



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

**MINUTES
Thursday, 07 January 2021**

Meeting Opened 1900 hours
 Meeting Closed 2033 hours
 Meeting Location Virtual (Zoom); due to COVID-19 pandemic

MEETING SUMMARY:

J. Greg Jolissaint, Chair, presiding, opened the meeting at 1900 hrs.

1. Roll Call of Commission Members to Establish a Quorum

- a. Roll Call¹: Eleven commission members present; 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)			

- b. Acknowledgement of Howard County Government Officials in Attendance: Lisa Terry (Manager, Office of Veterans and Military Families), Kimberly Pruum (Director of Constituent



Services & Community Partnerships), and Cheryl Mattis (Deputy Director, Department of Community Resources and Services).

- c. Special Guest(s): Major Terri Taylor (CAP Deputy Commander for Cadets, Howard Squadron) and Genese Muse (USA, ret.).
- d. Others in Attendance: Ed A. Hall, (Chair, Joint Military Council/Commander, A.L. Post 156), John Spain (A.L. Post 156), Bob Pelletier (A.L. Post 156/VFW Post 7472), Vikki Garcia (Community Outreach for U.S. Representative John Sarbanes), John Way (CEO, The VA Way), Linda Bergofsky (Coordinator, Veterans Advisory Council, Frederick County), and Yale Stenzler.

2. Meeting Opened by the Chair/Pledge of Allegiance

- The Chair led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Reminders of Virtual Meeting Etiquette

- The rules of etiquette for the meeting were distributed in the agenda.

4. Consideration of the November 2020 Meeting Minutes

- Commissioner Blum moved to approve the minutes; Commissioner Rivers made a second. The November minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

5. Presentation by Invited Guests

Major Terri Taylor, CAP:

- The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) is a civilian auxiliary of the U.S. Airforce; stood up on 1 December 1941.
- The CAP is congressionally chartered with aerospace education, emergency management, and maintaining a cadet training program.
- The Squadron participated in *Wreaths Across America*. In 2020, it laid 450 wreaths in Howard County. Lisa Terry participated.
- The Squadron has identified 900 veterans laid to rest in the county.
- Commissioner Griffin asked what other activities the Squadron participates in and when it would be calling for volunteers to lay wreaths again. Major Taylor said that the Squadron only engages in the *Wreaths Across America* events.
- Yale Stenzler asked how many personnel were in the Squadron. Major Taylor said that they have 14 senior members and 17 cadets.
- Ed Hall asked Major Taylor for her points of contact - see below.

Major Terri Taylor, CAP

Deputy Commander for Cadets, Howard Squadron

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U.S. Air Force Auxiliary



gocivilairpatrol.com
www.mdcap.org

- The Chair thanked Major Taylor for the Squadron's engagement in the community and for its efforts to document the veterans laid to rest in Howard County.

Genese Muse:

- Genese Muse participated in the Howard County Library System's (HCLS) veterans' writing workshop.
- She is a 30-year veteran of the U.S. Army.
- She thought the most valuable part of the workshop was to be among fellow veterans to hear their stories and share hers.
- The Chair asked John Way to comment on writing as therapy for veterans. John said that writing prose, songs, or poems is good therapy to release feelings. He also mentioned the Horizon Foundation Film Festival. Lisa Terry added that the film festival aired a film called "We Are Not Done Yet" that focused on veterans coping with anxiety, depression, and other challenges using this type of therapy to help them. The Chair commented that this is a good way for veterans to express how they feel without saying it out loud and is a good way to start moving forward.
- Lisa Terry said that she would post activities like these in the e-Bulletin.
- Link to HCPLS workshops: <https://howardcounty.librarycalendar.com/events/veterans-songwriting-workshop>.

6. Old Business

a. Update on Wreaths Across America, Toys for Tots, Veteran Holiday Gift Distribution, Made with Love Initiative, and Chamber Veterans Day Speaker Series:

- Lisa Terry and Jennifer Jones (Howard County Executive Deputy Chief of Staff) participated in *Wreaths Across America*.
- The Howard County Executive participated in the US Marine Corps League *Toys For Tots Campaign*. In 2020, over 900 families registered and over 6,000 toys were distributed to more than 2,000 children.
- The Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families joined the *Made with Love Initiative* who knitted several hundred scarves, hats, and blankets that were deployed to service members for *Operation Gratitude*.
- Lisa Terry participated in the Howard County Office of Aging *Veterans Holiday Gift Distribution* and dropped off gifts to senior veterans and veteran families.
- Lisa Terry participated in the *Chamber of Commerce Veterans Day Speaker Series*. She presented an overview of the Commission and the Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families. The Commander of Fort Meade was present.

b. Update from the Subcommittee on Equity and Racial Justice:



