

## Military and Veterans Service Alliance (MAVSA) of The Lowcountry, South Carolina

[www.mavsasc.org](http://www.mavsasc.org)

### January 22, 2019 Summary Notes

Meeting Time: 1100am-1215pm

Meeting Location: Beaufort Jasper Hampton Comprehensive Health Services meeting room located at 721 South Carolina Highway 170 in Ridgeland

Participants: Rob Bridgers (Chair), Audra Harmen, Barbara Terry, Carl Wedler, Cheryl Simms, Connie Hipp, Dawn Hoffman, Dick Foster, Gina Franklin, Fred Leyda, Lauren Francis, Michael Lee, Michael Weiss, Paul Johnson, Sarah Eliasoph, Steve Szelmeczki, Tamra Avrit (Facilitator)

Time	Summary
1100	Rob Bridgers called the meeting to order. Each participant signed in and verified their contact information. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
1105	<p>Fred Leyda, Beaufort County Human Services Alliance Facilitator, welcomed the group to the meeting.</p> <p>Fred recognized and thanked Jim Moore for his past years of leadership and service to MAVSA. He discussed the purpose of the MAVSA is to serve as a workgroup to positively impact quality of life for active duty, veterans and their families in Beaufort County. Welcome and Introductions. He stated that the goals of the group are to move from MAVSA's role as a solely networking and educational organization to a working collaborative that accomplishes shared results together which address the needs of the military community.</p> <p>Fred shared two local referral sources for residents to access county and non-profit agencies in Beaufort County:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dial "211" for evening and weekend coverage which provides information and referral only; and</li> <li>• Dial "843-524-HELP" which connects with a live agent for a needs assessment and then connects to community resources based on the needs.</li> </ul> <p>Fred also discussed the use of Charity Tracker by the Community Services Organization (CSO) as an example of a successful Beaufort County collaborative accomplishment. The CSO is another Together for Beaufort County collaborative which is comprised of housing, food, and clothing-based non-profits working together to address shared needs and services for the indigent.</p>
1110	<p>Rob Bridgers, Chair, MAVSA, welcomed the group. Each member provided a self-introduction to the group and shared a recent organizational accomplishment. Highlights of the updates included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 70,000 military, veterans and spouses in Beaufort County, SC.</li> <li>• 14% of the County's population is military/veteran affiliated.</li> <li>• 2,500+ claims were filed by the VA Office in FY18.</li> <li>• 25,000+ Beaufort County veterans receive disability benefits accounting for \$190M in benefits received in FY18.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 1,000 transitioning Marines/year from the three commands. Some of those transitioning may choose to remain in Beaufort County.</li> <li>• There are 650 new VA enrollees/mo within the Charleston, SC office with an increase of the veteran population expected in Beaufort County.</li> <li>• Veterans Court is helping to gain access to services that includes the VA, mental healthcare, substance abuse treatment and family services which helps have charges dismissed if the subject is successful with treatment.</li> <li>• NAMI Homefront Program is available in person or online for family members. They will set up an in-person group program when they have enough people.</li> <li>• Memorial Day and Veterans Day celebrations are active in Hilton Head. Beaufort has had a Veteran’s Day parade in the past, but it was believed as Veteran’s Day was on a Sunday in 2018 that the parade was not scheduled. <i>Meeting Addendum: An annual Memorial Day ceremony has been held at Buckwalter Place in Bluffton and an annual Veterans Day parade has been held in downtown Bluffton. Both events, especially the parade, draw a lot of spectators.</i></li> <li>• There are numerous agencies in the local community helping military, veterans and families (e.g. TWEAC, Vantage Point Foundation, Summit Behavioral Health, Horizon Behavioral Health, One80 Place).</li> <li>• Three information flyers were distributed by different organizations and attached for information.</li> </ul>
1125	<p>Rob Bridgers asked members to review the MAVSA Mission and Vision. Tamra Avrit (facilitator) provided a handout which included other military/veteran collaboratives’ mission/vision statements from around the nation for comparative purposes. After discussion, the group affirmed that the current MAVSA mission and vision statements were sufficient based on where the collaborative is today.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mission - The Military and Veterans Services Alliance</b> endeavors to support and assist our local military service members, veterans, their immediate families and survivors, utilizing the combined services and resources of our community.</li> <li>• <b>Vision - The Military and Veterans Services Alliance</b> will become a model for all other communities in South Carolina to follow. We will engage in a culture of excellence by providing military service members, veterans, their immediate families and survivors with the best support, benefits, programs and guidance needed to enhance their future. We will treat our military service members and veterans with dignity and respect, and will respond to all needs in order to achieve success.</li> </ul> <p>Tamra then asked the group to review the goal statements (as found on the MAVSA website). She then asked the group to identify the associated metrics for each goal statement. Several attendees noted that the goals are not specific and are difficult to measure, in addition not particularly focused on a shared outcome of what the collaborative is intending to accomplish together.</p>
1145	<p>Lt. Szelmeczki, CHC, USN discussed some of the military community needs. The military way of life with frequent deployments and the unique culture of Parris Island creates different stressors on active duty members and their families. Family separation and relationship dynamics, substance abuse, financial fitness, and mental health were several of the issues noted.</p> <p>Tamra then asked the group to look at a listing of how other different military/veteran collaboratives have categorized and grouped military/veteran/family issues to better focus on collaborative goals and initiatives.</p>

