 Veterans living in the Silver Spring area. It was asked if this data could be shared with the Commission as US Census records only show that Montgomery County has 46,000 Veterans total in the entire County.

Dr. Jolissaint explained the history of Holy Cross. The very first Navy nurses were Holy Cross nuns who were pressed into service by the Governor of Indiana during the Civil War. They served on the USS Red Rover, a Confederate ship that the Union Navy captured and then became the Navy's first floating hospital ship.

The goal is for the identifying military service questions that will be asked of all patients admitted at Holy Cross to be incorporated into the electronic health record. The program Cerner is used on the inpatient side and NexGen is used on the outpatient side. Although, over the coming years, Trinity Health will be moving to the Epic health system across all 94 of their hospitals. Henry Bockman, Commissioner, reported his father, who is a Veteran, was recently admitted to Holy Cross Germantown and he was not asked these questions. Col. Jolissaint took note and will connect with the hospital to discuss.

The floor was opened to questions.

Jim Campbell, Commissioner, suggested adding the USPHS and NOAA flags to the hospital lobbies alongside the five armed forces flags that are currently standing. It was noted that the flags are not mandatory for a private organization.

It was asked what training for military sexual trauma will be given to physicians and staff. Col. Jolissaint said that military sexual trauma is included in training as it relates to both males and females. It was noted that female Veterans have different issues in the military that extend far beyond sexual trauma. Col. Jolissaint said there is a Trinity Health center in Hartford, Connecticut that deals specifically with women Veteran's issues – both physical and mental. Part of Trinity Health services is helping navigate people to a particular system in the network that already exists until a system is created closer by. For example, they have to navigate several individuals to the Trinity Health neuroscience program in Michigan. Holy Cross does have plans to expand on its women's health services and create a Center of Excellence here.

Col. Jolissaint encouraged Commissioners interested in receiving care at Holy Cross to contact him so he can guide them to which providers are culturally competent. Holy Cross only employs 15 physicians. Most of Holy Cross' physicians are in private practice and they are working to sign them up for VA Choice and Tricare as well as training the physicians and their frontline staff.

PTSD is the largest unreported ailment. It was asked what would be recommended. Many have to fight with the VA and hire a private attorney to get a disability rating. There are 22M service members and Veterans dealing with PTSD symptoms. What many use for medicine is alcohol and whatever else they can find.

It was asked what services are offered for PTSD and if Trinity Health is considering partnering with the VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) scheduled to open in Gaithersburg in July 2018. Col. Jolissaint reported Holy Cross has offered to partner with the CBOC as they have clinics in that area. Holy Cross does not have a big footprint in behavioral health at the moment as they got out of providing such services some years ago. Currently they offer an observation unit at Holy Cross Silver Spring and a voluntary six-bed unit Holy Cross Germantown. Each emergency room also has a crisis team. Holy Cross also partners with Adventist Health, which has the bulk to behavioral health beds in Montgomery County, to offer Adventist Tele-Behavioral Health in Holy Cross emergency rooms. Holy Cross has recognized the mental health crisis and has made the decision to re-establish behavioral health services within the next few years. It was suggested that patients be referred to the Silver Spring Vet Center which provides counseling. Col. Jolissaint reported Holy Cross is connected to the Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Easterseals which treats a variety of behavioral health challenges including depression, stress and anxiety, PTSD, substance misuse, sleep problems, hyper-vigilance, anger, grief and loss, transitional challenges, and relationship and family difficulties.

It was asked if Trinity Health is coordinating with the VA when providing services. Col. Jolissaint gave an example of a Vietnam Veteran that seeks care at Holy Cross and is diagnosed with a stomach lymphoma as his cause of bleeding. Prior to discharge, hospital staff will assist the Veteran with filling out a VA compensation form for benefits relating to Agent Orange symptoms. This is part of the partnership with the VA. If staff discover someone has a service-connected disability, they will notify the VA. They accept Tricare, Veterans Choice and private insurance. Patients are able to choose them along with other providers. If Johns Hopkins is chosen as the provider, then the patient receives all of their medical care there. Holy Cross is also able to offer specialty services which includes pediatricians, obstetricians, gynecologists, and urologists.

It was asked if Trinity Health / Holy Cross Health is coordinating with the Office of Community Care with the VA. Col. Jolissaint said they are connected with that office. He also noted they are working to get their affiliated providers signed

up for Choice. The stopgap funding bills that have been passed to renew the VA Choice Act do not sustain the program. There is currently a bill being debated to upgrade the Choice Act.

