



Government Office Building
 9830 Patuxent Woods Dr.
 Columbia, MD 21046

MINUTES¹

Thursday, 01 October 2020

MEETING SUMMARY:

1. Roll Call of Commission Members to Establish Quorum

- a. 1900 hrs.; The Roll was taken²: Nine commission members present; Mr. Jolissaint declared the Commission was in quorum and brought the meeting to order.

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

- b. Acknowledgement of Howard County Government Officials in Attendance: Ms. Lisa Terry, Manager, Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families, Ms. Stephanie Adibe, Deputy Director, Department of Community Resources and Services, and Ms. Liesele Wood, Howard County Health Department.
- c. Special Guest(s): None.



- d. Others in Attendance: Mr. Ed A. Hall (Chair, Joint Military Council/Commander, A.L. Post 156), Ms. Vikki Garcia, Community Outreach for U.S. Representative John Sarbanes, Ms. Wanda Riddle (former Commissioner, HCCVMF), Mr. John Spain (A.L. Post 156), Mr. Bob Pelletier (A.L. Post 156/VFW Post 7472), Mr. Robert A. Berlett, Sr. (A.L. Post 300), and Mr. Yale Stenzler

2. Meeting Open

- a. Mr. J. Greg Jolissaint, Chair, Howard County Commission on Veterans and Military Families (HCCVMF), presiding, led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Jolissaint noted that when the Commission resumes in-person meetings, we will honor POW/MIAs with a “Missing Service Member Table.”

3. Reminders of Virtual Meeting Etiquette

- a. Mr. Jolissaint reviewed the rules of etiquette for the virtual meeting. (See Attachment A.)

4. Consideration of the September 2020 Meeting Minutes

1. Mr. Jolissaint entered the 03 SEPTEMBER 2020 Commission minutes onto the table and opened the table for discussion. Hearing none, he asked for motions to approve the minutes. A motion and second were made. Mr. Jolissaint called for a vote; the minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

5. Presentation by Invited Guests

- a. None.

6. Old Business

- a. Subcommittee on Equity and Racial Justice: Mr. Branch stated that the Subcommittee met with Howard County Councilmembers Mr. Opel Jones (D-District 2) and Ms. Christiana Rigby (D-District 3).



The councilmembers discussed with the Subcommittee their reasons for creating a Racial Equity Task Force in Howard County. The Subcommittee plans to work with the Task Force and to follow-up with the Councilmembers.

Mr. Branch stated the Subcommittee is planning to send a survey to veterans to capture their thoughts on equity in the County.

Ms. Kesler and Mr. Rivers suggested that there may be fatigue or reluctance in the community to participate in the survey.

Mr. Jolissaint suggested that the Subcommittee use a phased approach to contacting veterans. It should consider holding focus groups as is practical during the pandemic and should also consider sending anonymous surveys.

Ms. Terry said that she would continue to forward information on racial equity in the County to the Subcommittee.

Ms. Kesler said that the Office of Human Rights is looking at equity from a veteran's perspective. She said that the Office might be willing to help the Subcommittee.

Mr. Avery said that he has contacts with military officers at Fort Meade, and they may be interested in participating in the survey if it's done anonymously.

- b. Exploratory Committee to Investigate the Feasibility of Building a Veterans Home in Howard County: Mr. Blum will continue to try to schedule a meeting with the County Executive. He said that he did speak briefly with him at Colonel Schott's birthday celebration.

Mr. Jolissaint noted that there is a need in Howard County for a veteran's home. It may take someone willing to donate property, though, to get one.

- c. Veterans Support Group: Mr. Rivers stated that, due to the pandemic, NAMI is not conducting any in-person counseling. So, the Support Group will only do a meet-n-greet to start. The first session will be held on 5 October at 1730 hrs. It will meet at Centennial Park, Pavilion "O," off Centennial Lane near the back of the parking lot.

Mr. Rivers said that NAMI might also have issues with privacy while meeting at the pavilion.

Mr. Jolissaint asked if it would help to have commissioners attend the session. Mr. Rivers said that it would help, and any Commissioner is welcomed to attend. Mr. Jolissaint called on the commissioners to think about attending.



