



## Virtual (WebEx) Commission Meeting

### Meeting Minutes Thursday, March 4, 2021

#### 1. Roll Call of Commission Members for Establish Quorum:

- a. Roll Call: The roll was taken; nine commission members present (two vacant). The Chair declared the Commission was in a quorum and brought the meeting to order.

Commissioner	Present	Excused	Absent
J. Greg Jolissaint (Chair)	✓		
Jonathan Branch (Co-Chair)	✓		
Reginald Avery	✓		
Michael Blum	✓		
Steven M. Bolen*		✓	
Nafrettifi Griffin	✓		
Michael Griggs	✓		
Kelly Kesler		✓	
Robert Lowell	✓		
Keith McGuire	✓		
Paul Rivers	✓		
(Vacant)			
(Vacant)			

\*Joined late.

- b. Acknowledgement of Howard County Government Officials in Attendance: Ms. Lisa Terry (Manager, Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families)
- c. Special Guest(s): None.
- d. Others in Attendance: Jerry Wykoff, Dr. Cherron (Lou) Blakely, Yale Stentzler, Linda Bergofsky, Bob Pelletier, Cheryl Mattis

#### 2. Meeting Opened by Meeting Chair/Pledge of Allegiance

- Meeting Chair convened the meeting and led attendees in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.



### **3. Reminders of Virtual Meeting Etiquette**

- Attendees were reminded please stay muted; to utilize the WebEx Chat box to notify the chair if anyone had a comment or question; and to not place the call on “hold” if calling in by telephone.

### **4. Consideration of February 2021 Meeting Minutes**

- The Chair asked for feedback regarding the February 2021 Meeting Minutes. Receiving no recommendations for edits or changes, the minutes were unanimously approved.

### **5. Presentation by Invited Guests:**

- None.

### **6. Old Business:**

#### **a. Update on Survey Proposed by the Commission’s Subcommittee on Equity and Racial Justice (Jonathan Branch and Lisa Terry):**

- Lisa demonstrated the final version of the Howard County Racial Equity Survey for HoCo Veterans
- She ensured the word “felt” was used in every appropriate question
- Definitions were removed from the survey
- There was a wording change from “equality” to “equity”
- County officials are currently reviewing the survey for final approval

#### **b. Update on February Meeting of the Veterans Support Group (Paul Rivers):**

- Paul noted the VSG has had great participation; Veterans age 20-70 years are participating
- Paul also said they would probably be adding another meeting night since they are garnering too many participants for one monthly meeting

#### **c. Feedback on February VAMHCS Meeting (Steve Bolen):**

- Steve highlighted a few items from the VAMHCS meeting minutes. The VAMHCS minutes are attached to these minutes

#### **d. Update on Veterans Day Presentations in HoCo Schools (Reg Avery):**

- Reg Avery stated that Hanover Hills Elementary School will definitely want a Veterans Day presentation, but he is anticipating more schools will also be interested since schools are expected to return to in-person learning this Fall.
- Reg is also looking for volunteers on either Friday May 21 or Wed May 26 to participate virtually in the Simulated Congressional Hearing Program; there will probably be 4 or 5 schools conduct SCHs; Commissioners and attendees were asked to send Reg an email if they wanted to serve as a judge

#### **e. Update on MHFA Proposal to the FMA Foundation Board (John Way):**

- Action still pending.



- f. Update on Regional Veteran Symposium in Lieu of Annual Veteran Resource Fair (Lisa Terry):
  - Lisa is speaking with Serving Together; she is considering live demonstrations and break-out sessions (creative writing; song writing; training service dogs; yoga; Tai Chi; etc.)
  - VA enrollment and VBA applications are also being discussed
- g. Update on Howard County Web-Based Veterans Tribute (similar to Montgomery County) (Lisa Terry):
  - Starting Memorial Day 2021; Lisa and the HoCo Library are developing a form containing standardized questions that will ask for the submitted Veteran's brief history, etc.; the Veteran submitted will require some connection with Howard County
- h. Update on 2 Commissioner Nominations:
  - Dr. Cherron Blakely is presumed to have been approved by the County Council
  - COL Eric Towns withdrew his application due to advice received from his Pentagon Ethics Counsellor.

## **7. Business "On Hold"**

- a. Columbia Lake Monument completion; fundraising for the monument; dedication ceremony (donations can still be made by mail)
- b. Howard County Schools "Buddy Program" for incoming military family members
- c. Exploratory Committee to Investigate the Feasibility of Building a Veterans Home in Howard County (Mike Blum)

## **8. New Business**

- a. Update on 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Day Parade and Ceremony 2021 (John Spain):
  - Fundraising committee has been established
  - Meetings are occurring quarterly
- b. Memorial Day and ceremonies at 4 Howard County sites (Ed Hall):
  - No update for the commission
- c. Flag Retirement April 17<sup>th</sup> (Ed Hall):
  - Flag etiquette class will begin at 0830; flag retirement ceremony will begin at 11am
- d. Potential Collaboration with Rotary Club (Lisa Terry):
  - Rotary Club trying to secure a grant to establish an opportunity for Veterans to participate in the Rotary Club; more information will be forthcoming
- e. Howard County Joint Military Council (JMC) significant items (Ed Hall, John Spain):
  - No other updates



f. Legislative Affairs Update (Steve Bolen):

- The Chair provided update using Steve's 2-page Legislative Bills Information paper that is included with these minutes.

g. Status of New Commissioners:

- The Chair stated that the Commission needs one more commissioner; preferably an Active or Veteran USAF.

h. New business from Commission Members (Greg will facilitate):

- Nafrettifi's daughter won a contest this weekend. News story was on WJZ
- Paul says every commissioner is invited to attend the virtual Veterans Support Group meetings. We will be encouraged and enlightened

i. Comments or requests for other meeting attendees (Greg will facilitate):

- No additional comments were made

**9. Other Announcements or dates of importance (All)**

a. Racial Equity Training, HoCo Library System (Time Sensitive):

- You are part of our first wave of invitations. We strongly encourage you to register before a second wave of invitations is extended Saturday March 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Seats in specific trainings are available on a first come, first served basis.
- Please do not forward this invitation – at this time we are accepting only people invited by HCLS and designated partners.
- Register today! Sign up for either the one-day introduction/refresher ([register here](#)) or the two-day full training ([register here](#)), not both.

b. Request for Small Business Survey Participation from CE's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force. From Robert Gillette, TF Member.

- Please share this survey with ALL business owners in Howard County that you know. Small Businesses are the primary target audience. For our Veteran owned businesses (certified or not), please encourage them to state their status as a Veteran owned business in Question 15. The committee has asked that surveys be completed as quickly as possible within the next 5 days. The sooner we get the data, the sooner we can act on it!

Link to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JFV28YJ>

c. Commission Letter of Appreciation and Thanks for Milton Matthews, Columbia Association President. Departing his CA role in April 2021.

- After a short discussion, the commission unanimously recommended we provide the letter of appreciation and thanks to Milton Matthews.



d. Flu Shots:

- The Chair emphasized the importance of Flu Shots; COVID Vaccinations; social distancing; wear your darn mask; wash or hand sanitize your darn hands

**10. Next Commission Meeting Date(s)**

- Thursday April 1, 2021; Thursday May 6, 2021

**11. ADJOURNMENT:**

- The Chair adjourned the meeting at 0810 hrs.

The Commission stands in adjournment until  
**06 May 2021.**

Minutes were taken by J. Greg Jolissaint.

J. Greg Jolissaint  
Presiding  
Chair, HCCMVF