It was recommended to go visit the Steven Cohen Clinic in Silver Spring . <http://www.easterseals.com/DCMDVA/our-programs/cvn-home.html> They provide mental health supports for military service members, Veterans, families, kids and toddlers. Easter Seals also does Adult Day Care for Veterans.

They also recommended Serving Together of Every Mind www.servingtogetherproject.org

IV. Internment Camps, US Prisoner of War Camps and How the 442nd Tuskegee Airmen and Other Segregated Units Led the Way for Full Integration of the Military – Cynthia Macri, M.D., Capt. MC USN (Ret.), and LTC Al Goshi, USA (Ret.); Army JAG Office, Iraq War Veteran, President of the Japanese American Veterans Association

Commissioner Cynthia Macri and LTC Al Goshi were invited to speak to the Commission for Asian History Month. They have spoken to middle schools, high schools, colleges and agencies during Asian History Month to talk about the illegal ordered treatment of Japanese Americans during WWII. Cynthia noted a wave of Japanese immigration began in 1924, which means that many Japanese Americans had been in the country a minimum of 17 years prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Many families, like Cynthia's, had US born children that were sent to internment camps.

LTC Goshi read remarks prepared by Terry Shima, Veteran of WWII and the 442nd Tuskegee Airmen. Terry is a Montgomery County resident and was in the wave of replacements for WWII. We have requested the document that was read.

Cynthia spoke about her family during World War II. Her grandparents immigrated to Hawaii from Japan and her father was born there in 1930. The day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, her grandfather was arrested and sent to Camp Livingston, a prisoner-of-war camp. Her grandmother, father, and his sister were sent to Camp Jerome in Arkansas. Camp Jerome was one of ten concentration camps administered by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) to house Japanese Americans forcibly removed from the West Coast during World War II. Her grandfather was paroled in 1944 and sent to Camp Jerome. Approximately 2,800 from the island of Hawaii were sent to concentration camps with an additional 180,000 from the West Coast (California, Oregon and Washington). After the war, they were sent back to Hawaii. Cynthia's father attended the University of Hawaii and drafted for the Korean War where he served in military intelligence. During his service from 1951 to 1953 he received his US citizenship.

Mike Subin, Commissioner, reported County Executive Isiah Leggett recently named a hall at the Silver Spring Civic Building the Buffalo Soldiers Hall for the Army's 92nd Infantry Division segregated unit of African Americans. He noted that County Executive Leggett has created a task force to identify all segregated combat units. Cynthia and LTC Goshi were invited to join the task force.

IV. Chair Report

None

V. Updates

The dedication of the Vietnam War Memorial will be held on Monday, May 21st from 1pm to 2:30pm at Memorial Plaza. Mike shared a preview of the program as well as the insert of the 130 names of those killed in action or missing in action from Montgomery County. The only elected official participating, other than County Executive Isiah Leggett, will be Senator Chris Van Hollen who will be reading some of the names of the fallen heroes. Mike noted that a police officer will be tolling a bell for each name read. Afterwards, ROTC cadets will lead a row of the families past the wall. Red, yellow and green carnations will be passed out to families for them to leave at the wall. Betsy Luecking, Staff, reported Hung (Tony) Manh Bui, representing the Vietnamese American Senior Association (VASA), will be speaking to thank the families. He fought alongside the U.S. during the war and was held as a prisoner-of-war by the North Vietnamese after the war. Approximately 30 members from VASA will also be in attendance. Three wreaths will be laid as part of the ceremony. There will be a reception afterwards with food from Mission BBQ. Canopies will be in place if it rains the day of the event. Carly Clem, Staff, and a member of County Executive's staff will be stay with the families during the event and will look after their needs. It was suggested that name tags be given to family members. The event will be taped, and

photos and the program will be available online after the event. Mike thanked Betsy for her hardwork and commitment working on this event.

VI. Announcements

A representative from the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) spoke about [Charlotte Hall Veterans Home](#) – the only Veterans home in the state. Charlotte Hall offers a continuum of care from the 168-bed assisted living program to the 286-bed skilled nursing program. MDVA has future plans to open a Veterans home in Western, Maryland and possibly the Baltimore area.

Adjournment: 7:45 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting: **Please note location** - Tuesday, June 19th, 2018 from 6pm to 7:30pm at the Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Easterseals, 1420 Spring Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Respectfully submitted:

Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I

Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager