



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
October 15, 2019**

I. Call to Order

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.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the September 2019 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken, and the September 2019 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Overview of the 100 Entrepreneurs Foundation of Mindful Profits – Amanda Weathersby, Consultant

www.mindfulprofits.com, www.100entrepreneurs.org, www.entrepreneuronfire.com

PowerPoint: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/100EPMontgomeryCountyVetAffairs.pdf

100 Entrepreneurs Project, through 100 Entrepreneurs Foundation, provides luncheons with speakers from more than 80 industries, nonprofit organizations, and educational programs for Veterans. These business education lunches are held near Walter Reed and at Ft. Belvoir in the spring and fall. For those participants who cannot attend each session, they produce videos of the presentations and in-depth podcast interviews with speakers and those who cannot talk to participants in person. When 100 Entrepreneurs Project participants need additional help, such as business coaching or mentoring, they work with our network to provide them what they need. Since its inception in 2009, 100 Entrepreneurs Project has had thousands of participants, with more than 300 of whom have started businesses, and hundreds of speakers. They have supported Veterans, caregivers and family members to help them start businesses, apply for educational programs, find mentors and develop new careers. Partners and Supporters include Turner Construction, DPR Construction, Urban League Institute, Wounded Warrior Project (WWP), Dog Tag Bakery, and Arcadia Veteran Farming Program. Lunches are paid for by WWP and private donors. For more information, please e-mail 100entrepreneursproject@gmail.com.

IV. Concepts, Inc. and Clear2Connect – Ron Drach

www.clear2connect.org

The Clear2Connect Coalition is a group of organizations from across the U.S. working together to protect the right for Americans with hearing loss to communicate via Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS), also known as captioned telephone service. IP CTS enables people with hearing loss to speak during a phone call and then read captions on a specialized device when

the other person responds. Users get real-time, accurate transcriptions of conversations on their phones with the help of live skilled transcribers. Ron noted he has a phone with captioning that allows him to save conversations. He also noted that someone came out to his home to set up the phone.

Depending on which state you live in you might be eligible for free or reduced-cost telecommunications equipment such as amplified telephones and analog captioned phones. Betsy Luecking, Staff, said that captioned telephones and other assistive telephone devices including amplified phones, Braille TTYs, and tablets are available through the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program for qualified Maryland residents (<https://doit.maryland.gov/mdrelay/Pages/Equipment.aspx>). To qualify for equipment provided by the State, a MAT program participant must be:

- A Maryland resident who has difficulty using a standard telephone
- At least three years old (Applicants ages 18 and under must have an application signed by a parent or legal guardian)
- Certified as being Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, blind, low vision or having cognitive, mobility or speech-related difficulties
- On a fixed income, or a recipient of at least one of the following:
 - Social Security (SSA) benefits
 - Veterans (VA) benefits
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
 - Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP)
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - Pharmacy, medical or housing assistance

Captioned telephone service is provided free of charge from Maryland Relay.

The cost of captioning each IP CTS call is funded through a federal program. Oversight for the program is provided by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). There are six companies that provide captioned telephone services: CapTel® Captioned Telephone, CaptionCall®, ClearCaptions, Hamilton CapTel®, InnoCaption, and Sprint CapTel®. For more information visit: <https://www.hearingloss.org/hearing-help/technology/phones-mobile-devices/>. Clear2Connect does not promote one provider.

According to a study conducted by Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in 2011, at least 60% of military members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan – about 600,000 Veterans – suffer permanent hearing loss or tinnitus. It is the fastest-growing of all postwar disabilities, more than doubling over the past decade. Veterans are 30 percent more likely than non-veterans to have severe hearing impairment, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analysis. Those who served after September 2001 are four times more likely. And their numbers are growing: In fiscal year 2016, 190,000 veterans were diagnosed with service-connected tinnitus, and 103,000 were diagnosed with hearing loss, according to the VA.

