

Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

By Web Ex and FCG-TV

Attendance

Voting Members	Present	Absent	Excused
Deb Childers	X		
Sharon Jacko	X		
David Kaye			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: KT Tyler, Stan Seidel, Phil Munley, Cynthia Cavaleri

Staff: Linda Bergofsky, Ingrid Nicolau

Welcome and Introductions

Wilfred Plumley led 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: Sharon Jacko made a motion to approve the agenda as submitted. Wilfred Plumley seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Old Business

Approval of the meeting minutes from October 21, 2020: Wilfred Plumley made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting as submitted. Sharon Jacko seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Action Items: 1) Linda distributed the draft calendar of 2021 meetings, which will be discussed during New Business. 2) Fred Schumacher will report on Veterans Days activities, also under New Business. 3) The Executive Committee met to review the candidate for the remaining VAC vacancy. The VAC will take this up under New Business.

Report on November 2 Closed Meeting: Fred Schumacher read the Presiding Officer Statement describing what took place when the Executive Committee met in closed session on November

2 to review a candidate for the remaining VAC vacancy. After discussing the candidate's qualifications and the benefits of having him on the VAC, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to bring the nomination of Paul Hunter to the full VAC for consideration and then on to the County Executive and County Council for approval.

Chair's Comments: Fred Schumacher acknowledged the effort put forth by VAC staff to develop an extensive listing of food and nutrition resources in Frederick County.

Presentations: Updates from the Maryland Veterans Commission and Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs

- KT Tyler assumed the role of Chairman of the Maryland Veterans Commission in July 2020. He will serve in this role for five years. The focus of his tenure will be on building collaborations among organizations serving Veterans. He is most interested in sharing best practices and lessons learned among the counties and harmonizing the work going on. To that end, a Joint Veterans Commission meeting will be held in December. When the Advisory Commission meets again in January, he plans to invite Veteran serving organizations to present on their activities. He welcomed the opportunity to attend the Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council meetings when his schedule allows
- Phil Munley is the Director, Service and Benefits Program in the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs. He provided updates on the various programs he oversees. The Veterans cemeteries have faced particular challenges since COVID-19 started, with different limits placed on the number of people who could attend a funeral. He remarked that Maryland has one of the largest and busiest State Veterans cemeteries programs in the country. Because of active COVID-19 cases, Charlotte Hall also had stopped taking new patients earlier this year, but is now taking new residents. A new 120-bed Veterans home is planned for Sykesville; it will require two state agencies to negotiate the exchange of 80 to 100 acres of land so it is in the very early stages of planning. The home is expected to house a dialysis unit. The Outreach staff continue to work remotely. Phil noted that the Veterans Trust Fund distributed over \$90,000 so far in FY 21. That amount is more than half to what was distributed in all of FY 20.

The MDVA Service program is located in 12 sites across the State. The number of claims being submitted to VA has dropped. MDVA service officers are co-located, often with the MVA, and are available to face to face appointments 3 days a week (in most locations). The Rockville office is moving to the MVA in Gaithersburg. In Frederick, MDVA is still moving ahead with plans to move to the new Platoon 22 Veterans Service Center in November 2021. With regard to the US Dept of Veterans Affairs, Phil mentioned that his service officers are experiencing delays in getting service records from St. Louis. VA stopped doing in person Compensation and Pension exams, relying instead on acceptable credible evidence of service connected disability that could be gleaned from existing records. Now that C&P exams are being performed again, VA is going back to review all decisions made using acceptable credible evidence. VA will allow veterans who are not comfortable having a face to face C&P exam; they will stay the claim until the Veteran is willing to attend an exam. The Baltimore Regional Office of VA was closed for most of the pandemic; however a Veteran may schedule an appointment in Baltimore by calling 410-230-4530, ext. 1043 or in DC by calling 202-530-9028.

The VAC discussed if closing Charlotte Hall created any hardships, particular for Frederick County Veterans. Phil was not aware of specific concerns, other than that the closure was difficult for staff and residents. The VAC also requested assistance in advocating for Frederick County Veterans who fall under a VA Medical Center in another State, specifically as it relates to HUD-VASH vouchers. Phil suggested engaging with the Secretary and KT asked that we email him with details of our efforts to obtain vouchers.

Public Comment

- No public comments were submitted through the designated public input portal. Linda introduced Cynthia Cavalieri from the Federal Executive Board, who offered to make a presentation about the FEB at a future meeting.

New Business

Vote on candidate for VAC vacancy: Sharon Jacko made a motion to accept the Executive Committee's recommendation and move Paul Hunter's nomination forward to the County Executive. Deb Childers seconded; the motion was passed unanimously.

VAC involvement in Veterans Day events: Twenty five brass musicians participated in an Echo Taps ceremony on Veterans Day, with one playing from the bell tower of Calvary at 11 AM. Fred also attended a ceremony through Frederick County Public Schools honoring the eight FCPS employees who had been nominated for the annual Veterans in Education award. Colonel Nunnally from Ft. Detrick was also in attendance. VAC Staff assisted the County Executive's office in preparing a video proclamation for Veterans Day. That video was widely shared within Frederick County and was included in a collection of videos from County Executives across the State that is available on the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs website. Staff also developed and distributed a list of Veterans Day free food and other offerings for Veterans.

Linda noted that the Executive Committee will be meeting on December 2 to develop the December agenda. She has a high degree of certainty that we will be focusing on Veteran recreation and wellness at the January meeting. Fred Schumacher suggested including the YMCA as well. Linda noted that some ideas were carryovers from last year, with some modifications. She invited VAC members to suggest ideas and speakers for other meetings, as the schedule is still a work in progress.

Announcements

Linda encouraged the VAC and others to check out all of the programming being offered through the Steven A. Cohen clinic. She also mentioned the programs offered through Saratoga War Horse and Dogtag Bakeries. The calendar on the VAC website provides details on all of these programs, along with links to register.

Will mentioned that he is standing up the Retiree Council at Ft. Detrick. He expects the Executive Committee will meet in December.

The next meeting of the VAC will be held on Wednesday, December 16, 2020 at 6:30 pm. We will focus on finalizing the 2021 schedule and on electing officers.

Action Items and Adjournment

Action Items: Deferred

Sharon made a motion to adjourn the meeting and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving; the motion was seconded by Will and was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Submitted by Linda Bergofsky

Approved