

ATTACHMENT 3

Date: November 20, 2016

To: Mayor Allison Silberberg
Alexandria City Hall
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

From: LTG (Retired) John R. (Bob) Wood
711 Potomac Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Subject: Alexandria Veterans Commission Proposal

Madam Mayor,

Alexandria is home to a large active duty military, retired, and veteran population along with their families. While difficult to accurately estimate, active duty service members are ever present shopping in our stores, renting properties, buying new homes, and participating in our community's life and livelihood. The surrounding military bases and installations annually transition over 15,000 military service members out of active service to civilian life. When their family members are included in this transition, this number is magnified. It is estimated that over 11% of Alexandria's population are veterans. And, at least 240 veteran-owned businesses call Alexandria home.

Alexandria is also home to an array of entities and activities involved in services and support to the military community and veterans. Capitol Post, a model national veteran transition support center located in Old Town, provides a business incubator along with education and counseling services for veterans and their families seeking jobs, starting businesses, and beginning new careers. Importantly, Alexandria's American Legion Post #24 resides in its historic home of Gadsby's Tavern where it continues its vital engagement with the veteran community. The Military Officers Association of America, National Military Family Association, and the Blinded Veterans Association are based here along with a host of other nonprofit veteran support organizations. Each year we honor veterans at the Rocky Versace memorial, recognize their sacrifices in 9/11 commemorations, and plan to recognize Hidden Heroes – the caregivers who support veterans and Wounded Warriors.

As much as Alexandria is home for veterans and their families, a base of operations for veteran owned businesses, and transition site for military members moving into civilian life, there is no entity within the city that coordinates and advances the

needs, activities, and growth of this remarkable community within our community. Veterans and their families are a key resource to power the city's growth, strengthen the city's neighborhoods, and add their talents to the city's businesses and agencies, public and private. While this progress forward is desirable and possible, it is not inevitable.

I strongly encourage you and the City Council to support the formation of an Alexandria Veterans Commission. This commission will represent and advance the interests and needs of Alexandria's community of active military members, veterans, their families, and caregivers, and capitalize on the strengths of this unique group of citizens. It will form, expand, and empower a network of mutually supporting activities serving the common purposes of community engagement, personal growth, and compassionate, caring support.

Sincerely,

John R. (Bob) Wood
Lieutenant General (Retired), US Army
Alexandria, Virginia

Emily McMahon
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