

Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, February 17, 2021
By Web Ex and Facebook Live Streaming

Attendance

Voting Members	Present	Absent	Excused
Deb Childers	X		
Paul Hunter	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: Colleen Bernard, Denise Green, Tina Lehmann, Cynthia Cavaliere, Stan Seidel, Jay Hessler (for Andrea Walker). Staff: Linda Bergofsky, Ingrid Nicolau

Welcome and Introductions

Sharon Jacko called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Approval of Meeting Agenda: David Kaye 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 20, 2020: Fred Schumacher made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting as submitted. Paul Hunter seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Update on action items from prior meeting: Linda Bergofsky reported on the status of the action items.

Chair's Comments: Fred Schumacher noted that it was his honor and privilege to serve as Chair for the VAC. He acknowledged the progress the VAC has made in its first two years and its emergence as a

robust and active voice for Frederick County's 18,000 Veterans. Going forward, Fred noted that the VAC has the structure and motivation to aspire to do even more and hoped the VAC would achieve the success of its counterpart in Carroll County. Sharon Jacko, as the incoming Chair, expressed her gratitude for Fred's leadership, welcomed the opportunity to work with David, and committed to exceeding Carroll County's success.

Presentations: Veterans Recreation and Wellness Opportunities

Kevin McGlynn, serves as chapter captain for Frederick Team Red, White, and Blue (Team RWB), the mission of which is to help engage and enrich Veterans' lives through physical and social activities. That said, it is open to anyone as long as they are committed to that mission. The Frederick chapter, which was founded 7 or 8 years ago is part of a nationwide program. The local chapter has approximately 300 members, of which about 30 are active; about 60% of active members are Veterans. There are Team RWB chapters across the country and members in one chapter are able to be part of another chapter's activities. Interested individuals may join by completing a form online (www.teamrwb.org). Members have complete control over what activities they want to participate in, based on their interests and physical abilities as well as their location. All levels of expertise are welcome, however Team RWB does not have specialized adaptive equipment; Kevin will work with Team RWB national leadership to support a member's request. Because of the pandemic, many of the most popular activities have been curtailed. However, Kevin is hoping to reinstate activities this year to include rock climbing outings, races (both as runners and as volunteers), bike rides, and socials to get Veterans out of their homes. Team RWB would appreciate any assistance the VAC could offer to get the word out about what the chapter is doing, including working on sporting events together. Fred Schumacher committed to connecting Team RWB to the local running community and Paul indicated interest in working with Team RWB to better connect to student Veterans at Mount St. Mary's.

Jennifer Mogus from the City of Frederick Parks and Recreation Department shared an overview of the many facilities available in the City of Frederick, including recreation centers and parks as well as two public swimming pools that are open in the summer. Programming includes a wide variety of classes for individuals across the life span, from cardio conditioning, fencing yoga, and line dancing to pickleball, tennis, and cycling. COVID restrictions has affected the number of individuals who can participate in indoor classes but they are still getting interest. There are discounts on fees available to City residents as well as senior and military users (she is seeking clarity on what military discounts entail). Jennifer suggested that the web site is always a good place to start to look for activities (www.cityoffrederickmd.gov/255/Parks-Recreation) or people may contact the front desk at the Talley Recreation Center (301-600-1450). Alex Coleman is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) with City Parks and Recreation who has worked with Veterans in previous positions, including adaptive sports through Two Top Mountain Adaptive Sports Foundation. The City does not have any adaptive equipment but as a recreation supervisor, she is very interested in expanding more inclusive recreation opportunities for Veterans. She mentioned Danny Farrar and Topaz Navarro as local Veterans with fitness businesses who can help obtain adaptive sports equipment.

Justin Gaston presented on programs available through the YMCA of Frederick, which is the 7th oldest YMCA chapter in the country. The Y serves children, adults and families regardless of income. The Y is able to provide financial support to members through its partnerships and fund raising events, including

an annual golf tournament and a sporting clays event. The specific focus areas of Y programs are youth development (it is the largest child care provider in the county), healthy living (gyms and swimming pools, wellness classes), and social responsibility. The Y does have discounts for retired military and active duty that includes a zero dollar joining fee and 10% discounts on monthly dues. Justin indicated an interest in working with both Team RWB and the City of Frederick on any planned activities to support Veterans; he is also willing to take back a request to expand discounts to all Veterans, not just those that retired from the military and active duty.

