



9830 Patuxent Woods Dr.  
Columbia, MD 21046

**MINUTES**  
**03 February 2022**

Meeting Opened: 1900 hours  
Meeting Closed: 2022 hours  
Meeting Location: Virtual (Webex); due to COVID-19 pandemic

**MEETING SUMMARY:**

J. Greg Jolissaint, Chair, presiding, brought the meeting to order at 1903 hrs.

**1. Roll Call of Commission Members to Establish a Quorum**

The roll was taken; twelve commission members were present. The Chair declared the Commission was in a quorum.

| <b>Commissioner</b>        | <b>Present</b> | <b>Excused</b> | <b>Absent</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| J. Greg Jolissaint (Chair) | ✓              |                |               |
| Jonathan Branch (Co-Chair) | ✓              |                |               |
| Reginald Avery             | ✓              |                |               |
| Cherron Blakely            | ✓              |                |               |
| Michael Blum               | ✓              |                |               |
| Steven M. Bolen            | ✓              |                |               |
| Nafrettifi Griffin         | ✓              |                |               |
| Michael Griggs             | ✓              |                |               |
| Kelly Kesler               | ✓              |                |               |
| Robert Lowell              | ✓              |                |               |
| Keith McGuire              |                | ✓              |               |
| Paul Rivers                | ✓              |                |               |
| Jerry Wykoff               | ✓              |                |               |

**2. Acknowledgement of Howard County Government Officials in Attendance:** Lisa Terry (Manager, Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families), Jennifer Jones (Deputy Chief

of Staff, County Executive), and Stephanie Adibe (Deputy Director, Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services).

**3. Special Guests:** Yolanda Rayford, Blue Star Families.

**4. Others in Attendance:** John Spain (A.L. Post 156), Robert Pelletier (A.L. Post 156/VFW Post 7472), Michael Jackson (Chair, JMC/A.L. Post 156), John Way (CEO, The VA Way), and Vikki Garcia (Community Outreach for U.S. Representative John Sarbanes).

**5. Welcome by the Commission Chair/Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**6. Reminders of Virtual Meeting Etiquette**

- The Chair stated the meeting rules of etiquette.

**7. Consideration of the November and January 2022 Meeting Minutes**

- Commissioner Avery moved to approve the January meeting minutes without amendments; Commissioner Blum seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

**8. Guest Speaker(s): Yolanda Rayford**

- Blue Star Families is a volunteer organization founded by military spouses in 2009 to help connect military families.
- The organization gathers and shares data about challenges facing military families, delivers nationally funded programs to the community, grows participation among military families and civilian neighbors, and builds partnerships with local government, military, corporations, and non-profit partners.
- To learn more about the Blue Star Families 2021 Family Lifestyle Survey results: <https://bluestarfam.org/?s=survey>.
- For more information and to learn how to volunteer: <https://bluestarfam.org/>. Follow on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/BSFBBaltimore.com](http://www.facebook.com/BSFBBaltimore.com).
- Contact Ms. Rayford at: [yrayford@bluestarfam.org](mailto:yrayford@bluestarfam.org).

**9. Opening Comments by Commission Chair**

- The Chair thanked the commissioners, friends, and family members who attended the respectful burial of the nine unclaimed veterans at the Crownsville cemetery on 28 January.
- Commissioner Rivers attended and gave his impressions of the ceremony. He thought about 100 people were present.

