

## **Minutes**

**November 16, 2020**

### **Executive Committee**

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the South Carolina Military Base Task Force convened on November 16, 2020. This meeting was setup as a WebEx meeting.

A notice of the meeting was posted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

The following people attended the virtual meeting: Secretary Will Grimsley (SC Dept of Veterans' Affairs), Joe McLamb (Chief of Staff, SC Dept of Veterans' Affairs), Dan Beatty (Chairman), Mary Graham (Vice Chair and Charleston), Carl Blackstone (Columbia), Steve Creech (Sumter), Neal Pugliese (Beaufort), Ashely Teasdel (Department of Commerce), Brandon Wilson (Public Information Director, SC Dept of Veterans' Affairs), and Sandy Claypoole (Program Manager).

Dan Beatty gave opening remarks and updates on the Governor's Commanders Brief which was in October. This year was the first time the Governor's Brief was televised. Information from the Commanders showed that education was a number one priority, with suicide prevention and mental health also largely important.

At this point there was a major power outage in downtown Columbia, which effected Dan Beatty, Carl Blackstone and Ashley Teasdel. Dan and Ashley had to evacuate their building, which meant walking down stairs from the 25<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> floors. We tried to continue by phone, but the connections were not good.

Secretary Grimsley spoke about expanding Operation Palmetto Employment (OPE) to cover more service members transitioning out of the military.

### **Reports from Communities**

#### **Jim Wegmann – Beaufort**

The following was emailed from Jim Wegmann:

The NDAA requires Parris Island to be gender integrated within 5 years and MCRD San Diego to be integrated within 8 years. As I believe most are aware, the Commandant of the Marine Corps made a brief comment on integration based on a question in a fairly long interview recently. Essentially, the Commandant indicated the Marine Corps had three potential options to meet the requirements set out in the NDAA:

1. Infrastructure upgrades at both Recruit Depots to meet the integration requirements;
2. Consolidate Recruit Training at only one of the current Depots; and

### 3. Build an entirely new consolidated Recruit Depot centrally located in the US.

We understand that the Marine Corps is working on a study to review all potential possibilities to meet the integration requirements and that the study will be finalized and released sometime in the Spring. We believe the study will be more comprehensive than merely looking at infrastructure requirements and will also touch on environmental concerns, etc. that may pose challenges for any of the potential options.

The Commandant's comments about the Recruit Depots are a reminder of something leaders in the Beaufort Region have known for years - the military installations we host are not guaranteed and cannot be taken for granted. It is why the Beaufort region and other regions in SC have local committees like the MEC and also participate in legislative advocacy through the South Carolina Military Base Task Force. The message to our local area is simple, there are three things everyone in the Beaufort region should know in relation to the Commandant's recent comments:

- **This Threat is Real** – we cannot pretend that the risk of losing Parris Island is minimal. We have to take this threat seriously.
- **This Threat is Different** – we have known for a while that the Marine Corps has concerns about storms and tidal impact on Parris Island. The operational challenge for Parris Island created by the NDAA mandate is a new threat.
- **This Threat is Long-Term** – answers to the questions raised by the Commandant's comments cannot be addressed in a few months or even a few years. We must work now to protect and strengthen Parris Island for the decades ahead.

As a result - we are forming a Task Force of local government and business leaders to address the situation and to be ready to respond to the potential results of the integration study that is currently underway.

#### **Mary Graham – Charleston**

Confirmed the importance of education to service members and how that plays a part in BRAC.

#### **Carl Blackstone – Columbia**

Unable to connect due to power outage.

#### **Steve Creech – Sumter**

Announced CMSgt JoAnne Bass to become the 19<sup>th</sup> Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. She is the first woman to serve as the highest-ranking noncommissioned officer.

#### **Ashley Teasdel – Commerce**

Unable to connect due to power outage.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Claypoole