

## Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, October 21, 2020

By Web Ex

### 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), Patty McDonald, Paul Hunter, Teresa Spruill, Yolanda Rayford, Sherman Coleman, Stan Seidel, Phil Munley, Kelli Goetz

Staff: Linda Bergofsky, Ingrid Nicolau, Pat Fleet

### Welcome and Introductions

David Kaye 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: David Kaye made a motion to approve the agenda as submitted. Sharon Jacko seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

### Old Business

Approval of the meeting minutes from September 16, 2020: Sharon Jacko made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting as revised. Will Plumley seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Action Items: 1) Both Fred Schumacher and Fred Wood were approved for re-appointment to the VAC for a two-year period beginning October 2, 2020. Linda noted that this evening's guests included Paul Hunter from Mount Saint Mary's College, who is being considered for the remaining VAC vacancy. 2) Linda is investigating software that will can be used to flow chart eligibility for transportation and other benefits. 3) And as the VAC agreed, Linda submitted a

request that the County Executive include a position statement supporting income tax relief for military Veterans and spouses in her legislative package.

Planning for 2021 Meetings and Speakers: Fred Schumacher indicated that we should have a full slate of topics set sometime next month and expects that we will follow a comparable approach to this year's meetings. To that end, based on input from the VAC at the September meeting, Linda has reached out to Frederick County Parks and Recreation to develop a Veteran wellness and recreation program. Similarly, she had preliminary discussions with FCPS regarding the development of a Veterans in Schools program. As a result, Fred Schumacher will be part of a panel reviewing nominees for the FCPS Veterans in Education award. Linda asked for VAC members who are interested in joining a FCPS Veterans Speakers Bureau to email her.

**Chair's Comments:** Fred Schumacher noted that he attended a virtual meeting of other County Veterans Commissions where issues of mutual interest, such as accessing HUD-VASH vouchers, were discussed. The VAC agrees that sharing information across counties can be very helpful to our efforts, e.g. investigating how counties are addressing the Veteran property tax issue. Councilman McKay asked Linda make that a specific action item. The next meeting of the cross-county commissions meets again in December.

**Presentations:** Veteran Employment and Entrepreneurship

- Michelle Day, Director of Frederick County Workforce Services, led off the panel with a Labor Market and Employment Overview. Workforce Services is under the County Office of Economic Development and is tasked with connecting individuals to employment, training, upskilling, and career paths that meet our local industry needs. Veterans who self-identify receive priority. Frederick County has both a growing population and an above average rate of growth in jobs. The County has been affected by COVID-19 as evidenced by an uptick in the current unemployment rate compared to 2019. However, the largest industries in Frederick County include several that have been more resilient during the pandemic, including manufacturing, health care, biotech, and logistics.

Patty McDonald, Employment Services Manager, continued by noting recruitment and retention challenges, including a lack of qualified applicants, skill shortages, digital literacy deficits, and work readiness barriers. Patty also noted that businesses are trying to adapt to the new platforms for recruiting and interviewing and revisiting policies that increase employee safety, productivity, and promote equity and inclusion. Patty believes that Veterans are well positioned for these current opportunities because they are more likely to have the skills and capabilities employers are looking for.

Teresa Spruill, Regional Local Veterans' Employment Representative for the Maryland Department of Labor, described the programs and services available through her office. The office is focused on helping Veterans become work ready, which could involve providing case management, job coaching, skill building, or partnerships with industry and educational institutions. All staff members are Veterans themselves and they use their understanding of the military and demands of employers to address what is needed to help the Veteran find stable employment. DOL is using virtual job fairs, resume writing workshops, and career clubs

to help deliver those services and keep Veterans connected to one another during the pandemic. For example, once a month, there is a virtual entrepreneurs meeting. Going forward, DOL will be launching the Veterans Virtual Kiosk to connect Veterans directly to employment specialists; it is also investigating a program on base at Ft. Detrick to support spouses and transitioning military. Teresa noted that increased availability of remote work opportunities is ideal for military spouses, because jobs can readily transfer between postings.

Yolanda Rayford, is a Senior Career Coach with the Easterseals Veteran Staffing Network (VSN). VSN is a business within Easterseals that places Veteran, military spouse and caregiver job seekers nationwide in a variety of types of employment, industries, experience levels, and salaries. All VSN staff are Veterans or military spouses and to date have successfully placed over 2,400 individuals in 34 states using partnerships with public and private organizations including the US Departments of Veterans Affairs<sup>1</sup> and Labor as well as many Veteran Service Organizations. VSN provides career assessment, upskilling/credentials, employment opportunities, job search, career progression, social media, resumes, interviews, salary negotiation, and federal employment. These services are offered at no cost to the job seeker. Additionally, VSN provides logistical support to employer clients by conducting background checks and pre-employment screening. The focus is finding the right candidate for the right position; this can require between 6 and 20 hours with each client. As with our other speakers, Yolanda noted that VSN has transitioned to virtual platforms to deliver services. Going forward, VSN will be scaling back its e-coaching services for the remainder of the calendar year and will embark on a full schedule in 2021 (all VSN events are on the VAC web calendar).

Our last speaker, Sherman Coleman, is a Business Development Specialist in the Frederick County Office of Economic Development (OED) and served in the US Navy. His office recruits existing businesses and those interested in starting a business into the County. Sherman also leads the Frederick County Minority Business Vision, which was established in 2015 to provide resources, educational opportunities, and networking events for minority, Veteran and women-owned businesses. OED partners with the Small Business Development Center, the Women's Business Center and SCORE to connect entrepreneurs and those wishing to start a business with resources and mentors. These organizations have pivoted to on-line and other virtual platforms to continue their efforts under the pandemic. Sherman stressed that entrepreneurs must have a passion for their ideas, a willingness to invest in themselves, and accept a high level of commitment to be successful. As with their time in the military, Veterans must be fully engaged in the mission. To close, Sherman noted an upcoming technical training webinar on the Veteran-owned Small Business Enterprise Program.

The VAC discussed the connection between of salary and cost of living, how lack of access to high speed broadband impacts access to employment, education, and mental health, tax credits for small businesses, and the Veterans in Procurement program.

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<sup>1</sup> VSN is a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantee through VA that allows staff to serve homeless Veterans referred for job readiness and coaching. Yolanda indicated she is currently working with 6 HVRP clients.

## Public Comment

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

## New Business

Announcement of Closed Meeting: Fred Schumacher read a prepared statement regarding a proposed closed meeting of the VAC on November 2 for the purposes of assessing an applicant for the remaining slot.

VAC involvement in Veterans Day events: The 17<sup>th</sup> annual Echo Taps ceremony (with social and physical distancing precautions) will begin at 10 AM at the corner of Market and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets on November 11. No one is aware of any other events at Memorial Park, either through the American Legion or the VFW, any that are sponsored by the County, or on post at Ft. Detrick.

## Announcements

Sharon reminded the VAC that the US Marine Corps birthday is November 10.

The next meeting of the VAC will be held on Wednesday, November 18, 2020 at 6:30 pm. Speakers include Phil Munley, from the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, and KT Tyler, newly elected chairperson of the Maryland Veterans Commission. Malcolm Furgol from United Way will also provide an overview of programs available through the Prosperity Center.

Will gave an update on his discussions with FCPS about an additional JROTC program. The Deputy Superintendent expressed interest and a willingness to follow up with the Superintendent.

## Action Items and Adjournment

Action Items: Deferred

David Kaye made a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Will Plumley and was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 PM.

Submitted by Linda Bergofsky