**10. Old or Reoccurring Business**

**a. Veterans Peer Support Group Update (Commissioner Rivers and John Way):**

- Commissioner Rivers said that Charles and Carroll counties have been attending their group to learn more about how the group operates. The Howard County group has four facilitators that meet every month.
- John Way expressed the need for more participation in the community and asked the Commission and guests to help spread the word about the support group. He thought momentum for the group was building.
- The Chair thought that participation might increase as the group transitioned to in-person meetings.
- Commissioner Kesler thought the support group could work with the County's "It's OK to Ask?" program to help spread the word. More information about the program: <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/health/county-executive-ball-announces-its-ok-ask-youth-suicide-prevention-campaign>.
- Commissioner Blum thought the group could give a short briefing to the local American Legion and VFW posts.
- Commissioner Wykoff noted that one of the commanders from INSCOM - a two-star general - took his life by suicide. So, it's not just the younger people getting out that are vulnerable to mental health challenges. He also mentioned that the group could go to Fort Meade to give a briefing as part of the outgoing package presented to soldiers who are separating.
- For more information and to register for the group: <https://namihowardcounty.org/support-and-education/veteran-support-group/> or <https://namihowardcounty.org/support-and-education/support-groups/>.

**b. Howard County Veterans Foundation (Bob Gillett and Lisa Terry):**

- The Foundation has signed a contract with a fundraising professional and have put a contact list together for the fundraiser.
- The design is complete. The Foundation is trying to find local, veteran tradesmen to help install the monument.
- They need to raise \$2.5M; \$500k has been pledged by the State in a bond, and they have already collected \$500K. The Foundation still needs to raise about \$1.5M.
- The Chair asked Lisa Terry to invite Bob Gillette or Wanda Riddle to a commission meeting to give us more details about the monument's status.

**c. New Commission Recorder Needed:**

- The Chair asked the Commission for volunteers to take over as the Commission Recorder starting in April.

**d. Commission Branded Polo Shirts (Commissioner Wykoff and Lisa Terry):**

- Commissioner Wykoff is leading the effort.
- Lisa Terry suggested that we shorten the logo so that it can be embroidered onto the shirts.
- The Chair asked Commissioner Wykoff to work with the designer to find out how big the logo would have to be on a shirt to be able to read it.

**e. Bailey's Bundles:**

- Miss Vivian Bailey turned 104 years old today (03 Feb).
- In honor of Miss Bailey, “Bailey’s Bundles” are care packages sent to active-duty troops. The packages include items such as: Kind Bars, LaraBars, Granola or Nut Bars, Cookies, tuna lunches to go, word puzzles, etc.
- Bailey’s Bundles is collaborating with Blue Star Families, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and Operation Gratitude to support 350+ soldiers on duty in Operation Fidelity in Istanbul.
- Bailey’s Bundles has a drop-off box at the VFW post in Ellicott City.
- For more information, make a monetary donation, or refer a soldier who would like to receive a bundle, please contact Lisa Terry at the Howard County Office on Veterans and Military Families.

**f. Mental Health First Aid Classes/Fort Meade Alliance (FMA) (John Way):**

- The VA Way is working with the Fort Meade Alliance to start a class at Fort Meade. The VA Way continues to build to reach out to the FMA and build its team.

**g. Other Business:**

- None to report.

**11. New Business**

**a. Commission Priorities for 2022:**

The following priorities were approved in the January meeting:

- 1) Participate in the Clarksville July 4th Parade, the Howard County Veterans Day Parade and Lakefront Ceremony, and the annual Howard County Fair in West Friendship.
- 2) Participate/Conduct Veterans Day presentations in coordination with the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) and participate in the HCPSS 5<sup>th</sup> grade Simulated Congressional Hearings.
- 3) Continue to support the Veterans Peer Support Group; identify and support “resources” focused on military service members’ families and veterans’ families (including operation home front; mental health first aid; etc.).
- 4) Facilitate and promote access to non-medical but therapeutic wellness and behavioral health alternatives; incorporate virtual wellness activities.
- 5) Continue to support the installation of a veterans and family’s monument that will be erected in the Vivian C. “Millie” Bailey Park by the lakefront in Columbia.
- 6) Continue to support Howard County VSOs (e.g., quarterly flag retirement ceremony; etc.)
- 7) Support (a potentially re-formatted) Veterans’ Resource Fair. (Need to determine the frequency, time of year, and location.)

- 8) Support the creation of a **Howard County Fallen Heroes Tribute Page**. (The Commission will require a webmaster and volunteers to research Howard County service members who were killed in action. The Howard County Civil Air Patrol has a list of Veterans graves that could be a starting point for research.)

