

**Maryland Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, April 16, 2024**  
American Job Center  
14 N Potomac Street  
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Chairman Tyler called the meeting to order at 10:40 am

Vice Chairman Moore led the invocation.

Chairman Tyler asked for a moment of silence for those who died during the Key Bridge collapse.

Vice Chairman Moore led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Tyler introduced Mayor Tekesah Martinez of Hagerstown. Mayor Martinez welcomed the Commission to Hagerstown and presented some Citations.

Chairman Tyler introduced Presenters:

- James Marchinke, Maryland Department of Labor
- Aaron Mowery, Boots to Suits
- Arielle Jordan, Mindset Quality, LLC

Chairman Tyler introduced guests attending:

- Hagerstown Mayor Tekesah Martinez
- Audrey Severn, Senator Chris Van Hollen's Office
- Nan Mann, Senator Van Hollen's office
- Scott Schlesinger, nominee for Commissioner, Jewish War Veterans seat
- Penny Collins, former Commissioner Fleet Reserve Association
- Audrey Moore, spouse of Commissioner Moore
- LeRoy Thomas, MD Dept. of Labor
- Cynthia Cavalieri, Federal Executive Board
- Jason Marshall, Serving Together
- Raquel Adams, MD Dept. of Safety and Corrections
- Teresa Spruill, Chair, Washington County Veterans Advisory Committee
- Niki Falzone, Executive Director Platoon 22
- Clarissa Lang, Commissioner, Maryland College Collaboration for Student Veterans Commission

Additional guests:

- William Colberg
- Darwen Myers
- Brian Grim
- Robert Summers
- Jeff Graham, Frostburg State University

- Eddie Peters
- Linda Spence, Washington County DBED
- Ken Beecher
- Keith Roys, Gatekeepers
- Tony Hollinger, USMC Veteran
- Paul Frey
- Aaren Palmer
- Ann Seyle, DPSCS
- Three individuals – names were not legible on sign-in sheet

Commissioners absent: Childs, Fuentealba, Perry, Smith and Wallace

Chairman Tyler called on Deputy Secretary Cohen for his presentation:

Deputy Secretary Cohen:

- Thanked Mayor Martinez for her help guiding him to the building.
- Welcome also to Mr. Scott Schlesinger, who was nominated by the Jewish War Veterans of Maryland to be appointed to the Commission.
- I am going to give you a very brief update on the Department, and then a legislative update as the 2024 General Assembly session ended on April 8<sup>th</sup>.
- I will start with the Cemetery program:
  - Volunteer Committees are currently planning the Memorial Day ceremonies at the five State Veterans cemeteries.
  - The next date we have scheduled for Unaccompanied Veterans ceremonies is April 26<sup>th</sup>. We are still working out the details, because these ceremonies are dependent on when the Maryland Anatomy Board releases the Veteran to us. If a ceremony is scheduled, a notice will be posted in the April 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the newsletter.
- For the Service and Benefits Program:
  - Claim submissions and the monetary awards for veterans/dependents and survivors represented by the State of Maryland continue to be the main focus of the service program. Thus far in FY 24, claim submissions have exceeded 3,100 with the monetary awards granted exceeding \$28,000,000.
  - The Service Program is looking to increase staffing at some higher demand locations. Possible recruitment for these locations will begin over the next few weeks mainly in Glen Burnie, Frederick and Southern Maryland areas.
  - We have also been working on opening a new location at the Elkton MVA. Work on completing the necessary infrastructure (network connections) should be

completed soon.

