



Military Economic Development Advisory Committee (MEDAC) Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 26, 2026 | 1500 - 1630

**Department of Economic Development
4525 Main Street, Suite 700**

Members Present:

Chair RADM Robert Katz, Vice-Chair Dr. Charles Stuppard (CAPT), SES Steven Cade, RADM Mark Gemmill, RADM Gregory Nosal, RADM Fenton Priest, RADM Phil Olson, CAPT Bill Curtis, CAPT Robert Holmes, CDR Kathleen Owens, CAPT Christopher (Kit) Chope, CAPT Louis Schager, CAPT Vanessa Christie

Members Present Virtually:

CAPT Loren Heckelman, RADM Charles Kubic

Members Absent:

CAPT Andy Baan, CAPT J.J. Cummings, VBDA Rep Eric Keplinger

Guests/Advisors/Staff Present:

Rick Dwyer, Jenny Lynne Stroup, Sultan Camp, Todd Nichols, Ihsane Mouak, John Uhrin III, Matt Capodanno, Lyna Futrell, Gene Garland, Janet Lomax, Mike Schroeder, Gan Prinsinzano, Kayla LaFond, Kayla Dotson

Minutes/Notes

I. Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions

Chair Katz welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 1500.

- a) Chair Katz began the meeting by welcoming the newest member, CAPT Vanessa Christie, and asking everyone to introduce themselves.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

24 November 2025 Minutes were unanimously approved.

III. Special Presentations and Discussions

Deputy Director Jenny Lynne Stroup delivered a comprehensive overview of the Hiring Our



Heroes program, their offerings and impact. Ms. Stroup explained the differences in workforce options available, which are primarily through internships and direct hire opportunities. The internship component was segmented into 4 key opportunities:

- Skillbridge: available for degreed transitioning service members through three cohorts a year in January, May and October.
- Skills-based Academy: a new program in partnership with Lowes that is offered for non-degreed transitioning members. Currently located at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina with plans to offer a second location at Ft. Belvoir in Northern Virginia.
- Skills-based Fellowship: offered through Skillbridge for non-degreed service members to be connected with employers while having a program management benefit for both parties.
- Skills-based internships for Military Spouses: Offers paid 12-week internship opportunities, similar to Skillbridge, specifically for spouses.

Direct hire opportunities are presented through large-scale career summits that host around 50-60 employers and garners attendance from hundreds of transitioning service members as well as a large number of veterans. Ms. Stroup's team, the Military Spouse Programs team, will be hosting an all-day workforce development program called Amplify at The Hive on April 28th. This event provides resources for military spouses in areas such as resume help, LinkedIn, and interview prep. This event is followed by a military spouse hiring fair at The Westin on April 29th. Lastly, industry specific virtual hiring fairs are held twice a month, and employers are encouraged to look for opportunities where their industry can be represented.

Discussion: Additional discussions were held regarding how contact is made with transitioning service members and what the relationship is with other local workforce groups.

IV. Command Updates for JEB Little Creek – Fort Story/NAS Oceana

- a) No representative for JEB Little Creek – Fort Story Present

Discussion: Vice Chair Stuppard mentioned that the Change of Command invitation for this installation was sent out and is occurring on 27 February, so a command visit will be scheduled for a few months after the new CO is on board.

- b) No representative present on behalf of NAS Oceana

Discussion: CAPT Chope advised that the Change of Command ceremony for NAS Oceana would be on February 19th and provided an update on the changes that will occur. CAPT Schager gave an update that a decision for the 6th generation F/A-XX is expected any day, and he will keep everyone updated as support will be needed. Defense Innovation Unit added a housing initiative and is moving forward on additional funding for military housing/barracks and it will require public/private efforts.



V. HRMFFA Update – Rick Dwyer

- a) Minibus funding decision is stalled due to ongoing events in Minnesota. Issues with current funding are largely centered around DHS. There could potentially be another shutdown if an agreement is not reached by the end of the week.
- b) Virginia Military Community Infrastructure Grant program may see an additional 2 million as well as changes to the criteria and allow the grants to go directly to a defense community even without a current DOD grant – which are difficult to obtain.
- c) Several Military Spouse Employment bills that are moving forward, to include licensing and grants for hiring military spouses.
- d) Virginia Defense Forum will be held at The Waterside Marriot in downtown Norfolk on April 1-2, 2026 – website should go live within the next week or so. April 2nd will also include the first VA Military Affairs Advisory Council for Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, Maj. Gen. (Ret) Tim Williams.

VI. Economic Development Update – Ihsane Mouak, ED Liaison

- a) City Council Retreat is happening at the VB Convention Center
- b) 2040 Comprehensive Plan will be voted on by City Council on February 11th
- c) DevFest will be hosted at Zeiders Theater on February 27th and is one of the largest tech gatherings currently offered.
- d) Economic Development will attend the Virginia Defense Forum in April
- e) Stars, Stripes and Spurs Military Appreciation event will be hosted by the city on April 24 – 25, 2026 at the Oceanfront. This will coincide with the Blue Star Families lunch.

VII. Military Workforce Development Update – Jonathan Nieves

- a) Hampton Roads was recognized with the Community Impact Award for Military Spouse Employment
- b) Hiring Our Heroes USA ranked Hampton Roads the #1 Job Market for Veterans and Military Spouses in 2025 – beating San Diego and Texas.
- c) 757 Career Summits are evolving into the Red, White and Blue Summit, which will be a two-day event that addresses not only the career aspect, but the broader scope of the family transition.



VIII. Command Visit Program Updates

Members provided their comments during the Command updates.

IX. Meeting Schedule 2026

Meeting Schedule was discussed and the following was unanimously approved:

- a) Monthly meetings will continue to be held the third Monday of the month
- b) The remaining 2026 meetings will be in March, May, September (Joint with Norfolk) and November – for a total of 5 meetings in the year.
- c) A discussion was held again regarding the attendance policy and what the expectation is. A copy of the City Council Appointive Agency Handbook was provided to all members to provide further clarity on what is excused vs. unexcused and how to calculate in accordance with the number of meetings each year.
- d) The subject of joint meetings and attendance was raised; Chair Katz clarified joint meetings **will** be counted towards attendance. Clerk mentioned that coordination efforts have been underway with Norfolk Clerk and leadership from both MEDAC groups. What has been decided is that there will be **one** joint meeting per year and it will alternate locations each year. It is still being determined who will host first but members will be updated as it is decided.

X. Committee Member Comments

- b) John Urhin suggested that while only two board members can attend a command visit, does not preclude other non-members from attending with them. Mr. Urhin further suggested that this would be a good way to bring in/recruit potential future members and expose them to what role MEDAC plays.
- c) SES Steven Cade mentioned that he would be in San Diego next and offered to connect with their MEDAC or MAC group to connect and share ideas.

XI. Announcements – Next Meeting – 16 March 2026

XII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1556.