

Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, August 19, 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 Rowe, Harold Otis, Kendall Tiffany, Ralph Chiavola, Malcolm Furgol, Kelli Goetz

Staff: Linda Bergofsky, Ingrid Nicolau

Welcome and Introductions

Steve McKay 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: Deb Childers made a motion to approve the agenda as submitted. Will Plumley seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Introduction of Guests: Linda noted that guests included Joy Rowe from the Senior Services Division, along with Kelli Goetz and Ingrid Nicolau of the Citizen Services Division.

Old Business

Approval of the meeting minutes from July 15, 2020: Rachel Nachlas made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting as revised. Will Plumley seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Chair's Comments: On August 18, Fred Schumacher attended the dedication of the Biggs Ford Bridge, which was renamed in honor of SGT Kenneth L. Krom, a Frederick County native who was killed in action

during the Vietnam War. The dedication and memorial was widely attended and included heartfelt remembrances from many of SGT Krom's family and friends. SGT Krom was a recipient of the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart, among many other commendations and awards. This is the first County bridge dedicated to a service member killed in action. Fred also noted that the Frederick News Post produced an excellent article about the ceremony.

Presentations: Transportation

Kendall Tiffany, Rideshare coordinator for Frederick Transit, provided an overview of the agency's programs: Public Transportation, Paratransit, and Commuter Services. All transportation vehicles used are ADA-compliant and can accommodate riders with disabilities. *Public Transportation* services are available Monday through Friday; Connector and bus routes cover the City of Frederick and immediate surrounding areas, while shuttles go between Frederick and larger cities and towns in the County. There are reduced fares, although none specific to Veterans. Service has recently returned to pre-pandemic levels, although riders are still not being charged and riders must wear masks and practice physical distancing. *Transit-Plus* is the paratransit service that provides door to door service for disabled and elderly residents, also Monday through Friday and during regular business areas. Kendall noted that this service is currently nearing capacity because of increased demand and social distancing requirements limiting the numbers of people on each run. To address this increased demand, the County Created the Taxi Access Program, or TAP. Individuals who have been enrolled in Transit Plus for 3 months may apply for TAP, which allows 24-7 access to one of three companies that can provide taxi service. Individuals contribute \$5, \$10 or \$20; those funds are then supplemented with County funds. All programs supported by Frederick Transit are limited to destinations in Frederick County.

Harold "Bud" Otis shared information about the transportation services provided by the non-profit agency, Partners in Care. Although Partners in Care has been in operation for 18 years, it has recently increased its efforts to support residents by opening a boutique on the Golden Mile and expanding its transportation support. To be in the program, individuals must join as members by completing an application and undergoing a background check. Members requesting services are then matched to other members who can provide that service. There is no cost to join or to use a service. Currently, 50 members provide transportation; the volunteer driver will pick up and transport a member and stay with that person until s/he is ready to return home. Additionally, Partners in Care has a 9-person van that can accommodate 2 wheelchairs. Partners in Care has no geographic limits on its transportation services but needs at least a 48-hour notice to arrange services. They are looking to add more vans to their fleet and are open to receiving private donations to support their services. Partners in care may be reached at 301-682-7133.

Ralph Chiavola directs the transportation services office at the Martinsburg VA Medical Center. To be eligible, a Veteran must have an appointment at VA or paid for by VA in the community (this includes schedule compensation and pension exams). The DAV van picks up Veterans at designated stops in Frederick and Brunswick for transport to Martinsburg on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. There are also VA shuttles that go between Martinsburg and the

medical centers in Baltimore and Washington, with designated stops in Brunswick and Frederick. Door to door service is also available, but only for Veterans who have absolutely no means of transportation (i.e. no vehicle, no license, no way to get a ride). Services are only available Monday through Friday and are limited to locations in Martinsburg's catchment area. Veterans should contact his office a week in advance, although he can sometimes accommodate shorter notice. Finally, Veterans with a 30% or more service connected disability, those receiving the aid and attendance benefit, and those with very low income may be eligible for beneficiary travel reimbursement. The number to access the DAV van is 304-263-0811, extension 3732; the number for the Shuttles or door to door service is at extensions 2214 or 4269.x

Malcolm Furgol, Director of Community Impact at United Way of Frederick County, introduced a new program, Pathway to Transportation Car Program. As background, Malcolm described the work of the Prosperity Center (a partnership of United Way, the Frederick Housing Authority Frederick Coalition for Financial Success) to support ALICE¹ households. Individuals who enroll in the Car Program work with the Prosperity Center to receive financial and credit counseling in order to open an account with Woodsboro Bank in order to save \$400, which can then be used to purchase a vehicle through Second Chance Garage. The program is a hand up, not a hand out and is intended to help ALICE households overcome transportation barriers to full employment and engagement. The program is being formally kicked off on August 20, 2020.

Malcolm also offered his perspective as a discussant. He appreciated the different missions of the three transportation programs but saw a common need to increase awareness of the services and increase referrals. He suggested that Partners in Care may want to consider using the free online volunteer platform available through the United Way website to identify and recruit more drivers. He encouraged the other presenters to connect with 2-1-1 to ensure that it had up to date information on the services offered and eligibility.

The VAC discussed how COVID-19 has raised the visibility of transportation issues in Frederick County, along with disparities in access to high speed internet. There were also questions about how best to connect Veterans requesting transportation support to available services across the providers, e.g. case management.

Public Comment

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

New Business

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 this meeting, working with the County executive's office to prepare for VAC

¹ ALICE stands for households that are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed. The VAC discussed the ALICE report its February meeting.

members whose terms end on October 1, and coordinating with other agencies to determine if the County Housing and Community Department could apply for HUD-VASH vouchers.

Announcement of Closed Meeting: Fred Schumacher read a prepared statement regarding a proposed closed meeting of the VAC for the purposes of assessing applicants for three voting slots. David Kaye made a motion to hold a closed meeting on September 9 for that purpose. Will Plumley second the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Announcements

Linda reported on the Veteran Suicide Prevention project currently underway at the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs. Anyone interested in learning more or getting involved should contact Denise Nooe, Outreach Director. Linda also noted August events are on the web site and asked those in attendance to send any other events to her. Every other Tuesday, Easterseals Veterans Staffing Network holds career coaching calls. The next one is on August 25, as is the next Frederick Veterans Service Network meeting. The CVEB will meet on September 1.

The next meeting of the VAC will be held on Wednesday, September 16, 2020 at 6:30 pm. The September meeting will be focused on legislative priorities in the next General Assembly session.

Jay Hessler announced that the County Health Department has hired two nurses to provide COVID-19 consultation for people with behavioral health issues. He asked for suggestions for how to connect these resources with Veterans.

Fred Schumacher praised the Frederick News Post for the research it did to connect to WWII era Veterans in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of VJ Day, which was August 15.

Action Items and Adjournment

January Action Items: The Point in Time survey for 2020 revealed 5 unsheltered Veterans.

August Action Items: Linda will send Bud Otis her mailing address so he can provide information packets on Partners in Care. That information will then be uploaded to the VAC website. Linda will send out Web Ex invitations for the special closed meeting and the next VAC meeting. Linda will also prepare a flow chart describing access to transportation services.

Sharon Jacko made a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Deb Childers and was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 PM.

Submitted by Linda Bergofsky