Links to the Montgomery County Tribute Site:

[Montgomery County - Department of Health and Human Services - Veterans Affairs \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](http://montgomerycountymd.gov)

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-program/ADS/VETERANS/BlackHistoryMonth.html>

**b. 2022 Veterans Day Parade Planning Meetings:**

- The planning committee will start meeting Tuesday, 08 February at 1700 hours via Google Meet. The Chair is the Primary Commission representative and the Co-Chair has also been invited to attend. The Chair would like to identify a second alternate to the committee.

**c. No Struggle No Success - Recidivism, Entrepreneurship:**

- The Chair mentioned that Naomi Ling, President of Student Partners for Veterans, has requested the Commission's interest in conducting talks about our military values/stories/messages to the youth of **No Struggle No Success, Inc**. This organization serves youth who are transitioning back into the community due to juvenile offenses or other major life issues. The group would be honored to connect with Veterans for inspiration and hope. The presentation would likely be a virtual Zoom meeting.
- For more information: No Struggle No Success - Recidivism, Entrepreneurship.
- Commissioner Avery said that he has been in contact with the principle of Thunderhill Elementary School. Prior to the pandemic, during Veterans Day, the school would invite veterans to talk to students about their experiences. The school is interested in inviting veterans to participate again this year.

**d. Howard County Schools Simulated Congressional Hearings (SCH) (Commissioner Avery):**

- Commission Avery said that the planning for SCH has started. He let HCPSS know that the Commission is interested in supporting the program again this year.

**e. Dignified Burial Ceremony for Unclaimed Veterans:**

- The Garrison Forest Veterans and Owings Mills cemeteries will be holding burials for unclaimed veterans on 04 February at 1300 hours. Seven veterans will be honored rain or shine.

**f. Flag Retirement Ceremony February 5:**

- VFW Post 7472 Hall in Ellicott City will hold a flag retirement ceremony on 05 February. The Ceremony begins at 1100 hours near the Pavilion.

**g. Expired Commissioner terms - Jolissaint, Lowell, Nafrettifi (Commissioner Jolissaint and Lisa):**

- 04 January 2022, Council Legislative Session. Resolution was read into the record.
- 18 January 18, 2022, Council Public Hearing. Reappointments discussed.
- 07 February, County Council Legislative Session. The Council will take final action on the resolutions.

**h. New Commission Recorder Needed (Lisa):**

- Major Terri Tyler of the Howard County Civil Air Patrol is interested in joining the Commission.

**i. Howard County Joint Military Council (JMC):**

- The Chair administered the Oath of Office for Chair of the JMC to Michael Jackson (A.L. Post 156). Mr. Jackson relieves Mr. Ed Hall as the Chair of the JMC.
- John Spain said that the Memorial Day planning committee will be inviting commissioners to speak at the ceremonies.

**j. New Business from the Commissioners:**

- Commissioner Kesler asked if the Commission would be interested in recognizing graduating students with honor cords who are enlisting into the military. The Commission would need to figure out how to identify the students.

**k. Additional Dates of Significance:**

- **National Salute to Veteran Patients** - recognized during the **week of February 14th** and pays tribute to the ~100K patients a day that receive medical treatment in VA medical facilities around the world (as well as the Veteran patients who receive their care in the VA's Community Care Program network).
- **Brain Injury Awareness Month**, recognized each **March**, provides an important opportunity to bring attention to the prevention of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and to promote strategies to improve the quality of life for persons living with TBI as well as their families (to include our MILVET patients suffering from TBIs incurred during their military service).

**12. Next Commission Meeting Dates**

- The Commission will meet on 03 March and 07 April.

**13. Adjournment:**

- The Chair adjourned the meeting at 2011 hours.
- The Commission stands in adjournment until 03 March 2022.

Minutes were taken by Steven M. Bolen, with Greg Jolissaint presiding, Chair, HCCVMF