

Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, May 15, 2019

Attendance

Voting Members	Present	Absent	Excused
Daniel Campbell		x	
Sharon Jacko	x		
David Kaye		x	
Rachel Nachlas	x		
Fred Schumacher		x	
John Lynn Shanton		x	
Fred Wood		x	
Ex-Officio Members			
Dee Harrison		x	
Michelle Day	x		
Andrea Walker		x	
Michael McLane	x		
County Councilman Steve McKay	x		
Delegate Carol Krimm	x		
Robin Summerfield		x	

Guests: Teresa Sprail, Doug Silvern, Linda Bergofsky, Keith Midberry, Michael Meyer, Jennifer Farrar, Danny Farrar, Roger Wilson, Matthew Lenz.

Staff: Miles Ward

Welcome and Introductions

Sharon Jacko opened the meeting by leading the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Establishment of a quorum: After review of attendance and finding that only two of the seven voting members were present, Sharon Jacko stated that pursuant to the council bill that established the VAC and defines a quorum as a majority of the voting members, a quorum was not established.

Old Business

Approval of the April 2019 meeting minutes: Due to the lack of a quorum the April 2019 meeting minutes could not be approved.

Guy Whidden Proclamation Event: Sharon Jacko described the large turnout and warm reception that was given to WWII and D-Day veteran Guy Whidden on May 14. County Executive Jan Gardner presented Mr. Whidden with a proclamation honoring his participation in D-Day,

which will soon mark its 75th anniversary. A number of VAC members attended and spoke about their memories of and high regard for Mr. Whidden, who expressed his gratitude and thanks.

Permanent staff support for VAC: Linda Bergofsky, who was recently hired as the coordinator for the Veterans Advisory Council, was introduced. Ms. Bergofsky spent the last 17 years as a project manager, program manager, and policy analyst for the federal government, including 6 1/2 years at the Department of Veterans Affairs, both in the Veterans Health Administration and the Office of the Inspector General. She said that she is excited about working with the members of the VAC, and is scheduled to begin on June 3rd.

Presentation

Veteran-related bills in the legislative session: Delegate Carol Krimm spoke about several bills involving veterans that were introduced in the recently concluded session. A homeless veteran and domestic survivor bill passed, but without funding. HUD grants will be distributed to counties starting October 1, and Delegate Krimm suggested that the VAC should consider becoming involved, perhaps by contacting the veterans' councils at other counties, and sending a letter to the Governor about funding. Delegate Krimm said that her hope is to eliminate homelessness for veterans in Frederick County, and that Mike Spurrier should be asked to speak to the VAC and tell us how this is going.

Delegate Krimm said that a bill for an income tax check off for donations to the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund passed the house but not the senate. She wants donated funds to go back to a dedicated fund in the donor's county, but not to that county's general fund.

HB 1093 passed. It will give a tax exemption to military death benefits. SB 357, which expanded criteria for disabled veterans to receive property tax reduction, did not move forward due to concerns over its fiscal impact.

There was a general discussion about the accuracy of information regarding the number of homeless veterans in Frederick County. Most agreed that the numbers given seemed quite low, and indicated a need to review the method by which data is collected and the definition of "homeless" that is being used.

VAC's roles and responsibilities regarding local and state legislation: Roger Wilson, Frederick County's Director of Government Affairs & Public Policy, encouraged the members to move forward in helping veterans, while keeping in mind the County's expectations for all of its boards, commission and councils. These include collaborating with existing service organizations in the community, collaborating with other County commissions and boards, and collaborating with the County Executive and the County Council. Mr. Wilson said that the VAC might want to consider partnering and making recommendations with the Senior Services Division, Community Action Agency, United Way, the Commission for Women and the Commission on Disabilities. The VAC should also remember to work with the County Council liaison to address council issues.

On addressing issues by proposing state legislation, or supporting or opposing state legislation after it has been introduced, Mr. Wilson said it is important for the VAC to work first with the County Executive's office so things can be reviewed and considered for inclusion in the annual legislative package. Letters of support or opposition, whether addressing pending legislation or seeking action by a branch of state government, would require planning, advocacy and coordination, and ultimately the approval of the County Executive and the County Council. This is the kind of work he does when the legislature is in session, and Mr. Wilson expressed a willingness to discuss these issues with the VAC at any time. But he also encouraged VAC members to understand that when it comes to legislation, the VAC's role is primarily to provide advice and recommendations to the County Executive and the County Council, using the existing county procedures and offices.

Public Comment

Matthew Lenz with the Knight of Columbus distributed flyers and spoke about the Field of Honor tribute to military service providers and first responders that will take place at St. Ignatius of Loyola church in Ijamsville from May 25-27. Donors can sponsor flags, and net proceeds are turned over the Building Veterans and America's Vet Dogs, which help to provide services to veterans.

A brief discussion took place about whether the VAC should have its own webpage, independent of the County's website. How could VAC do this? How could VAC create a Facebook and Twitter account?

Subcommittee Reports

David Kaye sent word that he is working on the VAC bylaws, and knows that it will have to be reviewed and approved by the County's legal department.

New Business

Veterans Services Center - Michael Meyer, the president & CEO of Goodwill Industries of Monocacy Valley spoke about a \$2 million capital campaign that has just been kicked off. In partnership with Platoon 22, which is a veterans suicide prevention group organized and administered by Danny and Jennifer Farrer, it will create a 20,000 square foot regional veterans center here in Frederick. This regional center would be a hub serving veterans in Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware and Virginia. The anticipated site is on land next to the Wells Fargo building on Monocacy Boulevard.

Mr. Meyer said this regional center is based on a similar facility in California. It will be very personal and interactive, and will include the families of veterans who need services. Mr. Meyer said that he, Goodwill, Platoon 22 and the Farrars are moving ahead on this and would

appreciate help from the VAC. He said there will be a huge marketing budget so people will know about the project and understand what they are doing. Mr. Meyer said that Goodwill intends to develop a page on its website just about veterans. Jennifer Farrar said that Platoon 22 has a data base of over 6,000 contacts and they will use it to help promote what the VAC is doing in Frederick County.

Adjournment

Upon completion of business the meeting was adjourned.

Next Meetings:

Regular monthly meeting: June 19, 2019 at 6:30 pm.

The meeting will be held in Winchester Hall, 3rd Floor Conference Room

Submitted by Miles Ward