



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

MINUTES¹

Thursday, 03 September 2020

MEETING SUMMARY:

1. Roll Call 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)	x		
Mr. Jonathan Branch (Co-Chair)	x		
Mr. Reginald Avery	x		
Mr. Michael Blum		x	
Mr. Steven M. Bolen	x		
Ms. Nafrettifi Griffin	x		
Mr. Michael Griggs	x		
Ms. Kelly Kesler	x		
Mr. Robert Lowell	x		
Mr. Keith McGuire		x	
Mr. Paul Rivers	x		
(Vacant)			
(Vacant)			

- b. **Howard County Government Officials in Attendance:** Ms. Lisa Terry, Manager, Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families and Ms. Stephanie Adibe, Deputy Director, Department of Community Resources and Services.

- c. **Special Guest(s):** None.



- d. **Others in Attendance:** Ms. Wanda Riddle (former Commissioner, HCCVMF), Mr. Ed A. Hall (Chair, Joint Military Council/Commander, A.L. Post 156), Mr. Bob Pelletti (A.L. Post 156/VFW Post 7472), Mr. Robert A. Berlett, Sr. (A.L. Post 300), Mr. John Spain (A.L. Post 156), Mr. John Way (CEO, The VA Way), Mr. Topaz Navarro (Executive Director, Work-Play-Obsession), Ms. Linda R. Bergofsky (Coordinator, Fredrick County Veterans Advisory Council), Mr. Bob Berlett, and Mr. Yale Stenzler.

2. Meeting Open

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

3. Meeting Etiquette

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

4. Consideration of the August 2020 Meeting Minutes

- a. Mr. Jolissaint entered the 06 AUGUST 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 to the motion were made. Mr. Jolissaint called for a vote, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

5. Presentation by Invited Guests

- a. None.

6. Old Business

- a. Subcommittee on Equity and Racial Justice: Mr. Branch stated that the Subcommittee invited Howard County Councilmembers Mr. Opel Jones (District 2) and Ms. Christiana Rigby (District 3) to their next meeting.

The Subcommittee is in the process of identifying veterans to participate in its interview sessions. They hope to begin interviews no later than October.



Mr. Branch thanked Mr. Jolissaint and Ms. Terry for the information they passed to the Subcommittee.

Mr. Branch stated the Subcommittee was on schedule to deliver its report by January. Mr. Jolissaint noted that getting it right was more important than meeting the timeline, so an extension could be granted if needed.

- b. Exploratory Committee to Investigate the Feasibility of Building a Veterans Home in Howard County: Mr. Jolissaint stated that at the last Commission meeting, the County Executive expressed interest in placing a veteran's home in Howard County. Mr. Blum will be following up with a meeting with the County Executive.

Mr. Jolissaint noted that even if Carroll County gets a veteran's home, it won't provide enough capacity to meet the number of beds needed in Maryland due to the increasing number of aging veterans.

- c. Veterans Support Group: Mr. Rivers stated that Mr. Way, Mr. Navarro, and he had completed the NAMI facilitator training classes. Mr. Rivers and Mr. Way have also taken training from Grassroots.

Mr. Rivers said that NAMI would take the lead for the support group, which will operate jointly with the Commission.

Mr. Rivers stated that there are some open questions about the group organization, such as how often the group will meet, and if the first meeting (and subsequent meetings) should be in-person or virtual.

Mr. Jolissaint asked the Commission if any members had opinions about meeting outdoor in person or virtually. He said that he thought veterans would rather meet in person.

Mr. Way thought the first meeting should not be virtual. He felt it was important to meet face-to-face to be able to read body language.

Mr. Navarro said he thought the first meeting could be outdoor in a public area, but the rest of the meetings should be virtual or held in a private location.

Mr. Jolissaint asked if the first meeting was outdoor would NAMI participate? Mr. Rivers said that they still need to work that out with NAMI.

Mr. Way and Mr. Navarro said they would use their networks to inform veterans about the support group.



Mr. Rivers said that Mr. Way, Mr. Navarro, Mrs. Terry, and he would be meeting with NAMI next week to discuss tailoring the NAMI facilitator program to better meet veteran's needs.

- 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 19 August 2020.³ (See Attachment B.)

Mr. Jolissaint emphasized veterans should get a flu shot this year. He noted that the flu can affect people of all ages and can be potentially dangerous.

- e. Veterans Day Presentations in HoCo Schools: Mr. Jolissaint stated that Mr. Moore has stepped down from the Commission and is no longer leading this effort. Mr. Avery has agreed to take the lead.