- d. VAMHCS Meeting: Mr. Bolen summarized the Veterans Affairs Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) and Congressional Stakeholders (CS) meeting held on 16 September 2020.³ (See Attachment B.)

Mr. Jolissaint emphasized veterans should get a flu shot this year. He also noted that most VA services are being conducted via telehealth and that, tragically, suicides in the U.S. Army are on the rise.

- e. Veterans Day Presentations in HoCo Schools: Mr. Avery said that he contacted the Superintendent of the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) and his staff regarding the Presentations Program. He said he received positive feedback, but there may not be enough time to implement the program this year. He plans to contact some schools to see if there is any interest.

Ms. Terry suggested that once we know more about the Veterans Day celebration plans, we might want to find out if the school system can ask students to watch the celebration.

- f. MHFA Proposal to the FMA Foundation Board: No update.
- g. Virtual Veterans Connections thru Office of Aging and Independence (OAI): Mr. Jolissaint and Ms. Terry stated that the first meeting will be held on 7 October. Ms. Terry said that the OAI plans to have art demonstrations, share stories, do trivia, etc. as part of the program.

More information:

7 October; 1600 - 1700 hrs

Meeting link:

<https://howardcountymd.webex.com/howardcountymd/j.php?MTID=mc06f2753f0a6e7cce275fa4a9bf3ea25>

Meeting number: 172 257 0375

Password: yCDXWKYM735

For questions, please email veterans@howardcountymd.gov or Howard County Office of Aging and Independence.



7. Business “On Hold”

- a. Columbia Lake Monument Completion: Mr. Jolissaint stated that the completion of the monument and fundraising is on hold due to the pandemic.
- b. Howard County School Buddy Program: Mr. Jolissaint stated that the start of the program is on hold due to the pandemic.

8. New Business

- a. Veterans Day Ceremony Planning: Mr. Spain stated that this would be a modified event. There will be a convoy that will proceed to Bailey Park, followed by a ceremony. The ceremony will include the National Anthem, a poem reading, a speech by the County Executive, and Taps. Permissions and permits have been approved.

Mr. Spain said that student-veteran partners would be creating videos of distinguished veterans to present that could also be shown for other occasions.

The 6th Annual Howard County Veterans Day Celebration will take place on 8 November.

- b. Howard County Joint Military Council (JMC) significant items:

Mr. Hall’s report:

On 17 October, there will be a flag retirement ceremony at the American Legion Post 156 in Ellicott City. Starting at 1130 hrs., the Marine Corps League, SSgt Karl G. Taylor, Sr. Detachment 1084, will give a class on flag etiquette. The retirement ceremony will be held at 1200 hrs. Present at the ceremony will be the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), Gold Star Moms, and the Blue Star Howard County Garden Club.

On 24 October, from 1200 - 1700 hrs., Operation Jeeps for Wreaths Across America will hold a fundraiser in Waverly Woods.

On 6 November, there will be a U.S. Marine Corps birthday celebration.

On 7 November at 1700 hrs., there will be a flag-raising ceremony at St. John’s Episcopal Church in Ellicott City.

On 8 November from 1230 - 1600 hrs., Colonel Lou Schott 200 yard Off-Hand Championship.



c. New Business from Commission Members:

Mr. Griggs asked if anyone would like to participate in the Howard Community College (HCC) Veterans Day celebration. Please contact him if you are interested. Mr. Hall said that he would contact Mr. Griggs. Mr. Jolissaint said that he would be willing to participate. Mr. Spain told Mr. Griggs that if HCC wanted to participate in the Veterans Day celebration to contact him.

Mr. Bolen said that NAMI Howard County is hosting a veteran's forum on 17 November. More details at the next meeting.

Ms. Garcia thanked the Commission for all of the information. The Commission should let Mr. Sarbanes know if there's anything he can do to help us.

d. Update on Solicitation for New Commission Members: No update.

e. Comments or Requests from Other Meeting Attendees: None.

9. Announcements and Events of Importance

a. S. 633 — 116th Congress: "Six Triple Eight" Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2019:

This is a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the members of the Women's Army Corps who were assigned to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, known as the "Six Triple Eight". More information [here](#).

