



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
October 18, 2022**

****MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM****

Call to Order

Wayne Miller, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Wayne asked for all present to say the Pledge of Allegiance. He recognized prisoners of war and asked 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.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the September 2022 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken, and the September 2022 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

A Conversation on Veteran Entrepreneurship – Anthony M. Butler, Sr., Placement Director, NPower Maryland, & Founder/Executive Director, E3/Eagle Soaring Management Inc., U.S. Air Force Veteran

Website: www.eaglesoaringmgmt.com

Anthony served in the U.S. Air Force for four years. During his time in the service, he worked with a number of commanders. He was transferred into military intelligence, worked in commander control centers and traveled to 42 countries over three years. During that time he was surrounded by many leaders who made tough decisions daily. It impacted him greatly and he became a defense contractor after exiting the military.

Anthony has worked with entrepreneurs in various capacities for 28 years. In 1993, he started a business support group due to lack of support for veteran entrepreneurs. He was mentored by former City of Baltimore Mayor William Donald Schaefer and now Congressman Kweisi Mfume. They helped him to get a sense of what he could do as an entrepreneur and how to develop organizations. Over the years Anthony learned that veterans make the best entrepreneurs. Veteran-owned businesses are able to push through tough times and pivot themselves when there are challenging situations where other companies have failed. Veterans have unique intangible skills that are refined in the military and they have what they need to be successful in entrepreneurship. In his opinion, veterans are the past, present and future of this country. Anthony reported 534,00 small businesses are opening every month in the U.S. According to a study by HubSpot, 72% of entrepreneurs started a business because they were not ready to retire. According to the 2018 U.S. Census approximately 7% of the entire adult population were veterans – or approximately 18 million veterans. Most veterans exiting the military are not ready to retire and are looking for a second career. More frequently Anthony is steering people towards entrepreneurship.

Anthony worked as the Montgomery County regional manager for the Maryland Department of Labor's veterans program for three years. The Maryland Department of Labor focuses on employment. Their programs do not include entrepreneurship. He also noted many veterans do not seek out services from American Job Centers. The same resources ensuring veterans can gain employment through resume building and learning soft skills can applied to veteran entrepreneurship. The veteran community needs to strengthen advocacy when it comes to entrepreneurship to stay ahead of the curve and to continue to foster the veteran entrepreneur mindset.

Anthony developed E3 with a philosophy of education, encouragement and empowerment. Veterans should educate each other in all aspects of living. As a troop family they should encourage one another, set goals, and define clear objectives. Only then are they empowered people forging their own roads to success and not settling for anything less than their collective best. Prior to the pandemic, E3 had grown to 1,100 entrepreneurs across the country and in Canada, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and in European and Asian theaters overseas. Anthony also owns a management firm that helps businesses bring products to market and develop their organizational infrastructure. He works with leaders around the world to streamline their processes and help them implement the E3 mindset into their businesses.

Anthony recently attended a meeting held at the United Nations and presented before a small subcommittee on entrepreneurship. He was one of three individuals asked where entrepreneurship was leading particularly as it pertains to some of the lesser known communities. One of those lesser known communities was veterans. He told them veterans are an untapped resource when it comes to entrepreneurship. He suggested veterans who want to go into business should be able to take advantage of an expedited system, particularly if they are opening a business they are already a business expert in. Many veterans exiting the military service do not need to obtain additional certifications. Their time and service is the proof that should be used to show that they can do the job, but those skills are not recognized or transferred into the civilian world.

Anthony reported he hosts an international call weekly (Call of Eagles) on Wednesdays from 7am to 7:30am. The calls focus on sharing information, techniques, and resources for all types of entrepreneurs. The weekly calls began in 2017 and cover approximately 30 locations worldwide. Anthony offered the Commission 25 Call of Eagles scholarships. He also gifted 10 strategy sessions to Veterans. Betsy said the Commission can make referrals to Anthony for these scholarships and sessions since they will be free.