- We are working on providing a part-time Service Office at the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) Eastern Baltimore County 5235 King Avenue, Franklin Square Professional Center, Rosedale 1 day a week, beginning in April.
- Another successful Claims Clinic was held on March 13<sup>th</sup> in Carroll County at the Southern County Senior Center in Eldersburg. These events are held in partnership with the U.S. VA and claims are taken at the event.
- The Communications team is working to expand awareness of the Women Veteran Inclusion Program. Please sign up to receive the monthly Women Veterans Inclusion Program newsletter by visiting: [veterans.maryland.gov/women-veterans-inclusion-program/](https://veterans.maryland.gov/women-veterans-inclusion-program/) and share the link with women Veterans.
- Dana continues to train on Ask the Question. More than 350 individuals are now trained in screening for military service. Most recently, she trained DPSCS mental health and case management staff on March 27.
- The Communications team is working with DoIT and US Digital Response on an MDVA website redesign. We hope to launch the new website during the Summer of 2024.
- Charlotte Hall Update
  - The in-house Pharmacy received a new machine that will further improve the distribution process for medications.
  - Staff are working on numerous projects with the Department of General Services to improve plant operations.
  - Currently conducting Financial Modeling Studies on both the Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing areas to plan the best financial future for Charlotte Hall.
- Future Veterans Home Update
  - The home design team led by the architect firm SFCS continues to meet bi-weekly. Important milestones accomplished are the positioning of the home on the property due to steep elevation changes, first floor elevation, resizing of rooms to approximate the Facility plan's square footage. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, the design team met to create a "mock resident's room" to ensure that all of the planned equipment fits into the room allowing for a wheelchair bound individual to move freely in the room.
  - On Feb 28<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Public Works approved the transfer of 52 acres of land on the former Rosewood State Hospital to the Department. The land will become an extension of the Garrison Forest Veterans Cemetery located approximately 1/4 mile away.

- A draft document is being prepared by the Department and the Department of General Services to be sent to the VA Healthcare System Director in Baltimore to establish a long-term lease for 8-10 acres of land on the Perry Point Medical Center property for a future Veterans Home.
- Maryland Veterans Trust Fund Update
  - The Trust Fund is not currently taking applications, after the resignation of Denise Nowlin, the Trust Fund Administrator. Denise left us to take a job in another State agency.
  - This pause will be effective for the next 90-120 days. During this period, we will prepare for growth, assess and install new systems, and manage the transition of key personnel.
  - We have identified the need to build capacity within the Veterans Trust Fund so it is able to meet increasing demand with the infrastructure needed to maintain transparency and ensure we are good stewards of donated funds. For that reason, we will use this personnel transition as an opportunity to hire Denise's replacement, add additional staff, and deploy a new grants management system. During this time, we will temporarily pause new applications and disbursements of the Trust Fund.
  - In the meantime, we will continue to refer veterans to great partners and organizations that can offer support to our veteran community. If there are organizations that we should highlight, please respond to this email with the best contact information for veterans.
  - We appreciate your understanding and thank you for being great partners in this work.
- Legislative Update
  - We are thrilled that the legislature passed 24 veteran and military family-related bills. Governor Moore will sign all 24 bills into law, marking a historic milestone in Maryland's commitment to its military community.
  - Our departmental bill to change the name came out of the recognition that our name should align with our long-standing mission: to assist veterans, active-duty service members, **and their families** in securing benefits earned through military service. As of July 1st, our department will become the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families.
  - The Families Serve Act of 2024 and the Time to Serve Act of 2024 are part of the Moore-Miller administration's legislative agenda. The Families Serve Act creates stronger pathways to employment for military spouses in both the public and private sectors. The Time to Serve Act doubles military leave available to state employees who serve in the National Guard or military reserves, giving service members enhanced flexibility to use their leave for personal purposes like spending time with family, rather than using their PTO for purposes relating to their service in the

Guard or reserves.

- The last bill I'll mention creates a new commission to study and make recommendations for developing and implementing a statewide strategic plan to make Maryland the best state for veterans and military families - a lofty goal that we take seriously. You can find the other bills listed on our website.