The Bill has 49 co-sponsors (26 Democrats, 22 Republicans, and 1 Independent). New U.S. Senate co-sponsors of the Bill (as of 15 September):

- Sen. Marco Rubio [R-FL]
- Sen. Jeanne Shaheen [D-NH]
- Sen. Kyrsten Sinema [D-AZ]
-

b. Howard County Commission for Veterans and Military Families (HCCVMF): The website for the HCCVMF is <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/vetcomm>.

c. For Information or Questions Regarding VA benefits:

Contact:



Mr. Andrew Rutherford
Maryland Department of Veteran Affairs Veteran Benefit Specialist
Howard County Multiservice Center in Laurel
410-313-0229
andrew.rutherford@maryland.gov

- d. Resources for Veterans and Military Families: Ms. Terry publishes an email containing a link to an informative e-Bulletin. Contact her if you want to be on the distribution list
LB Terry@howardcountymd.gov.

- e. Veteran Owned Business Enterprise (VOBE) Program:

The program includes an overall aspirational goal of 1% of the County's total dollar value of procurement contracts to be made directly or indirectly with Veteran-Owned Business Enterprises.

A Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (VOBE) is defined as a business enterprise that is verified by the Center for Verification and Evaluation of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as a Veteran-Owned Small Business Enterprise.

To qualify as a veteran-owned business, the business must be verified by the Center for Validation and Evaluation of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. For more information on verification, visit <http://www.va.gov/osdbu/>.

To search the database of business enterprises verified by the Center for Verification and Evaluation of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as a Veteran-Owned Small Business Enterprise, visit <https://www.vip.vetbiz.va.gov>.

Link for more information:

<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/County-Administration/Purchasing/Veteran-Owned-Business-Enterprise-Program#:~:text=The%20Veteran-Owned%20Business%20Enterprise%20Program%20%28VOBE%29%20is%20designed,made%20directly%20or%20indirectly%20with%20Veteran-Owned%20Business%20Enterprises.>

- f. New Floating Launch for Non-Motorized Boats Improves Accessibility and Safety for Users of Seneca Landing Park at Riley's Lock (Montgomery County):

The original ramp was not ADA accessible, which presented numerous challenges for users with disabilities.



As part of the project, Montgomery Parks installed an accessible drop-off area and walkway, three accessible parking spaces, and a fully accessible picnic area with tables and grills.

The need for an accessible boat launch was initiated by [Team River Runner](#), a nonprofit organization that provides adventure and adaptive paddle sports to veterans and their families. It approached the County Commission on Veterans Affairs about the need for an accessible launch and was assisted by the Commission on the project.

On Sundays from May to November, Team River Runner hosts a kayak program at Seneca Landing with patients from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and veterans from the community.

A second phase of the project will include upgrades to improve safety, expand capacity, and enhance the existing boat ramp's accessibility for motorized boats, which is scheduled to begin this winter.

Link for more information: <https://www.montgomeryparks.org/>

10. Next Commission Meeting Date(s)

- a. Mr. Jolissaint stated that the next Commission meetings will be held on 5 November and 3 December starting at 1900 hours.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

- a. 2006 hrs; Mr. Jolissaint asked for a motion to adjourn. Having received a motion and a second, he closed the meeting and directed the Commission to stand in adjournment until 1900 hrs on 5 November 2020.

Minutes were drafted by: Mr. Steven M. Bolen.

J. Greg Jolissaint
Chair



Notes:

- 1) The meeting was conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2) Two Commission appointments are currently vacant.
- 3) The VAMHCS VSO & CS meeting is held on the third Wednesday of the month at the VAMHCS facility in Baltimore. (Currently, all meetings are virtual due to the ongoing pandemic.) Please contact Ms. Aimee Saylor, Business Manager, Public & Community Relations at aimee.saylor@va.gov to connect or for more information.

Attachments:

- A) General Matters, Virtual Meeting Rules, and How to Join a WebEx Meeting.
- B) Meeting Notes: VAMHCS VSO & CS Meeting; 16 September 2020.



