

Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

Attendance

| Voting Members | Present | Absent | Excused |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------|---------|
| Deb Childers | X | | |
| Sharon Jacko | | X | |
| David Kaye | X | | |
| Rachel Nachlas | | | X |
| Fred Schumacher | 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: Jessica Mills (for Michelle Day), Lisa Dawson, USA, Heather Kirby, Carrol Pinnix, USA (ret.), David House, Christa Burton, Kim Wilson, Keith Midberry, Carole Luber, Donald Masters, Teresa Spruill, Alan Phillips, Maura Paige, Lisa Littlefield, Dennis Vernon, Richard Rhodes.

Staff: Linda Bergofsky

Welcome and Introductions

Fred Schumacher opened the meeting at 6:31 PM by leading the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Establishment of a quorum: After a review of attendance, Fred Schumacher determined that a quorum of voting members was present.

Approval of Meeting Agenda: Fred Wood made a motion to approve the agenda as submitted. Deb Childers seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Old Business

Approval of the meeting minutes from January 15, 2020: David Kaye made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting as revised. Fred Schumacher seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Update on action items: Regarding the action items outstanding from the January meeting, Steve McKay noted that he is studying the legislation underlying the Veteran property tax credit

identified as problematic by a citizen. Linda Bergofsky noted that the Continuum of Care will take up the VAC request to add a Veteran representative and whether to resubmit the 2017 application for Essential Zero at its next meeting.

Subcommittee Structure Proposals: The discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

Chair's Comments: Fred Schumacher reported on a very productive meeting between the VAC and the Frederick County Public Libraries that we hope can result in a Veterans in Libraries program modeled on Carroll and Howard Counties. Fred encouraged guests and others to refer to the VAC website to identify events of interest and to keep abreast of upcoming VAC meetings.

Presentations:

- The Role of the Local Health Improvement Plan and health care delivery system in addressing disparities in care: Heather Kirby of Frederick Health provided an overview of the process that results in the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and the Local Health Improvement Plan (LHIP). Prior to passage of the Affordable Care Act, the hospital and county pursued these activities on separate tracks. However, for the most recent cycle (that was completed in 2019), the health system and county worked together as part of a coalition. Participants in the CHNA and LHIP process generally viewed their health and that of their communities as good. However, there were differences by race, ethnicity, and gender, indicating that programs and policies to address overall community health must take into account these differences. For example, while substance abuse and mental health problems were identified as the number one overall concern, lower-income respondents mentioned lack of access to dental services. Through data analysis, community surveys, focus groups, and planning sessions culminating in a Health Care Summit, three health priorities emerged for Frederick County: Adverse Childhood Experiences and Infant Health, behavioral health, and chronic conditions. In response to the three priorities, Frederick Health is embarking on a number of initiatives, including use of Community Health Workers to engage and educate citizens around health behaviors, chronic disease screening, school-based programs, and specialized programs for people transitioning from hospital care.

There was considerable interest in the data Heather presented and how to interpret findings for the Veteran community. Because Veterans made up a small portion of those who participated in the CHNA and LHIP, specific conclusions about Veterans health status and priorities couldn't be made. Given that limitation, the VAC identified an action item to get the Veteran community more involved in the next planning cycle, which begins in 2021, to ensure that Veteran needs are clearly identified going forward.

- How the Mission Act can help improve access to care for Frederick County Veterans: Kim Wilson, who heads the Community Care program at Martinsburg VA Medical Center, provided an overview of the Mission Act, which replaced the Veterans Choice program in June 2019. The Mission Act not only extends options for Veterans to seek care in the community but also expands caregiver support programs, telehealth access, and urgent care access, all under a single program administered by VA and a third-party administrator (OPTUM) that oversees the provider network. Access to community care still requires the Veteran to be enrolled in VA for health care, but eligibility is now based on drive time and wait time. Kim emphasized the importance of Veterans consulting with their care teams to ensure that the right care is delivered at the right time in the

right setting. VA is not privatizing care and still wants to be the provider of choice for Veterans while partnering with high quality community providers. In that regard, VA is similar to an HMO. That said, Kim acknowledged that finding providers that are part of the OPTUM network in Frederick County has been challenging. Although Community Care knows which providers saw Veterans under the Choice program, OPTUM has its own credentialing and onboarding process and VA is not explicitly involved. Currently, Kim knows that there is an immediate need for radiation oncology, radiology, oncology, and orthopedics.

