

Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

By WebEx 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: Michael Hughes, Dr. Xavier Bruce and Sophie Siebach-Glover. Staff: Linda Bergofsky, Miles Ward, Pat Fleet, Ingrid Nicolau and Kelli Goetz

Welcome and Introductions

David Kaye 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, David Kaye determined that a quorum of voting members were present.

Approval of Meeting Agenda: Paul Hunter made a motion to approve the agenda as submitted. Deb Childers seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

David Kaye thanked Linda Bergofsky for her dedication and great service. She was instrumental in getting the VAC to where it is today, and will be missed.

Old Business

Approval of the meeting minutes from March 17, 2020: Paul Hunter made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 17, 2021 meeting as submitted. Fred Schumacher seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Chair Comments: David Kaye reported for Sharon Jacko that it has been determined that a Veteran's needs assessment should be looked into. She is looking for a volunteer to chair the committee. Someone who has experience and knowledge in needs assessments. Contact Sharon Jacko or David Kaye in the next few days if you are interested.

Presentation: Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Sophie Siebach-Glover, Data Analyst for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program in the Frederick County Housing and Community Development Department reported that Religious Coalition and Frederick County Government are partnering to provide rental and utility assistance to those impacted directly or indirectly by COVID-19. The Religious Coalition for Emergency Human needs is administering this program, which can cover up to 12 months of back rent and up to three months of future rent. It also covers 12 months of utility bills for electricity, water, sewer, trash collection and fuel. In some cases it can cover Internet costs.

Eligibility criteria to receive assistance: A member of the household must qualify for unemployment benefits or have experienced a loss of income or financial hardship due to COVID-19. Also, the household must demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability, and the household income must not exceed 80% of the area median income. For Frederick County, that's around \$82,000 for a family of four; priority is given to households with an income below 50% of the area median income. That's around \$64,000 for a family of four or households with one or more members that have been unemployed for at least 90 days.

Applications and assistance are available online at the Religious Coalition's website. Housing navigators and caseworkers are available there who can help individuals with the application process.

Presentation: Striving for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Michael Hughes is the Chief Equity and Inclusion Office for Frederick County, and has been at work for several months. This is his first position with a unit of local government. For the last 25 years he has worked in higher education at community colleges, and at four-year private and public colleges. He has held positions as a faculty member, and in student services, student discipline, Title IX coordinator, and other capacities as well. He is enthusiastically learning about Frederick County and all it offers to residents.

Mr. Hughes has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the fields of diversity, inclusion and equity. He approaches his work with passion and commitment. He noted that we need to keep in mind that we're dealing with a history of challenges, and that the government, whether local, state or federal has often played a significant role in creating some of the difficulties that we're trying to overcome today.

His goal is to create a process for County government to bring together all of the various cultures and perspectives in our community. And, to foster an environment that is inclusive and diverse, and provides a fair and equitable means for people of all races, religions and nationalities to become part of the County's workforce. This may be more challenging than

expected, and some people have said that several people of color that had joined County government did not stay long.

Mr. Hughes eagerly anticipates the day when he can meet with people face to face and one-on-one. He enjoys being educated on a broad assortment of topics, and thanked Linda Bergofsky for sending him a great deal of information about veterans. He wants to continue learning about and supporting the VAC, and looks forward to a long term commitment of working together.

Presentation: Western Maryland Chapter, National Association of Black Veterans

Dr. Xavier Bruce, is the commander of the Western Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Black Veterans. He retired as a Lt. Colonel after 24 years of service in the United States Air Force. Based in Frederick, MD, NABVETS-Western Maryland Chapter is organized to foster the intellectual, economic, socio-cultural, collective good, and well-being of all veterans in general and Black veterans in particular. Its central vision is no more underserved black veterans. NABVETS is a national veterans service organization like American Legion and the DAV. The Western Maryland chapter was chartered in late January of this year, but the national organization has been around since 1969. The NABVETS-Western Maryland Chapter hopes to operate out of the Platoon 22 Veteran Services Center when it opens in November 2021. Dr. Bruce also described the work that his nonprofit organization, Uplift In-Powerment, is doing to help veterans in our community.

Public Comment

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

New Business

Updates from VA: Linda Bergofsky noted that all veterans are eligible to receive the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at the Martinsburg VA Medical Center.

Planning for Memorial Day: Fort Detrick will have a Heroes Walk with flags and signs honoring local residents who lost their lives in military service. The Memorial Day flags and signs will remain in place through the Army's birthday celebration on June 14. At the June celebration there will also be state flags on a blue and gray field, and a cake cutting with limited public presence. The Ft. Detrick Garrison Commander is expected to speak and the ceremony will be broadcast on Facebook live.

Announcements

Steve Mc Kay announced that on May 4 at 7 pm the County Council will be conducting a public hearing on the bill he has introduced that would provide property tax credits to local disabled veterans. He encouraged attendees to review the proposed bill and consider offering comments for consideration by the County Council.

The next meeting of the VAC will be on **Wednesday, May 19, 2021 at 6:30 pm.**

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Pat Fleet, Administrative Coordinator at the Frederick County Human Relations Department.

DRAFT