



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
November 20, 2018**

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Wayne Miller, Acting Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Wayne 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 October 2018 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken, and the October 2018 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. The Building of an Accessible Launch and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Improvements at Seneca Landing at Riley's Lock on the Potomac River in Poolesville – Bob Green, ADA Compliance Manager, Montgomery County Parks, and Steve McKone, Director, Calleva at Riley's Lock

In June 2016, the Commission on Veterans Affairs had a presentation by Joe Mornini, Executive Director of Team River Runner, where he discussed the accessibility challenges of kayaking with patients from Walter Reed at Riley's Lock on the Potomac River in Poolesville. Team River Runner (www.teamriverrunner.org) has a kayaking program with Walter Reed Sunday afternoons, May – November. Kayakers are accessing the river where the power boats are launched and this presents safety issues. That same month, the Commission on People with Disabilities (CPWD) had a presentation from Bob Green, ADA Compliance Manager for Montgomery Parks. CPWD advises the County on priorities for funding as a result of the U.S. Department of Justice Project Civic Access Settlement Agreement. After that, Betsy Luecking, Staff, arranged a meeting with Joe Mornini and Bob Green to see if some accessibility improvements could be done at the launch area as the land where the launch is on Montgomery Parks owns. Bob brought in engineers and architects and a plan was made. Parks then submitted an application to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to fund ADA accessibility improvements for the boat launch at Seneca Landing at Riley's Lock. The grant funding for the accessible launch at Riley's Lock was awarded to Montgomery Parks from DNR for \$99,500.

Handout: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/MParksHandout.pdf>

From the handout, the aerial photo shows Riley's Lock and the existing boat ramp. With the funding received from DNR, Montgomery Parks will improve the existing boat ramp and installing a floating launch for canoeists and kayakers just upstream. The two final two pages of the handouts show the proposed ADA access and floating dock. A sidewalk will be installed from the Lock area up to the port-o-john. Accessible picnic tables and grills will also be added as well as additional parking spaces with designated parking spaces for those who have disability placards. The improvements will not only increase the accessibility, but also the safety of the facility.

Steve-O McKone, Calleva,, spoke of a time he was helping an individual who uses a wheelchair down the ramp and a large truck began backing down the boat ramp which did not see Steve or the wheelchair user, almost running them over. The area is extremely popular and busy. Steve noted that Calleva provides kayaking and canoe services to almost 6,000 individuals, including kids, every summer, and having an accessible, separate launch would make the experience much safer.

Bob noted that while the funding has been approved, there are quite a few permits that need to be obtained. They will be working with the State to work within a flood plane, a wetland area and a historic area. Riley's Locak Road is designated as a Rustic Road, so they must receive approval from the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee. Once approved by them, it must be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. Upon final approval, Montgomery Parks must get their permit from Department of Transportation. Bob is working to make the process simple and streamlined and he hopes to have all permits in hand by January 2019. He is currently sending out initial plans for bids. He would like to get the floating launch installed in March as the State does not allow any work to occur in the water between March and June due to fish spawning season. The additional improvements would occur during the summer. If permits cannot be secured by January 2019, then the launch will be installed in October.

The accessible launch will be like a gangway or a giant plate on a hinge which will allow the individual to transfer from the canoe or kayak. Lake Needwood has a similar floating accessible/ADA compliant dock. The accessible launch will be located about 200 feet away from the motorized boat launch. Bob is considering adding a rack so that individuals can place their canoe or kayak on the rack rather than let them lay on the road or launch. The picnic area will overlook the launch area.

Bob will need to discuss with the park manager, but the accessible launch will need to be removed during the winter and possibly during times of flooding.

The sidewalk will be extended and the trail that leads to the wooden deck will be fixed. The parking lot will remain in the same location with additional spaces added. Bob would like to add two or three benches to the site, but his funding will not allow for them. It was suggested that the benches be donated. One bench costs approximately \$1,000. The Montgomery County Parks Foundation accepts monetary donations:

<http://www.montgomeryparksfoundation.org>.

Calleva (www.calleva.org) is a non-profit outdoor adventure company based at Riley's Lock. Calleva's Liquid Adventures teams up with Team River Runner to offer kayaking and canoeing on the Potomac River for wounded Veterans from Walter Reed. Calleva and Team River Runner can be found at Riley's Lock every Sunday at 2pm from April to October, weather permitting. Elks Lodge 15 offers a free barbecue. Riley's Lock is located off of Seneca Road or 112 on Riley's Lock Road in Poolesville.

Bob will continue to update Betsy and the Commission as the project proceeds. It was suggested that a ribbon cutting be held once it has been completed.

IV. Chair Report

None.

V. Updates

Mike Subin, Commissioner, reported Marc Elrich will begin his term as County Executive on December 3rd. Marc Elrich attended the Vietnam Memorial Wall dedication as well as the grand opening of the Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) which shows he has an interest in the work of this Commission. The transition team has already held two meetings, and another will be held next week. Mike reported that Uma Ahluwalia,

Director, Health and Human Services (HHS), has resigned. It is unknown at this time who will be appointed as the new Director. He also noted that there are several new individuals that will be joining the County Council. Mike does not anticipate any changes to the current Boards, Committees, Commissions structure. The new County Chief Administrative Officer Andrew Kleine was formerly Baltimore City's budget director.

Betsy attended the Gaithersburg-Rockville Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Male Health Symposium on November 10th held at the North Potomac Community Center. Betsy provided information to Veterans in attendance. Commissioner Cynthia Macria also attended and gave the Chapter a proclamation from Governor Hogan.

VI. Announcements

Cynthia attended a Veterans Day tribute concert by Matsunaga Elementary School (MES) held at Northwest High School. Cynthia gave MES a proclamation from the County Executive in honor of their 18th annual Veterans Day concert.

Bill Gray, former Commissioner, reported he attended Senator Chris Van Hollen's Service Academy interviews with Austin Morris, Representative for Senator Van Hollen, Commissioner Cynthia Macri and former Vice-Chair Randy Stone. The U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), U.S. Military Academy (USMA), U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) require a nomination from an authorized source before consideration for appointment. Senator Van Hollen selects ten students per year per academy. Austin noted that there were approximately 335 individuals applying to the various service academies.

Joanna Starling, Montgomery College, reported they expanded a Veteran film series discussion surrounding Veterans Day. The series fulfilled the multicultural and diversity requirement for college employees and facilitated a discussion. Joanna will share the videos with Betsy and one may be shown at a future Commission meeting.

Jim Campbell, Commissioner, announced the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC) was rolled out on November 9th. MMC is modeled after The Military Coalition, a national group of military and veterans organizations. The Coalition will lobby the state legislature and government to improve the lives of members of all seven uniformed services. Col. Bob Norton, a Montgomery County resident, has been elected President of MMC.

Hazel Gross, Elks Lodge 15 Veterans Committee, is seeking furnishing for an apartment for a homeless Veteran and her two children.

Betsy asked for speaker/presentation suggestions for the Commission's December meeting. Wayne suggested Wounded Warrior Project. The next Commission meeting will be held December 18th.

Adjournment: 7:20pm

Next Full Commission Meeting: Tuesday, December 18th, 2018 from 6pm to 7:30pm at the Department of Health and Human Services, 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor Conference Room, Rockville, MD 20850

Respectfully submitted:

Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I

Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager