



**OFFICE OF
EQUITY AND
CIVIL RIGHTS**

Tuesday, February 24, 2026 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), Trudy Conley (MD's Commitment to Veterans), Andre Johnson (OECR), Brad Byrnes (Byrnes and Associates), Shawn Davis (Veteran and Community Member)

Veterans Commission Updates and Events

The meeting covered updates on various initiatives and events related to the Veterans Commission. Jill reported on the NAVETS banquet, ongoing commission vacancies, legislative season activities, and resources for family caregivers. She also mentioned a water main break at McVet Center, which has been resolved, and shared plans for Gold Star Families Day and Veterans Day events. KeSean highlighted the participation in the Black History Month parade and the upcoming Veterans Statewide Resource Fair. The commission approved the January 2026 meeting minutes.

Historic Baltimore Properties Development Plan

Brad Byrnes, representing Byrnes & Associates, shared his family's history of developing historic properties in downtown Baltimore since 1981. He detailed their recent projects, including the renovation of the Vickers and Robert Garrett Buildings, the conversion of the Hotel RL into apartments, and their plans to purchase 7 East Redwood Street with a 20-year master lease agreement with Baltimore City. Burns also discussed their formation of the Historic Redwood Walk Association, which aims to honor veterans, police, and fire departments while restoring the area's historical significance and increasing the local tax base.

Parade Reroute and Veterans Day Planning

The meeting focused on rerouting a parade to Redwood Street instead of Baltimore Street, with participants expressing support for this change to enhance community engagement and historical recognition. Brad highlighted the historical significance of the B&O Railroad and the Garretts during the Civil War, while KeSean emphasized the importance of telling

comprehensive historical narratives. The group discussed plans to improve the parade experience by incorporating food, music, and other activities, with Councilman Blanchard and Jill agreeing to hold an internal meeting on March 3rd to further plan Veterans Day events. The conversation ended with a brief discussion on bylaws, with Jill introducing a template for review and future legal consultation.

Bylaws Review and Workforce Initiatives

The group discussed reviewing the bylaws and potentially meeting in person between March and April. They agreed to review the bylaws in the coming month to ensure alignment before any in-person meetings. The conversation also covered workforce development initiatives, including resume writing workshops and the importance of AI skills in the job market. Andre offered his services for resume writing workshops, and KeSean expressed interest in supporting AI and technology education for veterans. The group discussed the need for community partnerships with businesses to help veterans transition into civilian employment.

Veteran Support and AI Initiatives

The meeting focused on streamlining veteran support programs and leveraging AI to enhance community engagement and employment opportunities for veterans. Shawn Davis, with his extensive IT and AI experience, expressed interest in contributing to Baltimore's tech corridor vision and discussed potential collaborations with the city's Office of Homeless Services. Jill highlighted Councilman Blanchard's idea to partner with Gold Star families, which Zac expanded upon by suggesting a flag-planting initiative inspired by Boston Commons, with plans for further discussion. KeSean emphasized the importance of veterans in community development and proposed exploring AI opportunities with Adler and Commissioner Buford.

Veterans Engagement and Community Planning

The meeting focused on planning activities for veterans, including planting flags and a film shoot at the War Memorial on March 20th. The group discussed the success of recent events like the Black History Month parade and the National Association for Black Veterans' Buffalo Soldier event. KeSean highlighted the need for continued momentum and community engagement. Jill introduced the idea of exploring food access opportunities for veterans in Baltimore City, with plans to discuss further in the next meeting.