## Q&A

- Commissioner Calvert – When did Trust Fund stop? February.
- Chairman Tyler – Can the Trust still accept money? Yes.
- Commissioner Macri – Will there be dedicated space for women Veterans at the new home? In the design phase now. Charlotte Hall has dedicated space for female Veterans and spouses. Will take message back.
- Commissioner Blair asked about plans for a home on the Eastern Shore. None planned at this time.
- Commissioner Davis asked about the CBOC in Baltimore County. That is a federal facility.
- Eddie Peters asked about the name change and mission change. Serving active duty service members and military connected families has always been the mission. Now the name will better reflect that.
- Commissioner Macri is concerned about the name change. Women Veterans are already confused with military connected spouses.

Chairman Tyler called for a vote on accepting the January Minutes. Minutes were accepted.

Chairman called on Denise Nooe for her report:

- Asked Commissioners and guests to please sign in for the Minutes.
- New mileage rate is 67 cents per mile. Please check your travel forms to make sure all your personal information is correct.
- Convention season is approaching. Please email the name and contact information of incoming officers. Also need the names of outgoing officers for Citations.
- Memorial Day Proclamations and speeches – please let us know as soon as possible if you are requesting Proclamations for events you are attending.
  - Thank you to Commissioner Foxworth for accepting a Memorial Day speech request.
  - I will send out emails if we have more speech requests.
- Subcommittees must submit a written report for inclusion in the minutes.

Chairman Tyler called on Audrey Severn from Senator Van Hollen's office for any updates.

Audrey Severn:

- There are no legislative updates for the Commission.
- If Senator Van Hollen's office may be of assistance, please contact her.
- Nan Mann, also from Senator Van Hollen's office was in the meeting room.

Chairman Tyler called on James Marchinke for his presentation on employment services from the State of Maryland.

Q&A

- Commissioner Davis – do Veterans receive priority hiring from the State of Maryland. Yes, 10 points for Veterans, and 10 Points for spouses starting July 1, 2024
- Vice Chairman Moore asked if there are metrics that measure success. Also announced that Mr. Marchinke is a former American Legion State Commander. Yes, there are metrics.
- Commissioner Macri – Spouses, who did not serve will now get the same preference as Veterans. Not serving, they had the time to develop their skills and training, unlike the Veteran who served.
- Chairman Tyler said when employers look at the pool of applicants, spouses were not being looked at. This gives them a better opportunity.
- Commissioner Bowers said this is critical for spouses.
- Commissioner Hartman knows a nurse – took 19 months for her to get a job because of the need for Maryland credentialing.
- Commissioner Reuter mentioned the annual small business training at the Maritime Institute. LeRoy Thomas explained that small business owners are trained how to go after government contracts.
- Guest from the Department of Corrections who did not identify herself – asked about qualification gaps. Mr. Marchinke said he would research it and get back to her.

Chairman Tyler called on Aaron Mowery, Boots to Suits for his presentation. He founded JDog Moving and Hauling.

Q&A

- Commissioner Bowers asked when the networking group meets. 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at the Chamber of Commerce.
- Commissioner Foxworth asked how you measure success. Butts in seats.
- Commissioner Blair asked if private citizens could help. Yes, by hiring Veterans.
- Commissioner Davis asked if you have any counselors or trained specialists at meetings. To be a presenter, you have to be a member of the Chamber.
- Commissioner Moore asked if this was only in Washington County. Yes, but could be a model for other counties.
- Eddie Peters – Boots to Suits is a safe place.

- Commissioner Davis – if you are asking someone to come and speak, how do you deal with issues such as sexual trauma? Participation is totally voluntary. You don't have to bring it up/speak about it. Other people in the room are resources.
- Commissioner Blair – You have only one location. Do you plan to spread this around the State? Eddie Peters – first and foremost, we are there to do business with each other.
- Aaron Mowery – all presenters so far, have been Veterans.

Chairman Tyler called on Airelle Jordan for her presentation. She is a licensed counselor in Maryland.