- Co-Chair Branch said that the subcommittee was working on the survey. He said that a member of the veteran's community had contacted him about the survey.
 - The Chair asked that the survey be completed this month.
 - The subcommittee will be meeting again soon.
- c. Feedback on 6th Annual Veterans Day Parade and Lakefront Ceremony:
- The Chair commented that the ceremony was very well done.
 - John Spain said that the event was successful. Planning has already started for 2021. The committee is planning a consolidated memorial event with the VSOs for this year.
- d. Update on December Meeting of the Veterans Support Group:
- Commissioner Rivers said that a couple of veterans showed up at the January meeting. He feels that the activity is gaining momentum. He anticipates more veterans will show up for the February meeting.
 - The Chair asked how the veterans found out about the support group. Commissioner Rivers thought some found out through NAMI. John Way connected with several veterans to get them to participate.
 - Information about the meetings and support group are located on the [NAMI website](#).
 - The Chair asked the group to consider distributing a flyer to VSOs and the contractor community. Commissioner Griffin added that the group should reach out to the reserve center next to Fort Meade, too.
 - Commissioner Rivers, John Way, and Topaz Navarro will be featured on a Fort Meade Public Affairs Office (*Fort Meade Declassified*) podcast on 12 January. Link to the podcast [here](#).
 - Commissioner McGuire asked if the NAMI program was local. Commissioner Rivers said that it is currently local, but NAMI is investigating offering the program statewide.
- e. Feedback on the Behavior Health Forum:
- Commissioner Kesler said that the Howard County Bureau of Behavioral Health partnered with the Local Health Improvement Coalition and Aetna to hold the first webinar in a five-session webinar series. The first session focused on veterans' behavioral health resources and services. About fifty community members participated.
- f. Feedback on the VAMHCS November Meeting:
- The Chair said that the Baltimore VAMHCS is still limiting the number of persons that can enter the facility; telehealth is still preferred.
 - Jonathan Eckman is the new the Director of the VAMHCS. He replaces Dr. Adam Robinson.
 - The VBA continues to process benefit claims.
 - Sykesville is getting a veteran's home.
- g. Update on Veterans Day Presentations in Howard County Schools:
- Commissioner Avery contacted the staff at the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). HCPSS liked the idea of veterans giving presentations to students at a number of



their schools. They suggested starting with elementary schools. Activities will depend on the restrictions due to the pandemic.

- HCPSS would like more veterans to get involved with the 5th Grade Simulated Congressional Hearings.

h. MHFA Proposal to the FMA Foundation Board:

- John Way said that the VA Way is now able to offer a number of services including health and wellness packages to businesses, first responders, veterans' groups, and other organizations. He expects to start teaching mental health first aid by February.

i. Update on Howard County Web-Based Veterans Tribute:

- Lisa Terry said that the County will be updating its platform. So, we will wait until after the County has finished updating its platform before building out the tribute page.
- The Chair suggested collecting data to get ready for the website.
- Lisa Terry asked for volunteers to help deploy the website.

7. Business “On Hold” Due to the Pandemic

- Columbia Lake Monument Completion
- Howard County School Buddy Program
- Exploratory Committee to Investigate the Feasibility of Building a Veterans Home in Howard County

8. New Business

a. Regional Veteran Symposium in Lieu of Annual Veteran Resource Fair:

- Lisa Terry is working with non-profits to focus on behavioral health and possibly offer a symposium this year.

b. Howard County Joint Military Council (JMC):

- Ed Hall said that the next flag retirement ceremony will take place on 16 January at noon. The honor roll of remembrance will take place after the ceremony. They are working on creating a shadow box to honor veterans.

c. Legislative Affairs Update:

- Commissioner Bolen said that NAMI will be hosting an advocacy training day on 6 February. Advocacy for NAMI will take place virtually on 18 February.

d. New Commissioner Applications:

- Lisa Terry said there was a press release for new applicants that closed on 4 January; there were five applicants. A subcommittee has been formed to review the applications.

e. Other Items:



- Commissioner Kesler reminded everyone to get their COVID-19 vaccination. Howard County is currently in Phase 1A. The Chair encouraged everyone to get their vaccine.
- Linda Bergofsky said that Frederick County is starting up a new GIS service for people to find the closest food distribution service to where they live. They hope to replicate this for the vaccine distribution.
- Bob Pelletier suggested that the support group meet at the VFW Hall. Lisa Terry said that the group is only meeting virtually.
- John Way challenged everyone to invite two veterans to the next Veterans Support Group.
- Lisa Terry said that the County Executive asked our help to get the word out that the county has a 1% set-aside for contracts for veteran-owned businesses that are VA certified.
- Lisa Terry said that the Leadership Howard County program wanted to integrate a veterans' module into their program.

9. Other Announcements or Dates of Importance

- None.

10. Next Commission Meeting Date(s)

- The next Commission meetings will be held on 04 February and 04 March starting at 1900 hours.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

- The Chair adjourned the meeting at 2033 hours.

The Commission stands in adjournment until
04 February 2021.

Minutes were taken by Steven M. Bolen.

J. Greg Jolissaint
Presiding
Chair, HCCMVF

Notes:

- 1) Two Commission appointments are currently vacant.