

**Fulton County Veterans Empowerment Commission, Inc.**  
**Monday, December 6, 2021 at 5 p.m. (Zoom)**

**POST AGENDA MINUTES – RATIFIED**

**This document has been ratified or approved by the Fulton County Veterans Empowerment Commission, Inc. and is not binding on the County or any officer.**

**Call to Order/Welcome**

- The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m.

**\*\*A QUORUM WAS PRESENT\*\***

- **Members Present:** Jim Garcia, Shawn Hanley, Patricia Lewis, Eldson McGhee, Anthony Merritt, Michael Mizell
- **Members Absent:** Louis Coroso, Earnest Allen
- **Staff Present:** Fran Calhoun (External Affairs), Jasmine Campbell (External Affairs), Joey Logan-Pugh (County Attorney’s Office)

Commissioner Marvin S. Arrington Jr., District Five

- Thanked all members for volunteering. Hopefully ideas from the Veterans Empowerment Commission, Inc. will advise the Board of Commissioners on how to better serve Veterans, direct Veterans to Countywide resources, and spend any allocated funding for recommendations.
  - Informed members the Fulton County 2022 budget will likely be decided in January or February so it may be good to make some budget recommendations for veterans to the Board of Commissioners soon.
- Would like to make sure Fulton County is serving Veterans adequately. The Veterans Affairs Department in DeKalb County has been in place for 10 years and he would like a similar system in Fulton County.

Comments

- Shawn Hanley: Suggested diversity in the membership by including a healthcare worker who worked in a Veterans Affairs hospital. Hospital nurses and clinicians are examples of individuals with professional experiences related to Veterans service delivery challenges. Remaining Commissioners might be focused on finding Veterans and should consider this important connection when making appointments.
  - Joey Logan-Pugh: Read draft Bylaws that would allow other professionals with Veterans expertise to join the Commission.
- Rev. Eldson McGhee: Will provide potential names of new members via email to Fulton County Staff.

**Taskforce Organizational Structure Tasks**

Fran Calhoun, Intergovernmental & Interagency Affairs Division Manager

- It is appropriate to consider agenda action items and move forward with a simple majority of members who are already appointed to the Commission.
- Requested members to provide feedback for proposed meeting schedule. For example, let staff know if there needs to be a later start time or new dates.

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Joey Logan-Pugh, Assistant County Attorney

- Draft Bylaws will be finalized by the County Attorney's office shortly and be shared before the next meeting with members.

*Election of Officers*

- Fran Calhoun requested nominations for the following officers:
  - President: Eldson McGhee
  - Vice-President: None
  - Secretary: None
  - Treasurer: None

Nominations were stalled due to un-readiness.

Comments

- Patricia Lewis: Requested biographies of members before the vote. Veterans of Virtue is her organizational that helps Veterans be self-sustainable and she would like to discuss with the members what is currently being done including suicide prevention kits.
- Michael Mizell: Would like to wait until the other Board of Commissioners appointments have been made and biographies received to vote. Both can be completed before the January 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.
  - Jasmine Campbell: Only one biography from member (Patricia Lewis) has been received so would like to have commitments from members on December 2021 submission deadline.
- Commissioner Marvin S. Arrington Jr.: We are in a budget process so recommendations for Veterans should be given to the BOC between January-February to obtain a financial commitment from Fulton County. Also confirmed the County will be providing money to nonprofits that are already providing services to Veterans based on recommendations.
  - Eldson McGhee: Suggested members make a recommendation for officers based on public service records and not only biographies. Provided examples of his career experience in Veterans Affairs and would like to vote tonight to move forward and get work started. Focus of this group is on Fulton County Veterans and he would like to be in a leadership role in this Commission. Also expressed gratitude to Commissioner Arrington for creating this Commission.
  - Fran Calhoun provided BOC meeting schedule and mentioned the BOC usually votes on the budget by January 31, 2021.
- Patricia Lewis: How long does the position last if elected?
  - Fran Calhoun: The term of office for this election will be for one year.
- Jim Garcia suggested Fulton County staff call each BOC member and inform them of their need for appointments to the Commission. Commissioner Lee Morris informed him he plans to make his two appointments soon but did not have notice.

Vote

- Fran Calhoun requested a vote be taken on whether to hold elections tonight or wait until a time certain to be determined by the Veterans Empowerment Commission. She mentioned that it could take months to fully populate the Commission.

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- Jim Garcia made a motion to postpone the election of officers for one month until the January 6, 2022 meeting. Michael Mizell seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following votes:
  - Yes: Michael Mizell, Jim Garcia, Anthony Merritt, Shawn Hanley
  - No: Eldson McGhee, Patricia Lewis

*Approval of Meeting Schedule*

- All members agreed to the following meeting schedule: Monday, December 20 at 5 p.m., Thursday, January 6 at 5 p.m., and Thursday, January 20 at 5 p.m.

*Discussion: Annual Objectives*

- Joey Logan Pugh confirmed we will be creating a nonprofit.
  - Commissioner Marvin S. Arrington Jr. requested a copy of Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws draft.
- Eldson McGhee: There are resources available that need to be used to try to eliminate homelessness in Fulton County, with a focus on homeless veterans that are in the City of Atlanta. Will send resume with proposed budget to County Staff and members.
- Jim Garcia: Suggested to do little things and not just big things to recognize Veterans that will be easy to accomplish with approved funding. Examples: BOC can ask local merchants for voluntary designation of parking spaces reserved for Veterans.
- Michael Mizell: Identify other 501(c)(3) organizations that are already doing things for Veterans in Fulton County. This Commission can become a clearinghouse that will have a list of resources available to help, perhaps with a call center. Example: Rally Point is focused on housing for homeless Veterans across Metro Atlanta and has an Employment Agency. Fire and Police departments will know where to find homeless people and can provide statistics and connections to other groups.
  - Commissioner Marvin S. Arrington Jr.: Fulton County recently purchased four hotels on Fulton Industrial Blvd. One goal is to provide housing to Veterans in at least one dedicated building. Management onsite will also include a restaurant and employment resources.
  - Eldson McGhee: Does not want to recreate the wheel and agrees we just need to obtain a list of Fulton County providers. There is a political process that must be addressed and organization is necessary. Fulton County should be the designation location for Veterans to live. The Georgia Department of Veterans Services should provide more claim agents in Fulton County.
- Shawn Hanley: Transportation for Veterans to physician appointments is a big problem that will not cost a lot of money. Having a dedicated Fulton County VSO liaison to help with claims backlog can also be addressed by this Commission.
  - Fran Calhoun: Offered to provide the Department of Senior Services' transportation costs that can be used to create a budget.
- Fran Calhoun: Asset mapping, transportation, claims filing support were all listed as annual objectives.

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**Next Steps**

- Tony Merritt: Suggested members bring the provider list together for review at the December 20, 2021 meeting.
  - Fran Calhoun will reach out to the Georgia Department of Veterans Services.
  - Commissioner Marvin S. Arrington Jr. requested each member send a list of organizations that serve Veterans that they are aware of right now. This information will help with budget requests to the Board of Commissioners.

Fran Calhoun, Intergovernmental & Interagency Affairs Division Manager

- Requested biographies be sent to [Jasmine.Campbell@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:Jasmine.Campbell@fultoncountyga.gov).
- Will share the draft Bylaws with members once received from County Attorney's Office.
- Will remind BOC members of remaining appointments.

**Adjourn**

- The meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm.