

HARFORD COUNTY COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
(HCCOVA)

2017-2018 Annual Activity Report
of
HARFORD COUNTY COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
(HCCOVA)

Harford County Councilman: James V. McMahan Jr., Liaison
Chair: Mr. Robert A. Brown
Vice Chair: Mr. Hayden Anthony

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Bottom Line Upfront

The Commission is a volunteer organization formed of several dedicated Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen as well as close family relatives of veterans, who serve veterans and their family members in whatever capacity is required by the Commission. The appointed and auxiliary members willingly given of their free time, used their own special expertise and talents to improve the lives of our Veteran heroes and their loved ones. Most Commission members hold day jobs, attend school, are active in the community and religious organizations, and are part of other Veteran related organizations such as the DAV, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and many others. The Commission members are aligned to primarily serve on one or two subcommittees/work groups, but often assist on any or all of the subcommittees/workgroups depending on need.

The Veterans Commission is very fortunate to enjoy the strong support and strategic leadership from our County Executive and County Council. Without this support, which includes funding critical projects when required, the Veterans Commission would not be as successful as it has been serving veterans and their families. Importantly, the County Council Commission Coordinator Capt'n Jim McMahan is instrumental in providing the day to day guidance and leadership for the Commission. Through his work and that of his Legislative Aide, requests for assistance are quickly routed to the Commission members for resolution.

Over **1100** hours of outreach service was recorded by event planning, scheduled meetings, researching and providing assistance to veterans and their family members, public and VA hospital visits, Aberdeen Proving Ground Community Outreach activities, holiday events and activities, Veteran funeral and memorials, just to name a few. Our annual Resource fair had 108 attendees who signed in, with an estimated total attendance of over 150 Veterans and family members with 28 vendors, an increase of 300% over the 2016 Fair.

Purpose and Authority:

Charter:

To research, assemble, analyze and disseminate information and educational materials relating to activities and programs that will assist in meeting the needs of all veterans and their families;

To institute and conduct educational and other programs, meetings and conferences to promote the rights and opportunities for veterans;

To advise the County Executive and County Council on the status of programs and services in the state and County related to the needs of veterans and their families;

To assist in planning appropriate public acknowledgement of the contributions made by veterans and assist in planning commemoration activities recognizing the contributions made by veterans.

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Mission and Vision Statements

After much discussion and many months of work, the Mission and Vision statements were updated in 2018 to better reflect the Commission's goals and purpose.

Mission: To advocate for our veterans and their families, and connect them to resources through outreach and education.

Vision: A Harford County community that is responsive to the needs of veterans and their families.

The Commission Membership by Appointment Designation

The Commission membership consists of thirteen members. Twelve members are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the Council. The County Council appoints one County Council member as a liaison to serve as the Commission Coordinator. The County Executive designates a Chairperson, and the members designate a Vice-Chair and Secretary.

Members selected to work on subcommittees/workgroups to use their expertise when responding to requests for assistance or conducting outreach. Subcommittees are: Veteran Benefits, Technology to include Social Media, Education, Employment, Legal, Community Outreach, and Chaplain. Most members serve on multiple workgroups, and often collaborate across workgroups to better serve veterans. Members report monthly during the Commission meetings on their efforts, interactions and results.

Membership

County Council Appointed Member and Commission Coordinator

James V. McMahan, Jr.	410-638-3523	Captain7417@yahoo.com
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Appointed Members

Robert A. Brown, Chairperson	410-322-2760	brown.r.1627@gmail.com
Hayden J. Anthony, Vice Chair	410-838-7433	haydenanthony@msn.com
Lisa J. Brown, Secretary	410-836-0851	lisa.brown@hcps.org
Janice Cassady	410-272-2784	jcassady@harford.edu
James P. Castelli	631-838-3280	jpcastelli@yahoo.com
Arthur F. Kaff	410-638-9277	ackaff@verizon.net
Scott A. Kearby	410-734-6548	sakerby@harfordcountymd.gov

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William H. Montgomery III	717-701-1194	JDoe8015@gmail.com
Patricia O’Keefe	301-651-8655	pokeefe920@gmail.com
Larry L. Owens	410-879-7541	larrylowens@comcast.net
Pamela Silcox	410-838-8951	pssilcox@comcast.net
Cindy Smith (Pending confirmation)	443-504-3576	cindyasmith11@gmail.com

Ex-Officio Members designated by the County Executive:

