



**Minutes**  
**HCCVMF Commission Meeting held 1 September 2022**

**Role Call of Commissioners:**

Greg Jolissaint, Chair (P)	Michael Griggs (P-V)
Jonathan Branch, Co-Chair (P)	Cherron “Lula” Blakely (P-V)
Jerry Wykoff (P)	Terri Taylor (P)
Kelly Kesler (P)	Paul Rivers (P)
Mike Blum (P)	Reg Avery (P)
Keith McGuire (Ex)	Nafrettifi Griffin (P-V)

(P) – Present                      (Ex) – Excused  
(P-V) – Present Virtually

- 1. The Chair confirmed a quorum was present for the meeting.**
- 2. Howard County Government Officials in Attendance:**  
**Lisa Terry** (Manager, Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families)
- 3. Special Guest(s):**
- 4. Others in Attendance:** CJ Parks, CE Nominee for vacant Commission Seat (V); Bob Pelletier (V), Bob Berlett (P), Dr. Xavier Bruce (P); John Groth (P) Veteran Community Member  
  
Vikki Garcia – Congressmen Sarbanes Office (V); Jessica Clark– Representative Sen. Cardin’s Office (V)
- 5. The Commission Chair welcomed all attendees, then led those in attendance in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.**

**The Chair then reminded attendees of both in-person and virtual meeting rules of etiquette.**

**Consideration of the June 2022 Meeting Minutes**

- Chair asked whether there were any corrections to the June Commission meeting minutes.
- June minutes approved.

## Opening Comments by Commission Chair

- a. The Chair thanked those Commissioners who attended Independence Day Ceremonies and Howard County Fair events. Materials provided at the fair were well-received.
- b. The Chair reminded Commission that Commissioner Lowe has resigned, and Mr. CJ Parks has been endorsed by the County Executive to fill his position on the Commission. Additionally, Commissioner Avery has served the maximum years of service allowed for a Commissioner and is not eligible for reappointment upon completion of his current term.

## 6. Reoccurring Business

- a. Veterans Peer Support Group Update  
Commissioner Rivers provided an update about the Support Group and noted that there has been consistent participation by a small core group. Meetings are open to family members as well. Commissioner Rivers shared that they are looking into de-escalation and crisis training for facilitators. Commissioner Blum suggested that a PSA would be beneficial. Commissioner Kesler suggested adding information to HCPSS resources.
- b. Howard County Veterans Foundation Update.  
No new fundraising update. Chair will reach out to Foundation to encourage active participation in Commission meetings.
- c. Update on VA Mental Health Council and Potential Members  
Commissioner Rivers shared that the Council is creating a charter with defined targets for presentation to the VA.
- d. Update on HoCo Public Schools Simulated Congressional Hearings (Reg Avery).  
Commissioner Avery will continue to work with HCPSS for the 2022-23 academic year which commenced on August 28, 2022. Details will come as school year is further under way.
- e. Update on Veterans Day Presentations in HCPSS and Identifying which schools will want speakers for in-person events.  
Commissioner Avery iterated that he is working with the Howard County Public Schools 2022-2023 on scheduling presentations in schools. The addition of American Legion poster competitions or American Legion patriotic speeches was discussed. If these are included in the festivities, winners would be announced during the Veterans Day Ceremony.
- f. Update on HoCo Fallen Heroes Tribute page.  
Lisa Terry reported that the page is <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/fallen-heroes>. Following discussion regarding categorization of names and considerations for nature of death, a small committee will meet to further discuss the organization on the website. The committee includes Commissioner Avery, Commissioner Taylor, Commissioner Kesler, and Mr. Bob Berlett.

- g. Update on Veterans Treatment Court Initiative.  
Lisa Terry shared that Howard County is still collecting data and trying to identify a veteran judge or supporter.
- h. Honor Cord Update for enlisting graduates  
Will be readdressed in the 2022-2023 Academic Year.
- i. Local Health Improvement Coalition Veteran's Resources on [www.hclhic.org](http://www.hclhic.org) website.  
Commissioner Kesler will draft an email request that will be shared by Lisa Terry.

## 11. New Business

- a. **HoCo Veterans and Military Families Commission Priorities for 2022-2023** (list below was accepted by the Commission).
  - Participate in the Clarksville July 4th Independence Day Parade; Howard County Veterans Day Parade and Lakefront Ceremony; and annual Howard County Fair in West Friendship.
  - Participate/Conduct Veterans Day presentations in coordination with the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS); endorse AL Poster and Essay Contests
  - Participate as judges in the HCPSS 5th grade Simulated Congressional Hearings (preferably in person).
  - Support the NAMI Connection Veteran Support Group; identify and support veteran and military family behavioral health and wellness services and programs to include some type of event where resources are shared.
  - Support the installation of a Veteran and Military Families monument that will be erected in the Vivian C. "Millie" Bailey Park on the Columbia Lakefront.
  - Support Howard County VSO events (Flag Retirement Ceremony; etc.).
  - Support the sustainment of the Fallen Heroes Tribute Page and Memorial Day Tribute Page.
  - Sustain an up-to-date Veteran Resource Directory with organizations providing programs and services.
  - Attend funerals for unclaimed veterans at MDVA cemetery
- b. Veterans Day Parade and Lakefront Ceremony Sunday November 13.
  - Looking for nominations for Parade Grand Marshall. Theme: Honor Through Service
  - Working with the AL to establish a HCPSS Veterans Day Poster and Essay Contest prior to the Parade (with potential announcement of overall winners at the Ceremony)
  - Yard Signs will be available weeks prior to the Parade
- 1) Recommendations are being solicited to fill **HCCVMF Veteran Commissioner Avery's impending vacancy**. The current commissioner is allowed, by statute, to

continue serving until a new Commissioner has been approved by the County Council.

- c. **October 1 Blue Star Families event** – Lisa asking for volunteers to sign up thru the HoCo Volunteer website. The event will be from 10-3 pm at the Columbia Lakefront.

- d. **Howard County Joint Military Council Items of Interest**

Mike Jackson (current Chair) is retiring from the military and moving out of the Army – and Ed Hall (Past Chair and AL Post 156 Commander) have nominated Greg Jolissaint to serve as the Chair

- 1) Signage noting the # of flags that have been retired will be posted at Howard County Landfill. In 2021, 1,267 flags were respectfully retired.
- 2) **Flag Retirement Ceremony October 22.** ST. John's Episcopal Church.
- 3) **Veterans Day Parade and Lakefront Ceremony.** Sunday November 13. Theme: ***Honor Through Service.*** Commissioners are asked to please start thinking about potential nominees for Grand Marshall.

- e. New Business from HCCVMF Commissioners

Honor Flights – Bob Berlett and Commissioner Taylor will share Honor Flight lists with Lisa Terry.

- f. Additional Dates of Significance: The Chair reminded meeting attendees of the following dates and their military significance:

1. September 2 – Victory over Japan Day (V-J Day)
2. September 11 – Patriot Day in memory of 9-11 victims
3. September 16 – National POW/MIA Recognition Day
4. September 18 – USAF Birthday (1947)
5. September 25 – National Gold Star Mother's Day

## **12. Next Commission Meeting Dates**

- Next meeting 6 October

## **13. Having no further business to conduct, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:55pm.**