ATTACHMENT A

General Matters, Virtual Meeting Rules,
and
How to Join a WebEx Meeting



Public Meetings of the Commission on Veterans and Military Families Howard County, Maryland

General Matters, Virtual Meeting Rules, and How to Join a WebEx Meeting

General Matters

The meeting is a public meeting and subject to the requirements of the Maryland Open Meetings Act. The meeting will start with roll call to establish the presence of a quorum. Roll call will be conducted by the Chair, Vice-Chair, or designee. Members of the public are welcome to attend and observe the meeting but may only address the Commission if the Commission invites public input or when such input is otherwise scheduled or authorized by law. Whether input is otherwise authorized by law is subject to the advice of the Office of Law. During a meeting of the Commission, members of the public may only communicate with the Commission when the Chair gives them leave to do so. The meeting may be paused periodically to allow interpreters to switch places. There may be a momentary pause between speakers to allow people to unmute and mute their devices.

Ground Rules for the Virtual Meeting

- 1.** Be on time. So that all agenda matters can be appropriately covered. Please log/call in on time. Try to log/call in before the meeting starts to familiarize yourself with the platform. (See instructions below for joining a WebEx meeting.) If you cannot avoid being late, please don't interrupt the meeting by announcing your presence or asking for a review of what has transpired.
- 2.** Be Prepared. Please review the meeting agenda and other relevant documents before the start of the meeting.
- 3.** Be engaged. Commission members are expected to share ideas, ask questions, and contribute to the discussion.
- 4.** Do not use a speakerphone. Speaker phones interfere with the quality of the meeting, so please avoid using that feature on your phone. Use a headset instead.
- 5.** Always mute your device unless you are speaking. Unmuted devices create background noises, echoes, feedback and interfere with the quality of the virtual meeting. Use the mute button



when you are not speaking. This includes call-in users. The host will mute the device of participants who fail to mute their devices.

6. To speak. If you are using the video feature, raise your hand physically; or raise your hand by using the WebEx feature. The Chair will let you know when you may speak. Unmute your phone after you have been given the go-ahead to speak. Please mute your device when you are done speaking.
7. Before speaking, state your name. As a courtesy to all participants, please identify yourself each time before speaking.
8. Speak one at a time. Only one person may speak at a time. Please speak only when you have been given the go-ahead by the Chair.
9. Minimize or eliminate background distractions. As a courtesy to all participants, especially people who rely on visual cues, please minimize or eliminate background distractions. Also, please note that background noise disrupts the meeting for everyone and might prevent participants from hearing what is being said. When possible, choose a quiet location. Mute or turn off background noises.
10. Camera and lighting placement. Position yourself so that you are directly facing the camera and a lamp or other light source. This will ensure that you are clearly visible to other participants. Backlighting (light source behind you) affects the quality of your video and makes it harder for people to see you.
11. Avoid multi-tasking. So as not to be disruptive or distract other participants, please try not to multi-task.
12. Disable your call-waiting feature. If you call into the meeting, please disable your “Call-Waiting” feature. The clicking noise you hear on your phone when another call comes in can also be heard by other participants and will be distracting.
13. Do not put the conference call on “Hold”. Your “Hold” feature may play background music that will disrupt the meeting. If you have to take another call, please hang up and re-join the meeting after you complete your other call.
14. Stick to the agenda. Please stay focused and stick to the agenda so that the meeting does not run over.



15. Avoid side conversations. The process is intended to be openly deliberative, so please try not to “chat” with other participants.
16. Ask for clarification. If you miss something or do not understand, ask for clarification.
17. If you must step away. Please announce if you must leave the meeting.

Join a WebEx Meeting

- You can join a meeting from your computer, mobile device, phone, or a video system. Pick the one that works best for you. Click the links below for more information about your chosen device.

[Desktop](#)

[Mobile](#)

[Web](#)

[Phone only](#)

- Open your email invite and click Join.
- If this is the first time you're joining a WebEx meeting, WebEx automatically downloads the app. Click the installer file to install the app.
- You can also [download the WebEx Meetings app](#) manually.
- Enter your name and email address and click Next.
- If you're asked for a meeting password, enter the meeting password (it's in your email invitation) and click Next.
- Next, you choose how you want to listen to the meeting.
- Use computer for audio (default): Use your computer with a headset or speakers.
- Call in: If you prefer to use your phone for audio, dial in when the meeting starts. A list of the global call-in numbers is available in your meeting invite. Choose this option if your Internet connection is slow.