The VAC discussed the potential benefits of Veterans only activities, the value of encouraging Veterans to “buddy” up with each other to improve the likelihood of staying with a wellness program (e.g. Danny Farrar and Topaz Navarro have podcasts that may appeal to younger Veterans), and online resources, some at no cost, that are available to Veterans who can’t or would prefer not to take in person exercise classes. Will shared his idea to hold a Veteran focused wellness fair – possibly this fall - that would also include a race and that could be an annual event. The idea was well received by the VAC and our speakers, and Nan offered to help with a sub-committee that would plan the event.

Public Comment

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

New Business

Preparing for the 2021 Point in Time Count: Linda reported that the 2021 Point in Time count will take place overnight on Wednesday January 27. Linda has reached out to the coordinator to determine if any volunteers are needed and to reiterate the importance of screening anyone encountered by asking the question, “Have you ever served?” so we can get an accurate count of Veterans currently experiencing literal homelessness.

Announcements

Linda shared a list of activities that are coming up in the next month (they will be appended to the minutes).

The next meeting of the VAC will be held on **Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 6:30 pm**. We will be discussing how the VAC can work with schools to increase students’ understanding of the military and the contributions of Veterans to our community with speakers from Frederick County Public Schools.

Action Items and Adjournment

Action Items:

1. Linda will work with Sharon and David to finalize the agenda for February and will ask for specific questions or requests members have for the speakers, so that they can be collated and shared in advance of the meeting.

2. Linda will share contact information among tonight's speakers with the expectation of future collaborations.

3. Linda will follow up with Will and Nan regarding the creation of a wellness fair subcommittee.

David Kaye made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 PM. Will Plumley seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Submitted by Linda Bergofsky

Approved

1. The annual Point in Time count of homeless individuals is scheduled for next Wednesday, January 27. I have reached out to the person with the City of Frederick to ask that volunteers screen everyone they encounter with the question “Have you ever served” to ensure we get an accurate count of Veterans who are literally homeless. Last year, 5 individuals identified themselves as Veterans during the PIT count.
2. The **Ask the Question** campaign continues. Please advocate for health and social support providers you work with to ask whether any one they care for has served or has a family member who served. This is part of a nationwide effort to prevent Veteran suicide.
3. The VA is going to start notifying veterans who are at least 75 years of age or older, who are enrolled in VA healthcare, that they will be able to get their COVID-19 vaccines through the VA. If they are enrolled, all they should need to do is contact their primary VA provider for details. **The caveat here is that they must be enrolled in VA healthcare in order to be contacted and/or eligible.**
4. The Frederick County Health Department has opened a call center for residents who are eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine, but do not have access to a computer. The center is in operation from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. It’s staffed by county employees who will help residents set up an appointment. There are two call center lines: for English speakers, call 301-600-7900; for those who speak Spanish, they can call 301-600-7905. The Health Department says right now the vaccine is only available to those 75 and older, first responders, and health care providers who are licensed, certified and registered to work in Maryland. They must show an identification. Those individuals 75 and older must bring proof of age.
5. The Upper Potomac Chapter of MOAA is holding a fund raiser to benefit local food banks. If you would like to help, please send your contribution to Hugh McElroy, chapter treasurer.
6. Howard County’s Commission on Veterans and Military Families has started a virtual mental health support group on the first Monday of every month through NAMI. All local Veterans may participate –More info is on the VAC website
7. **Virtual classes for caregivers** will be held online weekly, beginning January 19, 2021 through February 23, 2021, from 4-6 p.m. This program is **free. More info is on the VAC Website**
8. The University of Alabama is excited to invite women Veterans to participate in the national survey, **“Assessing the Needs of Women Who Served in the U.S. Armed Forces.”** Women are experiencing transition challenges differently than their male counterparts. Your experiences can be a very valuable part of this study and we want to hear from you. **More info is on the VAC website.**
9. **Our next meeting will be on February 17 and our guest speakers will be from Frederick County Schools to discuss how the VAC can work with schools to increase students’**

understanding of the military and the contributions of Veterans to our community. I will be reaching out to you for specific questions or actions you would like to see from this initiative.

Approved