#### Q&A

- Commissioner Davis – asked about suicide and how to approach it. Approach with prevention. Talk about core skills so suicide is not the only option.
- Commissioner Bowers – this is not typical to have this many people at Commission meetings. We all have challenges and hardships, but you don't share what you are going through because of security clearances.
- Arielle Jordan – one of the most difficult client populations was working with Special Ops at Walter Reed. Very challenging.
- Commissioner Moore – do you have time to work with professional societies? Yes, and also other therapists who want to be certified.
- James Marchinke – do you have any “me” time? Yes.
- Commissioner Killebrew – where is your practice? It is a telehealth practice. She does travel for training.
- Commissioner Reuter – was a medic in the service. Had to have a clearance. Do you have a clearance? No, not in private practice. Did have a clearance while in the military.

Chairman Tyler – Thank you to all the presenters. Commissioner Bowers planned the first two presenters and he planned the third. It is important you share this information with your own organizations.

Chairman Tyler called for the Subcommittee Reports

- Homeless Subcommittee
  - Commissioner Reuter is the only member. He is seeking other members. If you are interested in joining, please contact Commissioner Reuter. He lives in the Baltimore Metro area. Needs help with the other parts of the State.
  - Commissioner Macri asked if he refers to MCVET. Yes.
- Subcommittee Combating Substance Misuse
  - Commissioner Macri gave the report.
  - A written report is attached to the minutes.
  - Proposing a summit on this issue. Needs help from other Commissioners.
  - Commissioner Reuter – there are 34 vacancies for psychiatrists and clinical counselors in the Baltimore VA hospital system.

- Chairman Tyler said that communication needs to be improved among Commissioners.
- Arielle Jordan – comment about the reimbursement rate is correct. She bills \$175 and is reimbursed \$70.
- Commissioner Killebrew – there is also a shortage of therapists in Prince George's County. Some Veterans want to speak to a male therapist and there are none available/accepting clients.

Chairman Tyler called on Commissioners to provide information for the Round Robin portion of the meeting:

- Commissioner Welsh – will not apply for reappointment. Personally and professionally, she cannot devote the time needed to the Commission. She did make a recommendation to Secretary Woods for her seat. A Navy retiree who is now a government civilian.
- Commissioner Hardebeck – no updates
- Commissioner Rosas – currently on travel which is why he had to call in. Asked if there was any legislative change to the amount waived from state income tax for military retirees.
  - Deputy Secretary Cohen – no change to the amount this year.
- Vice Chairman Moore – On March 16<sup>th</sup> Secretary Woods spoke at the American Legion National Commander Banquet.
  - AL Department of Maryland Convention is 7/16 – 19.
  - AL Cemetery Committee had a concern about one of the MDVA cemeteries. A meeting with MDVA is being arranged.
  - AL representatives recently met with Congressman Ivey.
- Commissioner Hartman – is the President of the Frederick Chapter of the VVA. Recent events:
  - Attended the Dignified burial ceremony at Rocky Gap.
  - Represented Secretary Woods at the Francis Scott Key Post dinner.
  - Part of the team that helped with the claims clinic held in Eldersburg.
  - USVA released a report about toxic exposure sites in the US – Ft. Detrick, APG, Ft. Ritchie and Ft. Meade are on the list. Soldiers stationed there have developed illnesses related to toxic exposures.
- Commissioner Bowers – this is the first Commission meeting held in Hagerstown. He introduced additional guests in the audience. Platoon 22 in Frederick just bought 6 houses to provide affordable housing.
- Commissioner Blair – has been working with a widow of a Veteran who passed away from the effects of Agent Orange.
  - Attended the Gilchrist Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.
  - Marine Corps League Convention is scheduled May 9 – 11 in Ocean City.
- Commissioner Thornton – he is back after some time away due to his health. He is the oldest Commissioner both in age and in time served on the Commission. Applause from the Commission to welcome him back.
- Commissioner Holcombe – represents the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional. Thanks to the presenters for the valuable presentations. Congressman Mfume has started a 7 week cyber program.