- Call me: Enter a phone number and WebEx calls you. Depending on your Webex plan, you may or may not see this option.
- Don't connect audio: Use this option when you need to join a meeting and share content, and don't need audio. For example, you are in a conference room with your team, or are already connected to the meeting from a video device.
- If you're experiencing [bandwidth](#) issues: When you dial into a meeting, you can hear everyone in the meeting, but won't be able to see anyone or what they share during the meeting.



ATTACHMENT B

Meeting Notes:

VAMHCS VSO & CS Meeting
16 September 2020



Veterans Service Organization (VSO) & Congressional Stakeholders (CS) Meeting

VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS)
Baltimore VA Medical Center
Multipurpose Room, 3A-300
10 North Greene Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

(Via Virtual Meeting due to COVID-19)

16 September 2020

1100 hrs Dr. Sandra Marshall, Acting Director VAMHCS, presiding, brought the meeting to order.

VAMHCS Update

- 1) Dr. Marshall stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the VAMHCS VSO & CS meetings would continue as a conference call for everyone's safety. She then took roll and noted those on the call.
- 2) Dr. Marshall stated the flu vaccine is available and urged veterans to get their flu shot. She asked meeting participants to help spread the word to veterans to get their shot.
- 3) Veterans do not need to go to a VA health center to get a shot. They can get a free shot at a community pharmacy or urgent care provider that is part of the VA network. (To find an in-network pharmacy or urgent care, visit www.va.gov/find-locations).
- 4) Ms. MeShondra Collins, Nurse Manager of the Cardiac & Medical Intensive Care Units at the Baltimore VA Medical Center, was featured in the *Baltimore Magazine* for her work at the Center. (Link to article: <https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/health/va-nurse-cares-for-vets-during-covid/>.)
- 5) Ms. Camilla Rose James, Coordinator, Infectious Disease Clinic at the Baltimore VA Medical Center, was selected among hundreds of nominees as one of the 2020 Star Nurse finalists.
- 6) Dr. Marshall noted a study that showed veterans undergoing an elective percutaneous coronary intervention for stable angina at community hospitals had an increased chance of dying following the intervention than veterans who underwent the procedure at VA hospitals.



- 7) Dr. Marshall announced that the VA *HealthWatch* cable show is back online via Zoom.
- 8) Dr. Marshall noted that September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.

VAMHCS Clinical Update

- 9) The Clinic continues to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic to understand the prevalence and spread in the community.
- 10) The Clinic is increasing the number of face-to-face appointments, is offering more elective surgeries, and is expanding its overall outpatient footprint. Additionally, it is also expanding its telehealth capability.
- 11) The Clinic continues to promote mask-wearing, physical distancing, and hand hygiene.

VBA Update

- 12) The VA is launching a new initiative called “Solid Start” to proactively contact veterans during their first year of transition to civilian life to help them navigate the process of accessing their VA benefits.
- 13) Nationwide, the total Blue Water Navy claims pending is 35,213. There has been nearly \$647 million paid out in retroactive benefits so far.

National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Update

- 14) NCA offices remain closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 15) Services are limited to 25 people outdoor and ten people under the shelter. Physical distancing and mask-wearing are mandatory.
- 16) As of 31 August, the Baltimore National Cemetery has 47,121 heroes interned.

MyVA Board Update

- 17) Plans to hold a veteran’s fair at Carroll Community College in 2021 are TBD.



Caregiver Support Program Update

- 18) The VA has revised the eligibility criteria for the “Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)” regarding the definitions of “serious injury” and “in need of personal care services.” (For more information: <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>.)

Homeless & Veteran Court Update

- 19) Veterans’ courts continue via virtual connections.
- 20) Veterans in the HUD-VASH program are eligible to receive smart devices to connect to the VA telehealth services. (HUD-VASH is a collaborative program between HUD and the VA that combines HUD housing vouchers with VA supportive services for homeless Veterans and their families to help them find sustain, permanent housing.)

Next meeting: 21 October, 1100 hours, via Virtual Meeting.

1205 hrs Dr. Marshall adjourned the meeting.

Notes taken (via dial-in) by: Mr. Steven M. Bolen