	<p>The group reviewed the work areas and issues – and identified three major areas to focus future MAVSA efforts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health and Wellness;</li> <li>2. Education and Employment; and</li> <li>3. Community Outreach</li> </ol> <p>Several suggestions were offered by the members which could be considered in the future for MAVSA actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open the MAVSA meeting to press so that coverage could be gained in the local media to increase awareness of issues and needs;</li> <li>• Host a press event;</li> <li>• Host an information briefing for Beaufort County and local leaders to learn more about military, veteran and family issues/support and what is needed;</li> <li>• Develop the MAVSA website into a one-stop for community and non-profit referrals, such as the 843-524-HELP local community number; and</li> <li>• Connect with Doug Webb, Low Country VA Engagement Team for information (SC ANG for point of contact).</li> </ul>
1200	<p>Tamra will review three MAVSA collaborative areas ((1) Health and Wellness; (2) Education and Employment; and (3) Community Outreach) and align with the goal statements and metrics. She asked that members provide via email to <a href="mailto:TamraMAVSA@gmail.com">TamraMAVSA@gmail.com</a> by March 1, 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any other known organizations or people which are missing from MAVSA which need to be added; and</li> <li>• Any suggested website changes for <a href="http://www.mavsasc.org">www.mavsasc.org</a>.</li> </ul> <p><b>The next MAVSA meeting is Tuesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 11am at AMVETS Post 70 Hall, 1831 Ribaut Rd, Port Royal, SC 29935</b></p>
1215	Meeting Adjournment

MAVSA 2019 Meeting Dates (locations):

- Tuesday, April 23, 2019 – 11am @ AMVETS Post 70, Port Royal (Confirmed)
- July 23, 2019 – 11am @ Palmetto Electric, Ridgeland (T)
- October 22, 2019 – 11am @ TBD

<b>MAVSA</b>	
<b>Mission</b>	<b>Vision</b>
<p><b>The Military and Veterans Services Alliance</b> endeavors to support and assist our local military service members, veterans, their immediate families and survivors, utilizing the combined services and resources of our community.</p>	<p><b>The Military and Veterans Services Alliance</b> will become a model for all other communities in South Carolina to follow. We will engage in a culture of excellence by providing military service members, veterans, their immediate families and survivors with the best support, benefits, programs and guidance needed to enhance their future. We will treat our military service members and veterans with dignity and respect, and will respond to all needs in order to achieve success.</p>

### **Goals**

Without prejudice as to where, how long, or what branch one has served, active or veteran, male or female; We, the **Military and Veterans Services Alliance** will work to accomplish the following, using all available assets within the community and beyond:

1. Assist our military and veterans community in all the benefits to which they are entitled;
2. Work to obtain more resources for our military service members, veterans, their immediate families and survivors;
3. Acknowledge those companies, organizations, and/or county, state, or federal government services that excel in supporting military families and veterans in services, benefits, hiring and discounts;
4. Support any effort by a member organization that will benefit the military and veteran community;
5. Ensure that our community is a place where all military members and veterans are proud to live, raise a family, and retire;
6. Advocate for military and veterans issues.

### **MAVSA Values**

As the **Military and Veterans Services Alliance**, we value honesty, respect, service to community, patriotism, sacrifice and personal excellence. We acknowledge, respect and honor all military service members and veterans for their service to The United States of America, without regard to when or where they served. We proudly pledge ourselves to creating and maintaining a community where all military service members, veterans, their immediate families and survivors are proud to live. We have a passion for the military and veterans, and firmly believe that excellence is not a goal, it is a standard.