Mr. Avery said he has a long history working with schools and talking to students about veterans and military history. He looks forward to leading the effort.

Ms. Kesler stated that the school system's asynchronous learning days would be on Wednesdays this year. Mr. Jolissaint noted that Veterans Day falls on a Wednesday, which might allow us to do a presentation on that day.

Mr. Jolissaint suggested inserting information about local area veterans' history and points of interest into the presentations.

Ms. Bergofsky said that the Fredrick County Veterans Advisory Council is contemplating starting a similar program and would like to connect with Mr. Avery to share ideas.

Mr. Spain asked to join the program.

- f. MHFA Proposal to the FMA Foundation Board: Mr. Way stated that The VA Way met with Maryland Mental Health First Aid (MMHFA). MMHFA has released the final version of the guidelines and protocols to incorporate it into their training. He expects The VA Way training to be up and running by November.

Mr. Way is looking for anyone who has grant writing experience to help write grant proposals. He is interested in applying for the Howard County *2020 Rise to the Challenge Grant*.

- g. Colonel Schott's Birthday Parade and Celebration: The event took place on 09 August, one day prior to the Colonel's birthday. Mr. Rivers said the parade was well attended; more than 100 vehicles participated. Mr. Hall said there was a bugler, a color guard, and a WWII jeep in the



parade. The Old Post Rifle and Pistol Club provided an 18-gun salute. Link to a video of the event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTWXY4z4iHg&feature=youtu.be>).

Mr. Hall stated on 10 August, at 0800 hours, several members of the Marine Corps League SSgt Karl G. Taylor Sr. Detachment 1084, American Legion Post 156, the Old Post Rifle and Pistol Club, and Colonel Schott's neighbors and friends gathered at his home. They played reveille and sung the 1st Marine Division salute song (Waltzing Matilda), three versus the Marine's Hymn, and Happy Birthday.

Mr. Hall stated on Friday, 14 August, Colonel Schott was a VIP guest at the Marine Corps Barracks, Washington, D.C. *Evening Parade*, where he shared the stage with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark A. Milley.

Mr. Hall stated on 02 September, Colonel Schott was the VIP guest of honor at the Marine Corps *Sunset Parade* (Marine Corps Memorial in Arlington, VA) to commemorate the end of WWII. (VIP attendance is the highest honor the USMC can give a person.)

- h. Virtual Veterans Connections thru Office of Aging and Independence: Ms. Terry said she was starting a virtual Veteran's Connections similar to the 50+ Centers Conversation and Coffee online program. She asked if anyone had any ideas about the best time of day to schedule the program.

Mr. Jolissaint said that mid- to late morning would probably work the best. Finding facilitators to work at that time may be an issue, though. Mr. Hall thought early evening might work. Mr. Stenzler thought around 1700 hours might work.

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 Planning: Mr. Spain stated that the Veterans Day parade is being modified due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event will consist of a parade of vehicles followed by a brief ceremony with the County Executive. The logistics for parking and staging are being worked.



Mr. Jolissaint stated that while the event will be modified due to the pandemic, it will be a dignified event. He thanked Mr. Spain and the planning committee for their hard work organizing the activity.

- b. Howard County Joint Military Council (JMC) significant items: Mr. Hall stated that a member of American Legion Post 156 asked to conduct a flag replacement ceremony to replace a flag at St. John's Episcopal Church in Ellicott City. A. L. Post 156 will arrange for the event.

Mr. Hall also said there was a Vietnam memorial near the church that could serve as the location for the ceremony. Inscribed on the monument are the names Adams, Hannah, and Moore (along with 16 other veterans) for which A. L. Post 156 is named.

- c. New business from Commission Members: Ms. Griffin stated that "Ms. Veteran America 2020" will be holding a competition on 11 October. The purpose of the event is to showcase "The Women Beyond the Uniform" and to raise funds for homeless women veterans. (Special note, Ms. Griffin will be the featured singer for the event.)

Link to the event: <https://www.msveteranamerica.org/>.

- d. Comments or Requests from Other Meeting Attendees: The Chair invited Mr. Navarro to introduce himself to the Commission. Mr. Navarro told the Commission that he is the Executive Director for "Work, Play, Obsession All In Foundation." This is a veteran-owned, non-profit organization whose mission is to promote and provide recreational activities for military, veterans, and first responders struggling with trauma. The Foundation will be participating in an in-person "Out of the Darkness Walk" sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) on 10 October.