Anthony suggested Commissioners educate the public about the benefit and presence of veteran entrepreneurs in the community and encourage the public to patronize those businesses.

The floor was opened to questions.

Michael Wilson, Commissioner, reported he recently started a part-time mobile fitness company. He said veterans need more tools in terms of financial training and education to be able to establish their own businesses. From his perspective he looks at what the community can provide veterans to become successful entrepreneurs. Anthony said this is valid for all entrepreneurs, not just veterans. Many resources do not teach entrepreneurship. Veterans often have many skills already in place that were developed while serving in the military. He suggested there should be a veterans preference to fast track veteran entrepreneurship into a position to receive financial assistance and to make the connections needed to establish relationships, develop contracts, and develop customers. Michael also reported he participated in Project Opportunity and learned what it takes to own a small business including financial management, taxes, human resources management. Anthony said he is currently teaching a cohort class at Montgomery College with Project Opportunity. He teaches approximately 2,000 entrepreneurs every year, both in-person and virtually.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, said veterans have a wide variety of backgrounds. Some individuals dropped out of high school and joined the military while others went on to become doctors. One thing they have in common is how to access financial resources. Betsy does know of one veteran small business directory that she could share and encourage people to use those businesses. Anthony said he has been pushing for veteran organizations to create an entrepreneurial arm within their organization to create a pipeline for entrepreneurship. Many veterans have already forged their own path that help other veterans.

Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair, shared an article published by the Edelman Institute detailing two research studies that identify misconceptions by the general public and employers that can prevent veterans from securing jobs that maximize their skills and experience while negatively impacting their well-being: <https://www.edelman.com/news-awards/new-research-reveals-misconceptions-about-veterans>. He noted that the majority of employers see military members as heroes but not as strategic assets. There is tremendous

stigma against veterans in terms of mental health. Anthony said when he reads about veterans being recognized they never focus on veterans who have served and are now successful in business.

Dale Tibbitts, Special Assistant to the County Executive, asked how Anthony defines entrepreneur. Anthony said the definition of entrepreneur is simply one who takes risks for financial gain. For him, entrepreneurship is a mindset. He described three types of entrepreneurs: the type A entrepreneur starts has a vision and starts an idea from scratch; the type B entrepreneur is a person that comes into an existing business and possibly becomes a franchise owner; and the type C entrepreneurs enter into a business, make changes, and then move on. He added that many businesses are passed down through the family. Dale reported the County does not track veteran-owned businesses and there is no master list of businesses in the county. The demographics of the business community are unknown, which would be helpful for a number of programs and helpful to learn the unique needs of businesses.

Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner, said one barrier to entrepreneurship could be grant writing as well as how to market and price your product and service. Anthony said this could be an opportunity to connect grant writers who are veterans with veteran entrepreneurs. Veterans relate better to other veterans.

Dr. Elwood Gray, Commissioner, reported the American Minority Veterans Research Project (AMVRP) is working with on a project with students from Towson State, Morgan State, Howard University, American University and George Mason University to develop a list identifying veteran-owned businesses in Montgomery County and throughout the state of Maryland. The project will eventually identify veteran-owned businesses nationwide.

Stan Siedel, Maryland Veterans Commission, reported the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce offers a [Veteran Institute for Procurement \(VIP\)](#) which is a free program for service-disabled veteran-owned and veteran-owned small businesses that specifically addresses federal procurement. VIP is a nationally recognized program.

Carly Clem, Staff, shared a resource in the chat of business assistance and entrepreneurship resources currently listed in the online Veterans Network Directory: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/VND/VNDBizAssist.pdf>. Betsy suggested making this information more prominent on the County's veterans website.

Anthony can be reached at 804-469-0284 or email abutlersr@eaglesoaringmgmt.com.

