

Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

Attendance

Voting Members	Present	Absent	Excused
Deb Childers	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	
Nan Mann	X		

Guests: Julie Riggs, Keith Midberry, Doug Silvern, Joyce Anne Sundergill-Schmid (for Andrea Walker), Karen Duffy, Teresa Spruill, Melissa Barber, Diana Modelski, Stan Seidel, David Perez, David Sella, Moses Park, Mallary Lass.

Staff: Linda Bergofsky

Welcome and Introductions

Fred Schumacher opened the meeting by leading the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Establishment of a quorum: After a review of attendance, Fred Schumacher determined that a quorum was established.

Approval of Meeting Agenda: A motion was made by David Kaye to approve the meeting agenda. Fred Wood seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Old Business

Approval of the September 21, 2019 meeting minutes: Fred Wood made a motion to approve the minutes of September 18 as submitted. Sharon Jacko seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Welcome to new member: Fred Schumacher welcomed Deb Childers as the newest voting member of the VAC. Deb served in the US Navy and is an accountant by training. She lives in Frederick with her family.

Chair's Comments: Fred Schumacher noted that we had two dynamic presentations this evening and hoped that they would spur considerable discussion.

Presentations:

The Frederick Veterans Service Network: Melissa Barber (Maryland's Commitment to Veterans) noted that she helped create the FSVN in 2010 as an informal network of Veterans and service providers who saw the need for collaboration around Veterans issues in Frederick County. That network grew and expanded over time, and the group decided to create a mission statement in 2014 to help guide their work. The FSVN purpose is to advocate for Veterans who face the complex challenge of re-integration while becoming self-sufficient and productive members of their communities. In 2015, a planning committee took up the task of planning meetings and selecting speakers; it was at that point that Julie Riggs (Serving Together) was brought in as co-chair. The FSVN subsequently established a Facebook presence. The group continues to serve as an informal forum for providers and Veterans to network, broaden knowledge about available resources, and share information about programs, rather than as an action oriented group. An estimated 30 to 40 organizations covering a broad brush of service to Veterans are represented in the network and most are represented at monthly meetings.

The Community Veterans Engagement Board: In 2017, Frederick White from the VA Veterans Experience Office approached the FSVN about the possibility of transforming into a Community Veterans Engagement Board with the goal of working across programs and resources at the local, State, and Federal levels. The CVEB was established in March 2017. Although the FSVN members opted not to be folded into the CVEB, the two groups share many of the same members and communicate regularly on issues. Diana Modelski described the CVEB as an action-oriented group that coordinates across county, state and Federal resources. The CVEB's main objective is to promote and support access for Veterans to available benefits and to raise awareness of services for Veterans. The group has been instrumental in establishing the Veterans Treatment Court and the Veterans Advisory Council, as well as working directly with the State and Federal Departments of Veterans Affairs to support homeless Veterans and those with other immediate needs. They also attend quarterly meetings of VA partners.

VAC members engaged with the speakers regarding other overarching issues of concern to Veterans in Frederick County. These include:

- Loss of VASH vouchers to support homeless Veterans, although recent changes in the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program may allow services to Veterans in imminent danger of becoming homeless,
- No means to respond to immediate needs of Veterans (funds are available from different sources but there is no way of knowing how much is available at any time;

those funds are also controlled by different organizations so there is no centralized mechanism to respond and disburse funds), and

- Accessible and timely medical transportation, especially out of Frederick County. Different counties have access to some resources, e.g. Carroll County has grant funded transportation for Veterans as well as a line item budget for Veterans' services.

Fred Schumacher thanked the speakers and asked them to follow up on two issues: specifically, he asked for additional information on the number of homeless (or imminently homeless) Veterans who have made requests through their respective organizations, and their perspective on the pros and cons of a reestablishing the Veterans Treatment Court. Diana, Julie and Melissa will prepare this information prior to the next VAC meeting.

Public Comment

David Perez, USA, announced a new fitness program for Veterans in honor of his comrades who died by suicide. Beginning at 7 AM on October 27, David will lead a two mile walk around Baker Park. The walk will continue every Sunday until Christmas. He provided flyers (a link to the flyer is also on the VAC website).

Stan Seidel, District 6 representative on the Maryland Veterans Commission, reported that effective January 2020, service connected disabled Veterans may use the Post Exchange and commissary. Dee Harrison noted that the commandant and medical director at the Ft. Detrick CBOC are aware of this change and are working to ensure all facilities are fully accessible.

Sub-committee Reports

Tri-fold: As requested, the tri-fold was modified to information about 211 and how to access services for homeless Veterans. The County has approved use of the logo. Please share the brochure when possible.

Speakers: The Speakers subcommittee is meeting on October 23 to discuss topics and speakers for 2020. All VAC members are encouraged to suggest ideas.

Bylaws: The bylaws have been submitted to the County Executive's office for approval. Once approval is received, they will be posted on the website. Steve McKay asked if the VAC wanted him to propose legislation to change the length of voting members' terms. Linda Bergofsky noted that once the bylaws are approved by the County Executive, the VAC could take up the issue of modifying them.

New Business

December meeting: Fred Schumacher noted that he would entertain a motion to cancel the December meeting in light of its proximity to the holidays. Fred Wood made a motion to cancel the December meeting; Sharon Jacko seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Coordinator's Report: Linda Bergofsky gave the Coordinator's Report. In addition to onboarding the new member, Linda has completed training in Mental Health First Aid for Military and Veterans and initiated training in faith-based, trauma informed behavioral health care for Veterans. She also mentioned that the Community Partnership Grant announcement has come out and encouraged VAC partners to attend the pre-application conference on October 29.

Linda also announced the many activities planned for the next month including, a Veterans workshop sponsored by Congressman Trone on October 24, the Veterans Day proclamation ceremony on October 29, the HeroHaven homeless stand down at Martinsburg on November 9, as well as several Veterans day commemorations around the county. She asked for the VAC and guests to share any planned 2020 events so they can be added to the web calendar.

Announcements

Dee Harrison announced that there will be a virtual claims clinic at the Ft. Detrick CBOC on November 14. Information will be posted on the VAC website.

Sharon Jacko announced that the United Way Day of Action was very successful and that Home Depot has committed to assisting any Veteran who needs home repairs going forward, including repairs to make the home accessible or to comply with VA Home Loan requirements. She asked that those requests be sent to her at sdjacko@comcast.net and she will pass them on to Home Depot.

Adjournment

Upon completion of business the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Next Meetings:

Regular monthly meeting: November 20 at 6:30 pm. The meeting will be held in Winchester Hall, 3rd Floor Conference Room. Col. Laurie Barone, VA Veterans Experience Office, will be our speaker.

Submitted by Linda Bergofsky