William O. Elliott Harford County Community College representative; Veterans Educational Issues	410-838-9893	belliot@harford.edu
Mike Ray Harford County Chamber of Commerce representative	410-459-3712	mike@survice.com
Aberdeen Proving Ground Representative (Vacant)		

Chaplain, Associate Member

Deacon Vic Petrosino	410-688-7105	deaconvic@stmargaret.org
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Membership Changes

Due to their many other volunteer duties assisting community members and veterans, Johnny Boker, former HCCOVA Chair, and Mary Moses, former HCCOVA Secretary, have moved from Appointed to Associate members. Larry Kimble also stepped down as an appointed member, but continues to provide employment information and advice. Mr. Bill Suchting, who represented the Chamber of Commerce, retired and requested to be replaced. They are all recognized for their many, many hours of work and tireless efforts.

Functions, Activities & Accomplishments.

Highlights as an outreach commission

- Veterans Resource Fair
- Maryland Association of Counties Panel presentation, “Serving Those Who Served Our Country”
- Gold Star Mothers Recognition and Memorial
- Memorial Day Representation
- APG Retiree Appreciation Day
- APG Community Outreach
- Flag Day & US Army Birthday

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- Support of the Senior Citizens and Veterans Tax Credit Bill
- Outreach calls and visits to veterans and family members including information on legal issues, housing grants, disability and compensation benefits, long term care housing, PTSD assistance, healthcare, homelessness, and building modifications.
- Partnership and collaboration with county, state and federal Veteran Service Organizations
- WAMD Radio Interview on veterans issues and upcoming Resource Fair
- Presentation at the Dublin/Darlington Community Advisory Board
- Attendance at veterans' funerals and memorials
- WWI Special Tribute Event
- Hospital and Home Care visits
- Use of Social Media; provides employment information, event and benefits updates
- PTSD Roundtable discussion in Havre de Grace

Major Events Enabling Outreach by the Commission:

Veterans Resource Fair. The major outreach activity for the past year was the Veteran Resource Fair, held on October 7, 2017. This event provided veterans and their family members resources from over twenty-eight vendors. Services ranged from onsite Veteran Benefit Assistance to alternative PTSD treatment information. The Fair was sponsored by County Executive Barry Glassman under the executive leadership of Councilman Capt'n Jim McMahan. Committee members were Pam Silcox, Hayden Anthony and Robert Brown. There were 108 registered veterans who signed in and many more family members and guests in attendance who did not sign in. The 2018 Resource Fair is November 10th at the Bel Air Armory.

APG Retiree Appreciation Day. The HCCOVA had a table at the Retiree Event and assisted veterans throughout the day with benefits, healthcare and requests for help. Lisa Brown, Bill Montgomery and Robert Brown represented the Commission

Gold Star Mother's Memorial in Havre de Grace. Johnny Boker is coordinating the funding, development and ribbon cutting ceremony, which will be held in June. The HCCOVA is supporting and helping to promote this event.

Fourth of July Parade. HCCOVA members will march in the Bel Air Fourth of July parade; Mike Ray is coordinating.

Communication Outreach: Social Media, Website, Radio and County Partnership

Facebook. The Commission continued to make maximum use of social medial, primarily through the Commission's Facebook page. Members on the Technology subcommittee regularly update the page with employment, benefits, event and changes in laws affecting veterans. With over 200 new articles and post(s) relating to the successes of Harford County Government as well as

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opportunities and outreach for our veterans, this free website has enabled both young and experienced veterans to gain information on events as well as keep up with current veteran and Harford county veteran related stories. The site boasts 360+ likes which equates to Harford County veterans who follow the news feeds and relay them to others by way of sharing. There have been over 200 postings this past year. The HCCOVA Facebook site.

<https://www.facebook.com/HarfordVeterans12>

County Website. The HCCOVA section of the Harford County website was updated to include meeting minutes, agendas and information of assistance. The result is that the number of requests for assistance and information increased substantially over the past two years. Requests for assistance were received not only from Harford County veterans, but also from veterans in other states and Maryland counties.

Radio Broadcast, “Harford Edge,” WAMD. The Commission Chair was interviewed on WAMD Radio discussing the mission and purpose of the HCCOVA, and how veterans and family members can contact the Commission. The interview touched on the many changing initiatives and legislation by the Department of Veterans Affairs to increase Access and improve claims processing and healthcare. Listeners were given instructions on how to have their claims expedited. This was an opportunity to promote the Resource Fair, and contributed to the strong turnout in October.