Veterans Day Planning and Operation Green Light

The National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO) are spearheading an initiative to count down to Veterans Day and is inviting counties, parishes and boroughs to join Operation Green Light to show support for veterans by lighting government buildings green from November 7 to November 13. Operation Green Light is a statewide initiative and Governor Hogan will be lighting up government buildings. Several counties have started the initiative October 1 to November 13 as a build up to Veterans Day to recognize the service and contributions of our veteran community. Councilmember Craig Rice asked County Executive Marc Elrich to participate in the initiative. Councilmember Rice's father is a Vietnam veteran. The County Executive's Office has made a commitment to follow through on this initiative based on this Commission's recommendation. Dale reported the County will be replacing all the embedded lights around Memorial Plaza with LED lights that can change colors. Memorial Plaza will be lit green for this initiative. Green lights will not be provided to County residents. Betsy reported a proclamation for Operating Green Light and Veterans Day will be presented by the County Council on Tuesday November 1 at 9am. She invited Commissioners to attend. Dale reported both the County Council's and County Executive's OPI will be publishing press releases regarding Operation Green Light and recognizing veterans programs as well. Betsy has shared information about the initiative with all Montgomery County American Legions and Veterans on Foreign Wars organizations. Wayne reported the Silver Spring Vet Center has shared information will all active clients.

The Commission has an online virtual tribute for Veterans Day featuring photos of profiles of Montgomery County veterans: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/veteransday. Neil Greenberger, OPI, will be sending out a press release that includes information on how veterans and their family members can submit profiles to be added. Veterans Day displays will be featured at the Rockville Memorial Library (RML) and the Silver Spring Civic Building (SSCB). The Commission also a fallen heroes website with the photos and profiles of all County servicemembers killed in action dating back to World War I: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fallenheroes. A digital display of fallen heroes is installed at RML and SSCB.

Carly reported she is compiling a list of Veterans Day events happening throughout the County. Currently she has information on the annual Veterans Day observances hosted by the City of Rockville and the City of Gaithersburg. She asked attendees to report on other events. A list of events will be compiled and posted online.

Janet Ammerman, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), reported DAR is hosting a Veterans Day observance on Friday November 11 from 10:45am to 11:45am at the Veterans Park Bethesda (corner of Woodmont Avenue and Norfolk Avenue). DAR is co-hosting the event with the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Center and Bethesda Urban Partnership.

Anneke Vandebroek, Commissioner, reported the Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic is hosting a 5th birthday bash. The event is free. Veterans will have an opportunity to create a stress resiliency kit. The event will also feature raffles and kids activities.

Dr. Macri reported Spark M. Matsunaga Elementary School will be holding their annual Veterans Day Concert at Northwest High School in Germantown. The elementary school choir sings patriotic songs. Dr. Macri will be the keynote speaker.

Dr. Gray reported AMVRP will be hosting a "Your Health is Your Wealth Brunch" on Monday November 14 at 1pm at SSCB. The keynote speaker will be Secretary George Owings, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs. The event is free and brunch will be provided. To reserve a seat, call 202-903-3847 or email drelwoodgray@gmail.com.

Chair and Vice Chair Report

The Commission will meet next on Tuesday November 15 via Zoom from 6pm to 7:30pm. Betsy suggested inviting Darryl Gorman, Acting Director, Montgomery County Office of Human Resources, to provide an update on the County's hiring preference for veterans, veterans with disabilities, and persons with disabilities. Dale suggested inviting County procurement to also present on the veterans preference.

Updates / Announcements

Wayne reported social security benefits will increase by 8.7% by 2023. It is estimated that VA disability rates will also see an increase in 2023.

Bill Gray, former Chair, reported he attended a memorial service for [Jay Kenney](#), Vietnam Veteran and former Chief of Montgomery County Aging & Disability Services. Jay passed away on September 22 after a three-year battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). Betsy noted that Jay had been receiving treatment at the VA Gaithersburg Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). She, several Commissioners and County Executive staff met with the VA for years to advocate that a CBOC be built in Montgomery County.