According to a 2012 article titled “Audiological issues and hearing loss among Veterans with mild traumatic brain injury” (TBI), 87% of the 250 Veterans reported some level of hearing disturbance and those involved in blast injuries reported a higher incidence of hearing disturbance than those with other injury etiologies. Ron has been working with post-9/11 wounded warriors and noted that those

who do have a hearing impairment do not want to file a claim or publicly admit that they have hearing loss due to perceived stigma.

FCC has argued that there is fraud and abuse of the program because the equipment is free. FCC may make eligible individuals visit a central location to acquire their equipment. This service is guaranteed and mandated under Title IV: Telecommunications of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which requires that telephone companies provide telecommunication relay services that allow individuals with hearing or speech impairments to communicate using a TTY or other non-voice device.

Members of the Clear2Connect Coalition met with members of Congress over the summer to educate them about the importance of effective communication as well as FCC Commissioners. FCC has agreed to hold off on changing the delivery method of this equipment until Congress can make a decision. Press Release: <https://clear2connect.org/clear2connect-hosts-briefing-on-capitol-hill-to-highlight-the-importance-of-ip-cts/>

In April/May 2019, the FCC issued a proposed rulemaking regarding making changes to the IP telephoned captioned service with public comment period ending in June. Typically, Federal agencies publish final ruling six months after notice of proposed rulemaking. At this point, the final ruling has not been published. This may be due to the National Council on Disability grant that enabled the National Disability Rights Network to conduct a study on whether the FCC is compliant with the ADA. The FCC may be withholding their final ruling until results of the study are revealed.

Visit www.clear2connect.org to sign up for e-mail alerts and updates. The Coalition is currently seeking information from Veterans who use telephone captioning services and learn about their experiences.

V. Chair and Vice Chair Report

County Executive Marc Elrich will make remarks and have a discussion with attendees at the Commission's November 19th meeting.

VI. Discussion – Military / Veterans Display Cases at Silver Spring Civic Building

A discussion was had regarding the display cases at the Silver Spring Civic Building (SSCB). Betsy suggested honoring living Veterans but needs assistance from Commissioners to gather items to put on display. Susan Webman, Commissioner, suggested honoring both living and deceased service members and displaying their skill sets, talents and artistic inclinations. She also suggested featuring a photo with a biography that could include their experiences during their time of service. The point would be to engage with the community that is not familiar with the military world. Other suggestions included segregated units such as the Buffalo Soldiers, prisoners of war, missing in action, Jewish War Veterans, and changing the display every month based on a designated observance including Black History Month (February) and Women's History Month (March). The challenge will be to create content that will hold a visitor's attention.

It was asked if high school students could be asked to assist with researching ideas to display, and if they could receive Student Service Learning (SSL) hours. It was suggested that the displays could be a project for an Eagle Scout. Betsy said that the display cases are to be managed by this Commission and asked for Commissioners to lead on the content and assist in setting up the displays each month or every few months. Commissioners Wayne, Susan, Jameelah Johnson, Shani Lindsay, and Mike Subin volunteered.

Betsy noted that there is a digital display in the vestibule of the SSCB that has the names and photos, if available, of all Montgomery County servicemembers killed in action dating back to WWII. This same display also runs in the lobby on the right hand side at the Rockville Memorial Library.

Dan said he received a frame with medals that honored two Blair High School students who were killed in Vietnam from their classmates. Dan asked if this could be displayed at the SSCB.

Carly Clem, Staff, and former Commissioner Bill Gray will be updating the SSCB display cases at the end of the month with items from gold star families honoring their sons that were killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. These items are typically displayed at the Rockville Memorial Library during the month of November, but there was an issue in reserving those cases. Betsy said these items will remain in the SSCB until the end of the year. The Commission can begin to change the cases in January 2020.

VII. Announcements

Betsy shared that she had dinner with Tammy and Everett Alvarez last night. They are working with Sandy Spring Bank to sponsor four Veterans at a golf tournament on October 25th that will benefit Fisher House. Please contact Betsy if you would like to participate.