Partnering with Harford County Governmental & Community Relations. The Veterans Commission was extremely fortunate to receive assistance and guidance from Cindy Mumby, Director, Harford County Governmental & Community Relations. Ms. Mumby assisted with promoting the Resource Fair, coordinating communications with media outlets, and acting as a liaison with County Government Officials. The communications and marketing efforts were tremendously enhanced through her efforts, as shown in the attendance increase over the previous year.

MACo Summer Conference Outreach and Communication Session

The MACo Conference Session, “Serving Those Who Served Our Country,” led by Capt’n Jim McMahan provided an opportunity for conference attendees to learn about the Harford County Commission on Veteran’s Affairs, the composition of the Commission, accomplishments, goals and objectives. The panel focused on Veteran Outreach activities throughout the state of Maryland. The panel was composed of Senator Stephen Waugh, Senator MD State Senate; Delegate Pat Young, Delegate, MD House of Delegates; Ms. Dana Hendrickson, Director, Outreach & Advocacy MD Department of Veteran Affairs and Robert Brown, Chairperson, HCCOVA. The panel was moderated and facilitated by Capt’n Jim McMahan. The HCCOVA received several inquiries from other counties and requests for information establishing a Veterans Commissions as a result of the panel discussion. One such request was from Charles

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County, and their representative attended a HCCOVA meeting and exchanged information via teleconference.

Speakers and Lectures That Have Educated the Commission

- Jim “Coop” Cooper, Heroes on the Water. Provided information on his local organization that assists veterans getting out on the water fishing, kayaking and boating.
- Tracy Landry, VeRUS for Veterans. Provided a description of the VeRUS program that helps wounded veterans with finances and service dogs.
- Marc Dellaire, VA Perry Point Lead Engineer. Discussed the many changes occurring at VA Perry Point including the new housing for homeless veterans, upgrade to water treatment, new buildings to house more long-term care patients, and other enhancements to the infrastructure to better serve veterans.
- Andy Powell, Commander Havre de Grace American Legion Post, information on the PTSD Roundtable discussion
- Gerard Williams, COO for Omni Technologies, provided an employment overview for veterans
- Mr. Allen Siegel, Director of Spiritual Care Services, Upper Chesapeake Hospital provided information and instruction regarding visitation of veterans at Upper Chesapeake Hospital.
- Barbara Richardson, Community Development Administrator, Harford County presented information on housing development and homelessness prevention
- Ms. Janice Cassady provided information on HCC’s 3rd annual Military Appreciation Night for active military/veteran HCC students and their families and how the Commission can assist
- Mr. Gordie Burke, Regional Resource Coordinator, Central Region, State of Maryland, discussed connecting veterans with the Behavioral Health Services for Maryland
- Ms. Betty Willard, Retirement Services Officer, Aberdeen Proving Ground, reviewed the many services her office provides transitioning service members and their families, and how retirees can still obtain services through her office. She invited the HCCOVA to the May 2018 Retiree Appreciation Day.
- Terri Kearney - Business Services Representative, Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN). Discussed how the SWN, oversees, coordinates, and plans workforce development programs and services for businesses and individuals in Cecil and Harford Counties.
- Kim Joyner – Veteran Navigator with the Military Corps Career Connect (C3)/Susquehanna Workforce Network, provided additional information on how C3 prepares soldiers with training, licensing and certification needed for a successful civilian career.

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- Julie Bryson, Charles County Government, discussed the Charles County Veterans Commission.

Commission Goals 2018-2019

- Conduct and expand the Annual Resource Fair to reach more veterans and their families
- Partner with Aberdeen Proving Ground to assist transitioning military members and their families find resources to help ease the transition to civilian life
- Respond to the needs and requests of veterans by quickly finding resources, assistance and guidance as required
- Participate in events such as the Fourth of July parades, Memorial Day events, Flag Day, APG Retiree Days, Veteran Day observances, and Wreaths Across America
- Continue to reach out to business to publicize job openings and opportunities for veterans.
- Continue and expand the guest speaker presentations during commission meetings to provide education and updates for commission members and guests
- Expand the web page and Facebook site to include more resources for veterans and their family members
- Increase support to veterans at Upper Chesapeake Hospital
- Conduct an outreach project, such as assisting with the building of a house as part of the Habitat for Humanity

Conclusion

The Harford County Commission on Veterans Affairs will continue to serve veterans, their families and the County by adhering to our Mission and Vision. Through the strong leadership and support from the Harford County Executive, County Council Commission Coordinator, and County Council, the HCCOVA will ensure support and assistance is readily available to support and assist our Veteran Heroes.