Jameelah reported the Women Veteran Workgroup were temporarily postponed. The workgroup would like to revisit two initiatives: resources for women veterans and small group health trainings on chronic disease, chronic pain and diabetes self management programs. Dr. Macri said the workgroup will resume meeting on a regular basis. Meetings are open to any who wish to attend.

Dr. Macri reported the Woodend Sanctuary (formerly the Audubon Naturalist Society) will be hosting a forest bathing session on Sunday October 30 from 3pm to 5pm. The exercise will be led by a certified trainer and include walking, listening, observing, sharing and using all your senses.

Jameelah reported she and Dr. Macri continue to participate in classes offered by Workhouse Arts Center (WAC). WAC offers a Military in the Arts initiative with free programs available to all U.S. military branches and reservists, regardless of duty status and their direct family members.

Adjournment: 7:30pm

Respectfully submitted: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I; Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

DRAFT

Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs Attendance Report

November 2021 – October 2022

VOTING MEMBERS			NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	ABSENCES
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Form on File with Risk Management P = Present / A = Absence / C = Conference Call / M = Military Active Duty P* or C* = Ex-Officio Member Alternative Attended / E = Excused W = Waived Absences by County Executive / R = Waiver Requested													
1. Bahn, Josephine <input type="checkbox"/>	General Public	2 nd term expires 10/31/2023	A	C	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	A	3
2. Gray, Elwood <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	1 st term expires 10/31/2021	C	A	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	1
3. Johnson, Jameelah	Director Designee – Dept. of Health & Human Services	1 st term expires 10/31/2021	C	A	C	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	2
4. Koffman, Robert <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	2 nd term expires 10/31/2022	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
5. Macri, Cynthia <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	2 nd term expires 10/31/2023	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
6. Miller, Wayne <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disabled American Veterans	3 rd term expires 10/31/2021	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	1
7. Mitchell, Reggie <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	1 st term expires 10/31/2022	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	1
8. Pollack, Susan <input type="checkbox"/>	Public - RESIGNED	1 st term expires 10/31/2023	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9. Schlesinger, Scott <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	1 st term expires 10/31/2022	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	E	1
10. Schuster, Lisa <input type="checkbox"/>	Public - RESIGNED	Partial term expires 10/31/2022	C	C	C	A	C	A	C	A	A	X	X
11. Starling, Joanna <input type="checkbox"/>	Ex-Officio Representing Montgomery College	2 nd term expires 10/31/2021	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
12. Subin, Michael L.	Ex-Officio Representing County Executive	4 th term expires 10/31/2020	C	C	A	C	C	A	C	A	A	A	5
13. Vandenbroek, Anneke <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	Partial term expires 10/31/2022	C	C	C	C	A	C	C	C	C	C	1
14. Webman, Susan <input type="checkbox"/>	General Public	1 st term expires 10/31/2021	C	C	A	A	A	C	C	C	A	A	5
15. Willis, Steven <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran - RESIGNED	1 st term expires 10/31/2023	A	A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
16. Wilson, Michael <input type="checkbox"/>	Veteran	Partial term expires 10/31/2022	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	0

Attendance Policy: A Voting Member may miss up to 3 meetings within a one year rolling period. Voting Members who miss more than 3 meetings in that period or who miss 3 consecutive meetings will be automatically removed. Waivers may be requested for absences caused by extenuating circumstances.

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives			A	A	A	A	A	A	C*	C*	A	A	
1. Burton, Christa – Office of U.S. Congressman Jamie Raskin Eyong, Joseph - Alternate			A	A	A	A	A	A	C*	C*	A	A	8
2. Garcia, Vikki – Office of U.S. Congressman John Sarbanes			A	A	C	C	C	A	A	A	A	A	7
3. Morris, Austin – Office of U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen Hendricks, Karen – Alternate / Samuels, Jeff - Alternate			C	C	A	A	A	A	C	C	C	A	5
4. Reichard, Ken – Office of U.S. Senator Ben Cardin			C	A	A	C	C	A	C	C	A	A	5