Calvert County Veterans Affairs Commission
Minutes
Wednesday, January 12, 2022

Present: Matthew Blackwelder, District 1 Rep; Patricia McCoy, American Legion Post 206 Rep; Wilson Parran, American Legion Post 220 Rep; Michael Richardson, American Legion Post 274 Rep; Robert Sprecher, American Legion Post 85 Rep; Michael Sweeney, District 2 Rep; Dr. Brandon Temple, Educator/Educational Admin Rep; Michael Wood, District 3 Rep.

VIA TEAMS: Melanie Woodson, BOCC Rep.

Excused: Jeff King, Local Business Owner/Operator; District 1 Rep.

CCG Liaison: Lorraine Joyner, CCG Liaison; Lisa Tolomei, Community Resources Specialist.

Michael Wood called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

1. **REGULAR BUSINESS**
   A. **Determination of a Quorum:** We have a quorum.
   
   B. **Approval of Agenda:** McCoy motioned, Sweeney seconded to approve January Agenda as submitted, all in favor.
   
   C. **Approval of December meeting minutes:** Parran motioned, Temple seconded to approve December meeting minutes as corrected, all in favor.
   
   D. **Strategic Goals**
      a. Need to look at 1, 3, 5-year plans, keeping in mind WIIFM (What’s In It For Me)? How do we advertise that the VAC exists?
      
      b. We need to develop a communications strategy. Mike Wood, in researching a veteran-related topic, observed that there wasn’t much information provided from the Calvert County level? Is there someone on a county level that can manage a web presence? Current county pages (under Volunteer Boards and our page). CCG Liaison and CRS can help with this.
      
      c. Mike Richardson, while working at the ARC during snow event, noticed communication was lacking. If your power is out, you can’t check the news. He researched opt-in text messages applications with the option to specify the number of texts you want to receive. Would the county play a part be in that? CCG staff will research if this can be done through the CCG website “Notify Me—Subscribe to stay informed” feature?
      
      d. Can we do a drop-in calendar on the CCG website specifically for Veterans events? What other plugins are possible? Pat reported that their Legion has set up a calendar.
      
      e. Rotating slide show on Channel 6 and Facebook. Can we add a slide either a general announcement or something specific to the survey? Example first slide: “Hey did you know that Calvert County has a VAC? Email us at… Take our survey.
      
      f. Boosted FB ad for the survey.
      
      g. Request/send out CCG Social Media policy and develop a Social Media strategy.
• What are the limits on what we can and cannot put on Facebook?

• Can we get a report on the demographics of who subscribes?

b. If we want to print out 1000 copies of a brochure, who needs to approve, who designs, who prints, who pays for it?

c. CR Department head will talk to County Administrator about establishing a budget.

E. Secretary Owings – Update from Wilson Parran

a. See attached summary.

b. Members noted that there is a significant backlog.

c. Carroll County Alternative – Invite Phil Munley and someone involved directly with Carroll County program to participate at the March meeting.

Sweeney motioned, McCoy seconded to invite Carroll County reps to March meeting. Decision about whether it’s via TEAMS or in person tbd.

• If this is a route we want to take, we have homework we need to do. Can we borrow their presentations? Wilson will ask Carroll County if they will share their presentation materials.

• Wilson stated that he believes the Commissioners will see the value of supporting veteran-related efforts.

F. Tactical Activities

a. Business Cards – were distributed

b. Social Media Activities (See above)

c. Veterans Email – has been established. Lisa and Lorraine both have access to the inbox.

d. Veterans Survey – Launch tomorrow, close date March 31st. Ask for extension if needed.

Take the next week and a half to develop a standard post. The Calvert County Veterans Affairs Commission wants to know:

• Members/CCG Staff will post on personal Facebook pages

• Promote through all means possible?

• Ask Commissioner Gadway to mention it during his Commissioner report

e. Holiday Observances

• Tuesday, March 29th Vietnam’s Vet Recognition Day – County has never done anything with this. Perhaps a proclamation?

• Memorial Day – 4 American Legion posts always collaborate on a ceremony at the Court House.
G. Information Sharing

a. Maryland Department of Labor rep, George Hawley, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program/Local Vets Employment Representative, is at the Calvert Library on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month, from 10 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Pat distributed a flyer. Brandon will email George to ask for details and perhaps get a one-pager on what services are offered. Can he possibly do evening hours?

b. Melwood has veteran’s program with a 108 acre camp that offers horseback riding, and many other amenities. Might be a good location for a special event. Mike Wood has a contact in Annapolis.

c. Parks & Rec Job Fair, to promote openings within their Department. February 26th, 10:00 to 2:00. Can we have Veteran participation? Need to reach veterans to tell them about it. Lisa will work with Mike Richardson to facilitate veteran involvement.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m., all in favor. Temple motioned and McCoy seconded.

The next meeting is Wednesday, February 9, 2022.

Adopted on the 9th day of February 2022 – minutes transcribed by Lorraine Joyner

Signed ________________________________             Date: February 9, 2022.
Discussion with Secretary George Owings III
Attachment to January 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Discussed how veterans are served in the State and in Calvert County:

1. All the Federally Charted Service Organizations (FCSO) (American Legion, DAV, VFW, etc.) can assist veterans that are members of the organization. They can have up to 2 certified service officers. They are volunteers.

2. You do not need to belong to a Federally Charted Service Organization to receive services.

3. If a veteran initiates a claim through a FCSO, they must be released by that organization before the MDVA can assist with that claim.

4. MDVA is co-located with the MVA locations around the state.

5. Carroll County Alternative – Secretary Owings suggested that I talked to Phil Munley.

   Conversation with Phil Munley – MDVA regarding the Carroll County approach:

   a. Carroll County hired and pays for three Accredited Service Officers
   b. Employed by the county, in the County’s budget
   c. Accredited through MDVA – Certified through the VA
   d. MOU between the County and the MDVA – provision of training, follows MDVA direction
   e. Can initiate claims, have access to the claims tracking system, have a VA ID Badge
   f. MDVA acts as a clearinghouse if a claim is denied
   g. Has been in place for 6 or 7 years
      - Got the County Commissioners involved
      - Explained the benefits of the request
      - Budget hearing - some resistance to spending the money, why the County should pay
      - County Commissioners – approved with a vote of 5-0

6. There are Service Office Providers in some states however not on the east coast.
(Secretary)