

The mission of the Commission is to evaluate the needs of county veterans and their families against the programs and services offered within Prince George's County, and to promote the development or expansion of programs and services when a need is identified.

COMMISSION FOR VETERANS
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES
6420 Allentown Road
Camp Springs, MD 20748

June 1, 2020 Meeting via Zoom
Minutes

In light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

- I. Call to Order
 - a. The meeting was called to order at 7:03PM. Participants recited the Pledge of Allegiance and had a moment of silence for our fallen veterans.

- II. Roll Call
 - a. Those present were Andre R. Martel (acting chair), Lisa Alston (acting vice chairperson), Kenneth Hathford, Ethel Sligh, Dr. James Dula, Kimberly Lewis, and Jermoni Dowd (host).
 - b. Excused absence
 - a. Ronald Dickens
 - c. Absent
 - a. Glynn Parker
 - b. Richard Hollis
 - d. Guests
 - a. Brenda Carrington – head of the Surviving Spouse Program in Veterans Affairs
 - b. Stella Hargrove – affiliate of CPAC

- III. The May meeting minutes were distributed prior to the meeting and approved without correction. Jermoni Dowd will publish the minutes.

- IV. Chairman's Report – Andy Martel
 - a. Chairman Martel is working with AMVETS and the Census.
 - b.** Due to the federal and state restrictions on public gatherings and the guidance of public health officials amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rolling to Remember motorcycle demonstration did not take place in Washington, D.C. The motorcycle ride occurred, but the participation was low.

- V. Dr. Dula's Report

The mission of the Commission is to evaluate the needs of county veterans and their families against the programs and services offered within Prince George's County, and to promote the development or expansion of programs and services when a need is identified.

- a. Dr. Dula reported that May was a great month. The Prince George's County Veterans' Affairs Office served more than 420 contacts via phone and email. Veterans and their families were particularly in need of food during the pandemic. With the assistance of faith based agencies, the Veterans Affairs Office ensured that those persons received food.
- b. Voting
 - a. Dr. Dula encouraged all to vote. This year, voting is by mail in ballot. He reminded all to sign the ballot envelope prior to mailing.
- c. Census
 - a. The Census is ongoing. So far, 60% of Prince George's County residents have completed the Census.
- d. Veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - a. Dr. Dula's office has ensured veterans that the Veteran Administration and other veteran associations are available to assist veterans who have PTSD
- e. The HELP Initiative is well underway. The HELP acronym stands for:
 - a. H - Health and Homelessness
 - b. E - Education and Employment
 - c. L - Labor
 - d. P - People / Quality of Life
 1. There has been particular focus on the People / Quality of Life Initiative during the pandemic
 2. Dr. Dula gave an example of how he used resources to assist a disabled veteran and his spouse who needed assistance in making their home handicapped accessible for the veteran. Through a series of emails, Dr. Dula was able to establish some resources for the family. Unfortunately, the veteran passed away before all of the resources were made available, however, the Office of Veterans Affairs continues to assist the spouse of that veteran.
- f. The new Staff Members to the Prince George's County Office of Veteran Affairs are as follows:
 - a. Mr. Smith is Program Manager and Administration
 - b. Brenda Carrington will handle the surviving spouse initiative
 - c. Patricia Otto will continue to serve as Dr. Dula's executive assistant
 - d. Partnerships
 1. Dr. Dula has been successful in Interface and other partnerships.
 2. The Prince George's County Veterans Affairs Office has developed a partnership with various groups and non-profit organizations to assist veterans beyond county lines, as our partnerships send referrals from other counties and states. Dr. Dula encouraged Commissioners to refer any potential partnerships to his office.
- g. Dr. Dula thanked Commissioner Ethel Sligh for sending him emails that he shares with his staff to follow up.

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- h. The SSDF Program assists veterans in paying rent. He will send the information to us by tomorrow morning so that we can distribute to veterans in need.

VI. Old Business

- a. None

VII. New Business

- a. None

VIII. Committee Reports

a. Acting Vice Chair, Lisa Alston

- a. Commissioner Alston reported that due to COVID-19, her work has been limited, however, she is posting information and events on social media.

b. Commissioner Kenneth Hathford

- a. Commissioner Hathford's committee has been working with his group. They were unable to participate in the parade this year, but hopes to do so next year

c. Commissioner Ethel Sligh

- a. Commissioner Sligh has stayed in touch with the Veterans Affairs Administration and homeless shelter. She has also shared information to veterans.
- b. Commissioner Sligh shared a story about, a veteran and rehabilitation specialist who was passionate about helping veterans with addiction. He contracted COVID-19 from the veterans, but was so dedicated that he went back to work even though he was ill. Unfortunately, he later died of COVID-19.

d. Commissioner Kimberly Lewis

- a. Commissioner Lewis reported that the Census Project that the Prince George's County Bar Association partnered with the Maryland National Capitol Park and Planning went well. The hope was to reach as many people (including veterans) as possible.

IX. Citizen Comments

- a. Stella Hargrove works with CPAC on providing hot meals for veterans. She requested that the Commissioners notify her of any veterans who need hot meals. She will take on the responsibility of delivering them.

X. Honors to the Colors

- a. Will be done remotely

XI. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 7:36PM. Next Meeting TBD because the Commission does not generally meet during July and August.

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Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly V. Lewis