Link for more information on the Foundation: <https://workplayobsession.com/>.

Link for more information about the Walk:

<https://afsp.donordrive.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.event&eventID=7059>.

9. Announcements and Events of Importance

- a. September is Suicide Awareness Month.
- b. National POW/MIA Recognition Day is 18 September.
- c. Happy birthday, U.S. Air Force, 18 September 1947.
- d. The Howard County General Hospital will be conducting a Youth Mental Health First Aid class in October.



10. Next Commission Meeting Date(s)

- a. Mr. Jolissaint stated that the next Commission meetings will be held on 01 October, 05 November, and 03 December starting at 1900 hours.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

2006 hrs; Mr. Jolissaint closed the meeting and directed the Commission to stand in adjournment until 1900 hours on 01 October 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; 19 August 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
19 August 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)

19 August 2020

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

VAMHCS Update

- 1) Dr. Marshall stated for everyone's safety during the COVID-19 pandemic the VAMHCS VSO & CS meetings will continue as a conference call.
- 2) Dr. Marshall stated the VAMHCS is already starting to prepare for the 2020 - 21 flu season.
- 3) Mr. Cedric Abron has been appointed Director of Finance, VAMHCS; effective 06 July. He is a US Navy veteran.
- 4) To help reinforce the importance of wearing a mask and the need for physical distancing, the VAMHCS has started a "Stop the Spread" campaign. A recent study showed that 40% of COVID-19 positive individuals got the virus from a family gathering, 20% from an outdoor sports event, 20% from a community event (e.g. a bar), and 20% from all other activities. Dr. Marshall stated the study indicates that most people are contracting COVID-19 while out with their family and friends at social events.
- 5) Dr. Marshall announced that Dr. Elias Spanakis, a researcher at the VAMHCS, has published a paper in [Diabetes Care](#) on the importance of continuous glucose monitoring to prevent hypoglycemia in patients in medical units.
- 6) Dr. Marshall thanked the Disabled American Veterans, Department of Maryland for their generous donation of \$15,000 to the VAMHCS to benefit patients throughout the state. The donation will support programs and activities at the Baltimore, Loch Raven, and Perry Point VA medical centers and the Baltimore, Dundalk, and Elkton Vet centers.



VAMHCS Clinical Update

- 7) All VA Maryland Healthcare System facilities are now open for limited face-to-face appointments. Virtual care options are encouraged (telehealth and video appointments) for primary care and mental health services. Veterans can contact the Appointment Center at 410.605.7333 to schedule an appointment.

VBA Update

- 16) VA facilities continue to be closed to the public but are providing teleservices to veterans. The VA Regional Office is operating under Phase 1 status with essential personnel reporting to work.
- 17) Nationwide, the total Blue Water Navy claims pending is 34,922. There has been nearly \$607 million paid out in retroactive benefits so far.

National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Update

- 18) Due to COVID-19, the annual “Saluting Branches, 9-11 Day of Services” has been cancelled.
- 19) The “Spirit of 45” event was held on 21 August. This was a wreath-laying ceremony to commemorate the end of World War II.
- 20) The new committal shelter is complete and has already held its first service.

Flu Shots for Veteran Patients

- 13) Managing the flu this year will be challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 14) Veterans are urged to get a flu shot. Last year the VAMHCS had 27,000 visits for patients exhibiting flu-like symptoms; 4,600 needed hospitalization.
- 15) The VAMHCS is working hard to make sure all veterans will have timely access to the flu vaccine. The vaccine should be available by mid-September.
- 16) Drive-thru clinics are planned for the Baltimore, Loch Raven and Perry Point campuses. Vets can also get the vaccine during their scheduled healthcare appointments.



- 17) The VA has partnered with CVS, Wegmans, Walmart, Safeway, Kroger, and Costco so that veterans can get their flu shots. No prior authorization is needed to get the shot.

Homeless and Veterans Court

- 18) Veteran's treatment courts continue to operate in virtual format.
- 19) The walk-in clinic is still closed. However, homeless veterans can still go to the Emergency Department for help.
- 20) The state of Maryland has a moratorium on evictions if you have COVID-19 related issue. Veterans, or any Marylander, needing help during the COVID-19 pandemic can go to 211md.org to find information about resources and human services that can help them.

Next meeting: 16 September, 1100 hours, via Virtual Meeting.

1146 hrs Dr. Marshall adjourned the meeting.

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