- Commissioner Killebrew represents the 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional. Member of the DAV, Sgts. Association in Clinton and the Tuskegee Airman Association. Air travel delays are not just because of shortage of air traffic controllers. We also have a shortage of aviation crews.
- Commissioner Davis – Commission held a recent meeting at Platoon 22.
  - VFW State Convention is May 28<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> in Ocean City.
  - Thanks Secretary Woods for the connection to the National Naval Officers Association.
  - Bill has been submitted to Congress for a Congressional Medal for an African American Naval Officer.
- Commissioner Macri spoke of the Asian American Center in Frederick which will be honoring Veterans on Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 to 5:00.
  - She is on the VA Advisory Committee for Women Veterans. Topics discussed were the PACT Act, toxic exposure, and fertility.
  - She will be giving a presentation on the Japanese American Experience during WWII at Leisure World.
  - JAVA is holding a Memorial Day service.
- Commissioner Stem – appreciated the information provided by the presenters.
  - She is active in Carroll County. Services are provided for Veterans experiencing homelessness.
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Celebration of Veterans will be held at the Farm Museum on May 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Commissioner Reuter represents the PVA. There are programs for persons who develop MS or ALS – there is specialized assistance.
  - PVA is supporting a bill that survivors of those who develop ALS do not have to wait 7 years for benefits.
  - PVA annual meeting will be in September in Delaware.
  - Some communities are considering paying for medical training in exchange for the provider serving in that community after training.
- Commissioner Calvert - represents the 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District and also served as the Chair of the Commission to Establish a Women Veterans Memorial. Secretary Woods submitted the report to the General Assembly, but there has been no feedback. Who will make the decision on where the Memorial goes? Asked Deputy Secretary Cohen to follow-up with Secretary Woods.
  - She also asked about the possibility of a road dedicated to former Secretary George Owings. Suggested Maryland Route 260 which goes through Owings.
  - She is the Service Officer for her Post. Do you know where your DD-214 is? Does your family know where it is?
  - On April 25<sup>th</sup>, Posts in southern Maryland are taking 50 Veterans by bus to the Memorials in DC. Five women Veterans are included.
- Scott Schlesinger – will replace Erwin Burtnick representing the Jewish War Veterans of America. He has not been appointed yet.
  - MOWW is hosting the Massing of the Colors at Ft. Meade on May 19<sup>th</sup>.
  - His Post in Silver Spring will be hosting the Dining Out program on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Commissioner Foxworth represents the Retired Enlisted Association – all branches of the military may join.

- His focus is assisting service members when they transition out of active-duty military.
  - Howard County is building a monument to Veterans and Military Families.
- Commissioner Shiffrin represents MOAA. MOAA supports all who served. Also mentioned the Massing of the Colors at Ft. Meade.
- Commissioner Hanson – represents the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District on the Eastern Shore.
  - There is a Veterans Court on the lower shore.
  - Service providers on the Eastern Shore are indicating that claims are clearing VA a lot faster now, than when the Pact Act was first implemented.
  - Vets seeking care at the VA outpatient clinics prefer in-person appointments, not telehealth.
- Commissioner Calvert added that the Charlotte Hall outpatient clinic is not taking new patients.
- Commissioner Killebrew talked about fuel for helicopters leaking on the airstrips.
- Commissioner Holcombe described Boys State and Girls State and gave the website: [Boysstate@mdlegion.org](mailto:Boysstate@mdlegion.org).
- Chairman Tyler thanked today's presenters.
  - Reminder to respond to Denise when she emails and asks for a response.
  - Attended a public safety presentation, which included representatives of five different correctional facilities.
  - Also attended a Veterans Court proceeding in Baltimore with Judge Weinstein presiding.
  - July 16<sup>th</sup> is the next Commission meeting. It will be on the Eastern Shore. It is also his birthday.

Vice Chair Moore led the closing prayer and Salute to Flag.

Meeting adjourned at 1:20 pm.