

## Frederick County Veterans Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, May 19, 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
<b>Ex-officio members</b>			
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, Shannon Aleshire, David Galloway, Brooksi Bottari, Lauren Binz and Linda Bergofsky. Staff: Miles Ward, Pat Fleet, 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.

### Old Business

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

**Chair Comments:** David Kaye asked if anyone was interested in chairing the Veteran's needs assessment.

David Kaye introduced Lauren Binz from David Trone's office. She is a Wounded Warrior Fellow Please contact her if you or someone you know requires assistance.

**Presentation: Frederick County Behavioral Health Authority**

Andrea Walker is the Director, she is in charge of planning and oversight of all Mental Health Providers in Frederick County. She shared data with regard to mental health hospitalizations and deaths. The trends have moved downward in 2020. Frederick County's Veterans suicides rate in 2020 were 16 deaths 75% male and 25% female. Almost split in half by age 44% under the age of 44 and 64% above the age of 65.

Jay Hessler is the Assistant Director, he talked about the obvious risk factors due to the pandemic for mental health issues. Although some of us can work and do school at home it also can create stress. Coping mechanisms can come out as drinking, drugs, overeating and gambling. There are also protective factors that have resulted from the pandemic some people have had better access to services by computers and less stress because of the lack of a commute. Kids are spending more home time because of lack of activities. Less money for gas and more money from stimulus checks. However, more time at home could be a risk factor for children.

The Frederick County Behavioral Health Authority was awarded grant money to roll out conversions to telehealth, distribute PPE where needed, created positions for liaison to go between the providers and the state. They also administered the distribution of grants to assist businesses.

**Presentation: Mental Health Association of Frederick County (MHA)**

Shannon Aleshire is the Chief Executive Officer. MHA provides 13 services but she focused on Behavioral Health Services, MHA has a 24/7 call center some are local some are state and some are national. They have received an increase in suicide hotline calls. When someone calls in there is an option to press 1 if they are a veteran. The call center reported that 1100 of the call come from folks that they are serving or have served in the armed forces. Expanded hours for the walk in crisis center provides counseling and medication management on a sliding fee scale. 30 people served in walk in have stated that they are serving or have served The longer hours provide urgent mental health services and navigators. Thanks to a partnership with Frederick County they are now expanding physical space. They have expanded the Mobile Health Crisis services to 24/7.

**Presentation: Maryland's Commitment to Veterans**

David Galloway is a trainer for the Maryland's Commitment to Veterans, he is also a Veteran. Maryland's Commitment to Veterans helps Veterans connect with treatment and support services through VA Health Services, Maryland Department of Health and/or community health providers. Resource Coordinators are devoted to assisting any Maryland resident who has served or is currently serving in the US Armed Services (Active duty, Guard or Reserve) and their families, with access to mental health and substance use services.

**Presentation: Melwood Veteran's Services**

Brooksi Bottari is the director of Veterans Services, she runs Operation Tohidu. The program is for individuals who are victims of military sexual trauma. The program focuses on confidence-building, outdoor activities, and group discussion in a relaxed, positive environment using proven techniques for the self-management of symptoms, stressors, and responses. facilitate activities that highlight individual ability and teamwork, promote positive engagement, drive transformative discussions and reframe traumatic experience.

They served 100 individuals last year, participation in the program is free of cost.

**Public Comment**

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

**New Business**

**Plans to celebrate the Army's birthday on June 14:**

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.

The next meeting of the VAC will be on **Wednesday June 16, 2021 at 6:30 pm.**

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned.

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