During the question and answer period, VAC members asked if there was something VA could do to improve the mechanics of doctors joining the OPTUM network. Kim explained that while VA has delegated responsibility for network development to OPTUM, she and her leadership have raised the issue of increasing reimbursement to VHA Central Office in an effort to improve the ability of OPTUM to negotiate. Martinsburg is also willing to look at using transportation, lodging and specialized funding to fill in local gaps. Other concerns raised dealt with how VA contracting and business management policies are creating a loss of capacity among local providers to serve homebound Veterans with special needs, an issue which VA is working to address. As an action item, Kim asked all Veterans who see community providers to encourage them to join the OPTUM network.

- Discussant: Lisa Dawson, Minority Veteran Program Coordinator for the Baltimore VA Regional Office, described the many different programs that are available within the Veterans benefits Administration to support minority Veterans with chronic health conditions, limited income, or who require caregiver support. She noted that the three administrations within VA work together on a regular basis to serve Veterans of all ages. As an action item, Lisa encouraged the VAC to engage minority Veterans in the community.

Public Comment

- Donald Masters asked if there was any additional information on the second Veteran's home in either Montgomery or Carroll Counties. Linda Bergofsky and others shared what they knew about current State plans.
- Richard Rhodes, USAF expressed concern with the impact of DoD plans to move retirees and dependents out of Military Treatment Facilities on the ability of Frederick County to meet Veterans' treatment demands. He asked the VAC to urge VA and DoD to work together to ensure Veterans were accommodated. The VAC will prepare a statement of concern to share with the County Executive.

New Business

Proposal to hold closed session on March 12: Due to the resignation of J.L. Shanton, there is a vacancy on the VAC. The County published a notice in the Frederick Post on February 9 and 16, inviting anyone who meets the criteria to submit a letter of interest and current resume. Documentation must be submitted by February 28 to Ms. Joyce Grossnickle in the County Executive's office. Once received, the nominating committee will review the letters of interest and resumes and make recommendations to the County Executive as to which individual should be put forward to Mr. Shanton's term, which ends October 1, 2020. Ms. Grossnickle will prepare

a staff report detailing those recommendations for Ms. Gardner, who will then pass her recommendations on to the County Council for a vote on or about April 7. This timing will result in the least amount of disruption. In order to meet these timelines, the VAC plans on holding a special closed meeting on March 12, 2020 to review the applicants for the vacancy. During this special meeting, the VAC plans on discussing the following two topics only:

1. Qualifications of applicants for a voting member slot on the Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council ending October 1, 2020; and
2. Recommendations for filling the vacancy to be submitted to the County Executive.

Deb Childers made a motion to have a closed meeting on March 12, which is statutorily allowed under the Maryland Open Meetings Act General Provisions Article § 3-305(b): (1) "To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals". Fred Wood seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Linda Bergofsky noted that the meeting would be held at 3 PM at Frederick County Citizen Services Division, 401 Sagner Avenue, Frederick.

Coordinator's Report: The formal coordinator's report will be submitted in writing as an addendum. Linda Bergofsky reported that she and Fred Schumacher attended a Joint Veterans Commission meeting on January 17 and have initiated outreach to many of the contacts made there. One promising development from the meeting was an interest in bringing County level Coordinators and Councils together on a more regular basis in an effort to identify and address issues and solutions in common. She encouraged all attendees to consider applying for the VAC vacancy.

Announcements

The second annual Women Veterans Day will be held on March 4 in Annapolis.

There will be a Veterans Claims Clinic and Resource Fair at Carroll Community College on March 19.

The next meeting of the VAC will be held on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 at 6:30 pm. The meeting will be held in Winchester Hall, 3rd Floor Conference Room and will focus on women Veterans. Speakers will include representatives from the VA Women's Health program and the Frederick County Commission on Women.

All events are posted on the VAC website.

Action Items and Adjournment

January Action Items:

- Steve McKay will continue study of the tax credit issue.
- Linda Bergofsky will attend the next meeting of the Homeless Coalition and will report back on its deliberations.
- The Nominating Committee will review applicants for the VAC vacancy on March 12.

February Action Items:

- Linda Bergofsky will draft a statement of concern regarding the impact of DoD policy on treating military retirees outside of Military Treatment Facilities.

Upon completion of business the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Submitted by Linda Bergofsky

Approved