

Carroll County Veterans Advisory Council Meeting

Meeting Date: November 18, 2025

Start Time: 2:00 pm

Location: American Legion Post 31 (2 Sycamore Street, Westminster, MD)

Chairperson: Bob Eney

Vice-Chair: Elaine May-Stem

Topic	Discussion
Mission Statement	To evaluate, develop and promote new and existing programs and services for Veterans and their families within Carroll County.
Vision Statement	That Carroll County offers our Veterans quality services and programs to ensure the enrichment and enhancements of life for our men and women and their families.
Attendance (Appointed VAC Members are in bold)	Bob Eney, Marc Fisher, Nigel Forney, Brian Kilheffer, Bill Nash, Mick Schmidt, Celene Steckel, Jason Martin, Gina Valentine, Amanda Coshun, Bobbie Lawrence, Tony Roman, Rick Pollard, Francine Hahn, Larry Burbank, Reva Coussey, Stacey Nash, Kati Townsley, Rodger Portz, Ann Gilbert.
Welcome and Introductions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Chair's Comments</u> (Bob Eney) – opened the meeting by welcoming those attending. Carroll County participated in Operation Green Light; a proclamation was given at the Commissioner's Open Session on October 30th. Attended Veterans Parade in Downtown Westminster on November 8th along with Celene Steckel and Christine Cambareri. Handed out rack cards and stress flags to promote Carroll County's Veterans Celebration scheduled for May 3, 2026. 2. <u>Attendee Introductions and Announcements</u> 3. <u>Pledge of Allegiance</u> led by Bob Eney 4. <u>Commissioner's Report</u> – None; not in attendance. 5. <u>Public Comment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celene Steckel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thanked everyone for participating in the Veterans Parade. Next year, we would like to promote the event more and encourage greater efforts to market it ○ Gina Valentine, Celene Steckel, and Secretary Rothstein attended the 250th US Marine Corps Birthday Celebration in Annapolis on November 10th ○ Veterans Celebration rack cards are in the back to start marketing the event • Marc Fisher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attended the 250th Marine Corps Birthday Celebration at Flood Zone in Union Bridge on November 8.
Old Business	<p><u>Approval of Minutes</u> – Quorum established; October minutes approved.</p> <p><u>Monthly Program Reports:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Veteran's Program Coordinators' Report for October 2025:</u> (Rick Pollard) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39 claims submitted • 25 new representations • 59 office visits • 24 phone appointments • 1,657 telephone and email contacts

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total cumulative payments since program start have exceeded \$95 million• VA is now utilizing “automated technology” (not AI), in the processing of claims, especially dependent benefits. Have noticed that claims for dependents are processing much faster in the past couple of months. The VA system is now processing approximately 1,000 more dependent-related benefits/claims each month due to deployment of automated technology systems. <p>2. <u>Veteran’s Shuttle Report for October 2025:</u> – (Stacey Nash)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Month of October, 26 Veterans served and 48 trips• Total cost: \$9,633.51 <p><u>Update on Employment Initiatives for Veterans</u> (Reva Coussey)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A total of 10 veterans were served in Carroll County. Of these, 5 completed their counseling, and 5 have successfully secured employment in Baltimore and Carroll County• Barriers to employment: Veterans face challenges such as unemployment and general re-entry issues <p><u>Update on Veteran Services Program Grant</u> (Bobbie Lawrence)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Kahlert grant was approved in October and will fund emergency needs for veterans• Tony and Bobbie are working together to submit a list of names to Babylon Vault for Thanksgiving meals• We are gathering names for Elaine May-Stem for the Toys for Tots program• Megan Klein visited the South Carroll Senior Center and shared information about our services• A family experiencing a housing emergency has signed a lease and will be moving into a home in Baltimore County. If you have any items you would like to donate, please let Bobbie know• Assisted a veteran with rental support and help paying their BGE bill• VASH is making changes, including eliminating the “interest list.” Each month, during the Ending Veteran Homelessness meeting, they will review and discuss individuals who may qualify. This will allow for greater involvement in selecting recipients of VASH vouchers
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meeting with Friendship Place is scheduled for November 20th to learn about their services
New Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nigel Forney <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attended Volunteer Maryland Military Coalition – first meeting last month. ○ Proposed that the Pledge of Allegiance be listed first under Welcome and Introductions. All approved. Per Gina Valentine, this does not need to be a change made in the bylaws. Moving forward, the agenda will reflect this change. • Roger Portz <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduced as Program Specialist for the VA National Cemetery Administration ○ Brought literature for what we do at the VA National Cemetery Administration ○ Provides all burial and memorial benefits for eligible dependents ○ Burial and memorial benefits available include a gravesite in any VA national cemetery with available space, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone, marker, or medallion, Presidential Memorial Certificates, and a burial flag all at no cost to the family. ○ In terms of eligibility, as long as you are eligible for VA Healthcare, you are eligible for our services. ○ Would like to do a formal Power point at next meeting. • Gina Valentine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brought up the potential of having a holiday luncheon at our next meeting date on December 16th. Lunch at 12:30 p.m., meeting to start at 2 p.m. Marc Fisher confirmed space availability at the American Legion. All agreed. Amanda Coshun to send out invitation to the Veteran's Advisory Council and collect RSVP's so we have a head count.
Announcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kati Townsley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Westminster Rescue Mission is offering sponsorship opportunities for Thanksgiving ○ Shepherd's Staff Community Thanksgiving Day Dinner from 12 – 2 p.m. at St. John Catholic Church Portico. Rock Salt provides the food. • Mick Schmidt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carroll Chapter 22 – 75th anniversary banquet at Friendly Farms; Saturday, November 29th.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celene Steckel<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ SNAP benefits have been reinstated. An additional \$10 million has been allocated to food banks, so Carroll County will see an increase in food supplies. There will be a food distribution event tomorrow 11/19 at 3 p.m. at the Union Bridge Community Hall—drive-thru format.○ Work is underway to align the bylaws across the county’s commissions. A few items may need to be amended to ensure consistency across the board. <p>Bob Eney adjourns the meeting of the VAC.</p>
Next Meeting Date	Tuesday December 16. Holiday Luncheon at 12:30 p.m. with regularly scheduled meeting to follow at 2 p.m. at the American Legion Post #31, 2 Sycamore Street, Westminster.