The Silver Spring Town Center, Inc. will be presenting the 11th annual Tribute to America's Veterans Concert featuring Chou Chou and the Imperial Palms on Wednesday, November 6th at 6:00 p.m. at the Buffalo Soldiers Great Hall in the SSCB. The event is free and is hosted in collaboration with this Commission. Wayne Miller, Vice-Chair, will be giving remarks and the Walter Reed Society has contributed funds. Commissioners are invited to a VIP reception prior to the concert and must RSVP to Lisa Martin to attend.

Jim Campbell, Commissioner, announced the Montgomery County Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) will be holding its monthly luncheon tomorrow, October 16th at Manor Country Club. A member of the Rand Corporation will be presenting on the situation in the Middle East.

Cynthia Macri, Commissioner, announced she has been appointed to the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention and she will share information with the Commission. Cynthia noted that the Yellow Ribbon Fund provides rental cars, hotel stays, and fully furnished apartments for patients and their entire families while at Walter Reed. The Eagle Force Foundation provides ground and air transportation at no cost to military Veterans and their family members throughout their rehabilitation journey. Cynthia suggested inviting the CEO from Eagle Force Foundation to speak at a future Commission meeting.

Joanna Starling, Montgomery College, announced that the Montgomery College Takoma Park / Silver Spring campus will be hosting a military and Veterans art exhibit next month. Montgomery College is also working on a film titled "Enlisted to Enroll" about student Veterans.

Stan Siedel, Maryland Veterans Commission, announced that starting January 1, 2020, all service-connected disabled veterans, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war and primary veteran caregivers will be eligible to shop at commissaries and exchanges.

Mike reported he spoke with a City of Rockville Councilmember this past week and there is a lot of interest in turning the former Red Gate Golf Course into a second Veterans home in Maryland. He also reported that County Cable Montgomery Homefront shows are now available on YouTube. Mike recently taped an episode featuring Michael S. Heimall, FACHE, Medical Center Director, DC VA Medical Center Health Care and its Montgomery County Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), who discussed services available to Veterans and the impact of the newly implemented MISSION Act. Mike would like to interview non-profit Veteran service organizations for future episodes.

Bob Koffman, Commissioner, said Commissioners interested in becoming 'puppy parents' with Warrior Canine Connection (WCC) can contact puppyparent@warriorcanineconnection.org. He also reported that WCC is accepting name nominations for the new puppy recruits. Names are accepted on behalf of a Veteran, living or dead, and they particularly are looking for female Veterans. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has received a research grant to study "Evaluating the Efficacy of a Service Dog Training Program for Military Veterans with PTSD". The eight-week study is taking place at WCC in Boyds, MD, and in the community.

Ron reported there is a new documentary titled "To Be of Service" about war veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) who are paired with a service dog to help them regain their lives. For more information visit <https://www.tobeofservicefilm.com/>.

Dan said he has been working with a homeless Veteran in Silver Spring for several years. He has begun the process to obtain his DD214, but it has been quite cumbersome. Wayne said homeless veterans may fax a request for records to 314-801-9195 through their case manager.

Mallary Lass, Outreach Manager, Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic, announced the Cohen Clinic hosts monthly Red Cross workshops and art classes. Mallary invited Commissioners to attend the Cohen Clinic's birthday bash on Wednesday, November 13th from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. to celebrate their second year. Commissioners can tour the clinic, meet the Director, and learn more about services available.

Bernadette Garrett, Toastmasters, announced a Toastmasters meeting will be held next Saturday October 26th from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m at the Cohen Clinic. She asked for help in spreading the word as they need 20 Veterans, family members, or caregivers in order to establish the club. Toastmasters can assist members with dues.

Adjournment: 7:40pm

Next Full Commission Meeting: Tuesday, November 19th, 2019 from 6pm to 7:30pm. Held at Health and Human Services, 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor 1A Conference Room, Rockville, MD 20850

Respectfully submitted:

Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I

Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager