



## **Veterans' Commission December Minutes**

Tuesday, December 30th, 2025 at 12:00 PM via Zoom

**Commission Attendees:** Adler Archer, Councilman Zach Blanchard, Adobolia Buford, KeSean Johnson, Major Scott Swenson, Jeromie Williams, Veobia Akilo

**Staff and Guests:** Chief Jill Muth (OECR), Greg Laub

### **Gold Star Family Day Advocacy**

The meeting focused on advocating for Gold Star Family Day recognition, with Greg highlighting efforts to secure a mayor's message or event for the last Sunday in September. Jill emphasized the importance of the Veterans Commission in addressing veterans' issues and mentioned that two new veteran members are expected to join the commission in late February. Jill also provided an update on the commission's structure and communication processes, including the need for a roll call and future notifications for events like swear-ins.

### **Veterans Banquet and Survey Planning**

The commission discussed the NAVETS Banquet on February 21st, where they plan to purchase a table and ad space, with Jill sharing the invitation with colleagues. They also discussed a survey being developed by Blue Star Families to identify priority issues for military families in Baltimore, which the commission will help distribute. Jill mentioned the appointment of a new Chief of the Police Accountability Division, Mr. Marlon Marion, and noted potential opportunities for collaboration between police accountability and veterans initiatives.

### **Veterans Commission Organizational Updates**

Jill provided updates on organizational changes, including Tashawn Smith's elevation to Deputy Chief for Police Accountability and Jamel's appointment as Chief of External Affairs. She discussed the legislative training held on December 15th and mentioned that the legislative division is working on distributing recordings. Jill also introduced a general email box for the Veterans Commission and discussed the possibility of business cards for commissioners. She shared that Jamel is working on outreach SOPs and mentioned a meeting with Councilman Blanchard about potentially changing the parade route to incorporate Redwood Street, which has historical significance for veterans.

## **Veteran Initiatives and Parade Planning**

The meeting focused on discussing parade route changes to avoid sensitive areas and exploring opportunities for veteran-focused initiatives in Redwood Street. Jill shared plans to introduce a developer to the group for collaboration on creating affordable housing, veteran business incentives, and community spaces. The team discussed the potential for a veteran-focused coffee shop or community space, with Adler suggesting involvement from veteran employee resource groups. Jill also mentioned early planning for Civil Rights Week 2026 and Black History Month activities, including a reading event with GED centers and a potential parade participation.

## **Veterans Commission Mission and Priorities**

The Veterans Commission approved their mission statement, which envisions Baltimore City as a place where every veteran and their family can thrive with dignity, equity, and support. The Commission also discussed participating in the Black History Month parade, with KeSean highlighting the historical significance of Black veterans' contributions. Jill announced she would submit an application for the parade spot and keep everyone updated. The conversation ended with a discussion about brainstorming top priorities for 2026, with Jill inviting participants to share their ideas using a Miro board.

## **Veteran Support Program Recommendations**

The group discussed recommendations for veteran support programs, focusing on categories like housing, education, training, workforce development, and benefits. Adobolia highlighted issues with SNAP benefits for veterans without dependents, prompting KeSean to emphasize the need for job coaching and resume writing services. Adler introduced a framework of five categories—Healthy People, Health Habitats, Cohesive Communities, Shared Prosperity, and Engaged Citizens—to help organize initiatives and attract funding. The team agreed to vet programs for effectiveness and impact, ensuring they align with veterans' needs and have a positive footprint.

## **Veterans Support and Community Initiatives**

The meeting focused on initiatives to support veterans, particularly in community development, youth mentorship, and workforce integration. Jill highlighted the potential for veterans to contribute to stabilizing communities in Baltimore and suggested mentorship as a key avenue for this, noting similarities between veterans with PTSD and youth from adverse backgrounds. KeSean shared his personal experiences with PTSD and emphasized the importance of supporting veterans in transitioning to civilian jobs. The group discussed organizing events, such as a Veterans Day Ball, to foster networking and raise awareness about veterans' contributions. They also explored the idea of using AI to support veterans and youth in workforce development. The conversation ended with plans to continue discussions on AI initiatives and to establish a text thread for sharing updates and ideas.