

## Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, September 16, 2020  
By Web Ex and Facebook Live Streaming

### Attendance

Voting Members	Present	Absent	Excused
Deb Childers	X		
Sharon Jacko	X		
David Kaye			X
Rachel Nachlas			X
Wilfred Plumley	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: Jay Hessler (for Andrea Walker), Joy Schaefer

Staff: Linda Bergofsky, Ingrid Nicolau

### Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM. Sharon Jacko led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance. Fred Schumacher welcomed Joy Schaefer, Director of Governmental Affairs in the Office of the County Executive. The VAC moved immediately into discussion because both speakers had to leave the meeting by 7 PM.

### Discussion

Delegate Carol Krimm noted that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the last General Assembly session lasted only 71 days instead of 90 days. As a result, there was insufficient time for many bills to be reviewed and acted on by both chambers. She mentioned two relevant bills that were passed by both chambers and signed into law: one increased tuition reimbursement for active members of the Maryland National Guard while the other established a Maryland Code of Military Justice. The delegation was also successful at getting a \$500,000 bond bill to support development of the Veteran Service Center. In addition to being named President of the 75-member Women's Caucus, Carol was recently appointed to the leadership team of the Appropriations Committee. This role on Appropriations will allow her to ensure that this funding is secure and to speak for the County when Appropriations issues arise. Although the delegates have been asked to limit the bills they bring forth given the budgetary restraints that the State is facing, Carol expects to revisit a proposed task force to study Women Veterans

Service Centers. Going forward, she also expects to have the annual event to honor Women Veterans.

Joy Schafer, Director of Government Affairs, provided an overview of the process used by County Executive Gardner to elicit legislative priorities from a broad array of constituencies, including the VAC, along with their ideas and suggestions for legislative initiatives. The County Executive has also scheduled a Town Hall on October 8 to allow for general public input. Those ideas are packaged for review by the County Executive and then to the County Council for approval. Ultimately, the package is passed on to the County's delegation to the General Assembly.

The VAC discussed one proposal submitted by Will Plumley regarding tax exemption of income for retired military Veterans. Both Joy and Carol noted that bills using this language have been proposed (and not passed) before and that it would affect the entire State, not just Frederick County. As such, it may be better proposing it as a position statement in the county's legislative package (indicating advocacy on an issue). Carol believes that any bills that have a fiscal note attached may be very difficult to pass going forward. That said, she knows that the Veterans' Caucus supports the bill.

Will has proposed two other legislative ideas, one specific to the County that Councilman McKay will take on and one that would introduce an Army JROTC program. Joy provided background on the existing ROTC program at Thomas Johnson High School and the issues that must be taken into consideration when establishing any special programming, e.g. transportation and enrollment challenges. She suggested that the VAC work first with the Deputy Superintendent of Frederick County Public School.

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

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

## **Old Business**

Update on Action Items: Linda Bergofsky provided an update on outstanding action items. The Nominating Committee met in closed session on September 9 to discuss applicants for the VAC vacancies. Partners in Care provided 20 information packets for the VAC to distribute. She is still working on the transportation service eligibility flowchart. Linda reported that the US Department of Veterans Affairs opted not to support the Registration of Interest for HUD-VASH vouchers on behalf of Frederick County. VA acknowledged that there are homeless Veterans who are being served with other resources. Sharon asked if United Way could address the VAC on its homeownership program for Veterans and suggested Malcolm Furgol address the VAC on this program.

Approval of the meeting minutes from August 19, 2020: Sharon Jacko made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting as submitted. Will Plumley seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

**Chair's Comments:** Fred Schumacher expressed his appreciation for Will's legislative proposals, and noted that both income tax exemption and an additional JROTC program would be valuable to many individuals.

### **Public Comment**

No public comments were submitted through the designated public input portal.

### **New Business**

Voting on Candidates for VAC Vacancies: Linda Bergofsky reported on the status of applicants for the three vacancies. Two applications were received; Rachel Nachlas will not be returning to the VAC. The Nominating Committee recommended that the names of the two applicants, Fred Schumacher and Fred Wood, be forwarded to the full VAC for approval.

Sharon Jacko made a motion to approve the two candidates put forward by the Nominating Committee; Will Plumley seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

With regard to the remaining vacancy, after consulting with the County Executive's office and with Rachel, Linda approached Rachel's counterparts at Hood College and Mount Saint Mary's College to determine if there were suitable staff available to fill the remaining vacancy (Note: Staff at FCC's Veteran and Military Student Center did not have any capacity to take on this responsibility). To that end, Fred Schumacher and Linda have a conference call scheduled with the Director of the Warriors to Workforce program at the Mount to assess his interest. If we are unable to identify a suitable candidate at either college, we will go back to the County Executive with other suggestions, such as re-posting the opportunity or approaching individuals who had previously applied.

Coordinator's Report: The formal coordinator's report was submitted to the VAC in advance of the meeting. Over the last month, Linda has been focused on arranging for the speakers and logistics for the rest of this year's meetings, filling the remaining VAC vacancies, and with collecting data on homeless Veterans.

Planning for 2021: Linda asked the VAC members to weigh in what types of activities and meeting topics they wanted to pursue in 2021. Since several topics were not covered at all because of the pandemic, the VAC may want to revisit those topics.

The VAC suggested several ideas, including sponsoring activities that promote Veteran wellness, fitness and recreational opportunities (both physical and emotional health), getting an update on the Veteran Service Center, revisiting having meetings at locations outside of Frederick to engage Veterans across the County, and holding joint meetings with other Veterans

commissions and councils to work collaboratively on common issues in an environment of fiscal challenges.

Linda also raised the issue of revising the website and trifold brochure. She asked members to go to the website and provide some ideas. She also asked the VAC to re-consider the idea of a marketing and communications sub-committee.

## **Announcements**

Linda reminded the VAC that September is Veteran Suicide Prevention month and encouraged members to access the resources available to educate themselves about suicide and suicide prevention. The 2020 Military Family Survey is open until October 16. There are many workshops available through the Stephen A. Cohen Clinic at Easterseals that address both physical and emotional well-being; the programs are free. The Frederick Veterans Service Network meets on September 27 and October 27. The CVEB will meet on October 6. Linda asked everyone to complete the Census before field enumeration ends on September 30. Nan reiterated the importance of getting the message out on the Census and offered the support of the office of Senator Van Hollen on issues, such as the military income tax abatement. Finally, the last day to request a mail in ballot for the General Election is October 20.

The next meeting of the VAC will be held on Wednesday, October 21, 2020 at 6:30 pm. The October meeting will be focused on Veteran employment and entrepreneurship and will feature the VAC's own Michelle Day, along with her colleague Patty McDonald, Teresa Spruill (Veteran Labor Specialist with the State of Maryland), Yolanda Rayford (Career Coach at Veteran Staffing Network), and Sherman Coleman (County Office of Economic Development). The agenda also includes a discussion of planning for Veterans Day activities.

November's meeting will include an update from the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs and the Maryland Veterans Commission.

## **Action Items and Adjournment**

August Action Items: Linda will continue work on a flow chart describing eligibility for transportation services.

September Action Items: Linda will contact Malcolm Furgol about presenting to the VAC on the United Way Home Ownership program. Linda and Fred Schumacher will continue efforts to identify a suitable candidate to fill the remaining VAC vacancy. Linda will reach out to other VACs to determine if they have identified any legislative priorities.

Sharon Jacko made a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Will Plumley and was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 PM.

Submitted by Linda Bergofsky