



Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
May 17th, 2016

I. Call to Order & Introductions

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. 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. New Commissioners

Dan welcomed two new Commissioners: Henry Bockman, Veteran, served in the Navy as an Aviation Ordnance man on the USS America; and Marek Posard, General Public Member, who is a military sociologist for the RAND Corporation.

III. Approval of Minutes

Jim Campbell, Commissioner, made a motion to approve the April 2016 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the April 2016 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

IV. Planning for Community Outreach to Veterans – Ohene Gyapong, Deputy Director, Montgomery County Office of Public Information

Ohene Gyapong, Deputy Director, Office of Public Information (OPI), discussed how the County can provide outreach to the estimated 44,000 Veterans and their families that live in Montgomery County. OPI has the entire media spectrum at their disposal including television, web, print, radio, graphics and 311. The Commission can use the County's main Facebook and Twitter accounts, which have 8,000 and 42,000 follows respectively, to get information out to the community and reach a wider audience. If the Commission sends a tweet via Twitter then someone needs to be readily available to answer any inquiries or tweets that are posted as a result. For the interim, Ohene will send tweets out on behalf of the Commission. Eventually there may be a system in place that will allow Commission staff or a Commissioner to send tweets. He suggested the Commission create a hashtag that will be used with all tweets.

Ohene noted that OPI was at Media Day for the Tiger Woods Foundation Quick Loans National event at Congressional Country Club. In the video clip Tiger Woods expresses his gratitude for the service and sacrifice of our nation's veterans. This is in keeping with the motto for the Commission: "Honor their service. Strengthen our community." Video clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9ELsBT3IN8&feature=youtu.be>

County Cable Montgomery (CCM) offers a wide range of television programs with several programs that target specific audiences, such as Seniors Today for the aging population, Mosaic for the African American community, Montgomery Al Dia for the Latino Community and Homefront for Veterans and their families. The County Report is a weekly overview of all material from CCM programming. OPI has limited funding for internal and external bus campaigns.

In regards to 311, the Commission can develop knowledge based articles (KBA) that 311 staff can use to refer calls to resources, services and websites.

Ohene suggested that the Commission designate Commissioners who are available to speak on camera for interviews and talk about the work, goals and challenges of the Commission.

OPI is still waiting to receive the printed property tax inserts, but are hoping to mail them out in June. Approximately 200,000 households will receive the property tax insert. The insert gives contact information for the Commission, Serving Together, and the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs.

V. MyVA Communities and Capital Network Community Engagement Board – Chakakhon Lea, MS, FAC-PM, Department of Veterans Affairs, Veteran Experience Office, North Atlantic District

PowerPoint: <http://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/VEOverview.pdf>

As part of Secretary McDonald's MyVA transformation initiative, VA has established local community engagement boards, called MyVA Communities, around the country. These boards provide a feedback and input mechanism for local veterans, and bring together the local VA leadership to meet the unique needs of veterans in each community and facilitate the development of local solutions. VA has incorporated more than 50 community engagement boards into the MyVA Communities initiative and expects to have nearly 50 more by the end of the year. To learn about the MyVA Communities initiative or to find a local community engagement board, visit: <http://www.va.gov/nace/myVA/index.asp>.

The Chesapeake Veterans Alliance encompasses the State of Maryland, except Southern Maryland which is covered by the Capital Network Board in D.C.

The VA Veterans Experience is currently piloting a program at the Baltimore VA Medical Center called V.O.I.C.E., which is a web-based platform that allows Veterans to make comments concerning care they have received that can be followed up immediately by the appropriate supervising staff. V.O.I.C.E. is targeted to be expanded to all VA Medical Centers by the end of August.

The VA Veterans Experience will also be working to develop one website that Veterans can visit to locate information. There are currently over 400 VA websites.

VI. Chair and Vice-Chair Report:

Randy Stone, Vice Chair, reported that he will be cleaning the Veterans display cases at the Silver Spring Civic Building at the end of the month. He is requesting items to be donated to be displayed in the cases. Items currently represent various wars and eras.

Dan Bullis, Chair, reported that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee met to discuss a design plan. The memorial will be a special place to honor those who gave the ultimate sacrifice and those who are Vietnam Era Veterans who submit their photos and or/ name to be on a digital display. It will also honor all those who have served including the Vietnamese who served alongside the U.S. military. It was suggested that the South Vietnam flag be flown alongside the American flag, Maryland flag, County flag, and POW/MIA flag. Mike Walsh, Vietnam Veteran, has designed a proposed etching that would be created on a flat wall, or on a pedestal possibly made of granite like the Wall downtown. The etching would be an outline of Montgomery County with the names of those residents who were killed in action to be listed within the outline. The name Vietnam Veterans Memorial would be across the top with a dedication date would be listed on the bottom. Mike Subin, Commissioner, will be working with the Department of Transportation on this project.

VII. Certificates of Appreciation

Dan Bullis presented certificates of appreciation from County Executive Isiah Leggett to Bill Gray, first Chair of the Commission and to Jerry Godwin, the second Chair of the Commission, for their leadership and service to Veterans and their families of Montgomery County, Maryland.

VIII. Old Business:

None.

IX. Roundtable:

Austin Morris, Representative of Congressman Chris Van Hollen, reported that the VA has chosen a location for the Montgomery County Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). It will be located at 15180 Gaither Road in Gaithersburg and has a tentative December 2017 operational date. There will be a meeting on June 13th with the VA to

discuss next steps. Commissioners with specific questions regarding the CBOC can contact Austin who will discuss them with the VA at the meeting.

Dave Peterson, President, Montgomery County Chapter of MOAA, reported that [Senate Bill 245 - Labor and Employment - Hiring and Promotion Preferences - Veterans and Their Spouses](#) - passed in the Maryland General Assembly this year. The bill authorizes employers to grant a preference in hiring and promotion to eligible veterans, spouses of eligible veterans who have service-connected disabilities, and surviving spouses of deceased eligible veterans; Octavia Dixon, Commissioner, asked if the VA has made any contingency plans for the proposed Metro shutdown schedule. The new schedule may affect veterans who have medical appointments. Betsy has not heard anything, but she will contact the VA Medical Center.

Hazel Gross, Elks Lodge #15, reported that Team River Runner had a successful kick off event earlier this month. It is a free weekly paddling program for wounded veterans and their families at Riley's Lock in Poolesville. The program is also open for teenagers and adults with disabilities. The program will continue every Sunday until the end of October. The Washington Rockville Elks will be providing a free cookout. Interested participants can contact Lisa Weed at Lisa.Weed@teamriverrunner.org.

Maryland Public Television (MPT) will be airing Maryland Vietnam War Stories from May 24th through May 26th at 8:00 p.m. Visit mpt.org/Vietnam for more information.

Adjournment: 7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting: Tuesday, June 21st, 2016 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Health & Human Services, 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor Large Conference Room, Rockville, MD 20850

Respectfully submitted:

Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I

Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager